



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Food and feed safety, innovation
Food information and composition, food waste

SUMMARY REPORT

EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES & FOOD WASTE (8th meeting)

DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

Via WebEx Meetings

15 June 2020 – From 11:15 to 16:40

Chair: Sabine Jülicher, *Director, Food and feed safety, Innovation, DG SANTE*

Commission: Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, Health and Food Safety; **DG SANTE; DG AGRI; DG EMPL**

Member States represented (23):

AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

Private sector organisations (30):

AECOC: Asociación Española de Codificación Comercial; AIBI: International Association of Plant Bakers AISBL; BEUC: The European Consumer Organisation; BOROUME – "We Can"; COPA COGECA: European Farmers and Agri-Cooperatives; ECSLA: European Cold Storage and Logistics Association ; EDA: European Dairy Association; EFFPA: European Former Foodstuff Processors Association; EUCOFEL: European Fruit and Vegetables Trade Association; EUROCOMMERCE: the retail, wholesale and international trade representation to the EU; EURO COOP: European Community of Consumer Co-operatives; EUROPATAT: European Potato Trade Association; FEBA: European Food Banks Federation; FEEDBACK GLOBAL; FOODCLOUD; FOODDRINKEUROPE; FOODSERVICEEUROPE; FoodWIN (Food Waste Innovation Network); FRESHFEL: European Fresh Produce Association; HCWH Europe: Health Care Without Harm; HFBA: Hungarian Food Bank Association; HOTREC: Hospitality Europe; IATA: International Air Transport Association; INDEPENDENT RETAIL EUROPE; OSTFOLD RESEARCH, Nofima and Matvett Consortium; RISE RESEARCH INSTITUTES OF SWEDEN AB; SMEunited; STOP WASTING FOOD; SLOW FOOD; WAGENINGEN University & Research; WRAP: Waste and Resource Action Programme; ZERO WASTE SCOTLAND.

Public entities:

EESC - European Economic and Social Committee; CoR – European Committee of the Regions; FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations; United Nations Environment Programme.

Observers:

EFTA: Norway.

The 8th Plenary meeting of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (FLW) took place **virtually** via Webex on **15 June 2020** from **11:15** to **16:40**. Platform members exchanged views on the recently adopted [Farm to Fork Strategy](#), and shared information on recent food waste prevention actions, including those taken in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. OPENING STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONER STELLA KYRIAKIDES – HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

In her opening speech, Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, in charge of Health and Food Safety, underlined the importance of establishing a sustainable food system in order to strengthen its resilience to crisis, reduce its overall climate and environmental impact, protect citizens' health and ensure the livelihoods of economic operators. She also thanked all the actors of the food supply chain, who have worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure food is available to citizens across the EU. On a similar note, the Commissioner took stock of the EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. agri-food sector support measures, amendments to the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived-FEAD to deal with the emergency situation including provision of protective equipment, strengthened public-private sector cooperation by all actors).

The Commissioner then referred to the recently developed [monthly newsletter of the Platform](#) and congratulated the members for the food waste prevention initiatives carried out. Finally, the Commissioner invited Platform members to work closely together in order to scale up and mobilise food loss and waste prevention actions across the EU and encourage broad uptake of the [Platform's key recommendations for action published in December 2019](#).

2. FARM TO FORK STRATEGY, PRESENTATION BY THE COMMISSION AND EXCHANGE WITH MEMBERS

The Commission presented the Farm to Fork strategy and its main actions. In order to meet the objectives of the [European Green Deal](#), the strategy puts forward a series of actions to enable the transition to a sustainable EU food system that safeguards food security and ensures access to healthy diets sourced from a healthy planet.

The Commission highlighted that reducing **food loss and waste is one of the strategy's key action strands**. As part of the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission proposes to: a) establish, by 2023, binding EU-level targets for food waste reduction, based on the results of the first round of EU-wide monitoring using common methodology); b) revise EU rules on date marking by 2022, to improve consumer understanding and their use by all players c) further investigate food losses at the production stage and d) scale up action and mobilise key players across the EU.

