



EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste

Activity report - first mandate (2016-2021)

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Health and Food Safety Directorate-General

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Stella Kyriakides

European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

The EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste has brought everyone together: public authorities, food business operators, research institutes and universities, and non-governmental organisations. It has built momentum for change.

The Platform's recommendations reflect this wealth of contributions. They offer valuable guidance for regulators and the general public, on what each and every one can and should do to prevent food losses and food waste.

The Platform's know-how has helped pinpoint EU priorities, reflected in the Platform's first sub-groups: on food donation, food waste measurement and date marking.

With the help of the Platform, the European Commission has developed EU guidelines to facilitate food donation and food use as animal feed – while always ensuring food safety. Platform members have also contributed to our common food waste measurement and its consistent monitoring at all levels – from farm to fork, across the EU. And, thanks to members' commitment to lasting change, the Platform has defined a clear roadmap, showing the way forward and inspiring others to take concrete steps to remove food waste from our food systems.

Let us build on this work and boost the EU's contribution to global efforts to establish sustainable food systems and ensure a liveable, healthy planet in the future.

There is no time to waste.

The EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste: a network of networks



The Platform aims to accelerate the EU's progress towards Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3 and maximise the contribution of all actors.

The Platform brings together public entities and actors in the food value chain including consumer and other non-governmental organisations. It aims to support all actors in: defining measures needed to prevent food waste; sharing best practice; and evaluating progress made over time.

The Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3 aims to halve per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030, and reduce food losses along the food production and supply chains'

Membership:



3

EU institutions (European Commission, European Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee)



27

Member States



3

international organisations (Food and Agriculture Organisation, UN Environment Programme, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)



37

private sector organisations (farmers, food industry, food banks, consumer- and other NGOs)



1

observer: Norway



22

sub-group meetings and webinars



4

sub-groups (food donation, food waste measurement, action & implementation, date marking)



12

plenary meetings



1

key deliverable to champion change across the EU: Recommendations for action in food waste prevention



1800+

subscribers to the Platform's newsletter

EU actions to reduce food losses and food waste



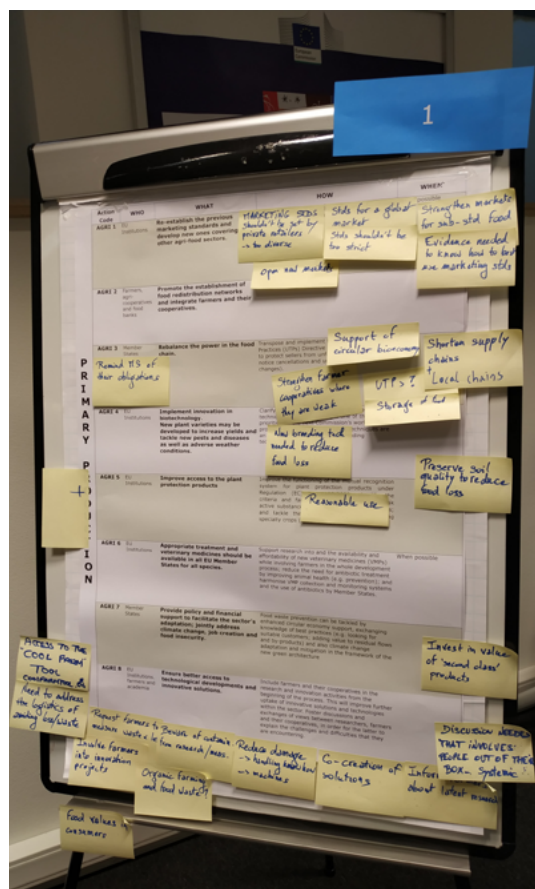
1- Adopted in 2017, the EU food donation guidelines do not reflect the latest developments and amendments made to EU food hygiene rules in order to facilitate safe food redistribution. These amendments concern, in particular, addressing how the "use by" and "best before" dates shall be applied in the context of food redistribution while not jeopardising food safety and allowing, under certain conditions, freezing of meat at retail.

The Platform has supported the Commission in implementing the actions foreseen under the EU action plan for the Circular Economy (2015) to reduce food waste:

- development of a common methodology and indicators to measure food waste;
- clarify relevant EU legislation related to waste, food and feed in order to facilitate food donation and utilisation of former foodstuffs as animal feed
- explore options for more effective use and understanding of date marking on food.

