

Motion S24/2 25/5/15



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

CCU, 7th Floor
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

T 03459 335577
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Sally Gabriel
Principal Member Services Officer, Mid Devon
District Council
Phoenix House
Phoenix Lane
Devon, EX16 6PP

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July 2015

Dear Ms Gabriel,

Thank you for your letter of 17 July to the Secretary of State about food waste. I have been asked to reply.

Defra works with the grocery sector to reduce food waste through the voluntary Courtauld Commitment. In May 2013, the Waste and Resources Action Programme announced the start of the Commitment's third phase, which will run until this year. Fifty-three retailers, brands and manufacturers have joined Courtauld 3, with a combined share of over 90% of the UK grocery market based on sales. The amount of food redistributed in the UK under the Courtauld Commitment doubled between 2011 and 2013.

The Government welcomes the steps charities such as FareShare and FoodCycle are taking to make sure that good quality surplus food gets to people who otherwise might go hungry or may not have access to healthy foods. Businesses should follow the waste hierarchy with food, and any surplus food should be made available for human consumption wherever possible.

In terms of the developments in France, based on our experience, a simple law would not fix the barriers to redistribution. We need to look at the bigger picture - less than 10% of food wasted in the supply chain is from supermarkets, so we need the whole chain to work together. The Government encourages the food industry to forge closer links with redistribution charities, and supports the actions and public commitment on redistribution made by retailers.

A Ministerial roundtable and industry working group was held in 2012, resulting in research into barriers to redistribution and a set of guiding principles for industry to prioritise redistribution. Building further on this work, Defra convened a roundtable meeting in January this year with representatives from food retailers, manufacturers, trade associations and the food redistribution charity sector to discuss how more surplus food can be put to good use. A Courtauld working group has also been set up and tasked with looking at further ways to increase the redistribution of surplus food.

Yours sincerely,

Alicia Newitt
Defra – Customer Contact Unit

