

European Citizens' Panel on Food Waste
Final recommendations
February 2023



#FoodWasteEU



**European
Commission**

Summary of recommendations and voting results

No	Title	IN FAVOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	TOTAL
1	The closer the farmer, the happier the consumer: Less waste, more sustainability	120	15	5	140
2	Tastes of home: Public and private support for local farming to reduce food waste	119	9	12	140
3	Share don't waste!	93	31	16	140
4	Sharing of data and best practices across Europe	97	27	16	140
5	Gathering data across the food supply chain	101	28	11	140
6	Citizens' voices matter: Citizen participation in European food policy	91	37	12	140
7	Just picked: The value of seasonal food	103	26	11	140
8	EU-wide food exchange network	84	41	14	139
9	Planned purchases and redistribution	85	38	16	139
10	Restaurants stand for "enjoy without wasting"	113	17	9	139
11	All waste has a weight	73	48	18	139
12	A mandatory reporting system for transparency coupled with penalties and rewards	68	56	15	139
13	EU-wide legislation on the destruction of unsold food products - a peer learning approach across Member States	109	20	10	139
14	Transparency on food waste for visibility and action	102	22	15	139
15	Innovation in packaging and use of packaging when needed	116	18	5	139
16	Broadening the definition of food waste in order to save unharvested food	110	19	10	139
17	Encouraging adults to take action on food waste as a priority	113	20	6	139
18	Nutritional awareness and sustainable food in primary and secondary schools	123	9	7	139
19	Promote and support food sharing applications and platforms connecting consumers with each other	97	25	17	139
20	Save food, save money: A European campaign against food waste in cooperation with food retailers on four weekends a year	98	31	10	139
21	"Stop food waste": A week of food waste awareness at school	116	16	7	139
22	To provide consumers keys to be aware and independent on their impact on food waste and to understand how to process, preserve and reuse a product before and after the date of the product has passed	108	26	5	139
23	The implementation of standardized practices at the retail level when promotion to consumers products close to the expiration date.	109	18	12	139

Topic block I - Cooperation in the food value chain: From farm to fork

RECOMMENDATION 1

The closer the farmer, the happier the consumer: Less waste, more sustainability

We recommend that the EU continues their work with policies and initiatives to support small-scale producers in the trade with retailers and supermarkets. Large retailers/processors have a clear power advantage in this relationship, and often steer the trade in their favour, sometimes resulting in food waste.

Three aspects need specific attention: 1) The EU, and its member states, should encourage retailers and supermarkets to always use the closest producer possible. Furthermore, they should investigate and develop incentives that motivate the retailers to follow these recommendations. 2) The EU needs to monitor and track the ban on last minute cancellations from 2019 and be ready to intervene if it is not followed. 3) The EU needs to continue working with policies on ugly/wrong shaped food and investigate further what are the consequences of these rejections regarding waste.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Tastes of home:

Public and private support for local farming to reduce food waste

We recommend local & regional authorities to support local farmers with practical solutions and initiatives aiming to reduce food waste. The goal is to encourage stakeholders to cooperate more closely to drive these initiatives and thereby create a sustainable food system that benefits both farmers and consumers.

Several initiatives are suggested for local authorities to initiate: 1) Tax reliefs and subsidies for small scale farmers. 2) Support to find new markets where local farmers are protected from unfair power relations with retailers, as example by allocating public spaces for sales. 3) Encourage inclusive processes and initiatives with value chain stakeholders for the work with food waste, as example by promoting the use of "food waste apps" in a city. 4) Support associations and other actors that are supporting local farmers in food waste issues, such as food banks.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Share don't waste!

We recommend that food banks and redistributors in general should be financially supported at a basic level by governments through a structural scheme, common across Europe, instead of primarily working by private donations (but not 100% funded, so it does not turn into a business).

We also recommend a platform that connects the various apps that already exist, that connect retailers to food banks; that platform should be user-friendly and efficient. The platform should be managed centrally. We also recommend that the food redistributed (donated or sold at a lower price) from retailers to food banks is given away in good time and good condition, preferably 3-5 days before it goes bad (rather than the current 48-hour guideline). The incentive to do this could be a tax deduction for retailers, that decreases the sooner you get to the expiration date. They must donate a minimum amount of food to be eligible for this deduction.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Sharing of data and best practices across Europe

We recommend that governments in each country share their data and best practices on actions to target all steps of the food waste chain, from producers to consumers, to the European Commission's platform for food waste. This information will then be managed and analysed by a special committee of EU researchers that work to spread out the good practices and make them easily accessible. The data on good practices should be categorized by types of production and types of consumption.

