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Overproduction of food (waste)

produce less, feed more!

For many years the Greens/EFA group has been leading the fight for food security, social justice, robust ecosystems and against climate change. Today the European Parliament adopted another non-binding resolution calling for more ambition in reducing food waste, improving resource efficiency and food safety. It calls for an EU harmonised definition of food waste and measures required to achieve a Union food waste reduction target of 30 % by 2025 and 50 % by 2030 compared to the 2014 baseline.

Did you say “waste”?

Around 88 million tonnes of food are wasted in the EU each year. This means 173 kg of wasted food per person and 170 tonnes of CO2 emissions emitted during the production and disposal of the wasted food. It also means a waste of the scarce resources that are needed for food production, such as land, soil, water, phosphorous and energy.

But waste is actually not always waste. This new report calls for clear hierarchy: first, if the “waste” food can be eaten as food by humans, it should be. This is called prevention. Then if it cannot be eaten by humans but still by farm animals as feed, it should be. Then, if on human or animal can eat it anymore, it should go to organic recycling. The next step is energy recovery and the very last one, when it can't be used for anything else, it should be classified as waste. Only then.

Find more poor to feed or solve poverty?

Nobody questions the fact that there is a huge inefficiency in the system. So why isn’t it solved yet? Well, because some of the root causes are still being discussed: is food waste the result of overproduction or

under consumption, or both?

Those who like to see food donations to charities as THE solution to food waste and hunger obviously miss the point that if there are charities, it's because there is poverty. Hunger is just the result of it. And the comprehensive political answer to poverty is not just mitigation through food donations: it's more social justice and peace, less inequalities and violence. Moreover, giving "waste food" to food banks can be used to justify the production of waste and overproduction instead of matching supply with needs.

Matching food supply with needs

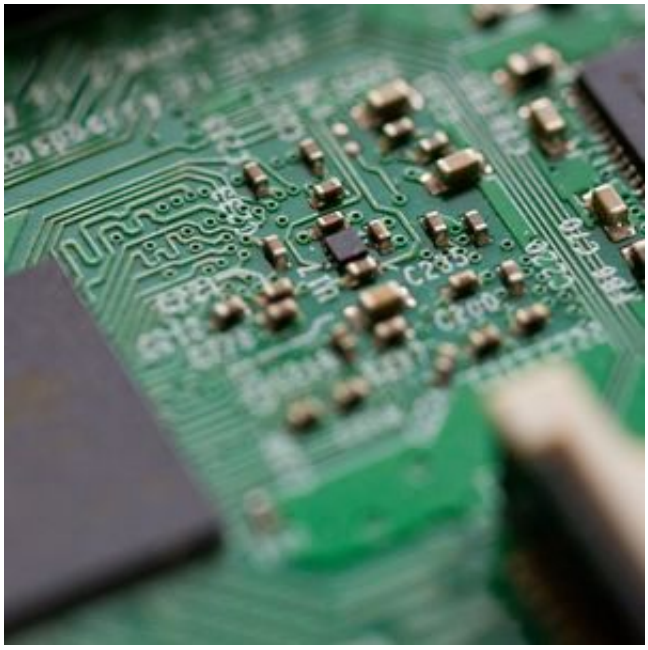
So do we waste food because we produce too much? In a recent special report on Combating Food Waste, the European Court of Auditors explicitly mentions overproduction and policies that can lead to it. Indeed, all steps of the current food chain contribute to waste generation, be it during production, transport, storage, processing, retailing or purchase by consumers.

Today's report emphasises the need for the agri-food sector to better plan production with a view to restricting food surpluses, and for fairer pay to producers in order to increase the value of the products. This means a real reform of our common agriculture policy (CAP): let's stop the degradation of land, biodiversity and pollination, and other natural resources!

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