



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Food sustainability, international relations
Farm to fork strategy

SUMMARY REPORT

EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES AND FOOD WASTE SUB-GROUP ON FOOD DONATION

DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

Webex

3 September 2024

Co-Chairs (2): Ms Rikke Karlsson, DG SANTE and Ms Gudrun Sandø, Denmark

Commission (3): DG SANTE, AGRI, RTD

Member States represented (8): BE, BG, DK, FR, HR, PT, RO, SI

Private sector organisations (10): Boroume, EuroCommerce, FEBA – European Food Banks Federation, FoodCloud, FoodServiceEurope, HFBA – Hungarian Food Bank Association, HOTREC - Hospitality Europe, Too Good To Go, WUWM – World Union of Wholesale Markets, Les Restaurants du Coeur

Public entities (1): FAO

Observer (1): NO

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The Commission co-chair opened the meeting by introducing the agenda.

2. Presentation of donation activities in Denmark by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, co-chair of the sub-group

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA) outlined its' role in supporting food business operators and households to reduce food waste. DVFA highlighted Denmark's first national food waste strategy (2024), which focuses on three key initiatives: addressing regulatory barriers for food waste prevention actions, engaging food business operators through the voluntary agreement 'Denmark Against Food Waste', and setting up a financial support scheme (2 mio. DKK (approximately 267.000 EUR) allocated from the annual, national budget law) to food redistribution organisations supporting the lease/rent/purchase of vehicles. As a food safety authority, the DVFA launched last year an inspection campaign for food donation recipients (e.g. food banks and shelters for homeless), to ensure compliance and offer guidance on traceability, specific hygiene provisions and information on allergen.

FAO inquired regarding the use of the colouring in the food waste hierarchy. The **Commission** acknowledged the importance of distinguishing between prevention and waste treatment actions and explained that work with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) on updating the food waste hierarchy is ongoing, which includes aligning it with the definitions and scope of the Waste Framework Directive. **FEBA** asked whether the financial support scheme mentioned by DVFA had been active before or if it was being launched for the first time. DVFA confirmed that this is the first year the scheme will be active, and it is uncertain if it will continue next year. **Portugal** asked about the role of the think tank One\Third mentioned in the presentation. DVFA explained that, while independent, One\Third is financed by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and plays a key role in the Danish voluntary agreement that obliges food business operators to measure and reduce their food waste. One\Third holds biannual meetings, produces reports and organises activities. Though mainly a business-to-business initiative, One\Third also engages consumers in food waste events.

3. Barriers and opportunities for the redistribution of surplus food in the EU

The **Commission** presented its preliminary findings from the assessment of barriers and opportunities in the redistribution of surplus food in the EU, this meeting targeting traceability and liability aspects.

a. Liability in food redistribution across the EU – a presentation of findings by the Commission

The Commission presented the main findings in relation to liability. Responses to the questionnaire highlighted practical aspects related to liability, examples related to national competence (liability of food business operators in relation to final consumers) and solutions or enabling mechanisms identified in national laws or practice.

Boroume asked if the results of the survey were available. The **Commission** stated that while specific findings were not yet available, efforts are underway to disseminate the results.

Croatia inquired about the difference between liability and responsibility. The **Commission** explained that primary responsibility for food law compliance is outlined in Article 17 and is enforced directly by national authorities. Liability, however, pertains to relationships between parties, such as a food business operators and

consumers, and is governed by national laws and practices, not EU law. For more details on liability in food donation, the Commission recommended consulting the [EU guidelines on food donation](#).

FEBA asked if the Commission could offer recommendations for food banks on how to reduce liability and improve traceability. The **Commission** responded that one solution, amongst others, is the use of contractual agreements.

b. Traceability in food redistribution across the EU – a presentation of findings by the Commission and examples from members

The **Commission** presented the main findings in relation to traceability in food redistribution for food safety purposes. Respondents noted challenges, including the perceived burden of traceability, regional differences, and difficulties faced by charities. Proposed solutions by respondents included more flexibility, simplified procedures for short shelf-life products, and clearer guidelines for food withdrawals and recalls. The Commission stressed that while effective traceability is required, the EU requirements rely on a general rule ‘one step up and one step back’. The Commission invited further discussion to address remaining barriers and gather more feedback.

The **Commission** asked whether the subgroup had explored ways to improve cooperation between donating businesses and receiving food banks or charities to better meet traceability requirements. Additionally, the Commission requested clarification on how members ensure traceability in practice, including the tools and methods used, to better understand and address the barriers to effective traceability.

