



Prevent
Waste
Coalition

JOINT LETTER

Joint Letter: Realistic waste reduction targets in the WFD

To the Presidency of the Council of the European Union,

We, the undersigned organisations, are writing once again to communicate the need for and feasibility of more ambitious food waste reduction targets in the ongoing Waste Framework Directive (WFD) revision. It has come to our attention that some Member States have expressed concerns regarding the feasibility of higher targets, as well as the potential economic challenges for different stakeholders along the food supply chain. In light of this, we wrote a [Policy Brief](#) demonstrating that such targets are not only achievable, but also economically beneficial — for large food businesses and SMEs alike.

Here are some key findings:

- The vast majority of food businesses and national sectors are **capable of meeting a 50% target by 2030**, and all are comfortably able to meet targets of 30–40%
- The [Dutch retail sector](#), for example, achieved a waste reduction rate of 4.4%¹ per year between 2018–2022 (compatible with a 40% target). Other national sectors achieved similar favourable results.
- [Kellogg Company's global manufacturing operations](#) achieved a 7% reduction rate per year between 2016–2022 (compatible with a 50% target). Other businesses achieved similar favourable results.
- **Investment in food waste reduction results in a staggering positive return**, with an average cost-benefit ratio for businesses of 14:1.

Both Member States and food businesses — including producers — are more than capable of meeting higher targets, especially if mandated through the WFD. Ambitious, legally-binding targets stimulate innovation, encouraging actors to find new ways of minimising their waste.

The current food waste targets proposed for processing and manufacturing are unjustifiably low, and we urgently call for these targets to be raised in line with those for other sectors. Toine Timmermans, former coordinator for EU FUSIONS and EU REFRESH, stresses that the target for manufacturing “should certainly be set far higher than 10% — a target this low won’t give incentives to the sector to speed up actions and is a huge missed opportunity”.

The UK has achieved over 25% reduction in manufacturing and processing food waste over 10 years, showing at least this level is achievable. Many manufacturers have achieved food waste reductions in line with 40% or 50% reductions, and many more are committed to halving their food waste by 2030.

There is a robust economic and business case for companies, countries, and cities to reduce food waste, and thus for higher food waste reduction targets to be introduced. A [comprehensive study](#) from 2017 analysing a diverse mix of 1,200 companies across 17 countries revealed that 99% of them reported a positive return on

¹ Only 5% per year is needed to reach the “50% reductions by 2030” target, using 2020 as a baseline.

investment in food waste reduction. On average, **businesses achieved a cost-benefit ratio of 14:1**. To put this in perspective, findings from the UK show that for every £1 invested in food waste reduction efforts, households and local authorities saved £250. Considering that the EU FUSIONS estimate of the cost of food waste for EU countries is €143 billion, it is reasonable to assume that billions of euros could be saved from higher food waste reduction. **Hesitancy from policymakers only serves to keep these savings locked up and unexploited.**

For these reasons, one would be wrong to believe that businesses have little to gain from reducing food waste, **since less waste would mean huge cost savings for them**. Furthermore, effective policy interventions are necessary to address cross-supply chain issues and **unlock these potential savings**. Currently, food waste often results from actions taken by one entity, while the costs are borne by others. These externalities exemplify market failures. For instance, supermarket policies, such as cosmetic rejections and unfair trading practices (e.g., last-minute order cancellations), contribute to food waste among their suppliers. This is a reason why we also **strongly recommend measuring (mature) unharvested food waste among primary producers**, which would better detect these kinds of practices by other actors along the food value chain.

We therefore **strongly urge the Belgian Presidency to resist any demands by Member States to lower the Council's ambition below the already insufficient targets of the EU Commission's proposal in anticipation of the coming trilogues with the EU Parliament**. Instead, the Presidency should ensure that this historic opportunity for the EU to become a global leader in preventing food waste is fully realised. Moreover, policymakers have a great and dire responsibility to act according to facts and safeguard the future of the citizens they represent.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to the Belgian Presidency playing a pivotal role in shaping a more sustainable and prosperous future for all Europeans.

We remain at your disposal should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

The members of the Prevent Waste Coalition on Food Waste



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