



## SUMMARY REPORT

### EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES AND FOOD WASTE

#### SUB-GROUP ON FOOD DONATION

#### DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

*Microsoft Teams*

*12 July 2022 – From 10:30 to 14:30*

**Co-Chairs:** Ms Anne-Laure Gassin, DG SANTE and Ms Angela Frigo, European Food Banks Federation (FEBA)

**Commission:** DG SANTE

**Member States represented (16):** AT, BE, BG, DE, DK, ES, FR, GR, HR, IE, LU, LV, PT, RO, SI, SK

**Private sector organisations (8):** BOROUME, EURO COOP - European Community of Consumer Co-operatives, FEBA - European Food Banks Federation, FOODCLOUD, FOODSERVICEEUROPE, HFBA - Hungarian Food Bank Association, HOTREC - Hospitality Europe, LASTMINUTEMARKET, TOO GOOD TO GO, WUWM - World Union of Wholesale Markets

**Public entities:** FAO

**Invited (2):** Matsentralen Norge - Food Banks Norway, REWE Group, TAFEL Deutschland

### 1. Introduction by co-chairs

The DG SANTE co-chair opened the meeting by introducing the co-chair from FEBA and by referring to the [mandate](#) of the Food donation sub-group, in particular, the objectives, the key topics to be discussed in this forum as well as possible deliverables. When discussing the co-chairing calendar, WUWM volunteered to act as the co-chair for the sub-group in 2025.

FEBA provided a quick overview of the current challenges and opportunities for food donation (e.g. increased demand for food aid, effects of the war in Ukraine on food security etc.). In their role as co-chair, in order to exploit the full potential of food donation, FEBA proposed that the sub-group carry out a new assessment of food donation practices, policy and legislation in order to help accelerate action in this

area. Such an overview would allow the sub-group, and more generally the Platform, to formulate recommendations to improve national policies and encourage food businesses to donate and will help identify solutions that can be exploited by all Member States (for example, how stakeholders comply with legal obligations such as traceability, how EU funds such as European Social Fund Plus can be utilised to support food redistribution etc.).

## **2. Making a difference with data: what it means for FEBA and its members, by Angela Frigo, FEBA**

FEBA presented their project ‘Quantifying the impact of European Food Banks – From Farm to Fork’ on data collection and digital transformation to support food redistribution, including its goals, milestones, and data from 2021. A representative of TechSoup Italy then introduced the online data collection platform called the ‘Observatory on Food Donation’, used by food banks to encode information on several indicators such as the number of end beneficiaries, food amounts received and redistributed, number of volunteers etc. 2021 data showed that 54% of the total food donated was surplus food recovered from various sources. Further steps for the project include refining the indicators, improving the interface of the online platform and its integration with national data collection systems, amongst others.

By working closely with members, FEBA has managed to implement the monitoring framework within one year and adjust the work plan according to the needs of members. FEBA members are open to learning from each other and to using the observatory to see how food banks operate in other countries.

The Commission asked whether FEBA and its members monitor the amounts of food waste in their operations. FEBA confirmed that these amounts are monitored and they are very small, as most of the recovered food is redistributed. Food Banks Norway stated that Norway has less than 2% waste from all redistributed food.

In reply to the Commission, FEBA indicated that they were not aware whether their members had been contacted by country authorities in context of the first EU reporting on food waste levels (under this scheme, Member States can report food redistribution amounts on a voluntary basis).

The Commission further asked how FEBA managed to implement the data collection exercise with all its members within one year and whether there were any lessons learned in terms of facilitating engagement and if they encountered any difficulties in rolling out this monitoring framework. FEBA already had a data collection system in place before starting this project and improved it together with TechSoup, a technology company that has experience with NGOs. FEBA worked very closely with its members and was open to all feedback and adjusted the work plan accordingly. FEBA had to learn from its members about the particularities of their operations and data measurement in an effort to create a system that would accommodate the needs of actors with different ways of working in different countries.

