



Update on EU actions on date marking and food waste prevention

**REFRESH Policy Workshop: policies against
consumer food waste**

Anne-Laure Gassin

**Policy officer (SANTE E1), Food information and
composition, food waste**

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Fight Food Waste: no impact on safety of the food and feed chain



- EU Platform on food waste prevention
- Measure and monitor food waste
- Facilitate food donation
- Optimise safe use of food in feed
- **Promote better understanding and use of date marking**

Date marking: focus of EU policy action

A multi-faceted, co-ordinated and coherent action plan is required by all key players

Key objectives of policy actions:

- improve the differentiation between the concepts of "use by" and "best before"
- facilitate common understanding and use of date marking by all actors (industry, national competent authorities and consumers)

⇒ Sub-group established – 20 April 2018



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Date marking: promote better understanding and use



... KNOW YOUR DATES!

"USE BY"

informs you about

FOOD SAFETY



"BEST BEFORE"

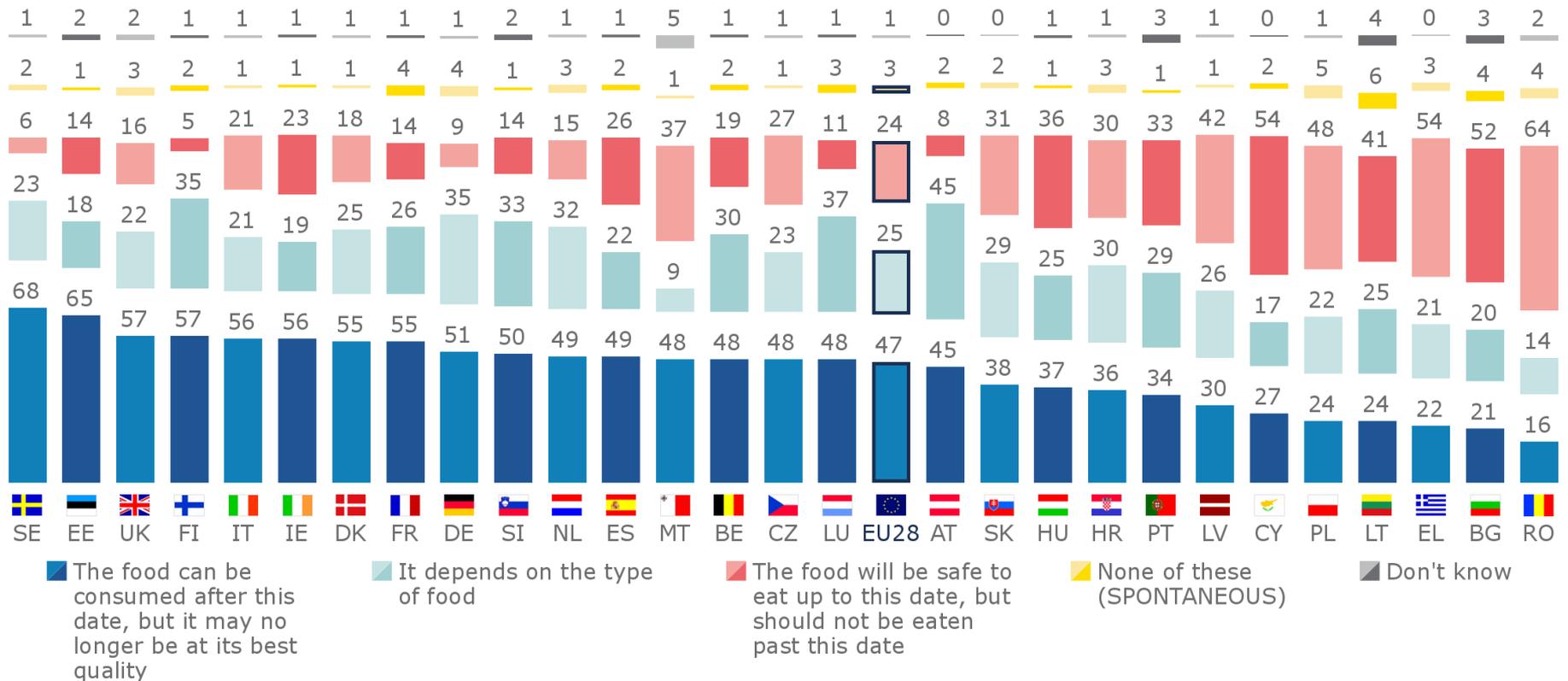
informs you about

FOOD QUALITY

58% consumers say they always look at date marking when shopping and preparing meals, but less than 1 in 2 understand its meaning.

