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Think. Eat. Save.

World Environment Day and Beyond against Food Waste

[World Environment Day](#) (WED) is an annual event initiated by the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) (UNEP). It aims at being the biggest and most widely celebrated global day to stimulate awareness of the environment and encourage political action. Since its creation in 1972, World Environment Day activities focus on positive environmental actions. They take place year round and climax on 5th June annually, involving all peoples in every part of the globe. This year the theme of World Environment Day celebrations is *Think.Eat.Save*. Behind this slogan lies an anti-food waste and food loss campaign that encourages citizens around the world to reduce their foodprint. In the framework of its Food campaign, the Greens/EFA group is joining UNEP's initiative and answering the Think.Eat.Save. call for action with the launch of our brand new campaign postcards dedicated to food waste.



As everyone counts in World Environment Day initiatives, it's up to you to make it happen! Join the Think.Eat.Save call for action and whatever you do, [tell the world about it!](#) But why the focus on food waste?

Lifestyle imbalances cause devastating effects on the environment

According to the [UN Food and Agriculture Organisation](#) (FAO), every year 1.3 billion tonnes of food, a third of global food production, is wasted. At the same time, 1 in every 7 people in the world go to bed hungry and more than 20,000 children under the age of 5 die daily from hunger. This enormous imbalance in lifestyles and its consequences have devastating effects on the environment. It takes about 1,000 litres of water to produce 1 litre of milk and about 16,000 litres goes into a cow's food to make a hamburger. The resulting greenhouse gas emissions from the cows themselves, and throughout the food supply chain, all

end up in vain when we waste food. At [the European level](#), up to 50% of edible and healthy food gets wasted in EU households, supermarkets, restaurants and along the food supply chain each year, while 79 million EU citizens live below the poverty line and 16 million depend on food aid from charitable institutions.

The Greens/EFA group has called for urgent measures to halve food waste in the EU

On 19th January 2012 the European Parliament (EP) called in a [resolution](#) for urgent measures to halve food waste by 2025 and to improve access to food for needy EU citizens. This EP resolution voted with the support of the Greens/EFA group has raised the need for a convincing EU strategy to systematically tackle the issue. The main issues highlighted in the resolution are the following: - Better education to avoid excessive waste through new awareness campaigns which should be run at both the EU and national levels to inform the public about how to avoid wasting food. To this end, schools and colleges should introduce courses explaining how to store, cook and dispose of food and also exchange best practices to this end. - Proper labelling and packaging giving better information and clarity on expiry dates. First, the European Commission and Member States should ensure that customers understand the difference between labels currently used within the EU i.e. "best before" referring to the quality of the product while "use by" is safety-related. The resolution further suggests the introduction of dual-date labelling to show until when food may be sold (sell-by date) and until when it may be consumed (use-by date). - Public procurement rules of public institutions for catering and hospitality should ensure when possible that contracts are awarded to catering companies that use local produce and give away or redistribute leftover food to poorer people or food banks free of charge, rather than just disposing of it.

So far, the European Commission seems to be heeding the call to limit food waste

Already on 20th September 2011 in the framework of its [roadmap for an effective resource use in Europe](#), the Commission identified food as a key sector where resource efficiency should be improved. It announced that it will further assess how best to limit food waste throughout the food supply chain and that it will seek incentives to halve the disposal of edible food waste in the EU by 2020. The roadmap has also called to develop a communication on sustainable food that will address food waste by the end of 2013. Furthermore it encourages the development of a methodology based on sustainability criteria for the main food products by 2014. The European Commission (EC) has answered the EP resolution with new initiatives that take the existing ones a step further^[1]. A new [website](#) has been launched identifying causes of food waste throughout the entire food chain: from farmers to consumers, not forgetting about the responsibility of the food industry, retailers and caterers. The website also highlights EU [short and longer term actions](#) along with the close involvement of [stakeholders](#) in the Commission's activities on food waste reduction via their participation and contributions to the [Working Group on Food Losses and Food Waste](#) ^[2] set up by DG SANCO. The [second meeting](#) of this kind took place on 8th February 2013, when the discussed topics included in particular the definition of 'food waste', donation of surplus food to food banks, education on food and vegetable waste, short food supply chains and food date labelling. A follow up meeting should take place before the summer holidays. As for the designation of 2014 as European Year against Food Waste, called for by MEPs in the [EP resolution](#), the EC stated that 2014 could be considered as such. However, no official announcement has been made so far. This would confirm EC commitment to improve the situation by strengthening the European campaign on the issue.

The Greens/EFA Food campaign makes the fight against food waste a top priority.

Following up on the EP resolution and EC initiatives, the Greens/EFA group have kept campaigning against food waste in order to open wider new doors for related initiatives at the European level. Too much food produced is wasted all along the food chain, while at the same time, agro-chemical companies and fans of the industrialised food model advocate an increase in production intensity, advocating [sustainable intensification](#) as the answer to feeding an exploding global population. The disappointing outcomes of the [vote on the CAP reform](#) was an unpleasant reminder that the general framework still needs to be

challenged in order to make significant improvements towards a sustainable food system. Want to go further?

From today on!:

The Greens/EFA group holds today, 5th June a conference on innovative food banks as a solution to food waste: 'Finding Food'. The conference will be livestreamed and is available [online here](#).

Movies:

[“Taste the waste”](#) - A german documentary made by **Valentin Thurn** shows you the big picture of the European food waste problem.

Books

[“Waste – Uncovering the global food scandal”](#) gives you a broad picture about the whole issue explaining what are the reasons for wasting food in different sectors and the reason why the whole food related system works in such a way.

Examples of civil society movements:

[Feeding 5k](#) - is a movement created by Tristram Stuart across the UK and recently it had its first appearance overseas in Paris. The main goal besides creating awareness is to “feed 5000 bellies” with food that otherwise would be discarded. The website suggests to sign a pledge in order to approve its message. [Love Food Hate Waste](#) by the Waste and Resources Action Plan (WRAP) - a non-profit organization financed by the UK Government. It provides a lot of information, facts and useful tools about food waste in order to raise awareness on the issue. [Say No to Food Waste](#) aims to make the problem of food waste understandable by raising awareness in different ways: videos, articles, campaigns, blogs and discussions. They have recently launched the campaign ['EU bring back Good Food'](#) to change the current regulation on specific standards on fruits and vegetables [StopTheHunger.com](#) provides facts and regularly updated statistics about hunger and food waste in the world. [European Federation of Food Banks](#) brings together 253 food banks in 21 countries in Europe. Its goal is to give each person in Europe, access to a sufficient and balanced diet, through the fight against waste and call for solidarity.

[1] Recently, on 20-21 March 2013, the European Economic and Social Committee adopted an own initiative Opinion on Civil society's contribution to a strategy for prevention and reduction of food losses and food waste (own-initiative opinion) [CESE 1917/2012 - NAT/570](#) [2] PAN Europe, Slow Food International and BEUC being counted among the stakeholders represented.

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