

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN FOOD SYSTEM

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## **Abstract**

*This report focuses on food and food security in the context of sustainable development. The trend of food waste is constantly increasing. The focus is on prevention activities, protection measures, food safety and other factors. It is necessary to provide sustenance for the increasing number of inhabitants of the planet. In the conditions of membership in the European Union, the achievement of the set goals in the period after 2020 is of essential importance for the applied policy in the agricultural sector of Bulgaria, and more specifically: ensuring food security for the population, manifested in viable food production; maintaining and creating employment; achieving balanced territorial development; introduction of innovative agricultural technologies; protection of the environment and organization of environmentally friendly animal breeding activity; reducing the impact of climate change and adapting to it and others.*

**Key words:** sustainable development, agricultural sector, food security, food safety.

**JEL:** Q18, O13

## **Introduction**

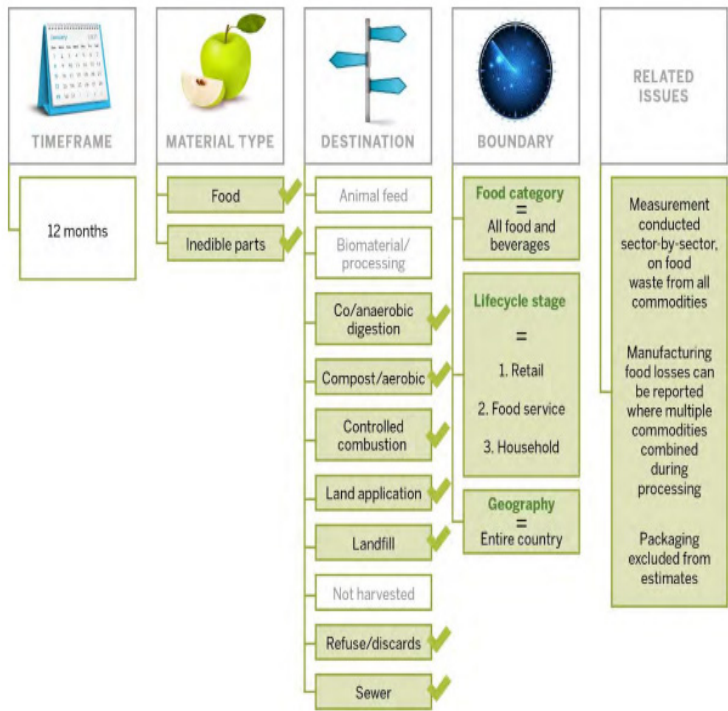
Food production guarantees the food security of over 400 million European citizens. However, the problem boils down to the entrenched food model. On the one hand, over 50% of Europeans are overweight. On the other hand, it is necessary to reduce food loss and waste. The solution is sought in the reformation of the common European agricultural policy - through the development of sustainable agricultural practices. In this direction, attention is directed to the implementation of the goals set in the “from the farm to the table” strategy. The limitations are in terms of indicators for measuring sustainability from production to consumption. There is a need to find ways to reduce food loss and food waste. The expected result is the achievement of a sustainable European food system - a modernized food chain, ensuring safe food and protection of people and nature.

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Exhibition

The food system can be represented as a system that supplies food to the population and is committed to their safe consumption. The requirements are reduced to the following three aspects: social aspect; economic aspect and environmental aspect. An index known as the Food Waste Index – Figure 1 – is used to measure the amount of food waste.



Source: UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2021

Figure 1: Definitions of food waste used for the Food Waste Index

The „from farm to table“ strategy presented on May 20, 2020 sets the ambitious goal of changing the European food system and turning it into a sustainable model (European Council, Council of the European Union, 2023). The stated strategy aims at a change in the ways of production, purchase and consumption of food. The aim is to reduce the negative effect on the climate. At the European level, the amounts of food waste are presented in Table 1.



Meat consumption in the European Union is 31%, compared to 15% in Bulgaria. (European Parliament, 2021). The payment possibility of the population is also related to the generation of the amount of food waste – table 2.

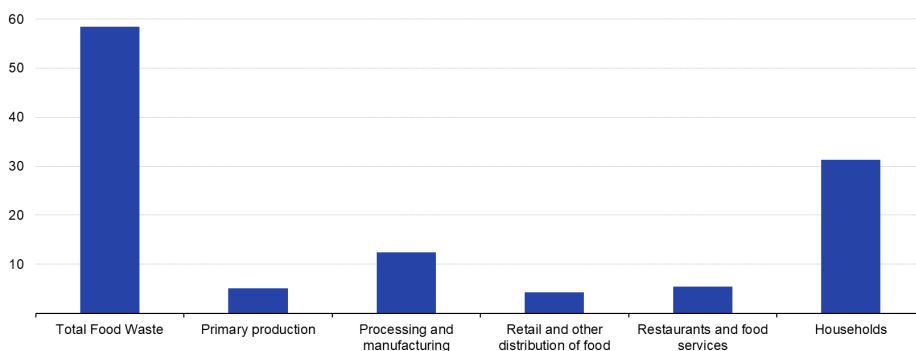
**Table 2:** Food waste quantity by sector for the period 2020-2021

Sector	Food waste			
	2020		2021	
	Quantity (kg per inhabitant)	Share (%)	Quantity (kg per inhabitant)	Share (%)
Households	70	53	70	54
Retail and other distribution of food	9	7	9	7
Restaurants and food services	12	9	12	9
Primary production	14	11	11	8
Processing and manufacturing	26	20	28	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>130*</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Autor

Note: A certain discrepancy with the publicly disclosed data was found ([ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Food\\_waste\\_and\\_food\\_waste\\_prevention\\_-\\_estimates](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Food_waste_and_food_waste_prevention_-_estimates))

From the data in the table, it is clear that more than 50% of the amount of food waste is generated in households, followed by the processing sector, etc. Schematically, the data for the year 2021 of the estimated amounts of food waste (tones/fresh mass) are presented in Figure 2.



*Source:* Eurostat

**Figure 2:** Food waste estimations in the European Union (million tones/fresh mass), 2021

The amounts of food waste from selected sectors and the amounts of food offered on the European market remain relatively constant - table 3.

**Table 3:** Food waste quantity (kg per inhabitant)

Food waste amounts for selected sectors		Estimated consumed food		Food supply quantity, FAO	
2020	2021	2020	2021	2019	2020
91	92	788	784	879	876

*Source:* Autor

Note: selected sectors for food waste: “Retail and other distribution of food”, “Restaurants and food services” and “Households”

Data: Eurostat and FAO

According to data from the United Nations, 10% of the world’s population is hungry - about 800 million people worldwide. An estimated 735 million people faced hunger in 2022. This represents an increase of 122 million people from 2019.

## Conclusion

To prevent food insecurity at the European level, efforts are needed to reduce the amount of food waste, and more specifically:

First. It is necessary to increase the level of awareness after the public and private sector and civil society.

Second. Correct interpretation of waste measurement definitions between sectors.

Third. Development of guidelines for the utilization of surplus amounts of food, to prevent the formation of food waste, including of unused and underutilized ones.

Fourth. Revision of the common European agricultural policy in its part of subsidizing production in the agrarian sector.

## References

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