



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Twenty-sixth Session

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Proposal for an International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste

Executive Summary

Today, an estimated one third, or 1.3 billion tons, of all food annually produced for human consumption is lost or wasted, at a cost of more than USD 940 billion to the global economy.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has set a global target for food loss and waste reduction. The Sustainable Development Goal 12, (SDG 12) seeks to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.” The third target under this goal (Target 12.3) *calls for halving per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food losses along production and supply chains (including post-harvest losses) by 2030.*

Tackling the food loss and waste challenge, toward meeting the SDG 12.3 target, presents a unique opportunity to increase the efficiency and sustainability of food systems to better deliver on nutrition, food security as well as on environmental benefit.

The Government of Argentina has requested the possibility of establishing the observance by the United Nations system, of an *International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste*, to be celebrated on 29 September each year.

The proposed *International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste* would seek to raise awareness at all levels of the need for concerted attention to reduce FLW and promote global efforts and collective actions toward achieving SDG target 12.3.

FAO’s support to this initiative is particularly important, bearing in mind that FAO is the UN specialized agency that leads international efforts to defeat hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition and is mandated to raise levels of nutrition and reduce food losses and food waste, taking into account sustainable production and consumption practices.

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;
an FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications.
Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org*



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Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee is invited to:

- 1) Review the proposal to establish the observance of the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.
- 2) Make recommendations on the Draft Conference Resolution, as contained in Appendix A, and submit the proposal for the consideration of the 26th Session of COAG, 1-5 October, and 160th Session of the Council (3-7 December, 2018) and the 41st Session of the FAO Conference (22-29 June, 2019).

Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:

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I. Background

1. Today, an estimated one third, or 1.3 billion tons, of all food annually produced for human consumption is lost or wasted, at a cost of more than USD 940 billion to the global economy, while approximately 815 million people across the globe suffer from chronic malnutrition and more than 2 billion people (approximately 30 percent of the world's population suffer from micronutrient deficiencies).
2. FAO defines food loss as the decrease in quantity or quality of food, typically caused by failures in the food production and supply system or its institutional and legal framework¹.
3. Food loss is a major issue in developing countries and occurs every day in the real operations of farmers, traders, processors and retailers, owing to problems in harvesting, handling, storage, packaging, and transport.
4. Some of the underlying causes of food loss are the inadequacy and/or lack of infrastructure and technology, the limited knowledge of stakeholders in supply chains, limited access to markets, poor market/price mechanisms, limited access to infrastructure and inadequate financing.
5. Food waste refers to the discarding or alternative (non-food) use of food that is safe and nutritious for human consumption. Food waste predominates in middle and high-income countries, in retail and at the consumer level.

II. Food Systems

6. Food systems today are under pressure to produce more food to feed growing and rapidly urbanizing populations, with changing dietary habits. These increases in food production must draw on genetic resources as well as scarce natural resources, such as land and water as well as energy requirements to produce, process and transport food.
7. High levels of food losses and waste (FLW) at each step of the value chain, reduce efficiency, and thus the sustainability of food systems.
8. Tackling the FLW challenge, therefore, presents a unique opportunity to increase the efficiency and sustainability of food systems.

III. Food Security and Nutrition

9. High levels of food losses impact the availability of and access to food, particularly for poorer segments of society in middle- and low-income countries, and reduce the incomes of smallholders and family farmers who produce food. The scaling up of actions and innovations to reduce post-harvest losses is, therefore, critical to alleviating food insecurity, while contributing to the improvement of nutrition and income generation.
10. Education and awareness raising are critical to bringing about behaviour change of food supply chain actors, agribusinesses and particularly consumers, toward achieving the sustained reduction of FLW.
11. Developments in the policy agendas of countries and the provision of incentives designed to promote investments geared toward reducing FLW will contribute substantially to reducing the negative economic and social impacts of FLW.

¹ FAO 2011. Global Food Losses and Waste. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/mb060e/mb060e00.pdf>

IV. Climate and the Environment

12. Every activity within the food system withdraws from natural capital and generates greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that contribute to climate change². The food supply chain contributes to over 20 percent of total annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally³. Food losses and waste are of particular concern as drivers of climate change and environmental degradation.

