

Concept Note

“High-Level Ministerial Panel on Agriculture and Forestry:

Reducing Food Waste and Conserving Water, Safeguarding Our Future”

Under the auspices of Her Excellency Mrs. Emine Erdoğan, Honorary President of the Zero Waste Foundation In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye and the Zero Waste Foundation 28 November 2025, Istanbul

Background

Food waste and insufficient use of water are among the most critical challenges facing our planet today. Each year, approximately 1.3 billion tons of food are discarded globally, which is equivalent to one-third of total food production. Meanwhile, around 783 million people struggle with hunger. This stark contradiction, as **Her Excellency Mrs. Emine Erdoğan** often underlines, forces us to ask: “As some tables are overflowing with abundance, why are others condemned to lives of empty plates?”

According to FAO and UNEP estimates, 931 million tons of food are wasted annually in retail, restaurants, and households. This waste represents not only an ethical issue but also a significant misuse of scarce resources. Every bite of food and every drop of water embodies the soil, energy, labor, and carbon footprint consumed in its production. FAO data indicate that agriculture accounts for more than 70% of total global water consumption. The production of wasted food alone consumes around 250 km³ of water annually, the equivalent of 100 million Olympic sized swimming pools.

Half of the world’s population experiences moderate to severe water scarcity during parts of the year. Urbanization, climate change, and poor water management are aggravating this situation each year. In Türkiye, per capita, annual water availability stands at 1,519 m³. By 2030, it is projected to decline to 1,100 m³, placing the country at the threshold of water scarcity.

The climate implications of food waste and insufficient use of water are equally severe. Greenhouse gas emissions from wasted food account for 8–10% of global emissions. If food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest emitter in the world. From an economic perspective, FAO estimates food waste alone costs USD 1 trillion annually; when including water, energy and logistics, total losses climb to USD 2.6 trillion.

The accelerating impacts of climate change are worsening this picture. Severe droughts, floods, and heatwaves threaten both food production and water resources. According to the World Bank, if current trends continue, 700 million people could be displaced by water scarcity by 2030. Tackling food and water waste is therefore no longer solely an environmental issue but a matter of security, stability, and sustainable development.

Link with the Zero Waste Forum

The high-level ministerial meeting to be held in Istanbul on 28 November 2025 is designed as a follow-up and complementary session to the Zero Waste Forum, scheduled for October. The Forum, under the theme **“Zero Waste in Action: People. Places. Progress.”**, will bring together governments, municipalities, the private sector, academia, and civil society to promote the global discourse on zero waste.

The ministerial meeting on **“Reducing Food Waste and Conserving Water, Safeguarding Our Future”** aims to deepen this vision specifically in the context of food and water waste. Closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the meeting will directly contribute to **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**, **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)**, and **SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)**.

Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The objective of the meeting is to raise global awareness about the scale and impacts of food waste and the insufficient use of water, highlight the Zero Waste approach as a holistic and a practical model, and to strengthen international cooperation at the ministerial level. The event also seeks to enhance policy coherence, share best practices, and develop actionable policy recommendations for governments, international organizations, and stakeholders.

Expected outcomes include a strong political declaration at the ministerial level, the formulation of concrete policy proposals for reducing food waste and conserving water, the integration of the Zero Waste Forum's outcomes into agriculture and water policies, and the strengthening of international cooperation.

Event

The high-level ministerial panel on **"Reducing Food Waste and Conserving Water, Safeguarding Our Future"** will take place on 28 November 2025 in Istanbul, under the auspices of **Her Excellency Mrs. Emine Erdoğan, Honorary President of the Zero Waste Foundation**, and in collaboration with the **Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye** and the **Zero Waste Foundation**.