

Report on A Strategy for the Prevention and Reduction of Food Waste, Malta

The Palace Hotel Sliema – Friday 21 November 2014

The Conference on **The Prevention and Reduction of Food Waste** was organised by 142the Association for Consumer Rights, Malta and the National Council of Women, Malta. The Conference was addressed by Hon Minister Leo Brincat, Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change. The Maltese Government is currently launching a Strategy on Sustainable Development with particular reference to Waste Management and Prevention of Food Waste. He spoke about the importance of sustainable development, with particular reference to the environment and climate change. He outlined the main components of the strategy that will address investing in prevention through education and training, inclusion of sustainable development themes in the National School Curriculum and educating the public. Referring specifically to food waste he spoke about the need to address the root causes through a holistic approach from production to consumption, including the intermediary stages of processing and distribution.

Panel 1: Moderator Grace Attard, ACR General Secretary and EESC Bureau member

The first speaker, researcher Ms Ondine Gaerty, made a presentation on The Environmental Impact of Food Waste and the Effects of Awareness Campaigns. The study, which included data and statistics from a global perspective highlighted aspects such as the food wastage footprint, the carbon footprint, the water footprint and land use. The research highlighted the role of consumers and the need for more responsible consumption patterns.

Dr . Hadrian Bonello delivered the presentation by Dr Anthony Gatt who had airport difficulties and could not return to Malta on time. The presentation explained the importance of the three Rs – Reduce, Recycle, Reuse

Statistics regarding food waste reveal that

- Europe: >100 million tones of FW per year *
- Europe: >40% is wasted at retail & consumer levels *
- Maltese throw away >22% of purchased food **
- Food waste generation in Maltese households – 55.8%
- 75.7 tones food stuffs destroyed in Malta - 2012 **

Up to 84% of all household waste can be recycled

Dr Bonello also explained Managing Food Stores and Planning with regards to Food Shelf Life which often are not understood with regards to *Use by date* and *Best before date or best by date*

Ms Marie Briguglio, Department of Economics, University of Malta, PhD candidate made a presentation entitled: *Reduction of Food Waste: The Carrot or The Stick*, during which she addressed household waste from an environmental, social and economic aspect as well as current and future demographics. She presented a number of options that households need to consider in order to reduce costs and bring about social change in attitudes and practice

The next speaker Ms **Jeanette Borg Director Merril Tours Agro Tourism** and lecturer at the MCAST Vocational College made a presentation on *The Role of Agriculture in Malta and Waste Reduction*. The presentation gave an overview of developments of agriculture in Malta, its impact on the environment, health, food security, medicine, recreation, knowledge and

traditions. Referring to the three Rs, she spoke about aspects of waste to resource and how Malta is developing agri waste to agri riches which is also part of our tradition

Panel 2: Moderator Grace Attard, NCW, EESC

The keynote speaker **Dilyana Slavova, President of the EESC Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment** made a presentation on *Food Waste as a Main Challenge of the EU Food Consumption and Production from an EESC perspective*. The study provided statistics on the effects of food waste on the population from an EU and Global perspective and how the reduction of food waste is a significant step in combating hunger in the world. An analysis of food losses in the EU revealed that in industrialised countries, food waste is as high as in developing countries, throughout the whole food chain. She highlighted the need to identify and address the causes of food waste. The presentation also included a range of initiatives that the EESC is taking, from further research, to campaigns, to exhibitions and to an own initiative opinions on food waste, submitted to the EU Commission (*NAT/570 Prevention and reduction of food waste*)

In the EU Commission Roadmap to a resource efficient Europe, several steps have been taken amongst which are measures to assess how best to limit waste throughout the food supply chain, (2013) developing a methodology for sustainability criteria (2014,)among others

In conclusion the presentation highlighted a number of best practices at global, national and local level, that can be adapted, encouraging Member States to address food waste in their National Waste Prevention Programmes . This can only be effectively done through the combined efforts of different stakeholders , farmers, the food industry, retailers, consumers and government with set targets and deadlines

The next speaker, **Mr Joe Attard, Representative of the GRTU, (General Retailers and Traders Union)** made a presentation on *The Role of Food Industrialised and Food Services for a Sustainable Strategy*. He explained that a Sustainability GOAL involved all citizens as well as Government , Social partners, producers and retailers to enable citizens to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the life of future generations . Corporate Social Responsibility Is essential to business contribution to sustainable development, which involves social, economic and environmental issues. He also spoke about a number of challenges that Malta faces and the need for a sustainable strategy.

