



**SUMMARY REPORT**

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

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

**4<sup>th</sup> meeting**

*Brussels, Jacques Delors Building*

*Rue Belliard 99-101, Room JDE 70*

*26 October 2018 – From 10:00 to 17:00*

**Chair:** Anne-Laure Gassin, *Policy Officer, Food information and composition, food waste, DG SANTE*

**Commission:** DG SANTE ; DG EMPL ; DG MARE

**Member States represented (10):**

BE, BG, DK, ES, FI, HR, IT, LV, NL, PL, RO, SI

**Private sector organisations:**

EUROCOMMERCE, European Food Banks Federation (FEBA), FOODCLOUD, FoodDrinkEurope, Hungarian Food Bank Association (HFBA), Independent Retail Europe, Les Restaurants du Coeur, Wageningen University and Research.

**Other organisations:**

ECORYS

**Observers:**

NO

## **1. WELCOME AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The chair extended apologies of the Head of Unit who, due to other immediate priorities, was not able to chair the meeting of the sub-group. She then welcomed members to the fourth meeting of the sub-group on food donation of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste. Following presentation and adoption of the agenda, the Chair gave the floor to the first speaker.

## **2. UPDATE ON FEAD: SUPPORT FOR FOOD DONATION AND FOOD WASTE PREVENTION – PRESENTATION BY THE COMMISSION**

The Commission official (DG EMPL) provided an overview of the objectives of the Fund of European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the type of support offered through the two main operational programmes, the eligible expenditures covered, as well as the opportunity to address food waste prevention and support food donation through FEAD funds. She further explained the latest amendments to the FEAD Regulation, which have extended the use of simplified cost options for food donation and the merging of the programme under the European Social Fund Plus (2021-2027).

In response to a query from the NL, DG EMPL stated that it is possible for Member States to change the type of operational programme funded by FEAD. The Hungarian Food Bank Association welcomed the possibility of applying simplified cost options to food donation activities but highlighted the difficulty of changing habits for Member State authorities who are used to purchasing food through FEAD (rather than funding food donation activities). DG EMPL informed FEBA that the mid-term evaluation was not yet completed and welcomed the possible additional feedback that FEBA offered to provide regarding FEAD implementation. DG EMPL further explained that whilst the Commission's aim is to administer a flexible funding system, with indicators that are not too onerous for organisations to apply, at times Member States lay down administrative obligations that go beyond the requirements stipulated in the EU Regulation governing FEAD.

## **3. EU PILOT PROJECT ON FOOD REDISTRIBUTION: INTERACTIVE SESSION WITH THE CONSULTANT ECORYS AND WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY AND RESEARCH**

The contractor in charge of the EU pilot project on food redistribution (Ecorys and Wageningen UR) presented a mapping of operational food redistribution models across Member States and the (preliminary) findings on strengths and weaknesses, providing an overview of the evaluation of capacity issues by country, operational model type and maturity level. Following the presentation by the consultant, sub-group members were asked to work in small groups, reporting back to plenary, in an iterative process, to address the following points:

**a) collect members' insights on barriers and success factors for current food redistribution processes, implementation of the EU guidelines on food donation, future developments and needs for action**

The main barriers to food redistribution identified by subgroup members were the following: lack of technical equipment and infrastructure; lack of knowledge (of food business operators, beneficiaries etc.); higher demand than supply (food available in small volumes etc.); reduced human capacity (volunteers etc.) and financial resources; absence of fiscal incentives; limited availability of foods with short shelf life (eg high quality protein sources such as meat, fish etc...); responsibility and liability issues; geographical constraints; absence of a coordinating body (ie multiple operators working independently).

As for success factors, members pointed out the following: availability of EU wide guidelines for food donation, as well as national guidelines; fiscal incentives; inter-sectoral collaboration, including public/private, and development of networks (e.g. regional redistribution centres in NL); digital tools facilitating the donation process; financial help for redistribution operators; raising awareness about relevant measures laid down in EU/national legislation including the possibility of redistributing food

past the 'best before' date; legislation and/or guidance clarifying who is responsible for what at each stage of the redistribution process. It was also suggested that private companies who make food donation part of their corporate social responsibility scheme find it easier to engage staff internally to support food redistribution.

