



European Economic and Social Committee

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The EESC calls for an end to food waste in the EU

Food waste amounts to 89 million tonnes a year in the EU, while 79 million EU citizens live below the poverty line. In its opinion on *Prevention and reduction of food waste*, adopted on 20 March 2013, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) calls on the European Commission to take steps to counter this dramatic trend aggravated by the economic crisis.

"The situation is unacceptable. Sadly, the current crisis has increased the number of people who depend on social assistance but reduced the number of food banks, even though the need for them has risen sharply. Paradoxically, up to 30% of food gets wasted in EU households, supermarkets, restaurants and along the food supply chain each year. We must take action to stop this", stated Yves Somville (Various interests group, Belgium), rapporteur for the EESC opinion on *Prevention and reduction of food waste*.

The EESC calls for a coordinated strategy at European level, combining EU-wide and national measures, to improve the efficiency of the food supply and consumption chains and to tackle food wastage as a matter of urgency. Preventing and reducing food waste is important not only in the wider context of food security and resource efficiency: it is also a social issue.

The EESC recommends developing platforms for exchanging experience on combating food waste and passing on existing examples of good practices: channelling products from the food retail and catering sectors to food banks, initiatives on taxation, discharge of liability for donors or removal of administrative constraints are a few actions already successfully implemented in some EU countries and regions.

In the EESC's view, the prevention and reduction of food losses and food waste must be given a key place on the political agenda. Combating food waste is already a fully-fledged policy in some Member States and regions. The EESC calls for it to be made an EU-wide policy. Some 79 million EU citizens live below the poverty line and 16 million depend on food aid, while 30% of food (89 million tonnes per year) gets wasted.

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