



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY
Food sustainability, international relations
Farm to fork strategy

DRAFT SUMMARY REPORT

EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES & FOOD WASTE (FLW) CONSULTATION ON THE INCEPTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON SETTING EU-LEVEL TARGETS FOR FOOD WASTE REDUCTION

DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

Meeting via WebEx Events

22 October 2021 – From 10:00 to 12:00

Chair: DG SANTE

Commission: DG SANTE, DG AGRI, DG EMPL, DG ENV, DG GROW, DG INTPA, DG MARE, DG RTD, DG TAXUD, EASME, ESTAT, JRC, OIB, REA

Agencies: EEA - European Environment Agency

Member States represented (27)

AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, GB, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, NO, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK

Private sector organisations represented (27)

AECOC - Asociación Española de Codificación Comercial, AIBI - Association of Large Bakers, BEUC – The European Consumer Organisation, BOROUME – "We Can", Copa Cogeca – European Farmers and Agri-Cooperatives, ECSLA - European Cold Storage and Logistics Association, EDA - European Dairy Association, EFFPA - European Former Foodstuff Processors Association, Euro Coop – European Community of Consumer Co-operatives, EuroCommerce - the retail, wholesale and international trade representation to the EU, FEBA – European Food Banks Federation, FEEDBACK GLOBAL, FEFAC European Feed Manufacturers Federation, FOODCLOUD, FOODSERVICEEUROPE, FoodWIN (Food Waste Innovation Network), FRESHFEL – European Fresh Produce Association, HOTREC – Hospitality Europe, INDEPENDENT RETAIL EUROPE, NORSUS - Norwegian institute for sustainability research, RISE RESEARCH INSTITUTES OF SWEDEN AB, SLOW FOOD, SMEunited, Stop Wasting Food movement (Stop Spild Af Mad), WAGENINGEN UR – Wageningen University & Research, WRAP – Waste and Resource Action Programme, Zero Waste Scotland

Public entities (4): EESC – European Economic and Social Committee, FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation, OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, United Nations Environment Programme

Observers:

EFTA: Norway

A meeting of the EU Platform on FLW took place virtually via WebEx Events on 22 October 2021 from 10:00 to 12:00 CET. The meeting provided the opportunity to present and discuss with members the Inception Impact Assessment on food waste reduction targets, published for feedback from 1-29 October 2021. The Commission provided an overview of EU policy and measures undertaken to reduce food waste since 2015, highlighted the role of EU-level food waste reduction targets in this context and outlined the process for development of the legislative proposal, including opportunities for stakeholder engagement. Platform members took the floor to share their views concerning the initiative and the different policy options presented in the Inception Impact Assessment.

1. Introductory remarks by the Commission

In her opening remarks, the Chair highlighted the importance of the legislative initiative to set legally binding, EU-level targets on food waste reduction, a key deliverable of the Farm to Fork Strategy. The Chair reiterated the Commission’s political commitment to food waste reduction needed both to achieve the European Green Deal and ensure the EU’s contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Within the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission is pursuing the reduction of food loss and waste as part of an integrated food systems approach. The measurement of food waste, the common methodology defined under the previous Circular Economy Action Plan and related monitoring obligations, currently being carried out by Member States, will be key for the elaboration of this legislative initiative.

DG SANTE is working closely with other services to prepare this legislative proposal, notably with DG Environment – as the introduction of food waste reduction targets will be part of the revision of the Waste Framework Directive – and with the Joint Research Centre, which will carry out the preparatory study to support the Impact Assessment for food waste reduction targets.

The Chair explained that the Inception Impact Assessment focuses solely on the subject of legally binding targets (and not other possible measures to reduce food waste), reflecting the Commission’s mandate laid down in the Farm to Fork Strategy. The Commission encourages Platform Members to contribute to the ongoing Inception Impact Assessment through today’s consultation meeting and by providing feedback in writing.

2. Food waste reduction targets – content of the Inception Impact Assessment, presentation by the Commission [\[PDF\]](#)

In order to define future policy, the Commission is seeking stakeholders’ views on the Inception Impact Assessment for setting food waste reduction targets and possible policy options described therein. The Commission published the Inception Impact Assessment on the [Have Your Say](#) portal to obtain feedback, which will feed into the development of the legislative proposal to set legally binding targets to reduce food waste.

The meeting was structured in 3 parts, with presentation by the Commission followed by an exchange with members. In an introductory presentation, the Commission presented the problem definition for the Inception Impact Assessment, indicating that while Member States are taking steps to reduce food waste, action is not yet sufficient. The aim of this initiative is to ensure that ambitious actions are taken across the EU. The proposal will define the desired level of reduction with Member States needing to define the most effective measures to achieve this, taking into account their respective national situation.

