

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - Ireland
Forum on Food Waste
Thursday 9 March 2017

ECA Special Report No 34/2016

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

Presentation by the European Court of Auditors

The ECA and its role

The audit

Structure and conclusions of the report

The ECA and its role

- 1 of the 5 EU institutions; in charge of external audit
- **Auditees:**
 - Commission
 - Member States -> down to beneficiaries
- **Types of audit:**
 - Financial (legality and regularity)
 - Sound management (performance)
- **For whom the ECA works**
 - Auditees themselves
 - European Council and European Parliament
 - Interested stakeholders
 - Public opinion



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 FAO estimations)*

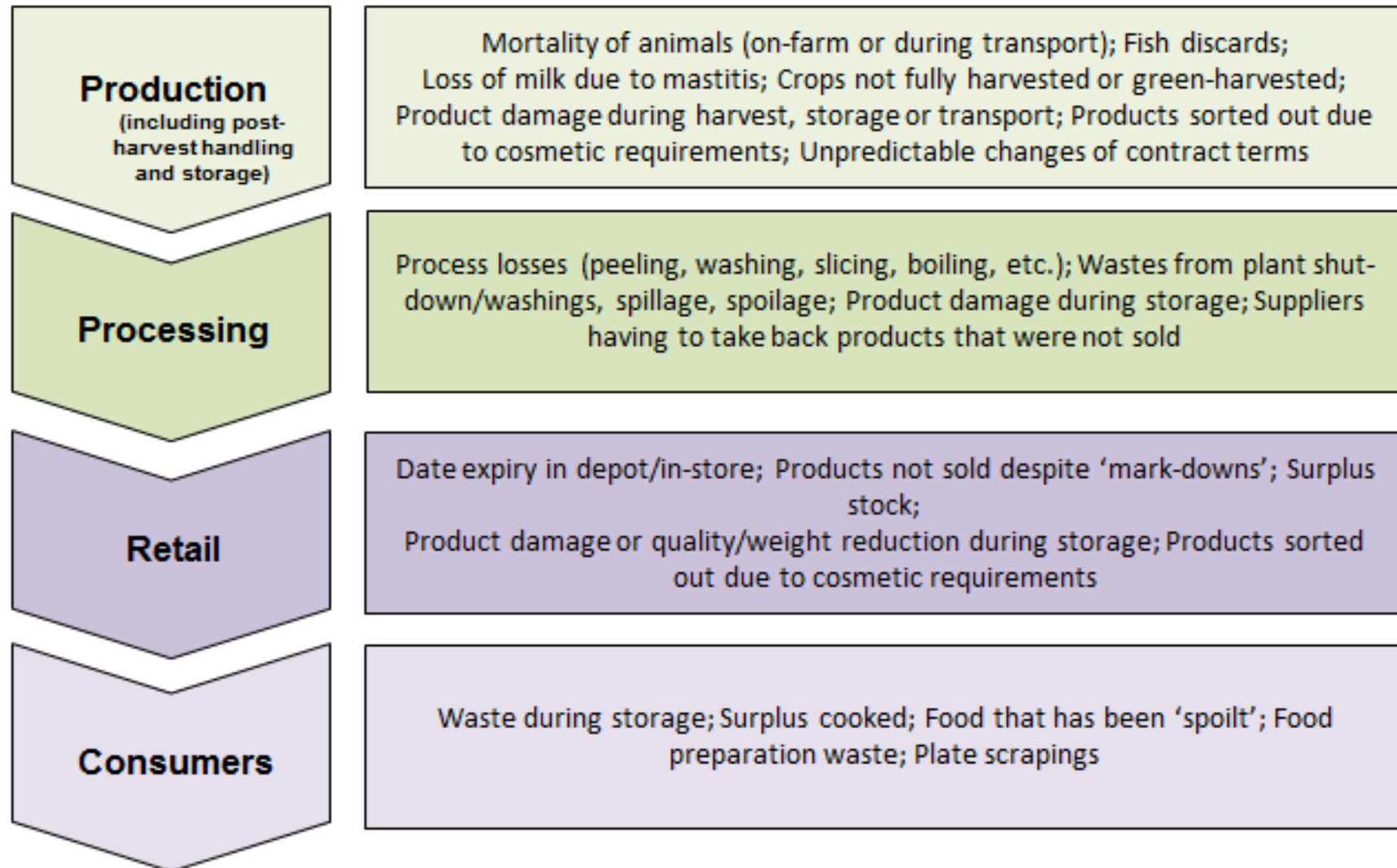
- economic costs of 1 trillion USD; it includes the cost linked to the production, transport, storage and treatment costs of the wasted products
- environmental costs of 700 billion USD; food waste represents a waste of the resources throughout the products' life cycle such as land, water, energy and other inputs, and the consequent increase in greenhouse gas emissions

