

# France Passes 'Pioneering' Food Waste Bill To Ban Supermarkets From Binning Unused Food

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*France has passed a law banning supermarkets from binning unused food* Photo: Alamy

By [Henry Samuel](#)

**France passes new food waste bill obliging supermarkets to hand over unused food to charity and not destroy leftover products, claiming the law will be “unique in Europe”**

[France](#) is to enact a law to reduce the estimated 7 million tons of food wasted in the country each year.

The law [forces French supermarkets](#) with retail space of 400 sq m (4,305 sq ft) or more to donate food that is approaching its best-before date to charity or be turned into animal feed or compost, rather than simply discarding it.

They will no longer be allowed to render foodstuffs inedible by pouring water or bleach on them – previously a common practice.

Supermarkets will have to sign contracts with charities or face penalties, including fines of up to €75,000 (£53,000) or two years in jail.

The new measures, according to Guillaume Garot, who helped frame them, mean “France will become the leading country in Europe” combating food waste.

They bring to an end a system whereby food producers were legally obliged to destroy entire batches of products that carried a supermarket brand name.



*Photo: Alamy*

"Today, when a supermarket like Carrefour finds even a tiny fault with a crate of its branded yogurts, it sends the whole batch back to the dairy producer, which is legally obliged to destroy the lot even if it is all of excellent quality," Mr Garot said.

"This is a very regular occurrence and we are talking about huge volumes - several million yogurts binned per year.

"Today, the law makes it possible for manufacturers to give these yogurts to charities without even asking permission from supermarkets."

The law, he said, was also the first to offer a "combined, coherent policy against food waste", including education about waste in schools.



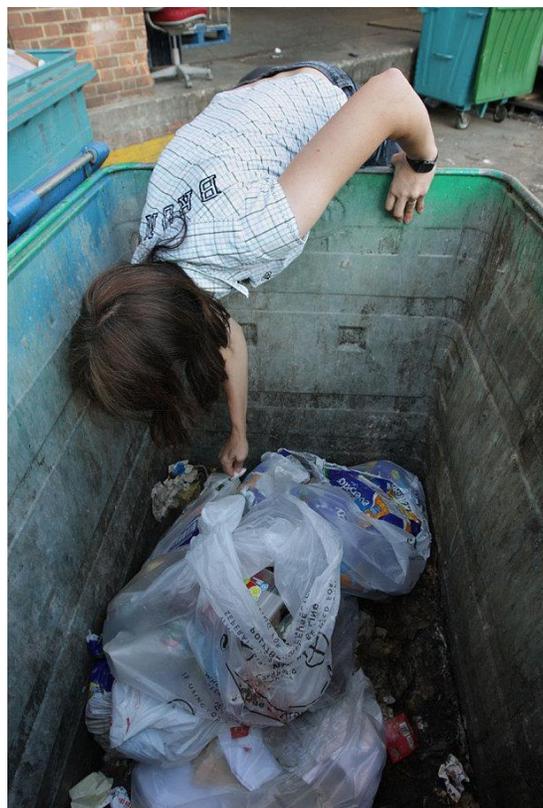
*Photo: Alamy*

"Schoolchildren need to know milk doesn't come from cartons but cows' udders, that some vegetables are picked only in certain seasons. They must learn to appreciate the quality of products, as the higher the quality of the meal, the less is left on the plate," he added.

His co-author, Jean-Pierre Decool, of the centre-Right party, The Republicans, said the law was crucial given that “to bin a baguette is to empty an entire bathtub [of water], and to throw a kilo of meat away is 15,000 litres of wasted water”.

The law, however, can do little about changing rules on a food product’s “use by” or “best before” dates, as these are subject to European regulation - bar ensuring that products remain in shops up to and including the expiry date.

[Initially passed earlier this year](#), the bill was quashed by the Council of State for “procedural reasons”, but is expected to be enacted after being backed by parties across the political spectrum and passed by the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament.



*Waste bins behind an Iceland supermarket in Camberwell, London Photo: Oli Scarff/The Telegraph*

The law must now pass through the Senate and is likely to be enacted early next year.

The world population is due to rise from 7 to 9 billion by 2050 and, according to the World Food Programme, mankind wastes between 30 and 50 per cent of the food it produces.

The French law goes further than the UK, where the government has a voluntary agreement with the grocery and retail sector to cut both food and packaging waste in the supply chain, but does not believe in mandatory targets.

The French move came as the Archbishop of Canterbury accused the Government of leaving families vulnerable to hunger and poverty because of controversial welfare reform.

Justin Welby described it as a "tragedy" that families still face hunger in the 21st century but credited food banks with "striving to make life bearable for people who are going hungry".

The Archbishop's comments came alongside the publication of an all-party parliamentary report which examined the causes of rising food bank use and household food insecurity. It concluded that Britain was still "a huge distance from abolishing hunger as we know it in our country".

A Government spokesman said: "We agree with the all-party group that nobody should go hungry, especially when surplus food goes to waste. We will therefore carefully consider the recommendations made in this report."

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