In addition to that, we want to promote a network of cities/regions which access the data and utilize the practices that work best for them, based on similar consumption and production patterns. The network is set up for these localities to learn from each other based on these similarities. The concept of "twin cities" could be applied for this purpose: Cities with similar food waste issues work together to solve them.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Gathering data across the food supply chain

We recommend that data on how, where, who, why and when food waste occurs across the food supply chain gets collected by an EU body or other agencies or research institutions.

This could be through: 1) Individual consumer behaviour through app measurement. 2) Face-to-face collection of data, through the Eurobarometer survey. 3) Surveys sent to schools and other educational organizations. Could be before/after a school intervention targeting food waste. 4) Use citizen panel citizens as a representative cohort for research purposes. 5) Journalling study of consumer behaviour could be an intervention study. Inspiration from consumer scan panels of BE/NE. 6) Using scientifically validated measures from universities. 7) Observational studies - specifically studying actual waste amounts by drawing on existing waste management processes of towns and municipalities. 8) Collecting and comparing invoices from supermarket/farmer interactions. 9) Standardizing forms for reporting waste.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Citizens' voices matter

Citizen participation in European food policy Building on the Conference on the Future of Europe and the current EU Citizen Panel on food waste, we recommend the establishment of local and national citizen engagement fora. These fora would be tasked with following, monitoring and offering advice on national strategies to implement EU directives on reducing food waste from the perspective of citizens.

We further recommend that the EU Platform on Food Waste should include citizens' representation and engagement that coordinates exchanges between the engagement fora. At both a national and EU level, the fora should offer a platform for information sharing and mutual learning between citizens and consumers, stakeholders, and policy makers.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Just picked: The value of seasonal food

We recommend a change in consumer habits by informing consumers of the value of seasonal food. This should be done through clear signalling in stores that allows consumers to clearly identify seasonal produce. Information about seasonality should also be communicated to a wide audience through

public information campaigns. Informing consumers through signs on shelves and campaigns may incentivize producers to grow seasonal produce.

We further recommend the production of better data on the most effective methods for incentivizing production of seasonal produce and limiting the import of non-seasonal low-quality foods.

Topic block II - Food business initiatives

RECOMMENDATION 8

EU-wide food exchange network

We recommend major distributors to be directly connected through a register on an EU-wide website that allows the exchange of about-to-expire or surplus food. The webpage would prevent food waste by enabling communication within the levels (see below) and the next sectoral unit in the supply chain. Businesses can sign up and offer or buy surplus food at a lower price.

There would be three levels: 1. Level one would consist of producers, farmers, and distributors. 2. Level two would incorporate supermarkets, food banks and community kitchens. 3. The final level encompasses consumers and households.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Planned purchases and redistribution

We recommend developing a legal framework to harmonise member states' legislation on practices for the entire supply chain regarding the redistribution of surplus and about to expire food, considering safety regulations and forecast data. Purchases should be adjusted to what will be sold. Supermarkets and suppliers could be incentivised with benefits (for example, through tax breaks) from selling at a lower price or donating.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Restaurants stand for "enjoy without wasting"

We recommend to the European institutions the following plan to limit food waste in restaurants. Once certain quality criteria (like the ones outlined below and some others) are met, all types of restaurants should be allowed to show a logo (which is harmonised across the EU). The logo would advertise the possibility to take leftovers home and waiters should provide packages for food to take leftovers home. Those restaurants that implement the logo plan would write on their menus an additional text stating "you can take your leftovers home".

If there are still leftovers of prepared food, they should be offered to employees. If there are leftovers of raw food from the kitchen, they should be offered to Food Banks/other charity institutions. If food is inedible, it should be used to produce renewable energy. To encourage restaurants to meet these quality criteria (or further quality criteria), financial support should be given to restaurants to carry out this plan. A tax relief could serve as a financial incentive and additional aid could be granted. As leftovers from kitchens can be weighed or measured, they could be monitored and taken into consideration for the tax relief.

RECOMMENDATION 11

All waste has a weight

We recommend that organisations in charge of waste management are obliged to weigh, scale or measure organic waste. In the short term, the plan should focus on public institutions (e.g., schools and hospitals), entire neighbourhoods or districts and in the long-term, it should also include private households.

Representatives of these institutions/districts and, at a later stage private households should regularly receive reports and comparisons to previous periods and comparisons to other entities. This leads to more awareness and is an incentive to reduce food waste. It does not have to be measured in the same way in all countries, it is sufficient if it is comparable in a respective country.

