**ITALY**



***MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION***

***inter-ministerial committee for human rights***

**ITALY’S REPLY TO**

**HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD: REDUCING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

***March 2021***

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Further to your query, we are in a position to provide the following remarks, for your information only:

At the outset, Italy would like to express a comment with reference to the wording in the title of this document, given its deep concern for the classification of food as “healthy” or “unhealthy”.

On the grounds of scientific evidence, all the nutrients needed for a healthy life shall be provided by a ‘healthy diet’. As such, Italy believes that the reference to “healthy food” can be misleading, given that there is no scientific definition and/or classification of healthy/unhealthy foods.

Moreover, such wording does not belong to the agreed language of the UN (e.g. the High Level meeting on non-communicable diseases declaration 2018) and insists on an arbitrary approach and judgment on specific foods, which should be promoted or rather be blamed in view of their asserted impact on local and traditional foods.

Instead, Italy believes that the sustainable values relating to food, especially for the agricultural workers and producers, shall be enhanced by reinforcing the cultural values of local/traditional diets, the rituals of food preparation and meal sharing.

Therefore, Italy requests to modify the wording used in the title to reflect the agreed conclusion that a healthy lifestyle does not imply the banning or blaming of specific foods, but rather comprises many elements, including a healthy and varied diet, physical activity, social interaction, cultural and religious values, etc.

More specifically, Italy also believes that a first step to address the general objective of ‘sustainable food supply chain’ is the implementation of measures that help to reduce/avoid food waste and food losses, and- towards this end- the measures implemented by the Italian Ministry of Environment are:.

Following the current Italian legislation, food waste shall be handled in accordance with the general waste management hierarchy. Owing to that, the primary focus of food waste prevention should be to act at source by limiting the generation of surplus food, followed by recycling, recovery and disposal. When food surpluses occur, the best destination, which ensures the highest value use of edible food resources, is to redistribute these for human consumption.

If the surplus food is not fit for human consumption, the food may be used as animal feed, provided it complies with relevant legislative requirements.

Moreover, the law August, 19th, 2016, n. 166 – Legge GADDA – encourages food donation, through simplification, rationalization and harmonization of the legislative framework (procedural, fiscal and hygienic-sanitary) that regulates this sector.

Ministry of Ecological Transition is about to start coordinated work with the other authorities involved in food waste prevention policies to ensure the best implementation of the new requirements under Directive 2008/98/EC as revised in 2018. Member States shall integrate food waste prevention programmes in national waste prevention programmes, as required by EU waste legislation (Directive (EU) 2018/851 amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste).

We will implement actions to support food supply chains to reduce food loss and waste. Our actions will include encouraging collaboration and cooperation between public, private and civil society actors, redistribution of surplus food, the promotion of zero-waste education and behaviour change programmes across all sectors and the reprocessing of food no longer intended for human consumption into animal feed or new high value food and non-food products through circular economy and resource efficiency approaches.

Italy is carrying out a study on food waste, aimed at responding to the provisions and requirements of Directive 2008/98/EC and of Decisions (EU) 2019/2020 and (EU) 2019/1597.

The combination of specific studies (e.g. definition of production factors to estimate losses in the food supply chain, etc), specific surveys and the processing of data from the mandatory declarations could provide the necessary information in order to monitoring data on food waste.

Moreover, we reaffirm our commitment to achieve SDG 12.3 and commit to utilise a “Target, Measure, Act” approach and establish national targets to reach that goal.

National communication campaigns on food recovery and waste reduction are carried out by the Ministry of Ecological Transition. The campaign Spreco Zero is supported by Ministry of Ecological Transition. Spreco Zero (http://www.sprecozero.it) is a campaign that promotes awareness about food waste and sustainable behaviors to challenge it, and its target is the wide public. Short videos and press material are shared on the main national broadcast channels (TV, radio and social networks). The potential outreach of the campaign is 5 million people on the entire national territory. By the use of social networks, the campaign was hugely successful with new and existing audiences, press and partners.

