

Let's reduce consumer food waste! Solutions from the European Consumer Food Waste Forum

5 June 2024, Brussels

Summary report



One day event in
Brussels



Five expert
parallel sessions



150 in-person
participants



300 web-stream
followers



30 food waste
prevention
experts

Participants were welcomed by the moderator Ms Tamsin Rose, who introduced the agenda of the event and explained the background of the [European Consumer Food Waste Forum project](#).

High-level opening remarks



High level panel. From left: Claire Bury, SANTE; Tamsin Rose, moderator; and Salla Saastamoinen, JRC.

The event started with a recorded speech by Professor Inese Vaidere. Professor Vaidere emphasised the issue of food waste, noting that over 130 kilograms of food per person ends up in the bin every year in Europe, with more than half of this amount being generated by consumers. Professor Vaidere highlighted the establishment of European Consumer Food Waste Forum project, which was proposed by the European Parliament to find solutions to consumer food waste. In July 2023 the Forum presented its findings in an event held at the European Parliament.

Next, the moderator invited Ms Claire Bury, Deputy Director General for Food Sustainability at the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety and Ms Salla Saastamoinen, Deputy Director General for the Joint Research Centre to discuss on stage. The discussion focused on the future of the food waste portfolio as part of the European Commission's upcoming priorities and the collaboration between the two institutions. Ms Claire Bury elaborated on the Commission's efforts to reduce food waste and highlighted the role of cities in fostering consumer behaviour change for sustainable food systems. Ms Salla Saastamoinen explained how the Joint Research Centre supports EU policymaking for food waste prevention through stakeholder engagement, research and knowledge, assisting policymakers in designing and evaluating effective policies.

In an "icebreaker" exercise, participants both in the room and online, were asked to reflect on the first word that comes to mind when they think of food waste. These responses were collected in real-time through Slido, an interactive polling platform generating a word cloud, visually representing the collective thoughts of the participants. The results of the exercise indicated strong negative

associations with the term “food waste.” This cloud served as hook in several sessions and was recurrently mentioned during the event.

In one word, what comes to mind when you think of 'food waste' ?

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Word cloud visually representing the collective thoughts of the participants.

Keynote speech: Tackling household food waste with behavioural science

Dr. Sophie Attwood, a senior researcher at the World Resources Institute, outlined the direction for further action to reduce consumer food waste by leveraging behavioural science. She highlighted that preventing food waste is not a simple behaviour to change, as it occurs at different stages, from pre-acquisition, acquisition, consumption, to disposal. Dr. Attwood proposed finding an alternative, more positive terminology for ‘food waste’, to mark the difference between real waste and food that is still edible, as this also differs in different languages. Additionally, she stressed that actions should go beyond information and awareness-raising campaigns, which have been shown to have little impact on consumer food waste behaviours, advocating for the use of household tools and guidance on how to reduce food at home.



Call for reframing communications on “food waste” to highlight that a significant portion of it is still edible and find terminology that is effective across different languages., By Sophie Attwood (WRI)

Overview of the work of the European Consumer Food Waste Forum



Alessandra Zampieri, JRC introducing the practical tools developed under the European Consumer Food Waste Forum.

Ms Alessandra Zampieri, Director for Sustainable Resources at the European Commission Joint Research Centre presented the findings of the European Consumer Food Waste Forum, which identified evidence-based, practical solutions to reduce food waste at the consumer level, including in households and food services. The outcomes of their work have been published in a Compendium of tools, best practices, and recommendations designed to assist all key players in taking action to prevent food waste. This includes informative leaflets with recommendations for policymakers, food businesses and schools, produced in all EU languages.