## **3. Recent developments in food redistribution across Europe (challenges and opportunities), introduction by Angela Frigo, FEBA and discussion with members**

FEBA opened the floor for a discussion about the availability of surplus food in an evolving food system, in particular on how increased supply chain efficiency, but also crises and other factors are impacting on food systems and as a consequence on food donation (e.g. COVID-19, war in Ukraine, impact of inflation and rising energy and food prices, availability/lack of raw materials etc.). A set of questions on these topics have been circulated with sub-group members ahead of the meeting. Here is an overview of the main points raised by members:

- HFBA pointed out that more and more companies are donating food, while there is also a decrease in the availability of surplus food as food supply chains become more efficient. When donating food, operators become more aware of the surplus food within their operations and adjust their processes in order to avoid such surpluses and become more efficient. BOROUME saw a 30% increase in the quantity of saved and redistributed food in 2021 due to an increase in the number of companies that donate food surplus as well as – in the context of Covid-19 – the donation of food destined for the Horeca sector.
- Matsentralen Norge – Food Banks Norway only redistributes surplus food. Similarly to BOROUME, they observed significant increases in availability of food for redistribution within the past few years. Food Banks Norway also noted an increased commitment from operators to donate food. The Covid-19 crisis has opened opportunities to save more food from Horeca and establish new partnerships.
- HOTREC reported an increase in initiatives to redistribute food from the Horeca sector to people in need, as companies are willing to show their social commitment and food redistribution helps save waste treatment costs. During COVID, many establishments became more aware of their food stocks and established partnerships with food banks. Rising energy and food prices have an important impact on the operations of this sector and businesses are adapting to reduce their costs as much as possible.
- Portugal addressed the set of questions proposed by FEBA to one of their biggest national food redistribution organisations (Re-food 4 Good), which has centers all over the country. One of the questions concerned the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food donation and the availability of surplus food, to which answers varied (e.g. while some respondents reported less surplus food available in restaurants, others claim quantities remained the same). Respondents also considered that neither the war nor the rising prices have had an impact on food donation to date. Many respondents answered that they are experiencing difficulties with volunteers' availability to collect donations with their own cars and that there is a large increase in the number of families asking for support.
- Denmark reported that in the context of the ongoing conflict and increase in food prices, the government reached out to major retail chains to encourage them to donate surplus food, while citizens were asked to volunteer and help redistribute the food. The number of local food banks increased, ensuring a better coverage of the country. Denmark is looking at some barriers, reported by a soup kitchen that cooks surplus food for other charity organisations, related to the recovery of food from restaurants and pointing to the possible need for greater flexibility as regards food hygiene rules. The DG SANTE co-chair encouraged Denmark to share more information on this issue.

#### **4. Food donation cooperation – an example from Germany, by Kathrin Daivandran, REWE and Ryan Harty, Tafel Deutschland**

Representatives from REWE Group and Tafel Deutschland presented their joint national initiative to redistribute surplus food from retail to people in need. Following an introduction about Tafel Deutschland's operations, the REWE Group presented the food waste data collected from 16 retailers as part of the National Retail Dialogue Forum in Germany. The data indicates that the food wasted at retail level represented 1,54% of the total sales.

The REWE Group and Tafel Deutschland collaborate on several initiatives beyond food redistribution, amongst which raising money for people in need during the Covid-19 pandemic; employees' donations to support local projects for children; a school programme offering breakfast to disadvantaged pupils etc.

In order to facilitate food donations, the two organisations have clarified how the legislative framework applies to this activity through the provision of guidance and have implemented a digitalisation project in order to provide more transparency. The presenters concluded that whilst, in their view, mandatory donation of unsold food products is not needed, it is important to ensure continued support to allow charities to carry out their work appropriately (e.g. clarification of food hygiene requirements) as well as continue to raise public awareness regarding food waste.