The Platform has also produced its own deliverables:

- As part of its contribution to the Commission's pilot project to map and analyse existing regulatory and policy measures impacting **food redistribution** from EU Member States (2018-2020), it adopted a document illustrating how Member States implement EU rules to facilitate food donation in practice.
- It has developed **key recommendations for action in food waste prevention at each stage of the food supply chain** (December 2019). This reference document can support all actors in identifying and implementing appropriate actions to take at national, regional and local levels.
- To support effective action on-the-ground, the Platform has also helped the Commission in developing a common evaluation framework for food waste prevention actions and a calculator to quantify the environmental and economic impacts of food waste prevention actions (2019).



Photos from the workshop to define the key recommendations for action (September 2019)



Key recommendations for action in food waste prevention

The Platform adopted key recommendations for action in food waste prevention to further mobilise Member States, food businesses and civil society and help scale-up action across the EU.

The Platform recommendations address action required by public and private players at each stage of the food supply chain (including food redistribution). They promote the integrated, holistic approach needed to tackle food waste without compromising food safety. The recommendations also include a set of horizontal or 'cross-cutting' recommendations, which are common across the food value chain, often involve multiple actors and are needed to achieve the global food loss and waste targets (Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3).

Recommendations for Action in Food Waste Prevention

Developed by the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste

12 December 2019



Reviews from Platform members²:

'The Platform's key recommendations provide a very useful international reference framework from which policy makers and practitioners at the local, regional and national level can reference when planning on the ground food waste prevention actions.'

'The recommendations have been an important input for our food waste prevention plan. Also the recommendations serve as a basis for cross-cutting discussions.'

'The Platform's key recommendations provide a very useful international reference framework from which policy makers and practitioners at the local, regional and national level can reference when planning on the ground food waste prevention actions.'

²- Sourced from Platform members' anonymous replies to a survey about the role of the key recommendations for action and the degree to which they have been carried out (May 2021)

Cross-cutting recommendations for action: where do we stand?

The majority of Member States have developed or are in the process of developing **national plans or strategies for food loss and waste reduction**. Reflecting the systemic approach required, these are often integrated in broader initiatives addressing, for instance, circular economy or sustainable food systems.

National action plans may include both regulatory and non-regulatory measures, and some also define reduction **targets** for food waste reduction, to be achieved in cooperation with food supply chain actors.

Many Member States' strategies and action plans apply the **food use hierarchy**, prioritising food waste prevention and redistribution of surplus food for human consumption over recycling or energy recovery activities. In this context, some have introduced **regulatory measures** to facilitate food donation and prohibit destruction of edible food.

Most public authorities have put in place **structured processes** to consult and engage actors in the food value chain and other stakeholders (through platforms, voluntary agreements established as part of public-private partnerships in food waste prevention, coordination tables etc.) as well as to help spread knowledge, find solutions and join up efforts in food waste prevention.

Member States integrate food loss and waste prevention in **other policy areas** than waste, such as agriculture, nutrition, food information to consumers, bioeconomy, unfair trading practices etc. However linking food waste reduction to **climate action** is a big area of opportunity which should be further explored.

Most national authorities **monitor food waste** levels, however few seek to quantify food losses in primary production. Food businesses have developed toolboxes for food waste measurement and diagnosis, and some monitor food waste within their operations. Nonetheless, the quality of data varies by country and stage of the food supply chain. The first EU-wide data collection carried out by Member States according to the common EU food waste measurement methodology will improve the availability and consistency of food waste data at national level. National authorities are expected to report on the results of their monitoring by mid-2022.

Raising consumer awareness about the issue of food waste is carried out by all Platform members through a variety of tools such as campaigns, events, or in-store actions. Topics include communications on the difference between “use by” and “best before” dates, good food management practices, the value of food and its impacts on the environment etc. Platform members recognise the key role of education in preventing food waste and many strive to integrate this theme in school programmes as well as professional trainings (for employees, food business operators etc.).

Efforts to reduce food waste generation in the supply chain linked to **date marking** include: consumer information and awareness campaigns; actions by public authorities to promote more consistent use of date marking by food business operators; legal measures to facilitate placing on the market of food past the ‘best before’ dates whilst ensuring food safety; additional wording on product packaging to clarify the meaning of date marking etc.

As recommended in the revised Waste Framework Directive (EU) 2018/851, public authorities use **fiscal instruments** to provide incentives for food waste prevention, in line with the waste hierarchy. These often relate to food redistribution (e.g. corporate tax credits and deductions and reduced VAT for food that is donated) or waste management. **Public procurement** rules and guidelines promote food waste reduction by integrating food waste criteria and/or obligations for catering companies to implement food waste prevention measures.