Ms Mary Gaerty, Director of Green Skips Group and NCW President made a presentation on The Challenges in Managing Food Waste. She described the process of recycling and reusing waste. She also gave a detailed explanation on how households can make better use of compost with more modern facilities

Dr Vince Caruana, Centre for Environmental Education and Research at the University of Malta spoke about *Education for All Ages: effective communication*

The presentation offered some very important concepts and quotations “We have to transform our relationship with food, as a first step towards transforming political, economic and social policies. The personal and political are two sides of the same coin

“Businesses need to know there will be a continual source of food waste coming before they’re going to make an investment in building things like anaerobic digesters,” says Dana Gunders, staff scientist with Natural Resource Defense Fund. “I’m all for composting,” says Rauch, “But the absolutely best thing is to reduce the amount of food waste generated. Then distribute it to

people who need it. Third is to distribute it to animals that we're going to eat because it's a better use of what's already committed in the carbon footprint. Next is composting and anaerobic digestion, and last is landfill which is the worst thing you can do."

In concluding he stated that we need to communicate, to organise and build a popular movement to put pressure on governments and businesses to change their ways

Conclusions and recommendations

At EU level

Given the urgency in dealing with the Issue of Food Waste, the Conference recommends

- That the EESC Group Three Various Interests Group present to the European Commission a **proposal to designate a European Year to the Prevention and Reduction of Food Waste**
- The EU Commission to draw up an informed and transparent framework to meet the increasing global demands without compromising sustainability
- That the EU Commission works in partnership with social partners and stakeholders for Sustainable European Food Consumption and Production
- The need for a definition and a Common EU methodology to quantify food losses and food waste
- Increase political will by setting agendas and goals
- Address the falling resources of food banks and the increasing demand for services.

At Member State level

- The inclusion of training on this topic in the curriculum and ongoing training for food service professionals as well as in establishments for packaging designers
- More effective communication with consumers on accurate data of the causes of waste
- The sharing of initiatives of best practices that have already been taken in various member States aimed at recovering locally unsold discarded products in order to distribute them to groups of citizens below the minimum income threshold
- Processors and retailers to develop guidelines to address avoidable food waste and to implement greater resource efficiency in their section of the food chain
- The need to communicate, to organise and build a popular movement to put pressure on governments and businesses to change their ways
- That retailers engage with food distribution programmes for citizens who lack purchasing power and to implement measures allowing products nearing expiry date to be discounted
- The need for more and clear information on Managing Food Stores and Planning with regards to Food Shelf Life which is often not understood
- Addressing habits of excess food buying
- The need of encouraging Member States to address food waste in their National Waste Prevention Programmes. This can only be effectively done through the combined efforts of different stakeholders, farmers, the food industry, retailers, consumers and government with set targets and deadlines

In line with the Conference, a Poster Competition entitled ‘Wasting Food is Wasting the Planet: Love Food Hate Waste’ for children aged between 8 and 13 years was organised for State, Private and Church Schools. The aim of the competition was to motivate the participation and creativity of the children and youth interested in gathering knowledge and develop action plans to combat food waste. Through this initiative, the National Council of Women, Environment Committee and the Association for Consumer Rights participated in the European Week for Waste Reduction from the 22nd November 2014 till the 30th November 2014. The Award-Giving ceremony was held at the NCW Centre on Saturday 29 November 2014. The Prize awarded to the first winner was sponsored by EESC Bureau Member Grace Attard