

Retail and Wholesale active and committed in combating food waste

Speaking today on the UN First International Day on Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschuereen said:

“If food waste were a country, it would be the world’s third biggest emitter of greenhouse gas. Wasting food means wasting all the inputs and work which has gone into producing it. This is bad for people and bad for the planet. Retailers and wholesalers have been active for many years in helping to combat food waste – both in working with suppliers, donating food to those in need, and in informing and supporting consumers. We therefore welcome the profile which the international community is giving today to food loss and waste, and the commitment of all actors in the food supply chain is showing to tackle this issue”.

Retailers and wholesalers are actively participating in a wide range of individual and joint initiatives to reduce food waste significantly by 2030 in line with Sustainable Development Goal 12. Since our sector committed to the Retail Agreement on Waste in 2012¹, it has drastically reduced food waste in store, and worked to achieve similar reductions throughout their logistics and supply chain. The work of actors in the supply chain in this initiative has led to a set of cross-sectoral recommendations² to continue this joint effort.

In-store losses now make up around 5% of total waste, and we are focusing tackling the biggest challenge of all: preventing food waste in households, where close to 55% of food waste arises. In conjunction with the efforts of other sectors, we have mounted consumer information campaigns and offered original ideas and recipes to use up food which might otherwise end up in the bin.

Some of this household waste arises out of confusion about ‘Best before’ and ‘Use by’ date marking and how long food may still be safe and palatable. Appropriate date marking can help in this, and retailers and wholesalers will be working further with others in the supply chain and EU and national authorities on designing marking and consumer advice which differentiates clearly between quality and safety.

¹ https://www.eurocommerce.eu/media/120522/12_wastereport2014.pdf

² https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/fs_eu-actions_action_implementation_platform_key_recommendations.pdf

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EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 31 countries and 5.4 million companies, both leading global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. Retail and wholesale provide a link between producers and 500 million European consumers over a billion times a day. It generates 1 in 7 jobs, providing a varied career for 29 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.