Part 1: Introduction

The Commission then presented the proposed approach for setting the targets, explaining that two issues needed to be decided: 1) the scope and form of the target (including coverage of the food supply chain, how the target is expressed and the way in which targets are set for Member States) and 2) the actual target levels taking into account expected environmental, economic and social costs and benefits. The Commission outlined the evidence base which would be considered, the analytical study to be carried out by the Joint Research Centre to support the Impact Assessment, and the consultation process, highlighting in particular the role of the targeted consultation of the EU Platform on FLW. An overall timeline for the project was presented, with adoption of the legislative proposal foreseen for 2nd Quarter of 2023.

Discussion

DE took the floor to inquire as to why the Commission would propose food waste reduction targets prior to preparing a report to the European Parliament and Council on the feasibility of establishing a Union-wide food waste reduction target on the basis of data reported by Member States, as specified in the revised Waste Framework Directive. **DE** also pointed out that it is the responsibility of Member States to define measures needed to achieve SDG Target 12.3. **Copa Cogeca** also raised concerns about the order of actions, in particular setting targets before assessing the state of the situation in Member States and expressed need for a study on food waste measurement in Member States.

Stop Wasting Food movement raised concerns about whether it is realistic to halve food waste by 2030 (i.e. the SDG Target) in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which poses new challenges for society and for food waste reduction. **Stop Wasting Food** suggested that perhaps such targets should be adjusted or broken down into smaller targets in order to make them more achievable.

WRAP argued, on the other hand, that for the EU to consider pursuing a food waste reduction target lower than the agreed SDG Target 12.3, would make it out-of-step with its climate commitments under the Paris Agreement (given the importance of food waste reduction to lowering greenhouse gas emissions) and to the UN Sustainable Development Agenda more generally. While delivering on the SDG Target 12.3 may be a challenge in the current context, businesses can act rapidly to reduce food waste, and such progress should be feasible. Given this context, the EU should at least try to halve food waste by 2030, in line with the leadership stance it has always taken regarding SDGs.

Feedback agreed that whilst the pandemic is posing extra challenges, target setting is needed in order to ensure active commitment to food waste reduction, notably in light of climate change. **Feedback** further stated that future targets should cover the whole supply chain so that businesses are also held accountable for food waste reduction.

NO pointed out that the Commission's proposal to set EU-level food waste reduction targets is in line with Norway's ambitions to reduce edible food waste in line with SDGs.

HOTREC indicated that whilst its members will always comply with targets (e.g. climate), the specific situation of the hospitality sector linked to the pandemic) should be taken into account when setting targets. **HOTREC** members consider that indicative targets set at national level would be more appropriate for those companies that have already taken action in recent years. Moreover, targets that cover only specific stages of the food supply chain would be more proportional (as some stages produce more food waste than others), targets set in absolute amounts are more realistic and a collective target should be set for the EU based on Member States' contributions.

FEFAC raised a question on the scope of the Inception Impact Assessment and how far it will go in addressing prevention of food loss and waste, in addition to proposing reduction targets. **FEFAC** highlighted the importance of ensuring food and feed safety and inquired whether the impact assessment would consider possible unintended consequences of food waste reduction initiatives.

Replies from the Commission:

Answering the first round of comments, the Commission explained that, whilst preparing a report for the European Parliament is a legislative obligation, the Farm to Fork Strategy makes a political commitment to propose setting EU food reduction targets given the urgency of the challenge and breadth of change needed in order to achieve the European Green Deal. The Farm to Fork Strategy therefore accelerates the process for target setting but does not contradict the obligations laid down in the revised Waste Framework Directive.

Any legislative proposal must be evidence based, and the accompanying Impact Assessment will take into account the data submitted by Member States in context of the EU-wide monitoring of food waste levels as well as data submitted by other stakeholders through the open public consultation. The Commission needs both data on food waste generation in the Member States as well as information on the impacts of food waste reduction, that is, the costs and effects of action, and whether specific sectors will be affected. The sequence will therefore be consistent with that suggested by stakeholders, i.e. first, data collection and assessment in 2022, followed by formulation of a legislative proposal (2023).

The Commission aims to ensure that the proposal will be the best possible, with feasible and achievable targets, legally robust and based on scientific evidence.

In closing this first round of comments, the Chair reaffirmed the clear political will to accelerate transition to sustainable food systems, of which reducing food waste is an integral part. The legal proposal will be evidence-based, with the Member States' monitoring data as a key foundation. Moreover, the Chair reiterated that food safety is a non-negotiable part of food sustainability.

Part 2: presentation of policy options

The Commission then went on to present the policy options presented in the Inception Impact Assessment followed by further exchange with Platform members.

