



FOOD

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Stop food waste

Around 88 million tonnes of food are wasted annually in the EU, with associated costs estimated at 143 billion euros (FUSIONS, 2016 (<http://www.eu-fusions.org/phocadownload/Publications/Estimates%20of%20European%20food%20waste%20levels.pdf>)).

About a **third of all food produced globally for human consumption is lost or wasted** - around 1.3 billion tonnes per year, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

Food loss and waste in **industrialised countries are as high as in developing countries, but their distribution is different:**

- In developing countries, over 40% of food losses happen after harvest and during processing;
- In industrialised countries, over 40% occurs at retail and consumer level.

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(<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/FLASH/surveyKy/2095>)

[Infographic on date marking](#)

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[View the video on food waste](#)
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What can you do?

Everyone can play a role in reducing food waste. Often with minimal effort, food waste can be reduced, saving money and helping to protect the environment. It might be a lot easier than you think! Check our **communications materials** (http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste/communications_materials_en) for practical information.

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Causes of food waste

Food is lost or wasted **along the whole food supply chain**: on the farm, in processing and manufacture, in shops, in restaurants and canteens and in the home. The reasons for food waste vary widely and can be sector-specific.

Factors contributing to food waste include:

- Insufficient shopping and meal planning and promotions like "buy one get one free" leading to too much food being purchased or prepared
- Misunderstandings about the meaning of "best before" and "use by" date labels leading to edible foods being thrown away
- Standardised portion sizes in restaurants and canteens
- Difficulty in anticipating the number of customers (a problem for catering services);
- Stock management issues for manufacturers and retailers
- High quality standards (eg. for produce sold at retail)
- Overproduction or lack of demand for certain products at certain times of the year; product and packaging damage (farmers and food manufacturing)
- Inadequate storage/transport at all stages of the food chain

Underlying all these problems is an overall lack of awareness, by many actors, of the sheer scale of the problem and the benefits that come from reducing food waste.