Spreco Zero also promotes an initiative called “Premio vivere a spreco zero”, at its 8th edition in 2020. “Premio vivere a spreco zero” is a national contest, where the best initiatives against food waste are shared and rewarded. New categories have been included in the contest over the years, up to the current ten categories receiving a prize. The categories are: 1. Companies; 2: Schools; 3. Public agencies; 4. Citizens and associations; 5. Innovation; 6. Mediterranean diet; 7. Biodiversity; 8. Literary essays; 9. Horticultural production; 10. Sustainable transport and mobility. Eleven (11) evaluation criteria define the winner, but the most important ones are reproducibility and measurability of results.

In 2014 was launched the national food waste prevention day, now in its eighth edition(https://www.sprecozero.it/giornata-nazionale-di-prevention-contro-lo-spreco-alimentare/), where also the Public Information Service plans a dedicated program with the aim of raising public awareness on the phenomenon of food waste.

Educational projects aimed at schools have been carried out. REDUCE (Research, Education, Communication: an integrated approach for food waste prevention) was a national project supported by the Ministry of Ecological Transition that aimed to collect data on food waste in the last stages of the food chain and to provide innovative solutions to prevent and reduce it.

First, through the work of the REDUCE project, a kit for education in primary schools was designed and donated to schools for free (link here). The REDUCE toolkit aims to promote a deep cultural change among final consumers and especially among the youngest, teaching them the value of food from the first years of school and raising awareness on the problem of food waste and on the need to prevent and reduce it. The kit has been developed to be easily integrated with the contents foreseen in the existing school modules and it can be adapted to specific needs of the class. It has been adopted by 176 classes during the first year and its promotion is one of the goals of SEIZERO project, coordinated by University of Bologna and financed by the Ministry of Ecological Transition of Italy.

Second, different actors, at a decentralized level (municipalities, associations), built their school kits against food waste. Some material can be found on the repository web-site promoted by ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities) link here. In 2018, a formal agreement between the Ministry of Ecological Transition of Italy and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) was signed. Two of the activities were Awareness raising campaign and training for school teachers. The repository was just recently published online and it is expected to grow in the next months, by including all the existing projects currently being run in Italy.

The Italian law n.92 of 20 August 2019 foresees the introduction of a new model of civic education as a mandatory module in the Italian school system. The law requires all schools to dedicate 33 hours a year (roughly 1 hour per week) to the subject, from Grade 1 to Grade 13. It also envisages that this module will need to be integrated into existing curricula (no extra classes) and will need to be taught by the main teachers in primary schools or teachers of law and economics, social sciences, history or similar matters in middle and high schools. The law mentions a list of topics to be addressed within the module (article 3, paragraph 1 a-h and paragraph 2), following three main subjects: the Italian Constitution and international organizations; the education to digital citizenship; and the Agenda 2030 of the United Nations.

Being food waste part of the Agenda 2030 (SDG 12.3), it is also perfectly fitting the new module on civic education. However, teachers did not receive specific training on the new module so far, and the guidelines just published by the Minister are broad in their content and synthetic, leaving a great autonomy to the teachers about topics and method. Therefore, even if there is the possibility of teaching food waste and sustainable food production and consumption in schools, there is not a clear mandate about it, nor a specific suggestion or training to teachers.

The Ministry of Ecological Transition of Italy has set up two pilot initiatives, both aimed at promoting the use of doggy bag in commercial restaurants.

In 2016, a prototype of doggy bag was produced in agreement with COMIECO, to be tested in restaurants that adhered voluntarily. Link here. In 2018, a formal agreement between the ministry of Environment, Land and Sea of Italy and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) was signed. One of the activities was the pilot testing of the doggy bag in commercial restaurants, as well.

In addition, the Ministry of Ecological Transition is carrying out various joint initiatives with FAO and in recent months they have hosted meetings for high-level scientific study on the theme of sustainable nutrition and food waste, in the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the recognition of the "Mediterranean diet " within the intangible cultural heritage of Humanity.

A sustainable diet should guarantee food security, promote healthy lifestyles, avoid food loss and waste, and contribute to the reduction of the impacts on the environment and to the improvement of social well-being for current and future generations.

