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Subject: Food losses and food waste
- Council conclusions (28 June 2016)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on Food losses and food waste, adopted by the Council at its 3479th meeting held on 28 June 2016.

Council conclusions**Food losses and food waste**

The Council of the European Union:

1. EXPRESSES ITS CONCERNS about a significant amount of food being produced but not eaten: the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that nearly a third (1.3 billion tonnes a year) of all the food intended for human consumption is lost or wasted between the farm and the fork.¹ This high level of inefficiency has major economic, social, and environmental impacts, as highlighted also in the recent United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) International Resource Panel study ‘Food Systems and Natural Resources’.²

Food losses and waste cost the global economy around USD 990 billion annually. Food losses and waste exacerbate food insecurity and malnutrition. Moreover, the food that is ultimately lost or wasted consumes about a quarter of all the water used for agriculture purposes, requires a cropland area the size of China, is responsible for an estimated 8 % of global greenhouse gas emissions³, and also contributes to loss of biodiversity.

¹ As measured by weight. FAO, 2011. Global food losses and food waste – extent, causes and prevention. Rome: UN FAO.

² <http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/KnowledgeResources/AssessmentAreasReports/Food/tabid/133335/Default.aspx>

³ FAO, 2015. Food wastage footprint and climate change. Rome: UN FAO. Kummu, M., H. de Moel, M. Porkka, S. Siebert, O. Varis, and P.J. Ward, 2012. FAO Lost food, wasted resources: Global food supply chain losses and their impacts on freshwater, cropland, and fertiliser use. *Science of the Total Environment* 438: 477-489. FAO, 2013. Food wastage footprint: impacts on natural resources. Rome: UN FAO.

2. RECALLS that the Zero Hunger Challenge, launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro, integrates a zero-food-loss-and-waste challenge along with a hundred-percent-sustainable-food-systems challenge.
3. HIGHLIGHTS the need to increase the availability of food, as required to meet future global demand given that the global population is estimated to grow to 9 billion people by the year 2050.⁴
4. EXPRESSES its concerns that hunger is still one of the most urgent development challenges, yet the world is producing more than enough food. Even if just a quarter of the food currently lost or wasted globally could be saved, it would be enough to feed 870 million hungry people in the world.⁵
5. RECALLS:
 - the debate in the AGRIFISH Council of July 2013 and May 2014⁶ on food losses and waste,
 - the 41st meeting of the FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on 17 October 2014⁷,
 - the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) on 19 November 2014,
 - the different recommendations on sustainable consumption patterns like, amongst others, the European diets such as the Mediterranean food consumption patterns (White paper by the FAO/CIHEAM⁸) and the Nordic diet⁹,

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap106e/ap106e.pdf>

⁵ SAVE FOOD: Global initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction, Key Findings, <http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/9755/14>

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml099e.pdf>

⁸ FAO/CIHEAM 2015, Mediterranean food consumption patterns, <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/9104aa92-4561-4375-abb2-2651260fdaca/>

⁹ <https://www.norden.org/en/theme/nordic-nutrition-recommendation/nordic-nutrition-recommendations-2012>

- the registration in December 2013 of the ‘Mediterranean Diet’ on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,
 - the G20 agriculture ministers meeting of 7-8 May 2015 in which ministers agreed actions which were endorsed by the G20 leaders in their Action Plan on Food Security/Sustainable Food Systems¹⁰,
 - the outcomes of the international conference *No More Food To Waste* in The Hague, the Netherlands on 16-19 June 2015¹¹,
 - the Expo Milan, Italy, 2015 which, through several events, has contributed to raising awareness on food losses and waste prevention, and
 - the resolution of the United Nations Environment Assembly on prevention, reduction and reuse of food waste.¹²
6. NOTES the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA) in September 2015 as part of its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG target 12.3, which states: ‘By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses’, and RECOGNISES the integrated nature of the SDGs and interlinkages between the different SDGs and targets.
7. NOTES the ‘Champions 12.3’ coalition, which arose from the conference *No More Food To Waste* (paragraph 5) and which aims to mobilise action to reduce food loss and waste globally and motivate others to meet SDG 12.3.¹³

¹⁰ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/newsroom/docs/G20%20Agriculture%20Ministers%20Final%20Communique.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.nomorefoodtowaste.nl/documents/reports/2015/06/19/chair-summary-report>