Correct answers to 'best before' vary from 68% in Sweden to 16% in Romania

Q What do you think "best before" on a food product actually means? I am going to read out some options, please select the one that best applies. (%)



Base: all respondents (N=26,601)



Commission study on date marking practices

Aim: investigate how food business operators and national competent authorities understand and utilise date marking and the possible impact of practices on food waste

Main phases:

- 1) Desk research to identify (if/where possible) main foods contributing to food waste in EU Member States and possible link with date marking
- 2) Market research to map date marking practices in selected food categories
- 3) Qualitative research (in-depth interviews) with Member States and food business operators

Report published on 9 February 2018

Market study on date marking and food waste prevention: main findings

- Up to 10% of the food waste generated annually in the EU is linked to date marking
- Wide variation in date marking practices
- Poor legibility of date marks (11% of products sampled)
- Strengthened cooperation and innovation in the food supply chain can help prevent food waste
- Additional guidance by control authorities may be needed in certain areas (e.g. food redistribution past the "best before" date)



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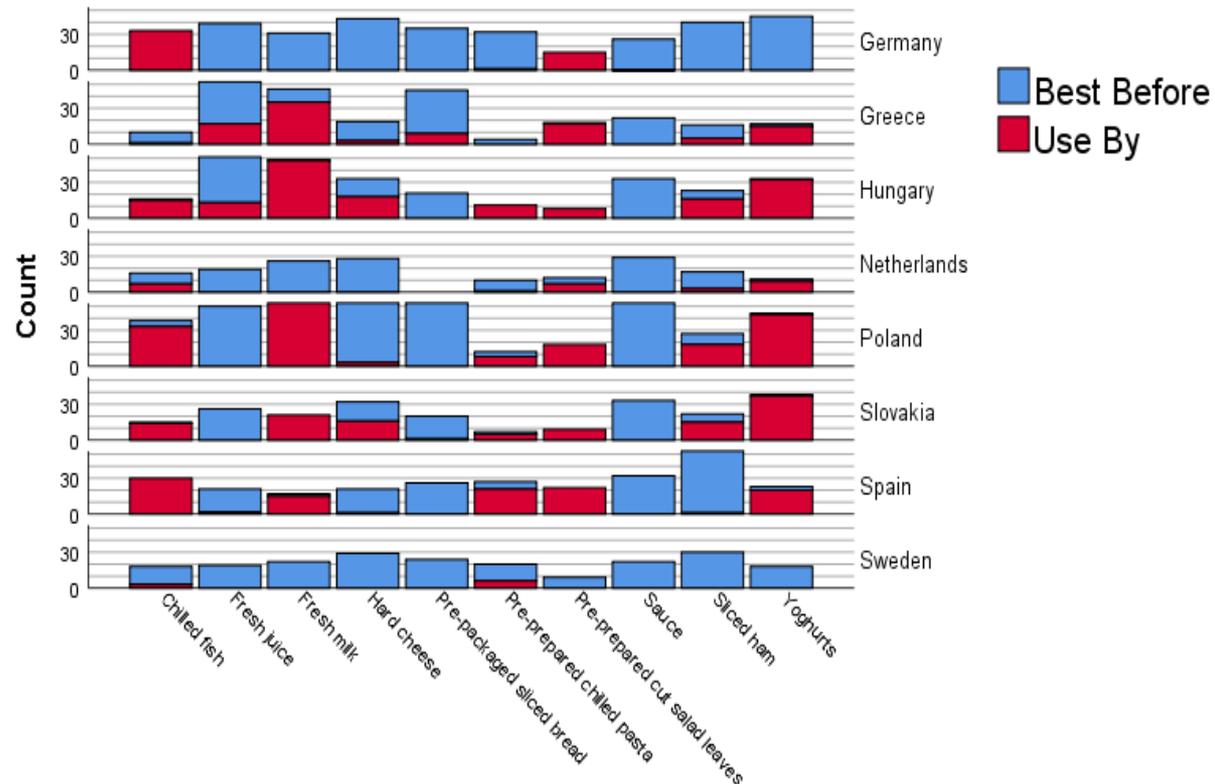
Mystery shopping – 10 product types (pre-packed)

- **Salad**
 - cut lettuce/ salad leaves
- **Bread**
 - white, medium-sliced
- **Fish (chilled)**
 - smoked salmon
- **Ham (chilled)**
 - prosciutto/ serrano
- **Milk (fresh)**
 - Cows', semi-skimmed (low-fat)
- **Yoghurt**
 - Multipack, strawberry
- **Cheese (hard, sliced)**
 - Cheddar/ Gouda/ Emmental
- **Juice (fresh)**
 - Orange, no pulp
- **Pasta (chilled)**
 - Vegetable filling
- **Ketchup (tomato)**