13. Food losses undermine the adaptive capacities of vulnerable populations to cope with climate change through decreased food availability and reduced income. Moreover, the magnitude of food losses could further increase with more frequent and intense climate variability and associated outbreaks of pests and diseases.

14. Implementing actions to reduce FLW will contribute greatly to climate adaptation and mitigation, reduce natural resource consumption and degradation, and contribute to the resilience of livelihoods and incomes.

V. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

15. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has set a global target for FLW reduction. The Sustainable Development Goal 12 seeks to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.” The third target under this goal (Target 12.3) calls for halving per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food losses along production and supply chains (including post-harvest losses) by 2030.

16. Reducing FLW will also directly impact other SDG Goals, for example under SDG1 reducing FLW will provide a step out of poverty for family farmers, while in the context of SDG2, reducing FLW will positively impact the food security and nutrition of the families of subsistence farmers; reducing FLW, will contribute to the sustainable use of water and land resources, (SDGs 6, 14 and 15) and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from FLW will contribute to combating climate change (SDG 13).

17. The measurement of FLW is important for SDG monitoring and cross-country comparison. Achieving SDG target 12.3 will necessitate target setting, measurement of FLW and the implementation of actions to stem the problem.

VI. Collaboration and Partnership

18. Collaboration and partnership should be strengthened to encourage policy dialogues, to promote SDG compliance, and to ensure coherence and alignment in the identification and implementation of solutions to FLW through the efficient and effective use of resources.

19. FLW issues are complex, and current efforts to address them are highly fragmented. There is increasing recognition of the need to develop alliances as well as to encourage open dialogues that integrate a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including civil society, academia, agribusinesses and the public and private sectors, to address the issues.

20. Private sector engagement in particular, is critical to realizing a reduction in FLW at the global level. Public-private sector collaboration is equally important, as better coordination between the

² FAO 2017. Save Food for a Better Climate. <http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/4ca616af-0a4a-4232-bd3b-681b67471857/>

³ Adoption of Climate Technologies in the Agrifood Sector. Methodology. Directions in Investment. <http://www.fao.org/policy-support/resources/resources-details/en/c/897015/>

public and private sectors improves efficiency and ensures inclusiveness and sustainability in development processes.

21. By creating an enabling environment through the provision of infrastructure, policy support, legislation, regulation and research, public sector can facilitate and incentivise action by the private sector.

VII. Objectives of the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste

22. In an effort to promote actions toward achieving SDG target 12.3, the Government of Argentina proposes to establish the observance by the United Nations system, of an International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste to be celebrated on 29 September each year and requests the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) to endorse this proposal (see Appendix A).

23. Activities such as the observance of the *International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste* by Governments, international and national organizations, the private sector, and municipalities will contribute significantly to raising awareness at all levels of the need for concerted attention to reducing FLW and promote global efforts and collective actions toward achieving SDG target 12.3.

Appendix A

Draft Conference Resolution

Considering the urgent need to raise awareness of the economic, social and environmental impacts of FLW and of the need for actions to stem the problem of FLW;

Recalling that SDG target 12.3 *calls for halving per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food losses along production and supply chains (including post-harvest losses) by 2030*;

Recognizing that high levels of FLW reduce the efficiency of the value chain, and thus the sustainability of food systems;

Recognizing that high levels of food losses, negatively impact the availability of and access to food, as well as incomes in poorer segments of society in middle- and low-income countries;

Noting that FLW are drivers of climate change and environmental degradation;

Noting that reducing FLW will also directly impact a number of other SDG Goals;

Cognizant of the urgent need to raise awareness and to educate food supply chain actors and consumers in particular, in order to bring about behaviour change toward achieving the sustained reduction of food losses and waste.

Expressing concern that current efforts to address FLW reduction are highly fragmented.

Cognizant of the critical role of the private sector in bringing about a reduction in FLW at the global level.

Recognizing that the observance of an International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste would contribute significantly to raising awareness at all levels, of the need to reduce FLW and promote global efforts and collective actions toward achieving SDG *target 12.3*.

Stressing that costs arising from the implementation of the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste will be met by voluntary contributions, including from private sector partners.

Requests the Director General to transmit this Resolution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a view to having the General Assembly of the United Nations consider at its next session, declaring 29 September each year as the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste.