



**Advice to Council No: 17-02**

**Re: Outputs from JPAC Public Forum “Reducing and Managing Food and Organic Waste Streams: Challenges and Opportunities in North America” in Tuxtla Gutiérrez (March 2017)**

The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) of North America:

**IN ACCORDANCE** with Article 16(4) of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), which states that JPAC “may provide advice to Council on any matter within the scope of this agreement (...) and on the implementation and further elaboration of this agreement, and may perform such functions as the Council may direct;”

**HAVING** conducted a public forum to discuss capacity in the three countries for reducing food waste and promoting organic waste diversion within North America, in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico, on 23 March 2017; and

**RECOGNIZING** that:

- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12, *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*, includes Target 12.3, which envisions a 50% reduction in global food waste at the retail and consumer levels by 2030;
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations stated that:
  - *Roughly one-third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year—approximately 1.3 billion tonnes—gets lost or is wasted,*
  - *Food losses and waste amounts to roughly US\$680 billion per year in industrialized countries;*
- Approximately one-half of the content of North American solid waste is organic waste, resulting in significant economic losses and environmental impacts as well as using up valuable capacity in engineered landfills intended for other types of waste;
- There is a very high public interest in North America on the topic of food and organic waste, as demonstrated by the high participation to the JPAC public meeting on the topic, which attracted over 200 people on-site and more than 5000 viewers online;

**SUBMITS** the following recommendations for Council's consideration:

**Recommendation #1: Support and facilitate innovations in food waste reduction and organic waste diversion in North America.**

National governments should support organic waste recycling by establishing national compost and digestate quality standards, work to implement additional local and state/province bans on landfilling, and simplify permitting for new composting and organic waste processing facilities. Either as part of existing or future trade agreements, or in partnership with local governments, national governments should support and facilitate the implementation of innovations related to food waste reduction and organic waste diversion in North America.

Many local governments and communities are demonstrating an innovative mindset to tackle food and organic waste problems. Issues usually arise when they are trying to implement these innovations as they are often not fully compatible with existing waste management or health legislations, or incur extra initial costs which negate their long-term social, environmental and economic benefits. Sustainable financing options and coherent institutional arrangements are cornerstones to reducing food waste.

**Recommendation #2: In order to properly address food loss and waste, consider the importance of assessing the whole food value chain: producers, distributors, retailers, consumers, and waste processors.**

When assessing food loss and waste, it is important to consider source reduction strategies across the food value chain, including as part of North American trade, in addition to addressing waste at the consumer level. Since food loss and waste occurs at every point of the food supply chain, from production and purchase to discard, it is important to implement overarching strategies that address this whole supply chain as a 'system' and not as separate components. International and national efforts on food policies should take this 'food system' approach when creating initiatives to reduce food waste.

**Recommendation #3: Develop a North American standard terminology regarding food products labeling.**

A standard terminology regarding food products should be developed for North America, especially considering the significant trade in food products between the three countries. At the international and national levels, there is a lack of general consensus on the terminology applicable to the labeling of food products, which has resulted in the use of inconsistent terms and definitions. Expressions such as 'Best Before Date', 'Expiration Date', 'Best if Used By', 'Sell By', etc., often create confusion for both industry and consumers, which may lead to even more food waste. The development of common guidelines on food labeling would help catalyze reductions in food waste, while also providing significant economic benefits to businesses and consumers across North America. The CEC could be a key player in facilitating the development of such terminology and guidelines, based on its recognized expertise on food waste at the international level.

**Recommendation #4: Assess the interconnections between food production and biodiversity in North America.**

JPAC supports the CEC 2017–2018 operational plan and efforts to build education on and link food waste measurements to environmental outcomes, including biodiversity, and other socio economic impacts. The mainstreaming of conservation and sustainable biodiversity is a key component of North American environmental partnership. As our global understanding of the benefits of healthy and diverse ecosystems continues to strengthen, it is important to assess the interconnections between food production and biodiversity, in particular, the potential impact that certain food production systems and practices may have on the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity. The CEC possesses a unique potential in the area of promoting and facilitating collaboration between experts in North America, and should direct its efforts in this regard with a view to enhancing the sharing of knowledge, best practices and lessons learned on biodiversity in the context of food production.

**Recommendation #5: North American leadership and coordination to address food loss and waste**

JPAC acknowledges the important leadership of the CEC on the issue of food loss and waste. The CEC has created synergies throughout North America, building and sharing knowledge, building expertise and competency in practitioners, civil society, ENGOs and government. JPAC strongly supports the continuation of work on food loss and waste through the Operational Plan and other mechanisms available to the CEC, including the establishment of a regional expertise center on food loss and waste.

JPAC is confident that the recommendations contained herein are relevant to the CEC Council's strategic priorities and is unanimous in supporting this Advice to Council.

**Approved by the JPAC members  
29 May 2017**