

PFP position paper on resource efficiency

Primary Food Processors (PFP) are the largest users of domestic grains, starch potatoes, sugar beet, oilseeds and crude vegetable oils in the EU. PFP add value to large volumes of bulk commodities, processing 220 million tonnes of agricultural raw materials a year and employing over 120 thousand people in Europe.

Resource efficiency within PFP sectors

PFP has a long tradition of valorisation of agricultural commodities to produce food, feed and non-food products. Resource efficiency is thus a cornerstone of PFP activities. It is reached through continuous innovation resulting in the use of all valuable products and co-products extracted from raw materials, and in the creation of new applications, markets and products. This way, PFP sectors aim in their production processes to prevent raw materials losses, by re-using and recycling resources.

PFP position towards food wastage

PFP understands the efforts being made to improve the sustainability of the food chain by preventing food wastage. Achieving a more efficient use of agricultural raw materials and food products will help improve the sustainability of the food system.

In order to assess and prevent food wastage, we support that clear definitions of the terms “food wastage”, “food losses” and “food waste” should be commonly agreed upon by all stakeholders of the EU food chain.

PFP believes that the definitions established by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) appropriately cover the issue of food wastage and allow a correct assessment of food wastage along the food chain.

The FAO definition of food losses and food waste reads as follow: “Food loss refers to a decrease in mass (dry matter) or nutritional value (quality) of food that was originally intended for human consumption. These losses are mainly caused by inefficiencies in the food supply chains, such as poor infrastructure and logistics, lack of technology, insufficient skills, knowledge and management, capacity of supply chain actors, and lack of access to markets. In addition, natural disasters play a role.

Food waste refers to food appropriate for human consumption being



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discarded, whether or not after it is kept beyond its expiry date or left to spoil. Often this is because food has spoiled but it can be for other reasons such as oversupply due to markets, or individual consumer shopping/eating habits. Food wastage refers to any food lost by deterioration or wasted. Thus, the term “wastage” encompasses both food loss and food waste.”¹

PFP supports that the differentiation of “food losses” (occurring at the production level) and “food waste” (occurring at retailing/consumption level) is important when discussing “food wastage”, as they lead to different possibilities of re-use/recycling.

According to the FAO definition, “food that was originally meant for human consumption but which fortuitously leaves the human food chain is considered as food wastage even if it is then directed to a non-food use (feed, bio energy...). This approach distinguishes between “planned” non-food uses that should never be accounted as food wastage, and “unplanned” non-food uses, which are hereby accounted as food wastage unless re-introduced in the food chain”. **PFP agrees that based on the above definition, any part of the agricultural raw materials, that is not edible, or that is not intended for human consumption, should not be considered as food waste, so as not to hinder the global resource efficiency of the food chain.**

PFP position towards the food waste hierarchy

PFP supports the adoption of a food waste hierarchy, such as the one developed by Wageningen University² that encourages the prevention of food losses and food waste, and also encourages an efficient use of resources. **In this context, any “food” that might be “lost” but can be re-used or redirected to the food chain should not be considered as waste.**

Situation within PFP industries regarding food wastage

The main driver of primary food processing is cost control. This cost control has made PFP industries to maximize the valorisation of their raw materials, which results in a high level of resource efficiency. **Food losses, as defined above, are close to zero within PFP activities and have reached a technical optimum. In addition, some products of PFP sectors can contribute to the prevention of food waste, e.g. by enhancing the shelf life of products in which they are incorporated, and therefore have a positive impact in reducing food waste.**

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¹ Food Wastage Footprint – summary report, FAO, 3013, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3347e/i3347e.pdf>

² FUSIONS project presentation, general introduction, 11 June 2012 – food waste hierarchy slide 8 : <http://ostfoldforskning.no/uploads/dokumenter/Food%20Waste%20juni%202012/FUSIONS%20general%20presentation.pdf>

