Hearing at the Parliament of Finland

Environment Committee

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Combating Food Waste: an opportunity for the EU to improve the resource-efficiency of the food supply chain

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The ECA and its role

European Court of Auditors: The external auditor of EU

Auditees

- European Commission
- Member States -> down to beneficiaries



Types of audit

- Financial (legality and regularity)
- Sound management (performance)



Stakeholders

- European Council and European Parliament
- European Commission
- Citizens
- Other stakeholders

The audit - Why an audit on this topic? (1/3)

Food waste represents huge economic and environmental costs *(figures on a global scale per year according to UN estimates)*

- Economic costs of 1 trillion USD
- Environmental costs of 700 billion USD

Food waste is a global problem

- Current estimates indicate that around one third of the food produced for human consumption is wasted or lost
- Around 88 million tonnes of food are wasted annually in the EU *(according to the European Commission)*

Many studies and initiatives going on but very few centered on the EU's responsibility

The audit - Why an audit on this topic? (2/3)

Political recognition of the problem

2011 Parliament

- ‘asks the Commission, furthermore, to take practical measures towards halving food waste by 2025’

2013 Council

- ‘recognised the need to significantly reduce post-harvest and other food losses and waste throughout the food supply chain. The Commission should present a comprehensive strategy to combat unnecessary food waste and work with Member States in the fight against excessive food waste generation”

2016 Parliament

- ‘Calls on the Commission to propose, by the end of 2015, targets, measures and instruments to efficiently tackle food waste, including setting a binding food waste reduction target of at least 30% by 2025’

2016 Council

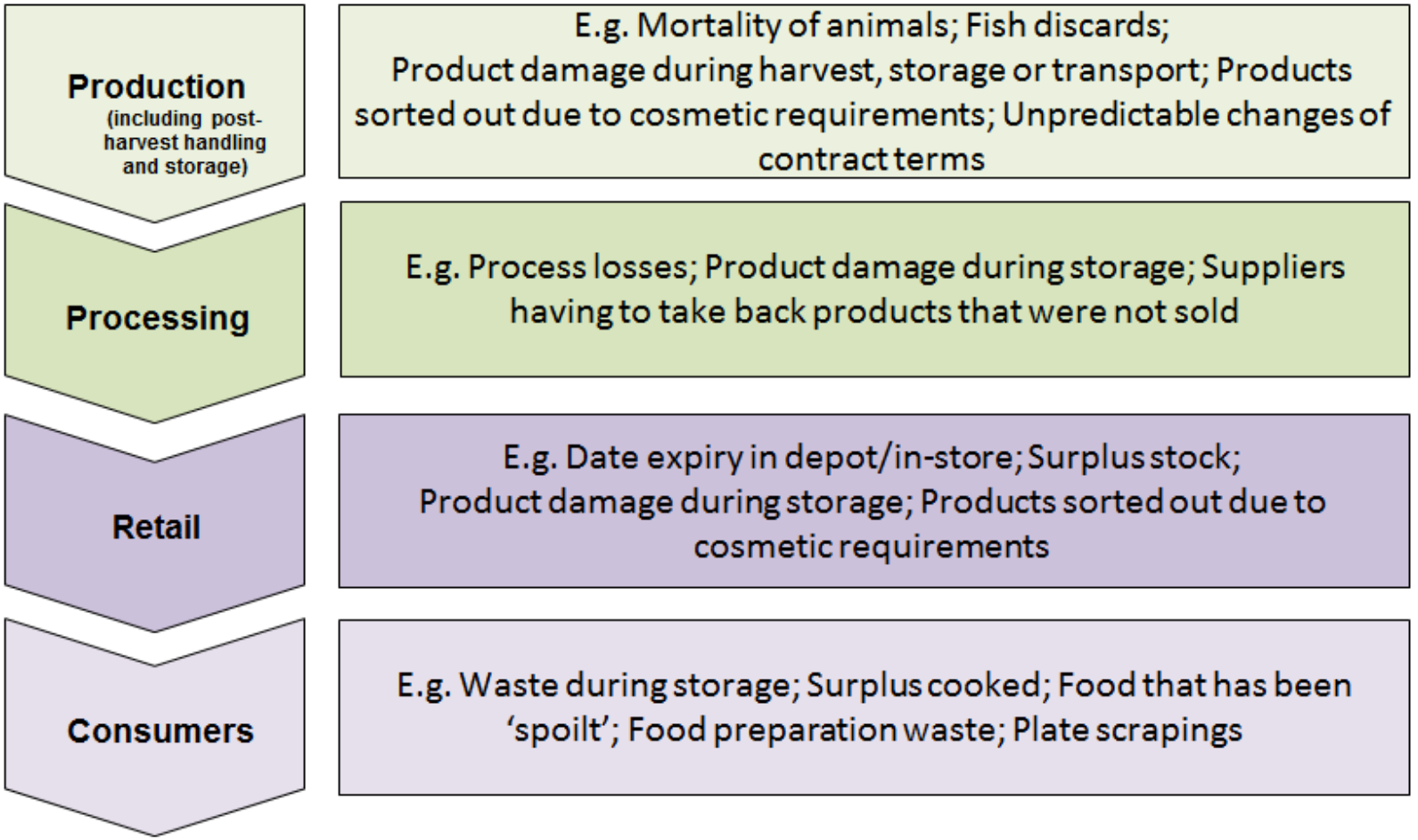
- ‘Supports efforts of all actors to reduce food waste, which will contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 12.3, which aims at halving per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer level, and reducing food losses along production and supply chains including post-harvest losses by 2030’

