

Press release – Proposals for cutting food waste – Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Environment MEPs put forward a number of possible measures to cut the EU 88 million tonnes per year food waste by half by 2030 on Tuesday. MEPs called on the European Commission to lift existing restrictions on food donations and stressed a solution is needed for the confusion created for many consumers by the “best before” and “use by” labelling.

“In developed countries food is wasted mostly at the end of the chain, at distribution and consumption. Everyone has a responsibility to tackle this problem”, said lead MEP [Biljana Borzan](#) (S&D, HR). “My report calls for a coordinated policy response on labelling, liability and education, as most consumers do not understand the precise meaning of “best before” and “use by” labelling”, she said.

“Moreover, we should address the shortcomings of existing EU legislation where it hinders food donations. We need to update our common VAT system to allow for tax exemptions. A form of “good Samaritan” legislation at EU level could lead to greater volumes of food being donated and reducing food being wasted, without compromising current standards of food safety”, she added.

MEPs call on EU countries to achieve food waste cuts by 30% by 2025 and 50 by 2030, reiterating the objective Parliament set out in its [waste legislation voted in March](#).

National authorities and stakeholders need to educate consumers in the understanding of “use by” and “best before” dates and the usability of foodstuffs after the “best before” date, MEPs stated. The Commission will have to assess the possible benefits of removing certain dates for products without any risk to public health or the environment.

Facilitate food donations

The Commission should also propose a change in the VAT directive that would explicitly authorise tax exemptions on food donations. The EU Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) should get the possibility to finance the cost of collecting, transporting, storing and distributing food donations.

Next steps

The report was adopted unanimously. It will be put to a vote by the full House during the 15-18 May plenary session in Strasbourg.

Note to editors

In the EU, food waste has been estimated at some 88 million tonnes, or 173 kg per capita per year. The production and disposal of this food waste leads to the emission of 170 million tonnes of CO₂ and consumes 261 million tonnes of resources.

The highest food waste occurs in the Netherlands (541 kg per capita and per year) and Belgium (345 kg), the lowest in Slovenia (72kg) Malta and Romania (76kg).