- **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)*

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

▪ Food waste occurs all along the food supply chain



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

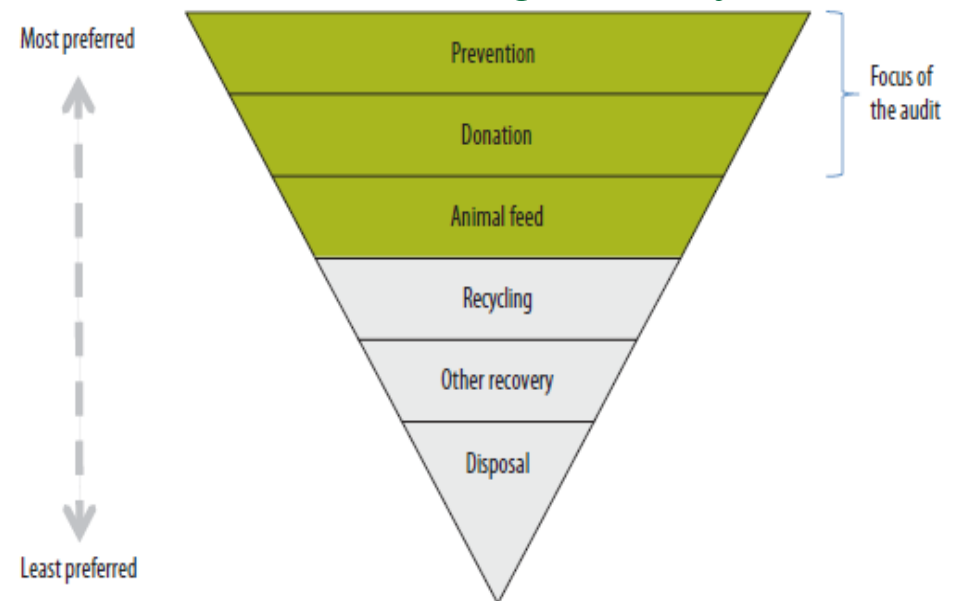
- Many studies and initiatives going on but very few centered on the EU's responsibility

EU has **funds and legal provisions** that **affect the behaviour of all the actors** in the food supply chain

EU instruments which have an effect on the fight against food waste		Food waste prevention				Donation
		Producers	Processors	Retailers	Consumers	
EU Funds	EAGF	X	X		X	X
	EAFRD	X	X			
	EMFF	X	X			X
	FEAD					X
Legal provisions not linked to funds	Waste directive ¹	X	X	X		X
	Food safety rules ²	X	X	X		X
	Labelling ³	X	X	X	X	X
	Traceability ²	X	X	X		X
	Marketing standards ⁴	X	X	X	X	
	(Un)fair trading practices	X	X	X		
	VAT ⁵ and financial stimuli	X	X	X		X

The audit - Scope and audit question

- For the purpose of this report, **food waste refers to:**
“any product or part of a product grown, caught or processed for human consumption that could have been eaten if handled or stored differently”
- Focus on **prevention and donation**, the two highest layers in the hierarchy



- Audit question**

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

The audit – Audit approach

Document review and interviews



- Large amount of studies available

- 6 DGs concerned



- 5 MS visited: Italy (Lazio), the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Finland;
In each of these Member States typically we visited 5-6 different Ministries

On-the-spot visits



- On-the-spot visits to relevant EU beneficiaries were also carried out

Stakeholders



- Consultation meetings with relevant stakeholders

Structure of the report

Observations

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

Alignment of policies for improved food waste prevention

Recommendation 2
Commission

Clarifications and alignment of the policies and provisions for facilitating the donation of food

Recommendation 3
Commission

Conclusions and recommendations

The recommendations are addressed to the Commission but...

- Many of the observations can be followed up at Member State level
- The report provides information for Member States and stakeholders to ask the Commission to set the right EU bases for all actors to be able to fight food waste more effectively

The Commission has, in its replies to the Special Report, accepted all the ECA's recommendations except recommendations 2.a and 3.b.

Recommendation 1

The EU efforts to combat food waste should be strengthened and better coordinated; in doing this the EU could take a greater role in the appropriate forums at a global level. This implies concerted action by the EU bodies and Member States to agree a common strategy as soon as possible.

At the technical level the Commission should now develop an action plan for the years ahead covering various policy areas. This should include agreed descriptions of what constitutes food waste at all stages of the food chain and a methodology for measuring the impacts of its strategy.



