



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

2009/2153(INI)

17.12.2009

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on the Commission Green Paper on the management of bio-waste in the
European Union
(2009/2153(INI))

Rapporteur: Salvatore Caronna

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Supports the Commission's initiative on Community action on bio-waste management, promoted through its green paper;
2. Notes that bio-waste accounts for more than 30 % of municipal solid waste; is of the opinion that better management of bio-waste will contribute to sustainable resource management and better soil protection on the one hand and combating climate change and meeting recycling and renewable energy targets on the other;
3. Believes that bio-waste management should be set in the more general context of a sustainable waste management cycle, both in terms of realising the rational use and conservation of resources and of reducing the global impact;
4. Reiterates that bio-waste management must be structured in line with the waste treatment hierarchy, namely: prevention, recycling, other forms of waste recovery, including energy recovery, and, as a last option, disposal in landfills;
5. Expects the strategies for bio-waste management to couple recycling (including composting) and energy recovery, although priority must be given to recycling and composting;
6. Considers biological treatment to be a feasible and fully tested possible way of diverting significant quantities of putrescible waste away from landfills;
7. Stresses that bio-waste needs to be regarded as a valuable natural resource that can be used to produce compost, which is essential to preserving land productivity, reducing the use of high energy intensive chemical fertilisers and increasing water retention in the soil;
8. Reiterates that agriculture's future also depends on the care, restoration and conservation of the soil; stresses, therefore, that policies for organic fertilisation of the soil and recovery of biomass through composting need to be promoted and supported;
9. Considers that a number of quality standards should be observed in the use of compost so that applying compost to the soil does not lead to its gradual pollution, producing obvious negative environmental and economic effects; urges the Commission to present legislative proposals on qualitative criteria for compost and digestate;
10. Is of the opinion that separate refuse collections, in addition to being a valid alternative to landfills, provide quality input to bio-waste recycling and improve the efficiency of energy recovery; urges the Commission to introduce binding and ambitious targets for the recycling of this waste;

11. Believes a crucial prerequisite for bio-waste incineration to become a viable alternative in the waste hierarchy is that it be coupled with energy recovery.
12. Considers bio-waste to be a valuable renewable resource for the production of gaseous transport fuel through conversion of biogas into biomethane;
13. Notes that the individual Member States have different waste management systems and that use of landfill continues to be the most common disposal method for municipal solid waste in the European Union; urges the Commission, therefore, to continue its impact assessment with the aim of preparing a Community legislative proposal on biodegradable waste in 2010;
14. Calls on the Commission to promote educational measures in European schools in order to encourage sustainable management of municipal solid waste, particularly at the first stage which is separate refuse collections.