



CMS Scotland - Kernel

Food Waste: The Direction of Travel

Globally, food waste contributes to 8-10% of carbon emissions. In the UK alone, 10.7 million tonnes of food are wasted annually, equivalent to 15 billion meals. While legislation is developing worldwide to tackle food waste, is the UK keeping up?

The UK Government is committed to a zero-waste, circular economy, and has a series of sector-specific roadmaps for reform. The first key development we have seen in relation to food waste is the requirement for workplaces (businesses and non-domestic premises) to separate food waste from municipal waste for collection, diverting it from landfills. This is already in place in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and will apply in England from 31 March 2025 (or 31 March 2027 for micro-firms).

Another potential development is mandatory food waste reporting. Currently, many businesses voluntarily report their food waste using standardised schemes, but there is no mandatory requirement. In October 2024, several large organisations including Too Good To Go and the BRC sent an open letter to Defra, calling on the government to implement mandatory food waste reporting for large companies. The letter pointed out that food waste has decreased in countries with such regulations.

So, how does that compare to action in other areas? France, which has taken the stance to go faster than the general EU movement, has already imposed obligations for food industry operators to donate unsold food, and has imposed a national anti-food waste level aiming to halve food waste by 2025. Italy has similar laws that encourage food donations by retailers and producers to charities and foodbanks. Meanwhile, China has reduced its food waste over the past several years by passing a law banning competitive eating and binge-eating videos, while South Korea has reduced food waste by making residents pay based on how much food waste they generate.

These global examples raise the question: should the UK implement more aggressive measures to curb food waste?

For a detailed discussion on the regulation of food waste, please listen to 'Waste not want not: The regulation of food waste' from our Future Consumer Talks podcast here: [Future Consumer Talks | Podcast | CMS UK](#)

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With valuable contributions from Rowena Hunt, a trainee solicitor in our EPC team.

Kernel is designed to support you on current legal issues affecting the Scottish Food & Drink industry and provide regular updates on key developments.