Use of "best before" and "use by" varied between product types and Member States

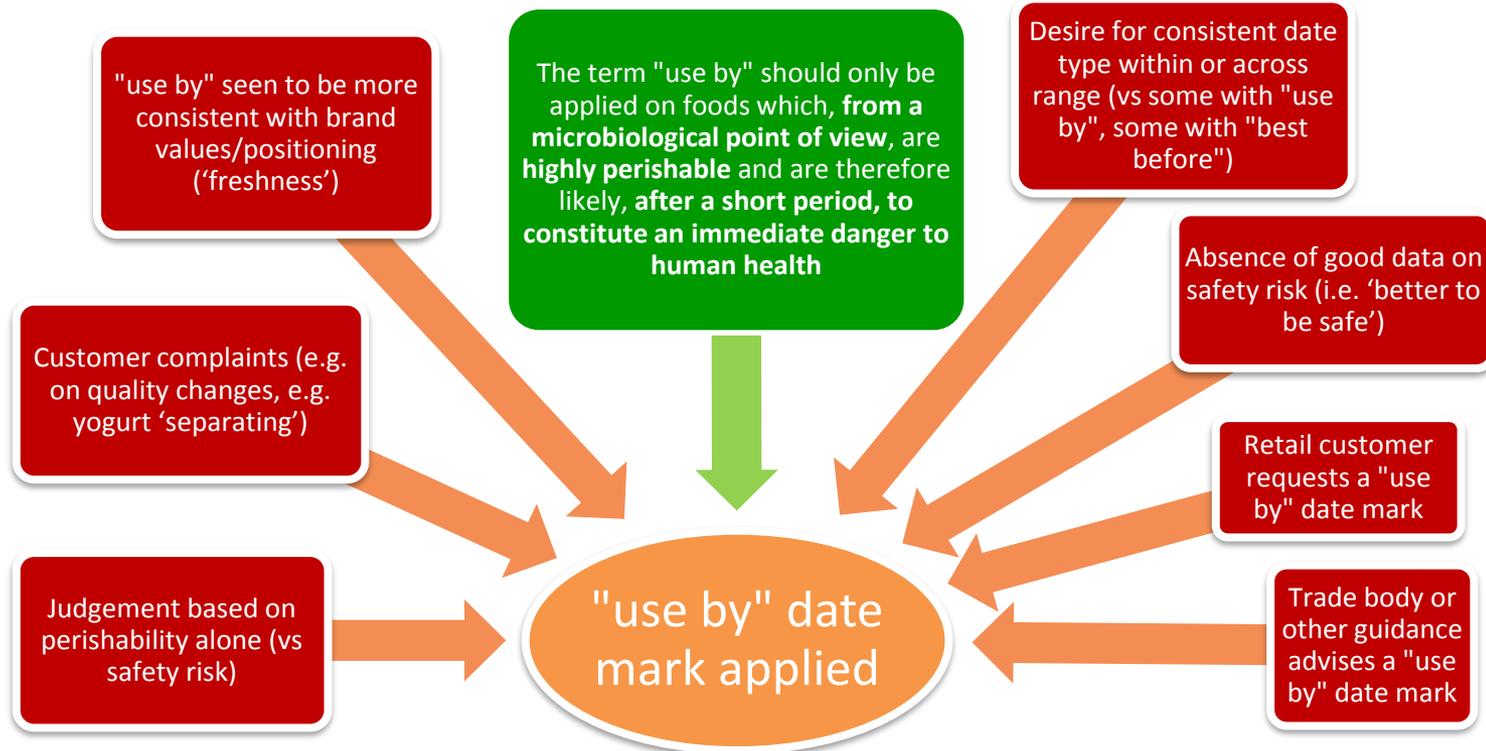
- Except for sauce, date marks (UB/BB) varied by product type
- "Use By" date marks were used most frequently in Greece, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Spain
- "Use By" date marks were used least frequently in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden





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Date marking practices: factors favouring "use by" vs "best before"



Source: ICF, 2018

Health and
Food Safety

Key considerations for policy action (1)

Avoidable food waste linked to date marking is likely to be reduced where:

- *a **date mark** is present, its meaning is clear and it is legible;*
- ***consumers** have a good understanding of date labelling (notably the **distinction** between "**use by**"- **as an indicator of safety** - and "**best before**"- **as an indicator of quality**);*
- *"**use by**" **dates** are used only where there is a **safety-based rationale**, consistent with the FIC Regulation;*

Key considerations for policy action (2)

Avoidable food waste linked to date marking is likely to be reduced where:

- *the **product life** is **consistent** with the findings of **safety and quality tests**, and is not shortened unnecessarily by other considerations, such as product marketing;*
- ***storage and open life** guidance are consistent with the findings safety and quality tests;*
- *there is a level of consistency in **storage of food at retail** and guidance for consumers regarding the temperatures for **storage at home**.*

Guiding principle for possible Commission actions related to date marking rules

As requested by Council (2016 Council Conclusions on Food Loss and Waste), the Commission will ensure that any proposals for changes to EU date marking rules (for the purpose of preventing food waste):

"...make a meaningful contribution to food waste prevention and not undermine either food safety or consumer information."



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Main discussion outcomes: Sub-group on date marking

- Agreed to proceed with elaboration of scientific and technical guidance as a key priority for action
- Issues specific to functioning of supply chain to be further explored (*eg* refrigeration)
- Members to consider further possible opportunity for EU-level communications activities
- Support for pan-EU consumer research to explore possible future changes in format and terminology
- No consensus on benefit of extending Annex X

Sub-group on date marking: next steps

- Task force established to assist in drafting EU scientific/technical guidance to support consistent date marking practices
- 1st meeting (June 2018) – discuss overall scope, content and format
- 2nd meeting (20.11.2018) – preliminary draft to be discussed as well as timeline for work going forward

Thank you