HOTREC welcomed the adoption of the Farm to Fork Strategy and shared concerns regarding the proposal to set legally binding targets for food waste reduction. HOTREC stated that Member States would eventually be obliged to follow national sectorial targets and this approach could potentially penalize responsible entities that have already undertaken efforts to reduce food waste. The Commission emphasised that the proposal for legally binding targets will be in 2023 and this is when the Commission will decide if further monitoring requirements are to be established.

In reply to a question as to how food waste prevention would be integrated in other policy areas, the Commission emphasised that the impact on food systems sustainability (including food waste aspects) needs to be taken into consideration when legislation in other areas is developed. For instance, the revision of marketing standards (which is currently in progress), will examine how sustainability

criteria can be reinforced and take into account the possible impact of these standards on food loss and waste.

As regards stakeholder consultation, the Chair informed that this will be carried out through existing fora and dedicated groups (such as the EU Platform on FLW) and that all legislative measures put forward in the Farm to Fork Strategy will be preceded by impact assessments, in line with EU better regulation principles.

As a closing remark, the Chair highlighted the Farm to Fork Strategy as a milestone and one of the biggest cross-cutting initiatives undertaken by the EU in the food area, requiring actions by all the actors across the food supply chain as well as by the public sector. The Commission will review the strategy by mid-2023 to assess whether the actions taken are sufficient to achieve the objectives of the strategy and whether additional initiatives are necessary.

3. UPDATE ON THE WORK OF FAO REGARDING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS, PRESENTATION BY ROSA ROLLE, Ph.D. TEAM LEADER, FOOD LOSS AND WASTE, NUTRITION AND FOOD SYSTEMS DIVISION, FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO). EXCHANGE WITH MEMBERS.

FAO updated Platform members on its work regarding sustainable food systems, including its contribution to the ongoing preparation of the **UN Food Systems Summit 2021**, as well as actions planned by FAO to promote the first International **Day on Food Losses and Food Waste (IDAFLW)**.

The [UN Food Systems Summit](#) will be convened in 2021 with the aim to stimulate all actors of the food supply chain to take up or scale up actions to eliminate hunger, create more inclusive and healthier food systems and safeguard the health of our planet. Food loss and waste prevention is expected to be a key theme and action strand. Summit preparations are underway, including organization of regional and national consultations with public and private sector actors.

The first [IDAFLW](#) will be celebrated on 29 September 2020 and will be a clear call to both public and private sectors to take further action, encourage innovative initiatives and mobilise new technologies to fight food waste. The IDAFLW will seek to unite a wide range of events and activities, also in the light of the [75th Anniversary of World Food Day](#), which will take place on 16 October 2020. More specifically, on 29 September 2020, key countries and partners will be invited to make a pledge to reduce food losses and waste, while FAO's interactive 'food loss and waste' platform will be launched. This platform will be the gateway to all the initiatives taken by FAO aiming to address food losses and food waste.

FAO encouraged Platform members to actively engage and participate in the IDAFLW, enumerating a few ways to do so (organisation of events, online meetings, campaigns, etc). Finally, FAO welcomed the opportunity to work together with the members of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste to make the IDAFLW a success. FAO also invited the members to share their ideas and feedback with the FAO team (contact: Food-Loss-Waste-Day@fao.org).

During the Q&A session, Platform members seized the opportunity to welcome the IDAFLW and a few members confirmed that they have already started planning activities for the day:

- Stop Wasting Food, Denmark and the Danish ONE\THIRD Think Tank on Prevention of Food Losses and Food Waste are currently planning several activities;

- Ireland foresees several activities, starting from 28 September 2020, including a consumer campaign on date marking;
- Estonia has begun preparing a campaign for consumers, to be promoted on the IDAFLW;
- Germany established its [Week of Action on Reducing Food Waste](#) every year around the IDAFLW, during which various actions will take place across the food supply chain. In 2020, it will take place between September 22nd – 29th.

The Commission will actively engage in communication activities and initiatives on IDAFLW, by joining forces with FAO and Platform members. While more detailed plans will be forthcoming, the Commission invited Platform members wishing to collaborate on actions to promote IDAFLW, to contact the Platform's Secretariat.

