



# Preventing food waste with CAP Strategic Plans



## POLICY INSIGHTS

**Food waste refers to food that gets thrown away, including parts that we don't eat, such as bones or fruit cores and skins. EU actions on reducing food waste risks support global ambitions to create sustainable food systems. Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) funding from the EU countries' CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) can help to implement improved ways of preventing food waste.**

The goal of sustainable food systems is to create a **circular** process where food waste is minimised or eliminated. When food is lost or thrown away we also risk wasting energy, fertilisers, livelihoods, money, nutrients, opportunities, resources, soil, time, water, and work. **Target 12.3** of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) exists to reduce food losses along food value chains, at all stages of food lifecycles, across the world. To achieve this, consistent global policy approaches are promoted to agri-food sectors using evidence-based approaches such as '**Target-Measure-Act**' techniques to prevent food loss and waste.

Food in the EU is legally defined in chapter 1, **article 2 of Regulation 178/2002**, and waste is defined under chapter 1, article 3 of Directive 2008/98. At EU level, in order to accelerate the progress towards SDG 12.3, in July 2023 the Commission adopted a legislative proposal setting legally binding food waste reduction targets. The legislative proposal, amending the Waste Framework Directive, requires Member States to take the necessary measures to reduce food waste in processing and manufacturing and at retail and consumption levels (i.e. households, restaurants, and food services). The proposal is currently being discussed at the European Parliament and Council.

**Eurostat** confirms that primary production sources account for 9% of food waste, whereas households represent 54% of all food waste. This highlights key targeting areas for policy interventions through the CAP, and suggests that prevention strategies targeting EU food supply chains can help tackle the remaining 46% of total wastage across the bloc. EU approaches to prevent food waste

are aided by the **EU Platform on Food Loss and Waste** and its **Thematic sub-groups** which **work jointly together** to tackle this waste management challenge in Member States.

### Food chain action

Policy actions at EU level to reduce food waste have included revision of **marketing standards** as well as updated **hygiene rules**. These complement the Member States' Waste Framework Directive, which promotes **circular economy** in agri-food chains, and **policy measures are in place to help prevent food waste**. The aforementioned amendment proposal for a food waste reduction target in the Waste Framework Directive promotes legally binding targets. Such policy tools facilitate tangible **actions in the EU** by individual businesses, and umbrella groups in EU food value chains.

Much is being done by instrumental EU food production and processing bodies to change attitudes and behaviour to lower wastage. Copa-Cogeca, for example, is supporting European farmers and their cooperatives in a commitment that stems from a **twofold conviction** that: "nothing of value should be discarded without reason"; and "food waste reduction is not only a social and environmental responsibility, but also an economic opportunity."

FoodDrinkEurope notes that "**every crumb counts**" in preventing food waste. It advises the EU food supply sector that "when it isn't possible to avoid food surpluses and redirect them to humans, they should be redirected to feed animals, then for industrial use, soil enrichment, or generating renewable energy."

Umbrella bodies like these agri-food associations act as substantial multipliers, and are pivotal in championing food waste prevention, particularly in terms of helping to achieve the EU Food Loss and Waste Platform priority for '**mobilising all players**'.

Industry bodies are well (and often best) positioned to encourage the desired upscaling and mainstreaming of food waste prevention.



Everyone can benefit from more coordinated waste elimination commitments by agri-food sector representatives and their members.

Social media can also be harnessed with good effect by food supply firms campaigning to **influence attitudes towards food waste**. Other topics identified as having high game-changing impacts for food waste prevention include **modernising food supply chains to be more circular** and reducing **confusion risks about 'Best before' versus 'Use by' dates** (food may still be safe to eat after the 'Best before' date, whereas the 'Use by' date defines when a food product is no longer safe to eat). The Commission is still working on the proposal and gathering more information.



### CSP funds for food waste

Awareness raising about funding opportunities for food waste prevention helps to facilitate uptake of the new approaches and to build new capacities necessary throughout EU food supply chains. Agricultural food waste actions, for instance, can be co-financed in **EU countries** by CSPs, which also offer possibilities for supporting sustainable food system approaches by processing partners in supply chains.

Opportunities eligible for support from CSPs include investment projects managing efficient volumes of agriproducts placed on the market. This can include collective storage, market withdrawals for free distribution or other industrial destinations, collective actions on sustainability by food value chain partners, as well as innovation research and communication campaigns.

The gathering and analysis of **good practices** provide further ideas on how policy can help to support and inspire more food waste prevention through the use of CSP resources. **National Networks** are involved with this process, and their outreach potential can help boost CSP contributions to preventing food waste.

### Modernised Maltese meat processing plant reuses trimmings

A **Good Practices story** from the EU CAP Network explains how CAP funding helped a food processing facility on Malta to prevent food waste in ways that also enabled an increase in the company's product range, thus improving consumer choice.

An investment grant was used by the Farm Meat Market Ltd company to upgrade its processing equipment to reduce inputs and limit waste by collecting and reusing discarded meat trimmings. These now provide raw material for new products such as hams, sausages, salamis, burgers, and meatballs.

### Preventing food waste and food poverty in Flanders

Belgium's **Food Act** project was shortlisted for the **Agricultural and Rural Inspiration Awards** in 2023, where it achieved a Highly Commended award due to its socio-economic and environmental achievements. CAP assistance helped the Food Act organisation to improve its logistical approach for collecting and redistributing unwanted food.

Partners included the Colruyt Group (one of the biggest retailers in Belgium) during the development of just-in-time logistics, work floor techniques, technologies, and digitalisation aspects to improve efficiency of food waste prevention procedures.

Overall insights regarding EU food waste policy and related approaches reflect main messaging from the internationally-renowned **EU Platform on Food Loss and Waste**. It confirms that "tackling food waste means working together with all key players from public and private sectors in order to better identify, measure, understand and find solutions to deal with food waste. Policy makers, research scientists, food banks and other NGOs also play an important role."

