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## SOTEU 2023



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On 13 September 2023, the President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen addressed the annual State of the European Union at the European Parliament and MEPs had the chance to ask questions. While she addressed many important issues such as Ukraine, the European Green Deal, the economy, China and Artificial Intelligence, it is worth highlighting the topics of agriculture, food security and poverty.

On the topic of agriculture and food, she emphasized the need for a sustainable food system as well as supporting farmers and addressing food insecurity. When it comes to social issues, she touched on employment as well as the need for cooperation with social partners, declaring to convene a new Social Partner Summit at Val Duchesse.

# European Commission's work programme for 2024 lists none of the remaining EU sustainable food files

According to files received by [Euractiv](#) none of the remaining EU sustainable food files are included in the work programme for 2024, confirming stakeholders' worst fears that these proposals will not be up for discussion before next June's EU elections. The work programme, entitled 'Delivering today and preparing for tomorrow', outlines the Commission's plans for which proposals it intends to put forward and when – however there is no mention of the remaining key agrifood files. This is a very timely concern in EU policymaking, as anything that is not discussed before the June elections might not be relevant in the next Commission and Parliament.

The notable absences include the sustainable food systems law, a key element of the EU's flagship Farm to Fork (F2F) strategy and a central pillar of the Green Deal, which aims to accelerate and facilitate the transition to sustainable food systems.

Previously, stakeholders published a [joint open letter](#) on the need to publish the EU legislative framework for Sustainable Food Systems before the end of this Commission's mandate.

## Social Protection Committee Annual Report

The [annual report](#) by the [Social Protection Committee](#) examines social conditions and social protection policies across the EU. This year's report – issued on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty – focused on the energy and cost of living crisis. Price rises had a negative impact on households' purchasing power, especially for lower income families and individuals. The report indicated that despite instabilities in the market due to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, employment continued to expand, and the level of poverty and social exclusion remained broadly stable at the EU level, at 21.6% of the population in 2022 (compared to 21.7% in 2021).

When it comes to higher energy costs, prices rose from February 2022, initially driven by energy price rises, but pressures broadened as higher energy costs passed through to food, services and other goods. This had an impact on households' purchasing power, especially for lower income families who spend a higher fraction of their income on energy and food. This was also reflected in a slight rise in material and social deprivation in Europe.

Specifically, households' purchasing power was alleviated through the effect of income support measures put in place to lower the impact of high inflation. The report underlines the importance of the measures to preserve households' purchasing power, while continued efforts are called for on strengthening social policies from early ages to the working age population, long-term care, pensions, and healthcare, as well as access to essential services and housing.

Social protection and inclusion policies supported by social investment to ensure fair growth, further improve the resilience of economies and societies and reduce the risks for vulnerable households and individuals, including those related to the green and digital transitions should be made a priority according to the report.



## Revision of the Waste Framework Directive in the ENV Council

On 16 October, the Environment Ministers gathered in Luxembourg for the Environment Council. The ministers were briefed on the targeted amendment to the Waste Framework Directive, focusing on food and textile waste with the presence of Commissioner for the Environment, Virginijus Sinkevičius, who gave a brief presentation of the proposal.

In the food sector, new provisions were introduced, setting a deadline of 2030 for waste reduction and sorting throughout the food chain, including processing, production, distribution, restaurants, and households. The goal was to achieve a 30% reduction in waste compared to 2020 levels. This proposal was presented in June 2023 and made available to member states for analysis and consideration. FEBA's position can be found [here](#).

Regarding food waste, the initiative supported the EU's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, targeting global food waste at retail and consumption levels by 2030. The proposal set binding food waste reduction targets for member states to achieve by 2030. Progress on food waste reduction would be reviewed by the end of 2027, allowing adjustments to the ambition towards and beyond 2030. Interventions were made by the representatives of Netherlands, France, and Hungary, welcoming the initiative.

# Social Innovation Forum

From 26 to 27 October 2023, the Social Innovation Forum took place in Brussels, hosting the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation: ESF+ Communities of Practice. The objectives were to build a **common understanding of social innovation and social experimentation across European Member States** and to identify synergies and cross-cutting topics among different Communities of Practice (CoPs) and remind them of the essential aim of the ESF+ Social Innovation+ Initiative: to scale up and transfer social innovations and to strengthen connections among different actors in the field of social innovation.

