



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Food Safety, Sustainability, and Innovation
Farm to fork

SUMMARY REPORT

EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES AND FOOD WASTE SUB-GROUP ON ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

Online via Webex

28 May 2024 (13.30-16.30 CET)

Co-Chairs (3): Rikke Karlsson, DG SANTE; Eva Sali, COPA and Tomasz Szuba, Venturis Horeca

Commission and EU bodies (3): DG SANTE, AGRI, JRC

Member States represented (7): EE, IE, IT, LV, HU, NL, SK

Private sector organisations (13): BOROUME, COPA – European Farmers, DUH – Deutsche Umwelthilfe, ECSLA – the European Cold Storage and Logistics Association, FEBA – European Food Banks Federation, Harokopio University, HOTREC, REGAL Normandie, Slow Food, WRAP – The Waste and Resources Action Programme, WUR – Wageningen University & Research, Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut, Venturis HORECA

Public entities (1): FAO

Observers (1): NO

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The SANTE co-chair opened the meeting, introduced the co-chairs from COPA and Venturis Horeca and presented the main points on the agenda.

2. Food waste prevention at primary production

2.1 Introduction by COPA ([PDF](#))

COPA highlighted various strategies and practices aimed at reducing food waste and enhancing sustainability in agriculture. Emphasizing the role of advanced agricultural techniques, COPA illustrated how innovations can significantly curtail food losses, thereby mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. Notably, COPA pointed out a downward trend in food waste at the production level, attributing this progress to numerous projects and programs designed to address the issue. COPA highlighted the importance of collaboration, with farmers working alongside national authorities, academic institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders to develop effective methods to tackle food waste. COPA showcased active farmer participation in food donation initiatives, citing specific examples from France, Poland, and Spain. These efforts are complemented by programmes aimed at shortening supply chains through direct sales to limit food waste. COPA discussed the importance of repurposing food unsuitable for human consumption and aligning measures with the hierarchy of food waste prevention. COPA identified several challenges, such as the need to differentiate between avoidable and unavoidable food waste and to enhance recovery of surplus food and its reuse. For better prevention, COPA outlined several conditions, including the promotion of product recovery and reuse, improving farmers' positions within the food supply chain, and facilitating access to agricultural techniques. Logistical support related to recycling, packaging, storage, and transportation for food donations was also deemed crucial.

Harokopio University asked if the utilisation of food waste for energy production and/or other added value products can be considered prevention measures, according to the EU food waste hierarchy. The **Commission co-chair** clarified that the distinction between prevention and treatment measures depends on the final destination of the waste. Further clarification of the food use hierarchy is ongoing in collaboration with the Joint Research Centre, to clarify the definitions and measures.

2.2 From field to facility: Challenges and opportunities to reduce waste in agri-food cooperatives - presentation by Agrupacion de Cooperativas Valle del Jerte, Spain ([PDF](#))

Agrupación de Cooperativas Valle del Jerte presented its initiatives, focusing on the use of products (namely cherries, chestnuts and figs) that do not meet marketing standards, such as fruits with visual defects or unconform sizes, which would otherwise be wasted. They are actively involved in research and innovation projects aimed at reducing food losses at farm level. Additionally, they participate in studies exploring how parts of cherries can be utilized as biomass or for energy production, highlighting the potential to derive more value from by-products that would typically go to waste. The presenter elaborated on the main challenge to this approach: producing high-quality products from agricultural surplus often incurs higher costs compared to traditional industrial products; achieving a constant volume of surplus product to justify new industrial machinery etc. To address these issues, Agrupación de Cooperativas Valle del Jerte suggested forming cooperatives and collaborating with other producers and technology experts. Such partnerships could lead to new business models, reducing dependency on the unpredictable fresh market and increasing resilience against weather

impacts. The presenter also emphasized the need for innovation to develop more resistant crop varieties, noting that warmer winters pose a significant threat to cherry production. To support these innovation programs, additional resources are necessary to ensure that producers can adapt and thrive despite the growing challenges they are faced with.

The **Commission co-chair** asked for examples of good practices for redistributing surplus food from farmers directly to consumers. **Agrupacion de Cooperativas Valle del Jerte** emphasized the importance of cooperation and distribution platforms, particularly in the B2B sector rather than B2C, advocating for more transparent and cooperative systems to ensure balanced commercial relationships between farmers and upper stages of the food supply chain.

3. Coordination and governance structures for food waste prevention actions

3.1 Perspectives at national level – presentation by Ireland ([PDF](#))

Ireland presented its efforts to coordinate food waste prevention actions, as part of its Circular Economy Programme, Climate Action Plan, Food Vision 2030, Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy and the National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap 2023-2025, involving organisations such as the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap sets out a number of priority actions to bring the focus on food waste prevention, across key sectors in the food supply chain, together in a coherent manner. The Roadmap will be updated every three years. The first Roadmap focuses on a voluntary approach in terms of measuring and reporting of food waste. The effectiveness of the voluntary approach to food waste measurement and reporting will be reviewed to determine if there is a need to set mandatory requirements for measurement and reporting.

