

Food Waste

Key messages

- 1. Preventing waste: Wasting wholesome food does not make sense from an environmental, social or business point of view.** While some waste is unavoidable, good planning and making the right judgment on what consumers will buy can make the difference. Retailers and wholesalers work hard to prevent food waste from happening in the first place: guaranteeing that they will buy all of a farmer's crop, making the most of misshapen or unattractive fruit and vegetables in soups or prepared foods, or arranging faster delivery to maximise their shelf life.
- 2. Sustainable supply chain: Combatting food waste is not a challenge that any one of us can address alone.** Retailers and wholesalers work together with suppliers and consumers to tackle waste: before delivery, in stores and beyond. This cooperative approach allows us to pursue a whole range of measures, from building a better understanding of the needs and consumption habits of consumers, to developing products tailored to the needs of different types of consumers. Only by combining the efforts of all supply chain actors can we make a real difference. This is why EuroCommerce has become a member of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste.
- 3. Regulatory and voluntary action: Within the diverse sector of retail and wholesale, a combination of well-designed regulation and voluntary action reflecting this diversity can deliver the best results.** The sector is about serving consumers and meeting their individual preferences and requirements. That means that a solution which works in one country or even in one part of a country may work less in another. Flexibility allowing individual companies and countries to identify the most appropriate actions, supported by smart legislation, is the best way to ensure progress in tackling food waste. For example, EU and national legislation often prevents donations of food, which is still good to eat, to those who need it most. Governments should consider both practical problems and possible incentives for retailers and wholesalers to promote donations, including corporate tax incentives and treatment under VAT rules. There is also a need for clear food waste definitions and harmonised measurement methods.
- 4. Commitment: Retailers and wholesalers are already contributing to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 to halve food waste by 2030.** The sector supports the Champions 12.3 initiative, a coalition of stakeholders dedicated to accelerating progress towards achieving this target, and also other key global initiatives such as the Consumer Goods Forum's Food Waste Resolution and the Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard.

Background

As part of the 2015 Circular Economy Action Plan, the European Commission proposed key actions aiming to reduce food waste, including a common measurement methodology, improved date marking, and tools to meet the global Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 to halve food waste by 2030.

Currently, around 88 million tonnes of food are wasted annually by the EU. If there is no action to change this, food waste could rise to over 120 million tonnes by 2020. Food waste occurs all along the food supply chain: on the farm, during processing and manufacturing, in shops, in restaurants and canteens, and in the home. 53% of food waste is created in households, 19% in food processing, 12% in food service, 11% in production and 5% in wholesale and retail. Causes of food waste and losses vary widely and can be sector-specific.

On EU level, several actions and initiatives have already been undertaken to combat food losses and food waste. From August 2012 to July 2016, the Commission supported the [FUSIONS](#) (Food Use for Social Innovation by Optimising Waste Prevention Strategies) project, working towards a more resource efficient Europe by reducing food waste. In July 2015, the [REFRESH](#) (Resource Efficient Food and dRink for the Entire Supply cHain) research project was launched as successor of FUSIONS. This programme will run until July 2019 and works towards the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 and on implementing country pilot projects.

The [EU Platform of Food Losses and Food Waste](#), of which EuroCommerce is an active member, was launched in 2016. The Platform is dedicated to food waste prevention, aiming to support all actors in defining measures needed to prevent food waste, sharing best practice and evaluation progress made over time. Within the Platform, a number of sub-groups have been established, dealing with food waste measurement, food donation and implementation. The Platform brings together national and international stakeholders and all supply chain actors, including consumers and NGOs.

Further information

- EuroCommerce (2017) [Rising to the food waste challenge](#)
- EuroCommerce, FoodDrinkEurope, FEBA (2016) [Every meal matters – Food Donation Guidelines](#)
- EuroCommerce and ERRT (2015) [Retail agreement on waste: Report](#)
- European Court of Auditors (2017) [Combatting food waste: an opportunity for the EU to improve the resource-efficiency of the supply chain](#)
- Champions 12.3 (2017) [The business case for reducing food loss and waste](#)
- Consumer Goods Forum, Food Waste Resolution - [website](#)
- European Parliament (2017) [Resource efficiency: reducing food waste, improving food safety](#)
- FUSIONS (2016) [Estimates of European Food Waste Levels](#)
- UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 12 & 12.3 on reducing food waste - [website](#)
- The Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard – [website](#)