This event brought together primarily ESF+ managing authorities from across the EU, as well as members of the following five CoPs:

- Social Innovation
- Employment, Education and Skills
- Social Inclusion
- Migrant Integration
- Material Support

The event focused on future activities, cooperation, and links between CoPs while highlighting the essential aim of the ESF+ SI+ Initiative: upscaling and transferring social innovation. Providing ample opportunities for networking and exchanging ideas was also an important part of the forum.

The event was also an opportunity to organise the first **onsite meeting of the CoP on Material Support** which focused the discussion on the role of accompanying measures, identifying challenges and opportunities as well as exchanging best practices.



# International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste

The UN recognises the importance of reducing food loss and waste. On 19 December 2019, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 74/209 proclaiming an International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste.

The IDAFLW will be held at a time when the global economy faces tremendous strain from climate change, conflicts, slowdowns and downturns and high food prices exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the on-going war in Ukraine. Action is required to transform agrifood systems globally, to improve their resilience, efficiency, sustainability, and inclusiveness in ways that positively impact food security, enable healthy diets, and contribute to better nutritional outcomes. Reducing food loss and waste contributes to enhancing the sustainability and resilience of our agrifood systems (FAO,2021).

The European Commission welcomed this initiative and joined FAO, UNEP, and other relevant organisations. **Reducing food loss and waste is an integral part of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy, and environmentally friendly food system.** To accelerate the EU's progress towards this goal, the Commission proposed to set legally binding food waste reduction targets to be achieved by Member States by 2030, as part of the revision of the Waste Framework Directive: Member States shall reduce food waste by 10% in processing and manufacturing, and by 30% (per capita) jointly at retail and consumption (restaurants, food services and households).



# Food, No Waste

FEBA supported the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste to be observed for the fourth time on 29 September 2023.

Some FEBA Members decided to take action to reduce food loss and waste towards transforming agrifood systems, organising a variety of initiatives.

- Food Bank Greece ran a public awareness campaign on food waste on its digital communication channels
- FoodCloud shared the details about their carbon calculator project, as well as insights from Deirdre Timmons of PwC about the Corporate Sustainability Responsibility Directive, and the new European Sustainability Reporting Standards.
- Matsentralen Norge planned 3 projects for the IDAFLW, a collaboration with influencers, a collaboration with TGTG and Matvett, and organised a food waste-seminar for Food Banks in Norway, Sweden, and the UK in Oslo in the days before the IDAFLW.
- Federação Portuguesa dos Bancos Alimentares developed a film as well as an event that brought together the various sectors of the food chain and promoted a debate on the topic.
- Federația Băncilor pentru Alimente din România distributed materials created together with two partners, Kaufland and Nestlé Romania. The Regional Food Banks, mainly in Brasov, Cluj, Oradea, and Timisoara, organised many events for the purpose of awareness raising, appearances on local TV and radio stations, and publication of press releases.



# A multi-stakeholder perspective on food loss and waste reduction strategies

The International Food Loss and Waste Awareness Day, on 29 September, highlights a challenge that requires knowledge and the involvement of various fields of expertise and actors. In line with this, the Valencia World Sustainable Urban Food Centre (CEMAS), in collaboration with the European Food Information Council (EUFIC), organised a high-level event on 3 October 2023 in Valencia.

The event, held under the framework of the Spanish Presidency to the European Council, aimed to bring together diverse stakeholders and experts, including universities, civil society, local, regional, national, and European authorities, city networks, and FAO, in a day dedicated to sharing valuable knowledge, and raising awareness.

City Networks and their key role in tackling food loss and waste was the focus of this event. FEBA was represented by Angela Frigo, Secretary General, and she actively in panel discussions and in particular in the sub-group on civil society.



CEMAS



Diputació de València



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# World Food Day

The World Food Day took place on the 16 October 2023 with the theme of 'Water is life, water is food. Leave no one behind.' raising awareness on the role of water in the food system. Water is essential to life on Earth.

#WorldFoodDay 2023 shined a spotlight on water as the foundation for life and food. The campaign raised awareness worldwide about the importance of managing water wisely as the availability of this precious resource is threatened by rapid population growth urbanization, economic development, and climate change.

Today, 2.4 billion people live in water-stressed countries. Many are smallholder farmers who already struggle to meet their daily needs, particularly women, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and refugees.

World Food Day 2023 looks at solutions to produce more food and other essential agricultural commodities with less water, while ensuring water is distributed equally, protecting the aquatic food system without leaving anyone behind. Governments, the private sector, academia, farmers and civil society and individuals need to work together towards a food and water secure world and make a difference.



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