The different interpretation of the EU guidelines on food donation, and the issue, in particular, of managing the responsibility for food safety between the different actors and application of food hygiene legislation (eg food banks need to be registered in some Member States, in others not) were amongst the key differences identified across Member States.

**b) frame key messages to support the project's dissemination activities**

The contractor offered an overview of the project's dissemination strategy, proposing key messages corresponding to different sections of the EU food donation guidelines and asked members to identify other possible messages, as well as specific target groups, which will be taken into account for development of the project's communication strategy.

**4. REDISTRIBUTION OF SURPLUS FOOD – EXAMPLES IN THE MEMBER STATES: DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS ON THE DRAFT DOCUMENT OF THE EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES AND FOOD WASTE**

The Commission reiterated the purpose of the document as being to illustrate how Member States implement EU rules to facilitate food redistribution in practice, thereby facilitating exchange of information. It was emphasised that the document would be a product of the Platform, shaped by its members with the aim to support relevant actors in the field understand the practical implementation of the EU regulatory framework applying to food redistribution.

A first draft of the Platform document had been sent, on 17 October 2018, to both the food donation subgroup, as well as Platform members for input and comments. Based on members' feedback, the Commission would then consolidate the document and disseminate it to Platform members in order to allow members' review prior to the plenary meeting to be held on 6 December 2018. It was explained that due to the complexity of the document, the initial deadline for adoption by the Platform, initially foreseen for end 2018, would be extended to early 2019, in order to allow members the necessary time to validate the information compiled by the consultant.

Members were encouraged to send their input in track changes in order to facilitate the reviewing process, giving relevant references/links to the regulations as well as to the guidelines and/or practices cited; together with any other suggestions concerning the level of detail or structure of the document. Other comments of more general nature were also welcome.

Following discussion of the first chapter, the Commission confirmed that, in line with the overall scope of the Platform's document, it would focus only on national policies/measures in place to facilitate food redistribution. Where these are part of national food waste prevention programmes, this would be indicated. The Commission also reminded members that a recent overview of national food waste prevention strategies and plans had been collected by the Bulgarian Presidency to inform discussions at AGRIFISH Council (held April 2018) on food waste prevention.

PL highlighted the usefulness of referencing also guidelines and other tools implemented at national level to raise awareness/educate actors in food redistribution. Given the large number and evolving nature of such work, it was agreed that such a list of guidelines/tools could be added to the already existing resource section on the Commission's [website](#).

This would allow regular, ongoing updating so that members would always have access to the most recent information.

DK stressed the importance of seeking Platform members' validation of the information compiled in the Member States' food redistribution practices document - in particular that of national competent authorities – in order to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of data gathered by the consultant through calls for information, interviews and literature review. The Commission stressed that, given the document's focus on national policies and legislation, it was important for national authorities in Member States to review the document for accuracy and that Member States, in particular, would be asked to validate the final document prior to its adoption by the Platform.

Furthermore, DG SANTE would also liaise internally with relevant services within the Commission (eg EMPL, AGRI, MARE, TAXUD) on the presentation of information related to their respective policy areas.

Most subgroup members considered the overall content of the Platform document to be useful in their work on food donation (BE, DK, ES, FI, HR, LV, NL, PL, RO, FEBA, LES RESTAURANTS DU COEUR) and its structure/format to be appropriate for the purpose of the exercise (FI, HR, LV, NL, RO, SI, HFBA, LES RESTAURANTS DU COEUR). EUROCOMMERCE found that an introduction explaining the aim of the document would be needed in order to explain to stakeholders its technical nature (i.e. overview of relevant national measures in place to facilitate food donation. The NL expressed a similar view and added that, whilst the document could be useful, some information was missing. The Commission further explained that the structure of the document reflected its overall aim to facilitate readers in finding information on a subject-by-subject basis and that it was not necessarily meant to be read from beginning to end.