2016 Council

- ‘Called upon the Commission to include food waste considerations in the future examination of EU policies and legislation’

The audit - Why an audit on this topic? (3/3)

Food waste occurs all along the food supply chain



Source: European Court of Auditors.

The audit - Audit question

Main audit question

- Does the EU contribute to a resource-efficient food supply chain by combating food waste effectively?

Audit questions

- To what extent has the Commission, as the executive arm of the EU, translated the high level political statements to fight food waste into action?
- What opportunities to combat food waste has the existing policies missed?

Main conclusions

High level political statements have not been translated into sufficient action

Decreasing ambition in the Commission's strategic documents over time

Fragmented and intermittent action at the technical level

Recommendation 1
Commission

Existing policies could be better aligned to combat food waste more effectively

Better alignment of policies to improve food waste prevention → **Recommendation 2**
Commission

Clarifications and alignment of the policies and provisions for facilitating the donation of food → **Recommendation 3**
Commission

Recommendation 1

The EU efforts to combat food waste should be strengthened and better coordinated

At the technical level the Commission should now develop an action plan for the years ahead covering various policy areas

Recommendation 2

Consider food waste in future impact assessments and better align the different policies which can combat food waste

Better align the different policies and consider ways in which they could be developed to target the problem

Recommendation 3

Promote the option of donating food that is safe for consumption and that would otherwise be wasted

Good practice examples

Traceability

The Finnish authorities have drawn up a food information guide establishing that the maximum volume of one lot should be one day's production.

VAT application

In the Netherlands and Finland, donors can themselves determine when a foodstuff is no longer saleable and therefore subject to zero VAT.

Facilitation of donation

Article 23(4) of the FUND for European Aid to the Deprived (FEAD) provides for the possibility of freely distributing food from intervention stocks to the most deprived people. In practice, only one Member State out of 28 (Finland) has included this in its FEAD operational programme.

Accompanying measures

In their strategies for the school milk scheme, 10 Member States (Bulgaria, Estonia, Spain, Finland, Croatia, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta and Romania) provide for accompanying measures.



What can I do in my daily life to limit **food waste**?

Follow these tips to help you reduce food waste, save money and protect the environment:

1 **Plan your shopping:** Menu plan your meals for a week. Check the ingredients in your fridge and cupboards, then write a shopping list for just the extras you need. Take your list and don't shop when you're hungry — you'll come back with more than you need. Buy loose fruits and vegetables instead of pre-packed so you can buy exactly the amount you need.

2 **Check the dates:** If you are not planning to eat a certain item with a short "use by" date, look for one with a longer "use by" date or just plan to buy it on the day you require. Be aware on the meaning of date labels: "use by" means that the food is only safe for consumption until the indicated day (e.g. for meat and fish); "best before" indicates the date up until when the product retains its expected quality. Food products are still safe to consume even after the indicated "best before" day.

3 **Consider your budget:** Wasting food means wasting money.

4 **Keep a healthy fridge:** Check the seals and the temperature of your fridge. Food needs to be stored between 1 and 5 degrees Celsius for maximum freshness and longevity.

5 **Store** food in accordance with the instructions on the packaging.

6 **Rotate:** When you buy new food from the store, bring all the older items in your cupboards and fridge to the front. Put the new food at the back to reduce the risk of finding something mouldy in your food storage compartments.

7 **Serve small amounts of food** with the understanding that everybody can come back for more once they've cleared their plate.

8 **Use up your leftovers:** Instead of scraping leftovers into the bin, they can be used for lunches the following day, go into the next day's dinner or be frozen for another occasion. Fruit that is just going soft can be used to make smoothies or fruit pies. Vegetables that are starting to wilt can be made into soups.

9 **Freeze:** If you only eat a small amount of bread, then freeze it when you get home and take out a few slices a couple of hours before you need them. Likewise, batch cooked foods so that you have meals ready for those evenings when you are too tired to cook.

10 **Turn it to garden food:** Some food waste is unavoidable so why not set up a compost bin for fruit and vegetable peelings? In a few months you will end up with rich, valuable compost for your plants. If you have cooked food waste, then a kitchen composter will do the trick. Just feed it with your scraps, sprinkle over a layer of special microbes and leave to ferment. The resulting product can be used for houseplants and in the garden.

See also: http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/sustainability/index_en.htm

Thank you for your attention

Questions?