

EUROPEN response to the roadmap consultation on Food waste reduction targets

EUROPEN, the European Organization for Packaging and the Environment, supports the Farm to Fork Strategy's commitment to introduce EU-level binding targets for food waste reduction.

Food waste has significant negative environmental, social, and economic impacts. It represents a missed opportunity to feed the growing world population, a major waste of valuable limited natural resources and a needless source of greenhouse gas emissions that impacts climate change. Wasting food also means wasting resources and efforts put into improving the sustainability of food production.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warns that one third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted. In the European Union, around 88 million tonnes of food waste are generated annually with associated costs of 143 billion euros, according to the most recent estimate¹. Food waste happens along the entire value chain: during production, in retail, at eating establishments and at home.

Packaging has an essential role to play in the prevention of food waste

Packaging has an essential role to play in the prevention of food waste, protecting products and minimising waste at all stages of the value chain. For example:

- Effective packaging systems can enable efficient distribution while making sure the products they protect stay fresh longer and thus extending their shelf life.
- High performance packaging solutions and technologies can preserve food safety by minimising sources of contamination and reduce food waste from spoilage.
- Innovative packaging designs can help consumers buy and use food in portions that match their needs and reduce food waste from leftovers.

Waste prevention is a priority not only for food but all packaged products. By protecting the product, packaging also prevents waste of raw materials and natural resources that went into growing or making goods and the energy used to transport the goods from the producer to the retailer.

In a recent publication, the UN FAO stressed² that "Packaging plays an important role in not only reducing food loss and waste but by extension boosting food security, nutrition and livelihoods too. A circular approach to how we package our food can make a big difference to the food security of our communities and the health of our planet".

The roadmap document does not adequately address the role that packaging plays in preventing food waste and minimising waste at all stages of the value chain. For example, it is disappointing that the only reference to packaging made in the roadmap is to identify it as part of the likely environmental impacts of the initiative, by stating that "better protection of food may be linked with increased amount of packaging". By considering packaging only as a negative trade-off of a food waste prevention policy, the roadmap fails to recognise packaging's role and significant potential to contribute to further tackling the issue of food waste. It also falls short of acknowledging the EU regulatory and policy framework to advance packaging sustainability. It is also worth noting that biodegradable and compostable packaging can play an important role in improving the collection and organic recycling of unavoidable food waste by reducing the contamination of separately collected biowaste.

¹ [FUSIONS 2016](#)

² [Reduce, reuse, recycle: a mantra for food packaging](#)

The Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) is the EU regulatory framework that determines the conditions for placing packaging on the EU market. These conditions include sustainability criteria, which play a key role in enabling the uptake of climate neutral and circular packaging solutions. The Circular Economy Action Plan 2.0 also defines that by 2030, all packaging on the EU market should be reusable or recyclable in an economically viable way. The ongoing review of the PPWD is focused on translating these goals into concrete regulatory measures.

Food wasted at consumption level should be tackled as a priority

The Food Waste Index Report 2021³, developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and partner organisation [WRAP](#), finds that in nearly every country that has measured food waste, most of this waste comes from households, which discard 11% of the total food available at the consumption stage of the supply chain. Food services and retail outlets waste 5% and 2% respectively. On a global per capita-level, 121 kilograms of consumer level food is wasted each year, with 74 kilograms of this happening in households.

EUROPEN recently [partnered](#) with [JA Europe](#), a non-profit organisation dedicated to preparing young people for employment and entrepreneurship, and [EIT Food](#), a European Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC), on the occasion of the World Food Day, which was celebrated on 16 October 2021. The partnership resulted in the organisation of a food hackathon (“Foodathon”), bringing together more than 100 students from secondary schools in Africa and Europe to come up with solutions to a range of important agri-food challenges, one of those being food waste and food loss. During an intensive two-day innovation and creativity hackathon, young people developed business ideas offering solutions for these key agri-food challenges.

Given the importance to improve knowledge and awareness on levels and impacts of food waste as well as the importance to influencing attitudes and behaviours that lead to food waste, EUROPEN believes it is essential to multiply such initiatives to raise consumers/citizens awareness, including from an early age, and recommends that similar actions are considered by Member States in the application of the future EU food waste reduction targets.

About EUROPEN

The European Organization for Packaging and the Environment (EUROPEN), is the industry association representing the packaging industry value chain in Europe. EUROPEN's members are raw material manufacturers, packaging converters, brand owners and national packaging organisations. EUROPEN aims to achieve a fully accessible European market for packaging and packaged products, while protecting the products that consumers need and protecting the environment. At EUROPEN, we believe that packaging enables the transition to a climate neutral, circular and competitive EU economy while ensuring goods are delivered safely to EU citizens and businesses.

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³ [UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2021](#)