

Europe's food industry has set its sights on reducing food loss and food waste with the hopes of improving sustainability across the supply chain. 

The “Every Crumb Counts” declaration, launched Tuesday in Brussels, outlines a 12-point pledge directed at educating consumers, improving public policy and informing best practices.

The initiative cites the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's estimate that about a third of food for human consumption is lost or wasted along the supply chain. Such "wastage" - lost or wasted food meant specifically for human consumption - is tied to increased problems with world hunger and unnecessary greenhouse gases.

The goals of the declaration seek to complement the European Commission's aim to cut edible food waste in half by 2020 as outlined in the flagship initiative "A resource-efficient Europe."

The 10 current signatories include Freshfel, the European Potato Trade Association, FoodServiceEurope and FoodDrinkEurope.

"By adopting this declaration, we wish to set a benchmark in the global fight against food wastage. We do this because it is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the food chain. In doing so, we will contribute towards the EU's goal of achieving a resource efficient economy and a sustainable food chain," the declaration states.

The document outlines a five-part hierarchy of wastage reduction, beginning with prevention and working down the chain through redirection to feed people, redirection to feed animals and industrial use, recovery and disposal.

General delegate of Freshfel Europe, Philippe Binard, spoke on the importance of the initiative and the need for support on all levels.

"Food wastage is a highly complex issue which requires the involvement of all partners in the supply chain in order to tackle it effectively and not just shift it further up or down in the chain. This has been the key driver for Freshfel's participation in the Joint Declaration," he said at the initiative's launch.

"There's no silver bullet solution, but we hope the increased awareness and exchange of best practices within the fruit and vegetable category will help to reduce the level of wastage across the chain."

FoodDrinkEurope has also released an online toolkit for food manufacturers to support the declaration. It provides guidance on identifying, preventing and reducing food wastage.

The toolkit adds an additional goal of exploring new markets and better food recycling practices to promote economic growth.

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