4. FOOD LOSS AND WASTE PREVENTION INITIATIVES IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

4.1 AGRI-FOOD SECURITY MEASURES TAKEN IN LIGHT OF COVID-19, UPDATE FROM THE COMMISSION

The Commission informed Platform members about the **set of EU measures adopted to support agricultural and food markets** most affected by the COVID-19 crisis:

- advice to Member States on designating '[green lane](#)' border crossings;
- [Guidance document](#) on the implementation of the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU, in order to ensure a smooth passage for seasonal workers;
- easing state aid requirements to safeguard support to farmers in need of liquidity;
- taking a number of [market measures](#) (so called flexibility package), such as private storage aid and allowing producer organisations to redirect the share of expenditure allocated to crisis management in their operational programmes (including market withdrawal for free distribution).

4.2 FUND FOR EUROPEAN AID TO THE MOST DEPRIVED (FEAD) AMENDMENTS IN LIGHT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS, UPDATE FROM THE COMMISSION

The Commission informed Platform members about the **latest developments as regards EU support to the most deprived**, through the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). The aim of the [amendments of the FEAD regulation](#) that came into force on 25 April 2020, is to ensure that the FEAD assistance will continue to be provided in context of the COVID-19 crisis and to enable Managing Authorities and food aid providers (such as food banks and other NGOs, public bodies etc) to react quickly to the fast emerging additional needs of people in need. Two of the most important changes incorporated in this amendment refer to the possibility of food assistance provision through electronic vouchers and protective equipment procurement for workers and volunteers delivering the aid.

4.3 UPDATES FROM PLATFORM MEMBERS

Platform members immediately responded to the COVID-19 crisis within the respective areas of competence of their government departments and/or organisations. A number of food waste prevention initiatives were carried out at national, regional or local levels with the aim to avoid that surplus food - generated by the disruption of the food supply chain linked to the health crisis - go to waste. During this time, food banks and other charity organisations received significant increase in demand linked to the economic downturn. The [first edition](#) of the Platform's monthly newsletter focused on these initiatives, and the [following editions](#) incorporated many other activities related to COVID-19 as well as other food waste prevention actions.

- COPA-COGECA presented the **farmers' and agricultural cooperatives' initiatives to tackle food waste during the COVID-19 crisis**, including distribution of surplus food to socially deprived groups and distilling alcohol from wine for sanitary use in Italy, promoting reduced production of certain foods due to reduced demand (notably, Iberian ham and goat cheese) in Spain and publication of recipes demonstrating how to make use of surplus food in Austria. COPA-COGECA suggested that the Platform could identify possible synergies with the [European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform](#), as the members of the latter are also working on food waste prevention. COPA-COGECA also invited members of the EU Platform to join the COPA-COGECA workshop on food waste prevention, scheduled in autumn 2020.
- In their joint intervention, the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) and FoodCloud elaborated on the **pivotal role of food banks in guaranteeing food security and resilience of the food chain**, especially in the context of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. Among others, FoodCloud launched the COVID-19 Emergency Appeal and utilized technology and innovative digital solutions to get better and faster results. FEBA highlighted the increased demand for food as well as the new environment in which food banks are operating and made reference to some of the initiatives carried out by European food banks: the recovery of surplus food from European Commission canteens, the donation of pallets of soft drinks and groceries from airline companies to food banks in France, the redistribution, by the Spanish food banks, of rice grown with compost using coffee grounds from recycled coffee capsules, a campaign on date marking in Germany etc. In this challenging situation, food banks have adapted to an unexpected environment and played a key role in preventing food waste for a social purpose.
- The intervention of the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) revolved around ways in which WRAP **facilitated food redistribution** in the UK through the [COVID-19 Emergency Surplus Food Grant](#) and **helped consumers reduce food waste at home** through the '[Love Food Hate Waste](#)' campaign. WRAP referred to a recent survey carried out in April 2020, which showed that 36% of consumers claim to throw away less food than usual. WRAP also issued [guidance](#) to ensure that certain food products past their "Best Before" date can be donated. According to WRAP, efforts from now on need to be focused on encouraging widespread adoption of behaviours that help reduce food waste and help create a new social norm on making the best use of the food bought. Using this approach WRAP thinks there is a real chance of halving household food waste by 2030 across Europe.

Following WRAP's presentation, several members of the Platform (DK, BE, IE, NO) took the floor and informed the audience about similar positive trends in their respective countries as regards reduction of household food waste during the crisis (linked to better meal planning, shopping, use of food in the home etc...).