Several Member States offer **financial support** to help players take food waste prevention and reduction actions in their operations. Such support can be delivered, for instance, through programmes managed by local or regional authorities, targeting financial support for SMEs, food services etc. Two countries are considering setting up national food waste prevention funds. EU financial instruments can also contribute to this objective, as some Member States have included food waste prevention measures in their national Common Agricultural Policy strategic plans or support food donation through the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. **Other support** provided by public authorities includes the development of sectoral guidance, trainings, dedicated fora to support best practice sharing etc.

Research and innovation plays an important role in developing adapted solutions to address specific challenges across the food supply chain. Platform members provide funding for innovative projects that contribute to circular food systems, such as new market opportunities for 'ugly' produce, packaging technologies that increase shelf life, optimisation of existing operations etc. Limited research has been carried out to improve the **design of food waste prevention interventions**, taking into account their effectiveness and related impacts (social, environmental, economic).



Primary production recommendations for action: where do we stand? *by Copa-Cogeca*

While farmers and agri-cooperatives have always looked at minimising losses and waste, this has become a rising concern for the sector in the last decade, with more and more primary producers taking action against this issue. This has been fuelled by awareness raising work carried out by the Platform and other actors, food loss and waste reduction programmes implemented by national authorities as well as academic research.

In this context, farmers and agri-cooperatives across the EU have engaged in food donation programmes, **food loss and waste diagnosis** projects, plans to minimise food waste during food processing, and have developed many **new outlets for co-products** that were previously disregarded. They have also carried out actions aiming at shortening the food supply chain, which can help avoid food waste, notably as regards issues linked to power imbalances amongst actors in the supply chain, such as last minute order cancellations. Measures against the latter, as well as other unfair trading practices, are covered by an [EU Directive on unfair trading practices](#) in business-to-business relations in the agricultural and food supply chain adopted in April 2019.



Research in feed composition and feed additives have allowed to **improve animal health and welfare** and nutrient assimilation. Thanks to these innovations, we are now able to reduce the quantity of feed required per animal. In addition, the use of new co-products can contribute to reach these objectives. Moreover, where authorised for use in animal feed, pig and poultry processed animal proteins do not only optimise nutrient cycles, but also allow to improve animal health and welfare thanks to their specific nutrient composition.

Some public authorities have facilitated the redistribution of surplus food from primary producers to other stages of the food supply chain by developing guidelines, codes of good practices, digital marketplaces and data sharing platforms etc.

Actions against food losses and waste are conducted in many Member States either by agri-cooperatives, farmers' associations or directly by individual farmers. Contact between these actors has been facilitated by networks and associations established at local, national or EU level. Nevertheless, this multiplicity of independent actors makes it difficult to have an overview of the extent of food losses and waste in primary production and limits the efficiency of knowledge sharing. In the future, it will thus be important to look at ways to systemize, centralise and harmonise the information on food loss and waste prevention initiatives and their impacts.

Other paths to further explore are finding innovative solutions to minimise food losses and waste resulting from new climatic conditions as well as continuing to monitor and mitigate against the potential impacts of environmental and safety requirements on food loss and waste. **Strengthening public investment in research programmes** and enabling effective knowledge sharing between primary producers are also critical for avoiding food loss and waste in primary production.

Manufacturing recommendations for action:

where do we stand?

by FoodDrinkEurope

Embracing its role in the fight against food waste, the European food and drink industry firmly supports the implementation of UN SDG Target 12.3 alongside contributing to the Paris climate agreement objectives.

The implementation of the Platform's recommendations for action at manufacturing stage is ongoing.

Food waste prevention actions are encouraged through accreditation schemes, voluntary commitments (e.g. Champions 12.3 10x20x30 initiative, [EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices](#)), toolboxes for **better planning and forecasting** including digital solutions etc.

Food and drink manufacturers have improved **packaging solutions** in an effort to reduce the weight of materials used, without affecting the shelf life, safety or preservation of foods. Such solutions, for example, aim to extend shelf life, **improve portioning and use of the food by consumers** (through storage, freezing advice etc.). In order to prevent food waste linked to misunderstanding of **date marking**, some manufacturers are actively collaborating with other actors to improve consumer understanding of date labels and to raise awareness of other ways to prevent and reduce food waste.