Discussion:

- Food Banks Norway asked for clarifications on donation of products which have passed the 'best before' date. The speakers clarified that, in Germany, retailers can donate or sell foods past the 'best before' date provided the food is still safe. There is no guidance for how to ensure this other than to do an organoleptic assessment, which implies opening the food package. Retailers therefore generally do not donate foods past the 'best before' date given possible safety concerns. The Tafel accepts products past the 'best before' date and tests a small batch of them to ensure they are safe, informing beneficiaries that foods are past their 'best before' date.
- Luxembourg raised a question on traceability and record-keeping for the donated foods and whether this issue had been discussed with local authorities. The Luxembourgish authorities inquired as to how product recalls are handled in the case of donated foods. REWE explained they have a checklist where the redistributed food is noted down but there is no traceability at article or batch level. The process is simplified to encourage donations, but it has certain drawbacks, also in terms of traceability.
- The SANTE co-chair thanked the presenters for sharing information on their work, providing a concrete illustration of cooperation between retailers and food banks. She stated that some of the issues raised related to food safety legislation (e.g. date marking, traceability) could be the subject of further discussion in the sub-group, notably in context of the assessment that would be done of food donation practices (state-of-play on barriers and opportunities).

## **5. Food donation and the Norwegian model for food waste reduction: how cooperation between the food industry and authorities facilitated the development of a robust network of food banks by Paula Capodistrias, Food Banks Norway**

Food Banks Norway provided an overview of the Norwegian cooperation model between the food industry, authorities and redistribution organisations and how it has evolved over time. The first collaborative project to reduce food waste dates from 2010, involving various actors of the food supply chain with the goal to help the food industry and consumers reduce food waste in Norway by 25% by the end of 2015. The establishment of Matvett, the Norwegian food industry's organization which focuses on food waste prevention, as well as of the Oslo food bank, were presented as milestones in shaping the food redistribution landscape in the country. Other important milestones which led to a consolidated food redistribution network in Norway include changes to the policy framework to facilitate donations; creating a framework of cooperation between public and private sectors and a negotiated agreement; the establishment of Food Banks Norway and its national network. A national system for redistribution of surplus food among the food banks was put in place to secure transport of food between the food banks (via purchase of external transport services), increase the receiving capacity of all food banks, increase the variety of food types among the food banks and the volume of food rescued. The speaker explained

that distances between towns in Norway are very long, transporting the food from one food bank to another with the food bank's own transport is more expensive than renting transport services to do this.

HOTREC provided feedback on the experience of some of their members engaging in food donation: in some instances, the small capacity of certain charities (accepting food for not more than 30 people) can have both logistical and cost implications for restaurants needing to carry out several trips in order to deliver surplus food.

## **6. Conclusions and wrap-up**

The DG SANTE co-chair presented an overview of the topics of interest arising during the meeting's discussions and asked members to vote on those which could be further explored in the 2<sup>nd</sup> sub-group meeting. Below is a list of the topics, starting with the most voted one:

- Food redistribution in the EU: today's landscape (assessment of barriers and opportunities)
- Monitoring of food redistribution and use of digital tools
- Use of EU fruit and vegetable withdrawal scheme
- ESF+ Programme to fund food donations (including for the recovery and redistribution of fresh products – fruits, vegetables, dairy) – simplified cost options

The Commission carried out a pilot project for the period of 2018-2020 to further assess food donation practices in the Member States and promote the dissemination and uptake of the EU food donation guidelines (adopted in 2017). In the context of the pilot project, a document has been prepared to illustrate how Member States implement EU rules to facilitate food donation in practice. Boroume expressed support for carrying out an overview and further assessment of food redistribution across the EU, noting that the [EU project](#) on food redistribution had provided helpful guidance for shaping Greek legislation to further promote food donation and food waste prevention, more generally. The [document](#) with concrete examples of practices and legislation from Member States had been particularly informative in this regard. The Commission thanked Boroume for their feedback on the previous assessment carried out with support of the Platform and, in the context of this new exercise, invited members to share their thoughts as to how to make the information collection as efficient as possible.

The co-chairs thanked all participants for their contributions during the meeting and announced that the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the sub-group would take place in the autumn, with the exact date to be confirmed at a later point. In the meantime, Platform members will be asked to review and update the content of their webpages on the [Hub](#), including any food redistribution developments, ahead of International Day of Awareness of Food Losses and Food Waste on 29 September.