3.2 Perspectives at local level – presentation by the City of Ghent ([PDF](#))

The **City of Ghent** presented its strategy to reduce food waste, including the establishment of a Food Council in 2015, which focuses on three strategic goals, namely, creating a short and sustainable food chain, ensuring sustainable food for everyone, and reducing food waste. The City of Ghent highlighted the importance of collaboration with numerous stakeholders, noting the challenges in measuring the impact of awareness campaigns and the need for greater coordination with other cities, national, and European governments to share experiences.

Harokopio University and **HOTREC** asked for further information about the Smart Scales that small restaurants can rent in Ghent to monitor their waste and receive tailored guidance to reduce food waste. The **City of Ghent** explained that they purchased five smart scales through a research program at the local university, an initiative funded by the Flemish government. Restaurants can rent these scales for free for five months, while the local government covers the cost of tailored consultancy services. In the first month, restaurants use the scale independently, and from the moment the initial data are received, guidance and training for the kitchen staff and chef begin. This support will continue for the next three years, with plans to evaluate the project at the end of this period. The City of Ghent explained that this technology is already used in large kitchens. The focus is now on making this technology accessible to smaller hospitality businesses, including small restaurants. Currently, the City of Ghent is collaborating with a company from Switzerland to achieve this. There are also companies in the Netherlands that have developed similar systems.

The **Commission co-chair** asked about the results of the Smart Scales initiative. The **City of Ghent** replied that they are planning an event in June in collaboration with their Culinary Council, involving

around 50 restaurants, with the aim to evaluate the initiative's progress. Since the introduction of the doggie bag programme seven years ago, the City of Ghent observed that many restaurants have started their own systems, indicating a significant increase in awareness.

HOTREC suggested discontinuing the use of the term 'doggy bag' and adopting a more consumer-friendly term.

Slow Food expressed interest in the Feast project, which seeks to increase access to sustainable food for people with low incomes. Slow Food also inquired about public procurement actions. In relation to public procurement, the **City of Ghent** replied that it participates in the SchoolFood4Change project, which also focuses on improving procurement for school meals to further reduce food waste. The City of Ghent referred also to ongoing research to understand market capabilities and better align procurement procedures with their goals. For other procurement initiatives, such as the Ghent Festival, the City of Ghent aims to influence food truck operations but faces limitations in its current tools. Collaborations with the legal department are ongoing to explore how much impact they can realistically achieve. Regarding the Feasts project, the City of Ghent explained its goal of making sustainable food accessible to everyone through various methods, such as double pricing, free contribution or solidarity systems, acknowledging the narrative shift required.

The **Commission co-chair** asked how national agencies consult and engage with other entities, such as cities and regions. The **City of Ghent** replied that in Flanders, the coordination seems fragmented, as budget cuts have eliminated a dedicated staff member for food policy within the lobbying organization for cities. As a result, cities like Ghent rely heavily on individual contacts when communicating for example with the Flemish local government. Furthermore, the Flemish food strategy is divided among different departments, adding to the complexity of coordination.

Ireland explained its national, structured approach: the Environmental Protection Agency oversees the national food waste prevention programme, while local authorities handle waste management functions, promoting food waste segregation and prevention. There is also a working group on communications for the circular economy and the environment, ensuring that campaigns and initiatives are well-coordinated and informed by behavioural insights. This structure facilitates a clearer delineation of responsibilities and ensures also that the citizen's voice is considered in decision-making.

Venturis Horeca stated that there is less formalized coordination between national and local authorities in Poland, while contacts and activities do take place. Local initiatives often arise independently and may later influence national policies if recognized as successful examples. The coordination is less systematic, with inspiration more likely coming from other Member States or EU level, rather than from a structured national guidance.

3.3 Can we limit food waste without coordination? Pros and cons – presentation by Venturis Horeca (PDF)

Venturis Horeca presented first a range of food waste prevention actions in Poland and reflected on their different approaches. Besides legislative measures on food donation, there is a need for better coordination and more comprehensive strategies to reduce food waste in Poland. Venturis Horeca presented the main work areas and results of PROM, a strategic project looking to reduce food losses and waste in Poland by developing a national strategy, a public awareness campaign and a monitoring system. Venturis Horeca called for greater national coordination and cooperation across the food value chain and emphasized the need for precise measurement and targeted prevention strategies.

Summarising some of the discussion on governance, the **Venturis Horeca co-chair** emphasized the relative ease of launching campaigns, noting that it often involves simply reusing messages from previous efforts with some posters and broadcasts. The co-chair stressed the importance of having a dedicated coordinator, not only for motivation and pushing initiatives forward, but also for accountability. Impact assessments were highlighted as crucial for demonstrating value for money and determining the effectiveness of different tools. The Venturis Horeca co-chair asserted that stable and secure funding is essential, suggesting that multi-year budgets should ensure continuous financial support. However, there is a concern that food waste is not prioritized in policies or strategies across countries. Data collection, monitoring, and the reliability of gathered data were also deemed critical.

4. Conclusions and wrap-up

The **Commission co-chair** closed the meeting thanking the co-chairs and presenters, reminded members to validate the voluntary agreement report by 6 June deadline.