RETASTE Conference Abstracts
RETASTE-PLW-1459-In-person Poster
Rethymno, September 16-18, 2026
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DOI:10.5281/zenodo.23678362

Policies on Primary Production Food Loss: How Do Regions Adapt to European and National Frameworks?

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Abstract

Each year, a substantial amount of food loss (FL) is generated at the primary production stage, contributing to food insecurity, natural resource depletion, greenhouse gas emissions and pressure on land and water. While the European Union (EU) has been active in improving monitoring and prevention of food waste (FW) in post-harvest stages of the food supply chain (FSC) over the past decade, there is yet little understanding and knowledge of the amounts of and drivers behind FL at pre-harvest and harvest stage, as well as of food remaining unharvested or left in the field. EU policies are characterized by a lack of definition of the term as well as the setting up of a measurement and reporting system and mandatory reduction targets for FL which is also reflected in national and regional policies of its Member States (MS). However, several EU Member States and regions have started to work on developing national and regional plans to prevent FL and FW along the FSC. The EU Horizon Europe project FOLOU (Bringing knowledge and consensus to prevent and reduce FL at the primary production stage) has followed closely some countries to understand how the EU countries are working towards the prevention of FL and FW. Examples of good practices among MS include Spain and the region of Catalonia, which have developed binding FLW legislation and Belgium and the region of Flanders, relying mainly on a voluntary approach. While being among the first countries having introduced a definition of food surplus, partly including FL into its legislation, Italy and the region of Tuscany have focused their policies on FW reduction since. The study focuses on how national and public bodies adopt EU legal framework and how the different national and regional perspectives can help to prevent food loss at primary production. And most important, how regional governments align their policies in the context of national regulations. Overall, the assessment revealed a need for an integrative approach covering production losses, FL and FW along the whole value chain. Considering the latest amendment of the EU Waste Framework Directive and the creation of the Farm Sustainability Data Network policy action on FL and FW is expected to gain significant traction over the next years. Great efforts will be needed on harmonizing data collection and fostering collaboration among European, national and regional scales to align the policies that lead to a sustainable food system.

Keywords: Food Loss, policy, primary production, EU, Catalonia

References

Héctor Barco Cobalea, who is also presenting another FOLOU project abstract in an oral session, will

present this abstract in the form of a printed poster.

Acknowledgments: This work was carried out within the framework of the FOLOU project, funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101084106.

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