

EBAs' contribution to the Waste Framework Directive

With approximately 88 million tons of food wasted every year, food waste accounts for at least 6% of total EU emissions in 2012. In total, bio-waste accounts for more than 34% of the municipal solid waste generated. Poor management of food waste causes the loss of natural resources, human health issues, pollution of rivers and seas, and the generation of methane emissions from dumps and landfills. Managing food waste sustainably could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 518 million tonnes. With the growing urban population, the need to address the management of waste in urban areas becomes ever more pressing. The revision of the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) is an opportunity to properly implement strong, binding targets of waste reduction and separate collection, these will be key to meeting the objectives set by the Waste Package.

The sub-optimal enforcement of current policies related to waste management is creating missed opportunities for proper recycling and upcycling of waste into much-needed materials. Such lack of proper enforcement is clear when it comes to a separate collection of biowaste. Especially in densely populated areas, contamination of biowaste by plastics, glass particles and others, is a concerning issue. As only biowaste with minimal contamination can be used as acceptable fertiliser, ensuring that biowaste can be properly separated from other waste in a way that efficiently avoids contamination should be a priority. Digestate is a versatile organic fertilizer and biogas as a renewable energy source, with uncontaminated feedstock the process of anaerobic digestion can be utilised by society to decarbonise the energy mix of the food industry, address soil erosion, close nutrient loops, store carbon in soils by increasing organic matter, and ensure that food waste that cannot be prevented is properly recycled.

EBA believes that the first step toward food waste management is to consider all reasonable steps to reduce food waste in the first instance, one of those steps is the implementation of prevention targets for individual product groups, this would allow for tailored indicators and targets to be implemented, providing a more efficient tool to reduce the impact of one specific category. However, some food waste is unavoidable, and this remaining material should be submitted to holistic targets that cover the whole supply chain and account for socio-economic factors. Such target should be met through a fully separated collection of biowaste to avoid any contamination and guarantee the utilization of biowaste for anaerobic digestion; and through special efforts in implementing decentralized waste management, a greater presence of processing facilities near the production site of waste is an important step in meeting the set targets.