Ms Zampieri highlighted the importance of adopting a full chain approach and bridging the gap between scientific study results and the creation of concrete recommendations through the creation of tools and methods that can be directly implemented by stakeholders. The public event marked the launch of a digitised Compendium: the Toolkit to Reduce Consumer Food Waste. This digital resource, developed by the Commission, ensures greater access and usability to the materials and recommendations for all actors. The toolkit includes:

- **Video Tutorials:** Practical guides for designing, implementing, and evaluating food waste reduction actions.
- **Food Waste Action Planner:** A collection of successful actions to serve as inspiration for practitioners with similar needs.
- **Food Waste Prevention Calculator:** A tool for calculating and communicating the environmental, economic, and nutritional impacts of waste reduction actions.
- **Recommendations for Action:** Tailored advice for policymakers, businesses, schools, and other organisations.

Reducing consumer food waste: challenges and opportunities

The morning session continued with a panel of experts discussing the challenges and opportunities to reduce consumer food waste, which provided diverse perspectives from public authorities, food businesses and academia. The panel discussed the proposed EU legally binding food waste reduction targets, emphasising the cross-border dimension of the issue. The legally binding food waste reduction targets aim to provide a strong incentive for Member States to act at all levels, while allowing the flexibility to choose the necessary actions according to national contexts. The panel also addressed the challenges of conducting consumer research, highlighting that



Dialogue on concrete actions. From left to right: Alexandra Nikolakopoulou (European Commission), Gertrude Zeinstra (Wageningen University & Research), Nora Brüggemann (Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production), Lorena Lourido Gomez (IKEA), Anja De Cunto (C40 Cities)

measuring food waste at household level is primarily hindered by a self-reporting bias. Panellists elaborated on initiatives to tackle food waste in retail and food services, for example staff training and use of technology to measure and monitor food waste through all operations and in stores. They also discussed the role of cities in reshaping food environments to reduce food waste, and the cultural differences of across countries that lead to different behaviours around food waste.

During the Q&A session, the audience raised several questions regarding date marking smart technologies, the level of the EU's proposed targets as compared to the global UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3, and waste taxation measures. The takeaways from the session were:

- The need to enable consumer behaviour change through actions that involve all actors in the food supply chain from farm to fork;
- The need for measures that make it less attractive to destroy and waste edible food, creating a stronger business case for food waste reduction at all levels, including food businesses and waste management companies;
- A call for support for smart innovations for date marking to help reduce food waste, and their inclusion in the Regulation on Food Information to Consumers (FIC) revision;
- Reframing communications on “food waste” to highlight that a significant portion of it is still edible and find terminology that is effective across different languages.
- Actions to reduce consumer food waste should go beyond information sharing and raising awareness, they should also consider specific target audiences and their motivation, opportunity and ability to reduce food waste, in order to be effective and achieve behaviour change.

Showcase of consumer food waste reduction actions and online tools in the foyer

The event was followed by a poster exhibition in the foyer, where actors who ran food waste prevention interventions presented their work to interested participants. A stand with 1:1 guidance was also available, where participants could see how to use the two online tools in practice, the food waste prevention calculator and the [Food waste action planner](#).



Poster session of 12 different food waste prevention actions and display of the online practical tools.

Parallel sessions



One of the five parallel sessions

The afternoon featured a series of parallel sessions, providing participants with the opportunity to engage with experts in a more focused environment. The first set of parallel sessions included food waste prevention experts from local, regional and national authorities, as well as experts in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of food waste prevention actions. Subsequent parallel sessions offered expert feedback to participants on their actions to reduce consumer food waste, with dedicated sessions for policymakers, food businesses and educational establishments.

Closing remarks

The facilitators of the parallel sessions presented the main takeaways from the discussions in the main room:

Parallel Session A: Reducing consumer food waste through local/regional/national policies

- A representative from Sweden presented the results of their national campaigns, which included the creation of a new language of food waste, encouraging the use of artificial intelligence to reduce food waste and awareness raising activities;
- The speaker from the Region of Catalonia presented their actions to prevent food waste, which included gleaning marathons, community “food waste dinners” and media campaigns;
- In Bruges, 5,000 volunteers were mobilised to become ‘food waste prevention ambassadors’ and have achieved significant reductions at household level. The main challenge highlighted during the session and across projects was the difficulty to reach all citizens in a country/region with a limited budget. Leveraging support from cities and retailers was seen as an effective opportunity to reach a larger audience of citizens.