¹² UNEP/EA.2/L.10 Rev 1, 27 May 2016, Nairobi

¹³ <http://champions123.org/>

8. NOTES that according to most recent estimates by FUSIONS, the EU produces around 88 million tonnes of food losses and waste per year, amounting to an estimated EUR 143 billion, most of which is concentrated in the area of food distribution and the consumption side.¹⁴ According to this study, 70 % of the EU's food waste, as defined by FUSIONS, arises in the household, food service and retail sector, while 30 % arises in the production and processing sector.
9. CONFIRMS that the reduction of food losses and waste delivers a threefold benefit. It alleviates pressure on climate, water and land; it has a positive economic impact on farmers, companies and households; and it means that more people can be fed with the food currently produced.
10. NOTES that the EU has the ability to improve the resource efficiency of its food production chain, NOTES that in line with the 'waste hierarchy', bio refining could be among the economically and environmentally beneficial ways of handling food losses and waste when food resources are no longer suited for people or animals, and also NOTES that various Member States have been successful in reducing food losses and waste across all segments of the food supply chain, given that such losses and waste often occur as a result of complex interactions therein. Action to mitigate food losses and waste in one segment is likely, although not always, to have an impact in other segments downstream and upstream. A food supply chain approach in policymaking makes the different segments interact with each other and develop food-chain-wide actions and collaboration.
11. ACKNOWLEDGES, therefore, that:
 - the reduction of food losses and waste in the EU contributes towards resource efficiency and sustainability and hence contributes to reaching the SDGs, particularly SDG 15,
 - reducing food losses and waste is a global challenge and requires global, regional and local action,

¹⁴ www.eu-fusions.org, 2016 'Estimates of European food waste levels'

- sustainable development, sustainable agriculture and food security are current priorities in EU development policy and the Agenda for Change places clear emphasis on sustainable agriculture and food security as engines of growth¹⁵, and
 - food losses and waste interact with various policies at EU and Member-State level. To tackle a cross-cutting issue there is a need to establish a coordinated policy response that takes into account policies regarding waste, food safety and food information, but also aspects of economic, research and innovation, environment, agriculture, education and social policy.
12. CONFIRMS that the EU, also as the world's largest importer and exporter of food products, should prioritise food security and sustainable, resilient and efficient agriculture within EU development policy, to allow the EU to contribute towards objectives on global food security (SDG 1 and 2) and sustainable use of natural resources (SDG 15); NOTES also that the implementation of the G20 Action Plan on Food Security/Sustainable Food Systems will contribute to SDG 2. ACKNOWLEDGES that in order to strengthen food security, continuing to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of food production systems (crop yields, animal production, fisheries and aquaculture) aiming to prevent food losses in agriculture, in particular at global level, could be of future interest.
13. WELCOMES, therefore, the European Commission Communication of December 2015 entitled *Closing the loop – An EU action plan for the Circular Economy*¹⁶, and the actions announced: to reduce food loss and waste generation, including the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform dedicated to food waste prevention; to develop a common EU methodology to measure food waste in the entire food value chain; to clarify EU legislation on waste, food and feed in order to facilitate food donation and ensure the safe use of former foodstuffs and by-products in feed production; and to explore options to improve the understanding and use of date marking by all actors, including consumers.

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/european-development-policy/agenda-change_en

¹⁶ 14972/15 + ADD 1

14. NOTES the Commission legislative proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste, currently under discussion, which seeks to reinforce food waste prevention within EU waste policy and calls for food waste generation to be reduced at each stage in the food value chain, monitoring food waste levels and reporting back on progress made.
15. AGREES with the Commission that greater insight is needed into the scale and causes of the problem of food losses and waste, and that measurement thereof is a prerequisite for reducing food losses and waste and improving policy on food losses and waste with a view to achieving SDG 12.3.
16. NOTES the outcomes of the FUSIONS project (Food Use for Social Innovation by Optimising Waste Prevention Strategies), which sought to achieve a more resource-efficient Europe by significantly reducing food waste across the entire supply chain, from field to fork.¹⁷ RECOGNISES in this respect that it is important to have clear definitions of food loss and waste in the different streams in the food supply chain.
17. NOTES the Council conclusions of 20 June 2016 on *Closing the loop – An EU action plan for the Circular Economy*.¹⁸

18. CALLS UPON THE MEMBER STATES TO:

- 18.1. Confirm their commitment to the achievement of SDG 12.3, agreed by all global actors within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the UNGA, while recognising the integrated nature of the SDGs.