Discussion

The question of baseline year was raised by **DE** and **Copa Cogeca**, that is whether 2020 would be considered as the baseline year and referring also to the 2014 baseline year laid down in the Resolution of the European Parliament on the Farm to Fork Strategy and to the 2015 baseline year for the SDGs. **DE** also inquired as to what extent earlier actions (initiated following adoption of Sustainable Development

Goals in 2015) would be taken into account, with **WRAP** also highlighting the importance of taking account of results already achieved by Member States when setting the baseline.

Feedback and **Copa Cogeca** enquired as to the timing of the Commission's decision making process and at what stage in the consultative process the Commission would make decisions in its 2-step approach to defining targets.

DE also asked whether targets would relate to total or edible food waste. **WRAP** concurred that this issue merited careful consideration, particularly in the light of the legally binding nature of the targets.

NO enquired about setting different targets across the food supply chain and how the Commission would link these to the main, overall target.

EURO COOP took the floor to express concerns about the option consisting in defining targets for only certain stages of the food supply chain and inquired about the benefits of such an approach given that food policy is rather recommending to consider the food system in its entirety. **FI** agreed that targets should cover the whole food value chain as some business models can for instance drive food waste in primary production; furthermore, all actors should take responsibility for the environmental impact of food systems. **Copa Cogeca** also stressed the importance of assigning responsibility of food waste to the right actor (e.g. last minute order cancellations by retail).

WRAP supported taking a systemic approach across the food value chain, indicating that if targets focus on specific stages of the food chain, reducing food waste could have unintended consequences, leading to increased food loss or waste somewhere else. **WRAP** also considered that the idea of setting a collective target for the EU, recognizing that the EU food system is complex and integrated, could bring the best value for both the EU and the planet.

SE pointed out that setting targets on food waste alone might increase food losses at industry and primary producer level, which should also be covered in the Inception Impact Assessment to improve circularity and resource efficiency.

ESTAT suggested, based on their experience in waste reduction more generally, that it is more efficient to set targets with intermediate milestones as this can also help drive sharing of solutions and best practices. Some countries have already started implementing strategies (for example France) and it would be helpful if such information could be shared.

Copa Cogeca asked whether the legislative proposal will also propose measures to support actors in reducing food waste or will it only address targets as such. **Copa Cogeca** also commented that the trend towards increasing food safety standards (e.g. mycotoxin levels in cereals) could contradict food waste reduction and asked whether the Commission would consider coherence between food safety and food waste prevention when carrying out the impact assessment and preparing the future legislative proposal.

Feedback pointed out that baseline data currently exclude the majority of food loss from farms (e.g. food not harvested), with **Slow Food** also stressing the importance of quantifying food waste at farm level. Moreover, **Feedback** stated that earlier estimates of on-farm food waste were based on few studies and underestimated its scale, citing a recent WWF report as the most comprehensive review of food waste at farm level. **Feedback** indicated that the future legislative proposal should also lay out measures to address this issue and lay down reporting requirements for this type of food waste. **Copa-Cogeca** emphasized the

importance of making a difference between food losses and waste, especially since losses are often very hard to avoid (e.g. climate related).

Replies from the Commission

As regards food losses the Commission confirmed that these would not be considered in the Impact Assessment as they are not covered by the Waste Framework Directive. However, food losses will be investigated under Horizon Europe research programmes and related calls for proposals.

As for the baseline, the Commission has proposed 2020 as this is the first year for which data from all EU Member States will be available. The Commission will certainly take into account the results of “early achievers” and, typically, when defining a baseline for the purpose of setting targets (e.g. Landfill Directive), the Commission considers the first year for which credible data are available. As regards the choice of baseline for the purpose of the Impact Assessment analysis, the Commission will consider how the situation evolves from 2020 in the absence of targets and taking into account possible impact of other policy areas on food waste generation (e.g. separate waste collection, climate targets etc.).

The Commission noted that the main added value of having a limited scope for targets (i.e. restricted to certain stages of the food supply chain) is that of simplicity, notably given the limited time for developing this proposal. The Impact Assessment analysis should show what option is the best to follow.

Concerning the timing, the Commission aims to proceed with further work on policy options once all feedback is analysed. The data from Member States will be critical in the elaboration of the proposal.

The Commission will take into account the suggestion of defining intermediate milestones, as suggested by ESTAT. The Commission explained that the Impact Assessment will include only targets and not additional measures. Food waste policy is evolving and additional measures could be considered/introduced later on, if necessary, or through recommendations, noting in this regard the role of the EU Platform on FLW as an appropriate forum for the exchange of views and experiences.