Parallel Session B: Designing, monitoring and evaluating your consumer food waste prevention action

- Participants emphasised that action design and monitoring are closely linked. It is important to consider monitoring aspects when designing a food waste prevention action and vice versa;
- In terms of design, the importance of social norms, behavioural and cultural aspects, were raised, all of which should be analysed and considered when designing consumer food waste prevention actions and practical tools;
- The importance of gathering data was highlighted: for example, understanding which types of food waste are avoidable or unavoidable can help design more effective interventions;
- Speakers stressed the need for a food system approach, noting that food waste cannot be considered only at one specific stage without having impacts on other parts of the food supply chain.

Feedback Session A: Actions to reduce consumer food waste by policymakers, with a focus on cities and regions

- The panel discussed the projects presented by selected participants. The key points raised were:
 - The importance of collaboration across sectors in the supply chain, as well as local and regional level partnerships, for example, with food banks. Further promoting actions such as training of kitchen staff (cooking without waste), food waste education in schools involving parents and caregivers, cooking workshops for young people through youth centers;
 - The need to engage the Horeca sector to commit and measure food waste, as well as engage in other actions such as encouraging consumers to use doggy bags from restaurants;
 - Actions should extend beyond awareness-raising, focusing on consumers’ motivations, opportunities and skills to reduce food waste;
 - The use of innovative solutions to reduce food waste, such as AI tools.
 - The importance for cities to identify the main barriers to food waste prevention, such as the lack of funding, staff turnover in public kitchens, in order address these.

Feedback Session B: Actions to reduce consumer food waste by food businesses and other organisations

- The panel discussed the prevention actions in Norway, Slovenia, and other countries. The key points raised were:

- The measurement of food waste and assessing impacts of food waste prevention actions were highlighted as common challenges across sectors of the food supply chain;
- The need to move from pilot projects to skill-building and fostering networks;
- Several practical tools to prevent food waste, for example, the recently launched Toolkit to reduce consumer food waste.

Feedback Session C: Actions to reduce consumer food waste in schools and universities

- The panel discussed prevention actions in schools and universities in Hungary, Spain, Denmark, and Italy. The key points raised were:
 - Stressing the need for technologies to promote engagement of all actors (students, parents, educational establishments staff);
 - Important drivers for change: teacher training, an interactive approach to drive behavioural change in households, collaboration between the different actors (for example, canteen staff, parents).

Following the feedback from the facilitators, the floor was given to a citizen from the European Citizens' Panel on food waste, who shared her experience in her role as an ambassador to reduce food waste and what she has done to raise awareness about food waste prevention in her region in Romania. These activities included visits to kindergartens and schools and contributions to local media.

Ms Joke Schauvliege, Member of the European Committee of the Regions and Member of the Flemish Parliament, concluded the event by emphasising the need for further action in preventing food waste at the consumer level. She emphasised that local and regional authorities are well positioned to facilitate access to healthy food and to prevent food waste. Ms Schauvliege highlighted the accomplishments of the Belgian Presidency, including the progress made on the legislative proposal to establish EU food waste reduction targets, as part of the revision of the Waste Framework Directive. She emphasised that this is an opportunity for regions to take a leadership role by adopting sector-specific targets, ensuring these objectives apply across the entire value chain from farm to fork, to prevent shifting food waste from one stage to another.

Before closing the event, the moderator reminded all participants about the possibility to apply for [EU action grants](#) with projects that reduce consumer food waste, before 25 September 2024.

Want to know more: The event's full agenda, and all the presentations and recordings of the event are available on the [event webpage](#).

Want to engage further?

[EU action grants](#)

[Toolkit to reduce consumer food waste](#)