

Food waste reduction: what EU actions are there?

Food waste remains one of the main obstacles towards achieving a circular economy. Find out more about the Parliament's proposed solutions.



While it is estimated that around 10% of food that is available for EU consumers may be wasted, there are more than 37 million people in the EU that cannot afford a quality meal every second day.

The reduction of food waste and food loss are two of the EU's main objectives in order to [achieve a circular economy by 2050](#).

Causes of food waste

Insufficient shopping and meal planning, “ugly” fruits and vegetables, impulsive buying as a result of retail promotions, inappropriate packaging size are just some of the reasons for food

waste by households, which accounts for the majority of food waste.

Standardised portions and overestimating the number of guests are among the reasons for food waste in restaurants and food services.

According to a [study carried out by the European Commission](#), date labelling on food, such as “use by” and “best before”, is also one of the reason for food waste. A better understanding of the labels could potentially help reduce food waste by up to 10%.

Why is reducing food waste important?

Reducing food waste is necessary to fight climate change. It accounts for approximately 16% of all the greenhouse gases from the EU food system. According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), the production and transportation of food that is later wasted accounts for 8% of global greenhouse emissions. By reducing food waste, households and companies could save money.

EU legislation for food waste reduction

The goals of the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) include making date labelling clearer and stopping their wrong use to help reduce food waste. Under this strategy, the Commission will also investigate the loss of food throughout the entire food-supply chain.

Food donation is another way to reduce unnecessary food waste. [The EU food donation guidelines](#) were adopted in 2017 with the aim of facilitating the recovery and redistribution of safe, edible food to those in need.

Additionally, a [common EU methodology](#) was adopted in 2019 in order to measure food waste at each stage of the food-supply chain. Common methodology eases the monitoring and reporting of food waste across the EU.

Revision of the Waste Framework Directive

The Commission put forward a proposal for a revision of the [Waste Framework Directive](#) in July 2023 to do more to reduce food and [textile waste](#). Among the changes, it proposes binding waste reduction targets on the national level by the end of 2030. 10% of waste should be reduced in food processing and manufacturing, and 30% in retail, restaurants, food services and households.

In March 2024, the Parliament [adopted its position on the revision](#). Parliament wants to reduce waste in food processing and manufacturing by at least 20% and in retail, restaurants, food services and households by at least 40%. The Commission should evaluate if higher targets (30% and 50% respectively) should be introduced for 2035.

"Parliament has come up with targeted solutions to reduce food waste, such as promoting 'ugly' fruits and veggies, keeping an eye on unfair market practices, clarifying date labelling and donating unsold-but-consumable food," said Anna Zalewska (ECR, Poland), the MEP in charge of steering the legislation through Parliament.

Next steps

The negotiations with the Council will be done by the next Parliament, which will be elected at the European elections on 6-9 June 2024.

Read more on EU actions about waste

- [Sustainable waste management: what the EU is doing](#)
- [How to reduce packaging waste in the EU \(infographics\)](#)
- [Plastic waste and recycling in the EU: facts and figures](#)
- [E-waste in the EU: facts and figures \(infographic\)](#)

Waste Framework Directive

[Follow legislative progress](#)
[Briefing \(December 2023\)](#)