Where surpluses cannot be avoided, **redistributing food for human consumption** remains a key priority for food and drink manufacturers. Digital tools alongside guidelines have been developed in order to effectively donate food to people in need.

Research and innovation programmes have been taking place **for the valorization and development of new products from co-products**. Such programmes aim at finding circular solutions for food and drink manufacturers, which can be beneficial in particular for start-ups and SMEs.

It is important to assess and identify the sector's future needs and tools in conjunction with policy developments. Considering the above, there is a range of actions that should be taken into account for the successful implementation of the SDG Target 12.3, including:

- The development of guidance for food and drink manufacturers on how to **measure and report on food waste**, especially in view of the adoption of EU-level food waste targets;
- The establishment of EU-wide awareness raising campaigns to trigger consumers participation in food waste prevention and reduction;
- An increased availability of funding for innovation and research to support and promote circularity (especially for SMEs).

Food loss and waste reduction actions should be consistent with other EU food policy initiatives such as those tackling climate change, biodiversity and packaging.



Retail recommendations for action: where do we stand? *by EuroCommerce*

The fight against food waste is one of the key priorities for retailers and wholesalers. Its reduction provides both environmental and social benefits as well as economic advantages. For the retail and wholesale sector, estimates indicate that the total cost of food waste and price discounts amount to close to 2% of the total sales.

Retailers and wholesalers have a pivotal role to play in contributing to the reduction of food waste along the supply chain by cooperating with their suppliers and providing enabling conditions to reduce food waste. Some examples of voluntary commitments taken by retailers can be seen under the EU Code of Conduct for Responsible Business and Marketing Practices or in the form of collective agreements to meet the Sustainable Development Goals to halve food waste by 2030 via the [Consumer Goods Forum](#) or the [Efficient Consumer Response](#). Moreover, [companies](#) set up individual, measurable targets focusing on:

- Managing waste in the shop by **repurposing food** and suggesting promotion for products close to their expiry date. Some examples are partnerships with start-ups to sell fresh food as discounted prices, providing alternatives for foods that may not meet marketing requirements (soups etc.). Retailers have also engaged with start-ups and charities to optimize food donations for people in need.
- **Working with consumers** is essential as households generate over half of the total food waste generated in the EU. Actions taken by retailers include providing recipes with leftovers, raising awareness **on date marking**, removing date marking for some perishable goods where this is allowed by legislation.
- **Coordinating food waste prevention efforts among supply chains** by developing volume demand forecasting, by linking primary food production to other markets to avoid waste in case of food surplus.



Hospitality/food service recommendations for action: where do we stand?

by HOTREC

The COVID-19 pandemic created disruptions in food supply chains, with severe impacts on the hospitality and food services, as most establishments were closed or operated at reduced capacity for several months between March 2019 and June 2021. Despite the challenging circumstances, hospitality and food services operators have been implementing, together with their national authorities and partners, national plans or strategies to prevent and reduce food loss and waste, in line with SDG target 12.3.

Overall, the implementation of the recommendations for action for the hospitality and food services is **on-going** in most of the Member States.

In order to support small businesses to take action against food waste, several measures have been taken by public authorities and the private sector, such as the development of toolboxes for diagnosis of food waste levels in public catering services, consultancy services for SMEs (e.g. kitchen processes, menu planning etc.), sectorial guidance for food businesses and staff training materials etc. Nevertheless, further financial support is needed to help the sector cope with the targets and food waste reduction aspiration. National funds are being deployed in some countries, but more action is needed. Easy access and information on how businesses can access those funds should be made available to SMEs.

It is important to help businesses see the economic value of preventing food waste, through case studies, best practice sharing or other awareness raising activities. Trade associations are passing this message to food businesses, together with researchers, public authorities and the media. Voluntary commitments and public-private partnerships are a great tool to mobilise further action in the sector.

Monitoring food waste levels is a real challenge for micro-enterprises and SMEs (which represent the majority of food businesses in this sector) and successful measurements are usually carried out with support from other actors.

Some public authorities have created label schemes or have defined criteria for food businesses, in order to increase visibility for their efforts to become sustainable. Some of these criteria also target food waste prevention actions, such as regular monitoring of food waste levels, promotion of 'doggy bags or boxes', among others.



Awareness raising activities are needed, starting at an early age. **Consumer awareness actions** are carried out either as part of wider national campaigns or on site through communication materials that **promote conscious behaviour** in restaurants, canteens and other food services.

