



Adopting the principles of the circular economy in the context of food waste - an essential premise for prevention and combatting

Legal framework / measures to combat food waste, in Romania



- The orientation towards new development models, based on the principles of economic circularity, is becoming more and more a way to efficient resource management, including within the agri-food industry, economic circularity being closely linked to environmental economics, industry ecology, and technological innovation, application of reuse and recycling of resources
- In line with Romania's long-term vision of developing a sustainable and competitive agri-food sector, focused on the export of value-added products, sustainable in terms of global climate change challenges, the priority objective of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) is that of supporting, through its policies, the development of an efficient agriculture in order to ensure the food security of the population.
- Food waste, as a major challenge of modern society, likely to affect food security, worldwide, through economic, environmental and social implications, causes major concerns and efforts and requires a complex approach.
- Adopting the principles of the circular economy in tackling food waste is probably the best way to solve this problem. Numerous initiatives have been implemented worldwide for decades to avoid food waste, however, most states have focused on food redistribution. Therefore, food donation should always be encouraged and will remain a key factor in reducing food waste.
- Achieving the goal of reducing food waste by 50% by 2030, as assumed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, requires the development and implementation of national policies to prevent food waste by responsible authorities, with the involvement of civil society, academia and business.

Resource efficiency to help combat food waste



Romania was among the first EU states that regulated the legal framework specific to the field of food waste, at national level, which proves the interest and responsibility of the competent institutions in this field.

An adequate regulation and adapted to the specifics and national particularities for combating the phenomenon of food waste, is the fundamental premise for streamlining and materializing efforts in this direction.

The specific legal framework for reducing food waste in Romania - Law no. 217/2016 on reducing food waste, adopted in 2016, has undergone a series of amendments / completions / changes, in order to improve the implementation of the food donation mechanism.

It is important to note that, the new amendments to the legislative framework on food waste has made possible the inclusion of food banks within the list of recipient operators, leading to a substantially increasing of the amount of donated food.





- As complementary measures, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR), as a central public authority, with legal prerogatives in the implementation of specific legislation in the field of food waste, has also undertaken non-legislative activities, such as:
 1. The approval and financing, within the Sector Plan 2019-2022, of the ADER Project 18.1.2 - “Methods to reduce food waste on the agri-food chain, at national level, in order to prevent and reduce the socio-economic impact, by 2030”, whose results will set up the establishment of public policies to prevent and reduce socio-economic impacts, education, information and awareness policies by 2030, as well as the development of an integrated package to support innovative methods of reducing waste, with the implementation of a responsible attitude towards the food resources used
 2. conducting information / awareness / education campaigns for the final consumers, aiming to change, in the future, the consumer’s behavior, which can be observed throughout the agri-food chain and will contribute to the achievement of global goals on reducing food waste

In this regard, MADR concluded with the responsible public authorities, at national level, respectively with the Ministry of Education and Research, the Department for Sustainable Development within the General Secretariat of the Government), as well as with other entities-organizations for consumer protection and stakeholders (INFOCONS Association, IKEA ROMANIA SA) collaboration protocols / partnerships regarding the realization of information and education campaigns for consumers.

Resource efficiency to help combat food waste



MADR also benefits from the collaboration and support of European forums / authorities, respectively FAO, with which it has concluded an agreement that allows it to use in information and education programs an educational package published in 2019, called: Do Good : Save Food! Educating future generations for a world with zero food waste, which includes four books, by age groups, respectively, 5-7 years, 8-9 years, 10-13 years and, 14+.

As a quantification of food waste in Romania, according to existing studies, about 2.55 million tons of food are thrown away every year, meaning over 350 grams of food per day, which means about 129 kg / capita per year.

Of the 129 kg / capita wasted annually, 24% is cooked food, 22% - fruit, 21% - vegetables, 20% - bakery products, 11% - dairy products and 1% - meat.

The greatest waste of food is recorded in urban areas: while rural communities use traditional methods of capitalizing on food waste in the household, in urban areas over 95% of waste reach the landfill.





Data on the dimensions of food waste on the agri-food supply chain, were available to our authority from the National Research and Development Institute for Food Bioresources – IBA , Bucharest, as the result of the project mentioned before, following quantitative impact studies, expressed as share of waste in the annual volume of products, as follows:

- **on the primary agricultural production - 4.20%**
- **on the food processing link - 3.79%**
- **on the distribution / retail link - 0.86%**
- **on the public catering link - 8.63%**
- **at the level of household consumers - 5.43%.**

Consequently, given that the costs of food waste are borne by society as a whole and they led to a significantly reduction of the natural resources, we consider that it is important to continuously improve policy convergence and coherence for the development of a sound financial and behavioral regulatory framework.