The food system must necessarily move from a linear model to a circular model. As such, it should be based on short and local production chains capable of promoting resilient and sustainable production and consumption practices that minimize food loss and waste, stimulating thereby change in diet towards healthier and less resource-demanding diets.

It is now essential to focus attention on the transition from a society strongly based on mass consumption, on the uncontrolled production of waste and on the intensive use of fossil fuels, towards one based on the efficient use of resources, on responsible production behaviors and consumption, and on the reduction, reuse and enhancement of waste.

The Mediterranean diet represents a model compatible with transition and therefore acquires considerable centrality.

Collaboration with FAO appears to be absolutely strategic to ensure and increase coordination between agricultural and environmental policies in terms of raising awareness of the negative consequences of food waste, with particular attention to the issues of the right to food, the impact on the environment and on the consumption of natural resources and possible measures to combat such waste.

In relation to the role of the State and businesses as far as the environmental impact of their activities, another issue is worth of mentioning.

Within the UN “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework – UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted by the Human Rights Council on 16 June 2011, Italy adopted its first National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (BHR NAP) 2016-2021. The BHR NAP was put under mid-term review in 2018 as an unique pilot procedure.

The NAP is developed along the UNGPs, providing for a general and, as appropriate, in-depth overview about programmatic and operational measures for the implementation of commitments in the short, medium and long term.

In particular, the NAP is based on six priorities, to be achieved in six main areas of action through specific measures, as outlined in its preliminary section:

1. promoting human rights due diligence processes, aimed at identify, prevent and mitigate the potential risks, with particular focus on SMEs

2. tackling caporalato (especially in the agricultural and construction sector) and other forms of exploitation, forced labour, child labour, slavery and irregular work, with particular focus on migrants and victims of trafficking

3. promoting fundamental labour rights in the internationalization process of enterprises with particular regard to the global productive processes

4. strengthening the role of Italy in a human rights-based international development cooperation

5. tackling discrimination and inequality and promoting equal opportunities

6. promoting environmental protection and sustainability.

As per the last point, the ‘legality rating’ is a significant measure. It was introduced in 2012 for the promotion of principles of ethical behaviour in business. The Italian Competition Authority (ICA) among others has the mandate - on request - to issue a certification of compliance with relevant domestic legislation and to reward the good governance initiatives voluntarily adopted by enterprises on safety and transparency matters, with the aim of getting an easier access to public funding and bank credit. In the elements promoted for the ‘legality rating’ there is the adherence to the guidelines provided by the Legislative Decree No. 231 of June 8th 2001 on the administrative liabilities of companies and the adoption of corporate social responsibility within their own modus operandi, aimed at promoting human rights and preventing potential abuses. The Decree No. 231 introduces essential provisions regulating the relationship between companies and the stakeholders, sanctioning enterprises that through their managers, company’s officers, subordinates (or third parties acting on behalf of the company), commit specific offences, including environmental crimes, unauthorized handling of information and crimes against the person (as listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), and violate the safety rules in the workplace.

As far as GP3, among the planned measures provided in the NAP, the following related to the action in the environmental field:

“19. Promote environmental accounting in sustainability reporting and encouraging the adoption of disclosure processes for the assessment and communication of the environmental and carbon footprint of business; 20. Strengthen human rights protection and promotion of low-carbon, ecologically sound technologies through climate change international cooperation in line with the OECD Guidelines and the Guiding Principles;”

The overall implementation of the NAP has been promoted and monitored within the framework of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights (WG-BHR), set up at the CIDU, whose members are representatives of the central Administrations concerned and convened for two sessions per year. The mandate of the WG-BHR is to supervise the progressive implementation of the NAP, to coordinate the monitoring by the Administrations involved, to formulate any material amendments to the NAP due to new legislative or operational requirements introducing relevant changes in the country-system’s approach on BHR.

Ad hoc meetings have also preserved dialogue undertaken in the compilation phase of the NAP with other non-institutional stakeholders: business companies, trade unions, NGOs, civil society, human rights defenders, academia, experts. The dialogue has resulted in the establishment of an advisory group, usually convened in an open meeting with the WG-BHR (following each of the two annual meetings) whose participants are invited to propose contributions on the topic.