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Statement Switzerland: foodwaste

As also in other countries, foodwaste is an important topic in Switzerland. There are a lot of discussions about what we can do to avoid foodwaste at each part of the food chain: consumers, farmers, industry, restaurants, governmental and non governmental organisations – everybody is thinking about minimizing foodwaste.

But it is obvious that the quality standards for fruit and vegetables are not a reason for foodwaste, quite the contrary.

- The standards by now are based on market needs (in Switzerland also consumer organisations are involved in standards development). With the standards producers already know which quality they have to produce in order that they can sell their produce. That's the first step to avoid foodwaste: producing what the market wants and needs, not "just anything". A lower standard would be the wrong sign for the producers.
- An important goal of the standards is facilitating trade. If we are continuing to lower the international standards, retailers will make more and more their own standards. This is the contrary of facilitating trade. The more private standards we have the more trade will get complicated.
- People are buying with the eyes. It doesn't matter whether this is desirable or not – it is as it is. Unfortunately people are also not buying what they tell you when you ask them. They always would buy organic and fruit with defects. But in reality they do not buy that. When the external quality of fruit and vegetables is not good enough and not attracting the eye, people buy automatically less. When we want people to buy more fruit and vegetables we have to offer a good quality. Anything else would also be contrary to the 5-a-day-campaigns (which are quite often financed by the government).
- Of course there is also a place for low-budget-produce. But even with the existing standards it is no problem to supply this market fraction. It needs a clear communication between supplier and buyer and the goods must be labelled correctly. In any case they must be clearly distinguishable from the goods which are correctly sorted according to the standards. Usually this means that there can be no class on the label.
- Whenever there are countries which do not have the possibility to sell produce not according to the standard without class, we should think about how to solve that. In our opinion there must be a way to sell produce not fulfilling the requirements of the standards – as long as this fact is obvious for everybody. And this would help us to retain the existing standards for the big majority of fruit and vegetables. With all the above mentioned benefits.

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