Too Good To Go (TGTG) suggested replacing barcodes with QR codes on food products to enhance product traceability. TGTG stated that QR codes could provide more detailed product information, such as expiry dates and batch numbers, potentially creating a more robust track and trace system. TGTG noted that this method has been successfully used in the pharmaceutical sector since 2011, and asked if such a solution could be applied to food products. The **Commission** extended the TGTG suggestion, asking members if QR codes would be feasible in practice.

EuroCommerce asked why it is not required to record recipients when distributing food to final consumers and whether doing so might raise GDPR concerns. The **Commission** explained that food business operators must track suppliers (one step back) and recipients (one step forward), but recording recipients is not necessary when distributing food to final consumers.

Croatia noted that their national ordinance on food donation placed food safety responsibility with the donor while the food is under their control, then shifts it to the charity upon transfer. Croatia emphasised that there is no flexibility on food safety, despite the unique nature of food donation. **Croatia** informed that there are national guidelines for traceability with examples of required information. While Croatia has not faced major issues with liability or traceability, Croatia plans to review charity organisation practices more closely, similar to Denmark’s approach.

Food Cloud asked if food business operators are legally required to provide detailed product-level information when donating food to charities. Food Cloud noted that in Ireland, donors are not legally obligated to provide such details, placing the responsibility on charities to record what they receive. This lack of detailed information has led to challenges for charities in Ireland. The **Commission** clarified that both donors and recipients share responsibility for maintaining traceability. Records should be kept by both, though physical or digital exchange of information is not mandatory. **Food Cloud** highlighted that while current guidelines are helpful, they are not mandatory requirements. Food Cloud stated that a warehouse management system for

traceability is used, which many food banks also use. However, but there is concern about charities without similar technology being able to maintain proper records. Food Cloud emphasised the need for ensuring charities have the tools to manage traceability effectively.

The **Danish Veterinary Food Administration** noted that Denmark is working to improve traceability in food donations through various initiatives to guide NGOs and food business operators. The DVFA has developed information on traceability requirements and is now updating the traceability guidelines with a new chapter on donation. The agency also offers a draft assessment service to help food business operators comply with traceability requirements.

The **Hungarian Food Bank Association** shared that it uses an online system to track food from companies to NGOs and final recipients, recording detailed information about the food's journey, including quantities and source details. The Hungarian Food Bank Association is also piloting a platform that allows people in need to receive surplus food directly from small retailers.

FEBA reported that some members use barcode scanning systems to track food, including expiry dates and quantities, and suggested QR codes could streamline this process by reducing manual input. Other members rely on paper-based systems, where consistency and clarity of delivery documents are crucial. For instance, a Romanian food bank uses an IT system to scan and read delivery papers, benefiting standardised documentation from donors. The **Commission** noted that while some Member States use digital tools and others rely on paper, having any traceability system in place is crucial for food safety. **FEBA** emphasised the importance of digitalisation for future traceability but highlighted barriers such as high cost, the need for volunteer training, and reluctance to adopt new technologies. Despite these challenges, FEBA continues to promote digital solutions. The **Commission** acknowledged these challenges and mentioned that Member States can apply for grants under the Single Market Programme to support implementation of Food Waste Prevention Programmes, including actions related to food donations. The Commission concluded the discussion on traceability and liability, indicating that further discussions will take place at the next meeting in December.

4. Latest developments in food donation – update from members

The **Danish Food Bank**, provided an overview of its activities, covering four locations in Denmark, distributing food to 400 recipient organisations weekly, with donations from around 170 donors annually. The Danish Food Bank maintains a rigorous system for traceability. The Danish Food Bank use a meal-based reporting system, adjusted due to various crises. Funding includes private donations, corporate partnerships, and symbolic fees from recipient organisations, covering about a quarter of their annual costs. The Danish Food Bank also engages in corporate volunteering programmes, where companies pay for employee participation. This raises awareness of food insecurity and food waste and contributes to a growing trend in corporate social responsibility.

Germany asked whether the food donations are sorted by volunteers at the food bank. The **Danish Food Bank** confirmed that volunteers primarily handle sorting under the supervision of staff.

5. Conclusions and wrap up

The **Commission** thanked attendees and announced the next meeting on **10 December** in Brussels. The next meeting will amongst others look at barriers and opportunities for food redistribution related to mislabelled food products, the freezing of meat at retail level and donations of animal products from retail to retail, when such activity is a marginal, local and restricted activity.