



Biowaste in the EU legislation

an overlooked enabler for Agriculture

The cornerstone of European legislation defining 'organic waste,' more specifically 'biowaste,' is the Waste Framework Directive (2018). This directive, particularly in Article 22, requires EU member states to ensure proper management of biowaste. This includes separating and recycling biowaste at its source or collecting it separately to prevent contamination with other waste types.

The directive categorizes biowaste as follows:

Biodegradable garden and park waste. Food and kitchen waste from homes, restaurants, catering services, retail stores, and food processing facilities.

It is important to highlight that the definition excludes forestry and agricultural residues, manure, sewage sludge, and other biodegradable waste such as natural textiles, paper, and processed wood.

In addition to the definition, the **Waste Framework Directive** introduces the "waste hierarchy," a priority order for waste management and disposal. The hierarchy stipulates that waste prevention is the absolute priority, followed by reuse, recycling, and other forms of recovery. Landfilling is the last resort, to be used only when all other options have been exhausted.

In summary, the European regulatory framework for bio-waste is based on two fundamental principles:

- **Obligation of separate collection:** Bio-waste must be separated from other waste to allow for its recycling and eventually the production of high-quality compost and digestate. These products can then be used in agriculture to restore soil health.
- **Waste hierarchy:** Waste prevention is the priority, followed by reuse and recycling. Landfilling is the last (and least preferred) option.

The Waste Framework Directive provides a general framework, leaving Member States the freedom to adopt specific measures for managing bio-waste based on their needs and local context. However, the common goal is to promote an effective and efficient bio-waste management system that contributes to environmental protection, soil health, and food safety.

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