¹⁷ www.eu-fusions.org

¹⁸ 10518/16

- 18.2. Welcome the outcomes of the FUSIONS project, e.g. developing a common and practical EU monitoring protocol for measuring food loss and waste reduction (paragraph 16), and the methodologies developed by Member States to measure food losses and waste, in order to use these experiences as a scientific basis and starting point for further discussions on harmonisation of measuring food loss and waste reduction.
- 18.3. Actively contribute to the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste¹⁹, which brings together Member States and all actors in the food chain, including non-governmental organisations, and will be established as part of the EU action plan to promote the circular economy, in order to monitor progress towards SDG 12.3 by helping to define measures needed to prevent food waste in the EU, reporting about the situation at national level and sharing best practices informed by evidence on reduction of food losses and waste.
- 18.4. Encourage implementation of the waste management hierarchy and the food use hierarchy, by prioritising prevention of food losses and waste, reuse of safe and nutritious food suitable for human consumption that might otherwise be wasted, recovery of food resources for animal feed, where it is safe to do so, and diversion of unavoidable food losses and waste from disposal to, in a priority order, recycling and other forms of recovery, including through use in bio-based materials, aerobic digestion and energy recovery.
- 18.5. Support education and awareness-raising among the population on sustainable food production processes, the resources required, consumption and food losses and waste.

¹⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste/eu_actions/eu-platform/index_en.htm

- 18.6. Aim to reduce food losses and waste and valorise food resources from primary production through to consumption, in line with the waste management hierarchy and the food use hierarchy, making use of the tools available at EU level, including those under the Common Agricultural Policy, research and innovation policy, and the European Innovation Partnership (EIP).
- 18.7. Put the issue of food loss and waste reduction on the agenda of the various actors of the food value chain, and promote inter-sectorial cooperation to prevent food losses and waste from farm to fork. Getting better data on food losses and waste, including the agricultural sector, and detecting possible problems and opportunities, albeit without putting extra administrative burden on farmers, is an important first step to develop targeted action.
- 18.8. Take into account food losses and waste issues in discussions and initiatives on using raw materials more sustainably.

19. CALLS UPON THE COMMISSION TO:

- 19.1. Use the lessons learned and deliverables from the FUSIONS project (paragraph 16), considering other research projects (e.g. Eurostat food waste plug-in) and experiences with methodologies by Member States as a scientific basis and starting point to design a common and practical EU protocol that defines food waste and how to quantify it at each stage in the food supply chain for waste reduction purposes, as set out in the EU action plan for the Circular Economy, and taking into consideration the Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard (June 2016)²⁰, the experience of actors in food waste quantification, and the necessity to minimise the administrative burden for Member States.

²⁰ <http://flwprotocol.org/>

19.2. Include the following objectives in the future examination of EU policies and legislation, such as the fitness check on the General Food Law within the framework of the Better Regulation Initiative²¹:

- better integrate the prevention of food losses and waste throughout the value chain;
- better valorise biomass, when food is no longer fit for use in the food and feed chain;
- minimise the potential negative impact on food losses and waste of existing policies and regulations, without prejudice to their original aims.

19.3. Promote more consistent understanding and usage of date marking, such as dates on eggs and other products, amongst consumers, food business operators, in particular food manufacturers and retailers, and control authorities, in order to prevent food losses and waste.

Should any proposals for changes be made to EU rules on food information for consumers, the Council calls on the Commission to take into account the Council's position that these proposals should make a contribution to food waste prevention and not undermine either food safety or consumer information.

²¹ 9079/15

- 19.4. Foster discussions involving all Member States to explore the ways and means to strengthen management of the food supply chain and foster cooperation between actors in order to minimise the amount of food that is unsold by food manufacturers, retailers and caterers, in cooperation with other actors in the food supply chain, including food banks and other charitable organisations, for example by ensuring that retailers refrain from purposely making unsold food products unfit for human consumption and by encouraging the donation of unsold food products to charities, in particular by means of agreements between retailers and charities. Additionally, consider proposals regarding the lifting of legal and practical barriers leading to food losses and waste, in particular to facilitate food donation to food banks and other (social) initiatives.
- 19.5. Use the stakeholders platform as a forum for exchanging views on developing consumer information in the Member States in order to meet the huge challenge of influencing consumer behaviour.
- 19.6. Develop guidelines on the current legislation to clarify EU legislation relating to waste, food and feed, to facilitate food donation and the use of former foodstuffs and by-products from the food chain in feed production without compromising food and feed safety, taking into account current provisions in Member States that have already proved effective.
- 19.7. Include, in light of point 9 of the Political Guidelines for the European Commission (‘A stronger global actor’), food losses and waste in agendas, action programmes and cooperation programmes on food security, nutrition and development cooperation, to facilitate capacity-building and technical support in less developed countries, and therefore to actively support partnerships that contribute towards SDGs with a view to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda. In light of this, initiate (or reinforce) cooperation between the EU and international organisations (in particular FAO and UNEP) in order to maximise the contributions of all actors towards reaching the SDGs, ensure consistent monitoring and efficient reporting of progress made, and promote the sharing of knowledge and best practices.

20. INTENDS to assess progress made on the implementation of these conclusions periodically, starting in 2018.