In concluding this part of the exchange, the Chair emphasised that, in the end, it is up to the risk manager to make decisions taking into account different public interests. Food safety and protection of human health represent an overriding interest, and risk managers need to assess, on a case-by-case basis, how to mitigate any potential negative impacts, for instance on food waste.

Part 3: presentation of policy options for target levels

In the final part of its presentation, the Commission went on to explain how the JRC’s Magnet model would be utilized in order to analyse impacts according to three different reduction levels of total food waste (including both edible and inedible parts).

- Option 1 (basic): to reduce food waste in the EU by 15-25%
- Option 2 (medium): to reduce food waste in the EU by 25-35%
- Option 3 (advanced): to reduce food waste in the EU by 40-50%

Commission explained that it is not possible to directly relate these options to SDG Target 12.3 as EU targets will refer to total food waste including both edible and inedible parts and only estimations about progress towards SDG 12.3 will be possible as reporting on the edible parts is currently voluntary. Commission recalled the example of the UK where reduction of total food waste by 15% resulted in a 27% reduction in comparison with the SDG Target.

The Inception Impact Assessment serves as a preliminary analysis as to who will be impacted and how. The Commission called on participants to provide further information in this regard, if/where available.

Discussion

Some members (e.g. **Feedback**) reiterated the importance of including an option that allows meeting the 50% reduction of food waste required by SDG Target 12.3.

FEFAC pointed out that there is a need for more clarity on differentiating between edible and non-edible food waste and how these relate to the proposed targets. **FEFAC** inquired as to whether the proposal would reiterate the waste prevention hierarchy, differentiating between food and feed uses and other uses. As regards monitoring and reporting, **FEFAC** asked what would be the contribution of food business operators, and stressed the need to avoid multiplication of reporting be it voluntary (e.g. Code of Conduct on Responsible Business and Marketing Practices) or required by legislation.

Slow Food noted that we have high levels of food waste because we do not give appropriate value to food. By restoring proper value to food, we would not only tackle food waste but also other systemic issues linked to food systems, with positive impacts on health and other societal issues. In this regard, the Chair reiterated that the aim of this initiative, as well as other initiatives proposed within the Farm to Fork Strategy, is to achieve systemic change across the food system.

WRAP asked for further clarification regarding the scope of the exercise. Referring to the meeting's discussions – focusing on food waste at retail, food service and household levels and pre-harvest waste, classified respectively by the UN as food waste and loss – **WRAP** asked whether manufacturing was indeed included (in line with the Waste Framework Directive) given that significant waste occurs in this sector. Moreover, as one of the key barriers to reducing food waste is absence of measurement, **WRAP** suggested that obligatory measuring of food waste could be one way of driving change at the level of food business operators. **WRAP** also reiterated that reducing food waste across the food supply chain would make an important contribution to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, supporting the EU's ambitious targets in this regard.

NORSUS indicated that it seemed that many participants are agreeing to take a food value chain approach and also taking the EU as a whole for the setting of targets; however, we should ensure that, in doing so, problems are not shifted up and down the value chain or to other regions of the world. For instance, achieving a 50% reduction target should not be the result of simply importing more food into the EU. **NORSUS** explained that, linked to COVID-19, Norway increased its degree of self-sufficiency, with more food produced in Norway, resulting in greater amounts of food waste (although when measured as percentage of food produced, food waste from manufacturing has decreased).

Replies from the Commission

The Commission pointed out that mandatory measurement is not a part of this proposal, however obligations related to food waste monitoring have been set on Member States, which can go forward in requiring further measurement (e.g. from actors in the food supply chain). In this regard, the Platform is an ideal place to exchange experiences and results related to the implementation of food waste monitoring obligations.

Closing presentation – Next steps

The Commission presented the evidence base that would be considered in the Impact Assessment, the consultation process (including targeted consultations of the Platform) and recalled the overall scientific and technical support that would be provided by the Joint Research Centre.

The Commission presented the next steps, stating that a first summary of feedback from the Inception Impact Assessment would be given at the next Platform meeting on 18 November. The data collection exercise, run by the Joint Research Centre, will be launched in November/December, focussed on numerical data based on stakeholders' experiences thus far, in particular those of Member States. The open public consultation will run from the end of 2021 through to the 1st Quarter of 2022, and the Commission's legislative proposal is currently planned for the 2nd Quarter of 2023.

Feedback reiterated its question regarding the timeframe for Commission decisions on the different options and whether these are addressed at different stages of the process. The Commission clarified that the options may be adjusted and/or augmented taking into account feedback received and analysis of their impacts, and the final choice will be presented in the legislative proposal following the Impact Assessment.

The Chair thanked members for their active participation and exchange, reminding members to send in their feedback in writing. She recalled that the next Platform meeting would be held on 18 November and closed the meeting.