Food donation is a popular action in the hospitality and food services sector, with digital solutions being implemented more widely to sell surplus food at the end of the day or to connect businesses with charitable organisations. Nonetheless, **redistributing small amounts** of food that are often perishable remains a challenge from a food safety point of view and more technological solutions are needed to better connect offer and demand.

Finally, businesses note that there should be a distinction between “avoidable” waste (what is left over by guests) and “unavoidable” waste (what is inevitably produced during cooking). Reduction of unavoidable waste is more limited. For example, fruit and vegetable peels, seeds or animal bones can sometimes not be avoided during meal preparation.

Consumers' recommendations for action: where do we stand? *by Zero Waste Scotland*

Many countries are now looking beyond communication and awareness raising alone towards promoting **individual and community behaviour change** towards positive food waste behaviours. Providing skills and knowledge through targeted campaigns, interventions and training is increasingly commonplace. Temporary behaviour change reported in some countries during the Covid-19 pandemic suggests that consumers can change behaviour and reduce waste, but these positive behaviours may be difficult to maintain once returning to normal routines.

Citizen surveys and self-reporting of food waste are regularly used to determine consumer attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge. However, increasingly a **wider range of methods for understanding behaviour change and designing effective solutions** are being developed or in action where behavioural science insights and studies are being used to design more effective interventions; for example, looking at acceptance of reduced choice in different food environments. The platform's recommendation to promote **active collaboration between researchers and practitioners** has resulted in the establishment of the [European Consumer Food Waste Forum](#).

Although some Member States and organisations have developed segmentation models to target different audiences more effectively, the recommendation to **increase use and development of audience segmentation** does not yet appear widespread. Where in place, they are being used to inform development of consumer facing engagement, campaigns and targeted behaviour change interventions. It is suggested that further research and development is required, particularly when looking to identifying hard to reach or high impact audiences. There are also potential opportunities to align with wider health, food system sustainability and social justice activities where positive food waste behaviours have a range of wider economic and societal co-benefits.



Food donation recommendations for action: **where do we stand?** *by the European Food Banks Federation*

Food redistribution to people in need is the best destination when surplus food occurs, because it ensures the highest value use of edible food resources. This activity has proven to be essential in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring food supply and food security in the EU also for the most vulnerable groups.

In line with the EU guidelines on food donation, most Member States **are in the process of developing national guidelines and/or legislation** to further facilitate food donation. Guidelines may clarify traceability and food safety issues, advise on how to prolong shelf life for fresh foods or how to handle foods past their best before dates. In Member States where legislation is already in place, the adoption of EU guidelines and recommendations for action did not have a strong impact.

Many Member States are in the process of promoting the **use of surplus food for food donation**. National measures can include zero or reduced VAT on donated surplus food, legal obligations to establish partnerships with redistribution organisations for retailers and other food business operators, voluntary commitments between actors in the food supply chain to name a few. Nonetheless, a renewed effort from the Platform to monitor the implementation of the EU guidelines and recommendations for action at national level could help raise awareness among all actors of the food supply chain.

Some Member States are also financing **projects to innovate and modernize food donation** supporting food redistribution organisations, strengthening operational capacity to allow the quick movement of surplus food etc. In this context, it is pivotal **to favour the establishment of stable partnerships** to enhance the different skills and competences, especially of food redistribution organisations.

As part of the EU's efforts to reduce food waste, it is important to ensure that more surplus food is recovered from the food supply chain and redistributed to those in need. Monitoring the uptake, at national level, of the principles laid down in the EU guidelines on food donation as well as the Platform's recommendations for action can help inform the EU's progress in this field.



Sharing best practice in food waste prevention

The Covid-19 health crisis has placed governments, businesses, people and the economy under severe pressure. The food supply chain was also impacted and strengthened cooperation between both public and private actors was needed to prevent and mitigate against risks related to food waste as well as ensure safe redistribution of surplus food to those in need.

In the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Platform launched its monthly newsletter. First published in March 2020, the newsletter aimed to help Platform members stay connected, inform all interested stakeholders about Platform members' activities and inspire further action to prevent food loss and waste in the context of this unprecedented crisis.