Finally, FoodWIN highlighted that during the Covid-19 crisis, the link between local farmers and consumers became stronger, and asked COPA-COGECA about ways in which this trend could be reinforced, as it has positive impacts on the reduction of food losses and waste in the primary sector. COPA-COGECA stated that farmers could be open to the establishment of a more direct connection with consumers in a more permanent way, as they would benefit from a larger and fairer profit margin, compared to selling their produce through intermediaries. However, there are several issues that need to be taken into account in such a business model, such as logistics, availability and diversity of food products.

5. UPDATE FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE EU FOOD LOSS AND WASTE ACTION PLAN AND EXCHANGE WITH MEMBERS

The Commission provided more details concerning the implementation of the EU's food loss and waste action plan, in light of the adoption of the Farm to Fork Strategy. As regards the implementation of the new food waste measurement obligations, the Commission informed that Eurostat will collect and publish data on food waste reported by Member States and informed that Eurostat will soon send to Member States a questionnaire and guidance documents on the reporting on food waste data.

The Commission offered an update on proposed amendments to **EU food hygiene rules**, focusing on those proposed in order to facilitate food redistribution and to offer flexibility in freezing meat at retail level under certain conditions. These proposals are foreseen to be adopted in the fourth quarter of 2020. The Commission has also published a [Notice providing guidance on food safety management systems for food retail activities](#) of small businesses (eg. butchers, bakeries, groceries and ice-cream shops), including food donation, on 12 June 2020. The guidance is based on the 2017 and the 2018 EFSA scientific opinions on hazard analysis approaches for certain small retail establishments (and food donations).

The Commission highlighted future financing opportunities to support actors in undertaking initiatives to fight food waste, notably through [Horizon Europe programmes](#), as well as grants through the [Single Market Programme](#). Platform members also received information about the planned developments for the Commission's food waste website, creating an EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub, and the Platform's monthly newsletter.

Germany provided information on the **German Presidency's plans to monitor progress** of the Member States and Commission as regards the [2016 Council conclusions on food loss and waste](#). More specifically, at the start of its mandate in July, the Presidency will request Member States and the Commission to provide relevant information for this exercise. Outcomes would be communicated at a Council meeting towards the end of the Presidency (e.g. November 2020).

UN Environment updated Platform members on **global food waste monitoring work** and the [Food Waste Index](#). UN Environment referred to 15 countries worldwide that currently have Food Loss and Waste baseline data at least for one stage of the food supply chain, and she invited Platform members to contribute with such data about their Member States if/where these are available.

Italy took the floor and informed Platform members about the **initiatives carried out in Italy with regard to the implementation of the Platform's key recommendations for action**: adoption of Law No 166/2016, which encourages the recovery of surplus food for social purpose; establishment of a Table (*Tavola Rotonda*) aiming to fight food waste and foster food aid involving all the actors of the food supply chain; launch of national funds for the most deprived and against food waste; and development of a national Observatory of surplus food. Based on a study conducted by the Italian Observatory, Italy argued that there are four elements to manage surplus food better with the purpose of avoiding food waste: a) producer organisations are best placed to manage food surplus at source; b) a framework (such as the Common Agricultural Policy-CAP) offering incentives to manage surpluses is essential; c) strong relations between farmers and charitable entities are key and d) there is a need to intensify information-sharing with farmers on how to better utilise the tools available within the CAP.

Following Italy's intervention, the Netherlands presented its **new consumer campaign on food waste and date marking**, launched on the same day. The goal of the campaign is to help consumers reduce food waste linked to confusion about the meaning of date marking. The message of the campaign is clear, simple and as positive as possible, while at the same time providing concrete information to consumers on how to take action.

During the Q&A session, Portugal informed Platform members about the **initiatives that Portuguese authorities carried out to tackle food waste during COVID-19** (e.g. extension of food donation possibilities to avoid food waste at production level). Portugal also plans to implement the Platform recommendations for action at national level and within the different stages of the food supply chain.

To wrap-up the first virtual meeting of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, the Chair thanked Platform members for their participation and their interventions and invited them to [subscribe](#) and actively contribute to the [Platform's monthly newsletter](#).