RECOMMENDATION 12

A mandatory reporting system for transparency coupled with penalties and rewards

We recommend establishing a reporting system (especially like ISO certification) to set specific standards across the whole value chain including producers, manufacturers, retailers, supermarkets, restaurants, and hotels. It should distinguish between large and small/medium size enterprises (SMEs) based on existing categories to classify company sizes.

There should be penalties if standards are violated and rewards if companies overperform. There should be a relative fine system proportional to the gravity of the offense and the size of the company. Rewards should primarily be based on a label system, for example, ABC grades, or potentially financial incentives especially for SMEs. Independent and external auditors must be tasked with reporting, not the companies. Public authorities at the member-state level (e.g., ministries or regulatory bodies) are in charge to ensure implementation and monitoring. The data should be publicly accessible and enable peer learning. The Commission should have an oversight and coordination function.

RECOMMENDATION 13

EU-wide legislation on the destruction of unsold food products - a peer learning approach across Member States

It must be ensured that food products are used in different phases before being thrown away. The priority is on avoiding food waste, but, if not possible, the following cycle applies: Human consumption, animal consumption, biofuel, and composting.

The member states are responsible for the required infrastructure to be in place to enable implementation. The EU sets an overarching goal to reduce food waste by a certain percentage. Member states set national standards so that the EU goal is collectively achieved. Member states can implement either voluntary or mandatory measures for companies to comply with. The reduction needs to be quantifiable. After a pilot phase that focuses on supermarkets, and adjustments based on peer learning, the best practice should be a guideline for all member states.

RECOMMENDATION 14

Transparency on food waste for visibility and action

We recommend that all participants in the food supply chain, except individual households, should have an obligation to measure and report transparently on dealing with food waste and its handling. Further emphasis should also be on the need for new options for data collection as well as including

the food loss in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, differentiated incentives to promote voluntary agreements should follow to support institutions in playing a pioneering role.

Also, corrective measures contribute to the importance, geared towards including all participants in the food supply chain (except individual households). The EU should do a best-practice evaluation of the different Member States about their existing reporting structures and incentives as well as corrective measures. This helps to establish a further embedded framework for the EU to make data more comparable.

RECOMMENDATION 15

Innovation in packaging and use of packaging when needed

We recommend investing further in scientific research on innovative and alternative sustainable ways of packaging. This helps to increase the life span, improve the package size to reduce food waste, and ensure better food safety for its transportation. The EU should support this financially and politically through appropriate programs, such as the funding of start-ups and smaller innovating forces. Furthermore, we recommend supporting retailers to sell food without packaging, where it is possible, without compromising food security.

Topic block III - Supporting consumer behavioral change

RECOMMENDATION 16

Broadening the definition of food waste in order to save unharvested food

We recommend that unharvested food should be integrated in the European definition of food waste. We also want farmers to have the possibility to commercialize less than perfect but still edible products. To avoid food loss farmers should get signs which proclaim that unharvested food may be harvested by private households and NGO's.

This idea must be communicated to two groups: • to the citizens via the campaign that is developed in recommendation 20. • and to the farmers via the member states ministries for agriculture. The latter should implement this recommendation in coordination with local municipalities and producer unions.

RECOMMENDATION 17

Encouraging adults to take action on food waste as a priority

We recommend that every member state should implement a program for adults to raise awareness and knowledge about the cost of food waste and the benefits of preventing it at national, regional, and local level. This should be based on best available data (recommendation 5) to underline the urgency of the problem.

It should include apps (recommendation 18), campaigns (recommendation 4 and 20), further education and training for people working in the food industry, in-house training programmes for professionals as well as documentaries and television programs on the topic. Some possibilities could be short ads showing the benefit of reusing food, promote Sunday as leftover day, create game shows with cooking competitions for young adults to involve the broadcasters. Informing people about the economic and environmental benefits of not wasting food is important in simple messaging or nudges. A key contributor to the dissemination of information could be the media, especially the public service radio stations and television, print media, social media, public institutions, museums and retailers.

Existing EU institutions could develop resources to support member states (for example, the House of European History).

RECOMMENDATION 18

Nutritional awareness and sustainable food in primary and secondary schools

We recommend the inclusion of the topics of sustainable food and nutrition in primary and secondary schools' curricula, either through the creation of a new mandatory standalone course, as they already exist in some countries, and/or its inclusion in existing mandatory subjects. This recommendation aims to increase pupils' awareness of food waste through discussions on socioeconomic values, sustainable production and consumption, shopping behaviours, household economics, and practical experiences bringing schools and farms closer together.

