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## **"Transforming Food Waste into a Resource"**

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A warm welcome to all participants and special thanks to Professor Segré, from the University of Bologna, and to all speakers for being here today and talk about the important issue of food waste.

The initiative of today is one of the many initiatives organised this year on the issue of food waste, and an important occasion that it involves members of the European Parliament, representatives from the European Commission and stakeholders all aiming at tracing one common action for a joint declaration tackling food waste.

The "Black book on food waste in Italy", on the initiative of the University of Bologna, estimates that every day, in Italy, the 40% of fruits, vegetables and meat are wasted. Similarly, the estimates coming from other countries show a common European trend.

In Great Britain, every year 18 tonnes of perfectly edible food is thrown away, this accounting for an annual cost of 10 billion pounds. In Sweden, each family trashes on average the 25 % of the purchased food. According to a report processed by the Commission which appeared just two days ago, every year 179 kilos of food per person are thrown away in the 27 European Union member countries.

The causes are to be detected along the entire food supply chain, from farms to consumers: agricultural productions remaining in the fields; products withdrawn from the market because the price is so low that it is not enough to overcome the harvest's costs; food exceeding in restaurants and in a consumer context.

Not all wasted food can be restored; this means that one part is inevitably and permanently lost, but a large quantity of food can still be consumed. "Losses" have dramatic socio-economic and environmental impacts-the latter in terms of carbon emissions and water consumption.

To save one part of this waste could have great benefits, mostly on a social and environmental level, as shown by the Italian experience of Last Minute Market, a spin off of the University of Bologna, with its actions of food recovery and redistribution for solidarity.

The year 2010 is the European Year against Poverty and in Italy we waste food enough to feed a large country as Spain, so we must feel obliged to put more thought on how an efficient food distribution would contribute and combat social exclusions and poverty in Europe.

But the waste issue it is not only a question of poverty, it is related to one of the major global challenges: food security. In these days the Agriculture Committee is engaged in a discussion over an own-initiative report on the food safety, highlighting a number of concerns affecting the entire planet today, concerns linked to the imbalance between the global food demand and the food supply.

In fact, the progressive rise in consumptions, particularly in some areas of the world, may lead to a scenario where food is destined to become a scarce and costly resource. According to UN estimates, the world's population will have exceeded 9 billion by the year 2050. Such population growth and the increase of incomes of large part of population will be matched by the increase in food demand, and it will be required a food production the 70 % higher than the current one.

To decrease food waste is not the only way to tackle this problem, but it can be an important way to make clear to the consumers why a sustainable approach to food is important.

In the year 2008 -in the context of the Waste Framework Directive- the European Parliament had submitted a request for a report on the issue of bio-waste (including food waste). This report finally appeared two days ago, and now we call for the preparation of a legislative proposal on the part of the Commission with respect to this issue.

First of all, more comprehensive data concerning food waste across the European territory are needed, so as to be able to set ambitious objectives aimed at reducing food waste (in the joint declaration we request the 50% by the year 2025).

We also call for a label system that takes more into account the difference between "best before" and "use by" indications, thus making clear to consumers the difference between commercial expiry and the sanitary expiry.

Finally, I believe the institution of a "European Year against Food Waste" could be important, to make the public opinion aware of the problem, and put policies tackling food waste into practice.

The joint declaration on food waste that we want to subscribe today must be the first step toward a common action on the part of us all, aiming to the prevention and reduction of the food waste global level.