What is behind recommendation 1

- Commission's ambition has decreased over time (*para 28 and Fig. 3 of the SR*)
- limited effectiveness of Working Group and Expert Group in the past (*Box 4*)
- Commission's non-acceptance of recommendation 2.a of this report
- possible action at international forums (e.g. UNECE – see *Annex I*)



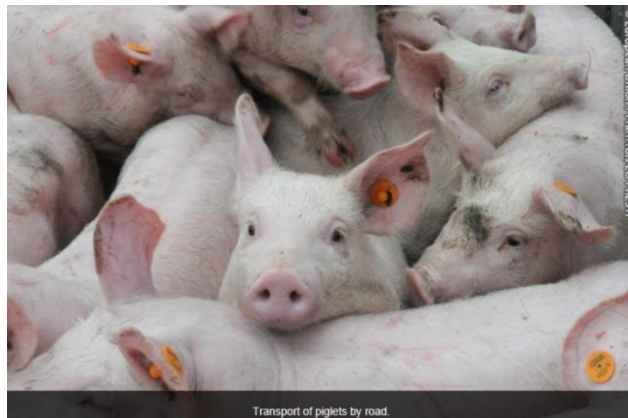
Recommendation 2 ^(1/2)

The Commission should

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

a) As regards the CAP

- topic of food waste should be included in the forthcoming review of the policy
- encourage Member States to prioritise the objective of combating food waste when programming future expenditure



What is behind recommendation 2 ^(1/2)

a) As regards the CAP *(paras 34-51 of the SR)*

- no assessment of the impact of direct payments (including VCS) and market measures on generation/prevention of food waste
- not much use of school milk and school fruit schemes to pass educational messages
- use of EAFRD to fund projects that contribute to reduce food waste was by accident rather than design



What is behind recommendation 2 (1/2)

Examples of rural development projects in Italy that contributed to reducing food waste

- A.** Financing of a cereal storage silo which drastically reduced (from around 12 % down to 0.2 %) waste of cereals due to moulds and pollution by birds and rodents.
- B.** Financing of investment in a dairy cow shed (moving from a tie-stall to a free stall with mattresses, scrapers, etc.) led to improved animal welfare and hygiene conditions, which in turn led to a reduction in the number of cows with mastitis and in the volume of milk wasted.

Recommendation 2 (2/2)

b) As regards the common fisheries policy,

- closer monitoring of the landing obligation
- facilitate the use of available EU funds for investments that combat food waste



c) When developing its food safety policy

- facilitate the exchange of good practices on hygiene and traceability
- as regards food labelling, assess the need to intervene in order to prevent labelling practices that generate food waste

What is behind recommendation 2 ^(2/2)

b) As regards the common fisheries policy

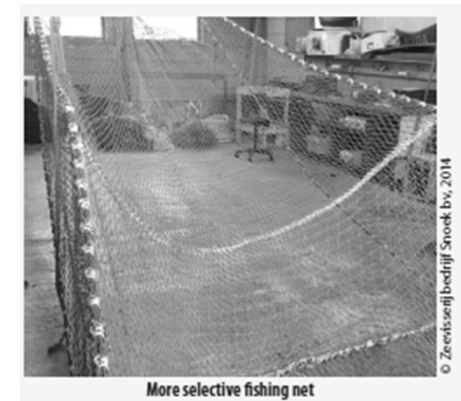
(paras 52-61 of the SR)

- data on catches and discards not fully available
- use of the Fisheries funds to fund projects that contribute to reduce food waste was by accident rather than design

c) When developing its food safety policy

(paras 62-69 of the SR)

- insufficient exchange of guides on good hygiene practices and on lots identification
- inappropriate use, from a food waste perspective, of «best before» and «use by» dates / unjustified differences in the shelf lives of similar products
- insufficient awareness by consumers of the meaning of both labels



What is behind recommendation 2 (2/2)

Date labelling practices — examples

A study called 'Date labelling in the Nordic countries' investigated how companies determine the shelf life of their products. For all the products in the study, there were major variations in shelf lives between similar products. For some products **the longest shelf life in days, as marked by one retailer, was twice as long as the shelf life determined by another retailer.**

Recommendation 3

The Commission should

promote the option of donating food that is safe for consumption and that would otherwise be wasted. In particular, and as soon as is practicable, by:

- a) clarifying the interpretation of legal provisions that discourage the donation of food, in particular with reference to the waste framework directive and the General Food Law
- b) carrying out an assessment of the impact of extending donation to those policy areas where it is not taking place, particularly in relation to the common fisheries policy
- c) completing the legislative requirement to allow the use of food from agricultural stocks from public intervention
- d) promoting among Member States the use of existing provisions for donation, with particular reference to fruit and vegetables withdrawn from the market and to the FEAD.



What is behind recommendation 3

a) *(paras 71-73 of the SR)*

- waste framework directive does not clarify hierarchy for food uses nor clarifies what “food waste” is
- General Food Law: ambiguous consideration of charities as regards liability
- space for improvement on how to interpretate VAT rules on donated food

b) *(para 74 of the SR)*

- absence of mechanisms to encourage the donation of withdrawn fish and of fish that cannot be marketed (e.g. undersized)

c) *(paras 75-76 of the SR)*

- absence of implementing acts that would allow donating food from agricultural stocks from public intervention

d) *(paras 77-79 of the SR)*

- FEAD hardly used to facilitate donation
- less than 40% of fruit and vegetables withdrawn from the market were actually donated in the period 2007-2015



Thank you for your attention

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