To make this recommendation happen, there are two pre-conditions for which we expect the EU to act. First, we need a multi-stakeholders awareness raising campaign to create and increase momentum around the topic (recommendation 20). Second, we need to support teachers through trainings, and pedagogical exchanges and materials, capitalising on existing networks and proven best practices. Acknowledging that these changes can take time to be implemented, it is important to organise already action days or weeks on the topic of food waste in schools, with the mobilisation of different societal actors (recommendation 21).

RECOMMENDATION 19

Promote and support food sharing applications and platforms connecting consumers with each other

We recommend that the EU promotes and supports existing applications and platforms, such as Olio or FoodSharing.de. The tools to be promoted need to meet some basic criteria and need to be assessed accordingly: user-friendliness, richness of the database, independence, adaptability to local contexts, and the real impact on curbing food waste. The EU, national and regional authorities need to be proactive in their promotion of most-promising existing tools and support, notably, but not only financially, their development and maintenance through their different research, action, and funding programmes. Public fundings should encourage qualitative and neutral information, free of advertisements.

RECOMMENDATION 20

Save food, save money: A European campaign against food waste in cooperation with food retailers on four weekends a year

We recommend that the EU coordinates a campaign focusing on shops selling food (food retailers, supermarkets, hypermarkets, smaller shops) to be deployed in the Member States. This campaign would focus on 4 weekends each year. It would focus on the topic "save food, save money". It would be up to the different Member States to decide which weekends to pick. The choice of date should be based on the objective to raise awareness on food buying habits (for example around national or cultural celebrations) and seasonality (for example around the crop time).

The campaign would be an initiative from the European Union, which would develop a uniform visual design (same logo, colour code, etc.) for all member states. The campaign would then be implemented at the national level and adapted based on the specificities of each country, their annual calendar, food habits, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 21

“Stop food waste”: A week of food waste awareness at school

We recommend organizing a “thematic week” in schools on food waste to raise awareness on the topic among young children and teenagers. The week would adopt a form and content depending on the age of the pupils. In primary school and for younger children, the week should focus on raising awareness through games.

The European Commission would create and distribute a toolkit for schools and teachers in all the EU languages on how to raise awareness on food waste at schools and how to discuss and organize activities on this topic in relation with their own teaching subjects. The toolkit would include guidelines with proposed activities to not overburden teachers and should be easily accessible online. Younger pupils would be rewarded by receiving a certificate (with EU Logo). National states would implement the week depending on the functioning of their respective education system and of their academic calendar. Schools would be free to decide what activities they want to organize during the week, with the help of the toolkit made available for teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 22

To provide consumers keys to be aware and independent on their impact on food waste and to understand how to process, preserve and reuse a product before and after the date¹ of the product has passed

We recommend the deployment of information tools to enlighten and (re)equip consumers in their ability to judge whether the product is truly expired. To make consumers aware of the use of their food products, we are in favour of better identification of the labelling of the date: same place for each product and larger font size. Furthermore, we want to affix a QR code directly on the product label (the possibility of also using the barcode).

What is the purpose of this? To transmit information on the best ways to preserve it, to recognize (by the taste and the smell) if it is still consumable, and to transmit culinary tips to transform the product (example of adapted recipes). The producers are for us the best placed to formalize the information available via the QR code. Concerning unlabelled products such as fruits and vegetables, the QR code should be put where the products are sold to avoid unnecessary packaging. For this source of information to be accessible to everyone, we are not betting essentially on digital technology. We also wish that paper communication tools (guide available in supermarkets for example) be made available.

RECOMMENDATION 23

The implementation of standardized practices at the retail level when promotion to consumers products close to the expiration date

We recommend that the purchase of products close to their expiration date be revalued by asking businesses to adopt a strategy for managing and valuing these products for the consumers. Indeed, it is a question of improving the perception by households of these products so that they are not intended for only one part of the population. This strategy is divided into several parts: - a regulatory implementation part at the European level by creating a section dedicated to these products. Easily accessible and identifiable upon entering the store to promote better consumption practices by all users, regardless of income; - The development of a communication policy highlighting "common

¹ “use by” date is a safety date after which a product should not be consumed; “best before” indicates the date until which a product keeps its optimal quality.

sense" and the attractiveness of the products, as well as the responsible purchasing approach. Promotional overconsumption aspects should not be on the front communication line. - Encourage retailers to adapt their policy of putting new products close to their expiration date on the shelves at peak times (adapted to the practices of consumers in different European countries).