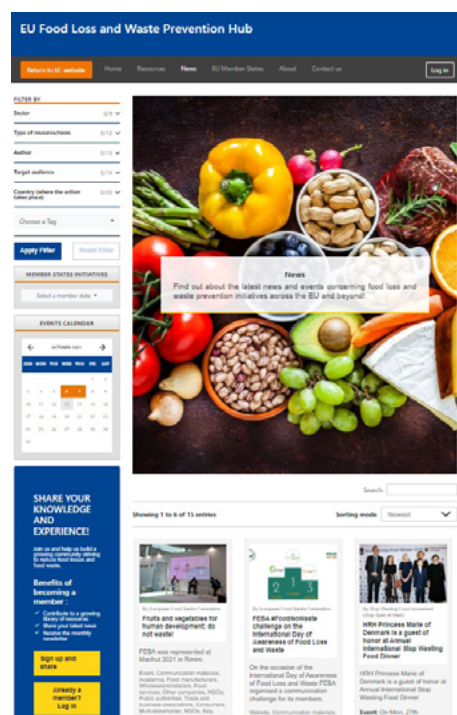
EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste

Newsletter June 2021



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The June 2021 edition of the newsletter includes information on the recently adopted Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction developed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, new cross-sector initiatives against food waste, behavioural insights from food waste initiatives, as well as new food waste data, and many more. You will also find information on the Commission's public call for expression of interest for researchers and practitioners working on practical solutions to reduce consumer food waste, to join the European Consumer Food Waste Forum. We wish you a pleasant reading and a wonderful summer break!



On 29 September 2021, the European Commission launched the **EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub**³ on the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste.

The Hub is a “one-stop-shop” for stakeholders who take action to fight food losses and food waste. It aims to foster the exchange of knowledge and experience and to help disseminate the different initiatives carried out to tackle food losses and food waste in order to inspire and drive further action on-the-ground, across the EU and beyond. Any stakeholder active in the area of food loss and waste prevention in Europe can become a member and share resources and news.

3- In order to avoid duplication with the Hub, the Platform newsletter was discontinued in July 2021 after 16 issues. All the newsletter issues are available in the Resources library of the Commission's Food waste website: https://food.ec.europa.eu/safety/food-waste/resources-library_en

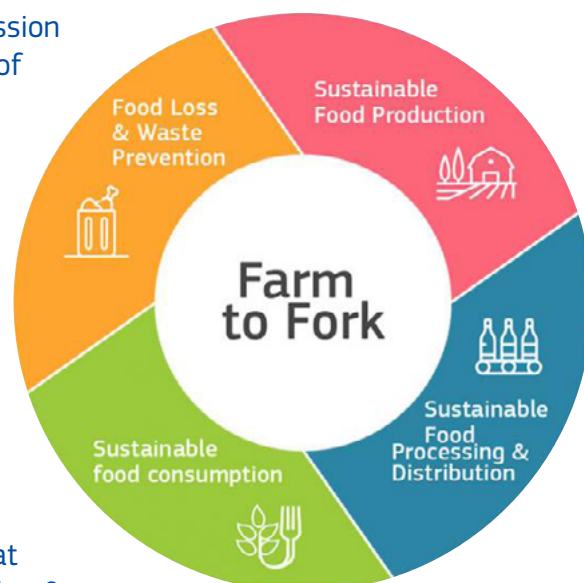
Next steps

As called for by the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission is pursuing efforts to reduce food loss and waste as part of an integrated food systems approach. It will propose, by end 2023, legally binding targets to reduce food waste across the EU as well as a revision of EU date marking rules by end 2022. Food losses at the production stage will also be investigated in view of exploring ways of preventing them.

According to the assessment of progress made in implementing the Council conclusions on food losses and food waste, under the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union⁴, Member States have benefited from the exchange of information and experience made possible by the Platform, which have often inspired further action at national level. The Farm to Fork Strategy also points to the role of the EU Platform and its key recommendations for action in helping to show the way forward for all actors.

In order to support actions laid down under the Farm to Fork Strategy and help to scale-up action across the EU - mobilising Member States, food businesses and civil society to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3 - the Commission will renew the Platform's mandate for another 5-year term (2022-2026).

The new Platform will continue to support EU actions on food losses and food waste, contributing to the preparation of the legislative proposals foreseen in the Farm to Fork Strategy. The Platform will be closely involved in research on consumer food waste and consumer understanding of date marking, two important on-going areas of work for the Commission. Last but not least, The Platform will carry on its role to facilitate the sharing of evidence-based best practices to inspire further action by all actors of the food supply chain.



4- Food losses and food waste: assessment of progress made in implementing the Council conclusions adopted on 28 June 2016, November 2020. https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/56da405c-d84b-4049-b134-1ac425c554f9_en