FI and NL suggested the addition of an introductory table offering an overview of the information available according to Member State and topic. Other recommendations received from subgroup members included: updating the information sources to ensure that they refer to organisations rather than individual contributors (DK, HR); adding more information on Member States' barriers and solutions found (ES); addressing the issue of cross-border food donations (FOODDRINKEUROPE); illustrating more operational aspects of food redistribution (FOODCLOUD, LES RESTAURANTS DU COEUR); ensuring a better balance between countries throughout the document (FI); clarifying the issue of registration of food business operators who redistribute foods (HFBA).

Restaurants du Coeur requested the identification of actors on national level, to which the Commission replied that, given the number of players involved and rapidly evolving nature of the food donation environment, the Platform document could only offer a general overview of the food redistribution framework in a certain country. At a later stage of the project, specific reports will be made available mapping existing regulatory and policy measures, as well as operational frameworks impacting food redistribution across Member States, which could provide further information on the actors involved.

Replying to a question by HR on the approach to assess the added value and effectiveness of the EU food donation guidelines, ECORYS explained that specific indicators were under development, together with a questionnaire to gather feedback from relevant actors in the field.

On the inclusion of a list of national contact points for further information (ES, HFBA), the Commission explained such a measure would not be feasible due to data protection requirements. The Commission reminded members that Platform experts can contact each other directly through the [Digital Network](#).

Several members have indicated missing information or misinterpretation of data, and have committed to come back with written comments on the text, after consulting with relevant competent authorities (BE, BG, DK, ES, FI, LU, LV, NL, PL, RO, SI). IT mentioned it had already provided written comments on the Platform document during the drafting process of the EU guidelines on food donation.

Members also stressed the need to update the document over time (BE, LV, FEBA), an idea also supported by the Commission. The Chair referred to the [Resources library](#) of the European Commission's Food Waste [website](#) as a tool to store relevant links and references to national reports, guidelines, education campaigns etc.; encouraging members to send in relevant resources to be published on the page when these become available.

In closing the discussion, Wageningen University and Research thanked all members for their direct input and reiterated the importance of collecting written validation (in track changes for comments on the text) of the information presented in the Platform document. All comments received would be integrated into a consolidated version of the document, to be disseminated to Platform members ahead of the plenary meeting taking place on 6 December.

## **5. INFORMATION SHARING ON FOOD DONATION ACTIVITIES IN MEMBER STATES/BY SECTORAL ORGANISATIONS**

### **5.1 MORE RECOVERY, MORE SUSTAINABILITY. THE CONTRIBUTION OF FEBA AND COSTA CROCIERE TO SDG 12 AND 14 – PRESENTATION BY FEBA**

The presentation outlined an initiative carried out by FEBA and COSTA CROCIERE, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders and national competent authorities, forming part of a wider food waste reduction programme. The overall aim is to halve food waste by 2020 across the fleet. The project guarantees regular and continuous donation of surplus food from ships to the associations selected in the participating ports. Moreover, there is also a pilot project being carried out on the recovery of confiscated and discarded fish and its conservation, transformation and redistribution for social purposes.

The Commission (DG MARE) welcomed the latter pilot project and acknowledged the different approaches taken by Member States to address the issue of confiscated fish. It was explained that the regulatory framework imposed certain limitations on discarded fish (eg undersized fish that do not comply with marketing standards cannot be placed on the market for direct human consumption, including donation); however fish discarded because there is no market interest (no buyer) or confiscated fish may be made available for food donation.

Replying to a question raised by NL on the possibility to transfer the practice to international cruises, FEBA explained that the project had been adapted to comply with Italian, French and Spanish legislation and there were ongoing discussions with a global level corporation for its expansion worldwide. As for the possibility to transfer the practice to airplanes, raised by the NL, FEBA emphasised that the potential amount of food saved could be significantly lower due to capacity differences between the two means of transportation, but also due to flight companies' ability to gather information about travellers' food preferences which helps prevent the occurrence of surplus food and hence food waste. The Commission indicated that any such initiatives must conform with EU rules on safety of the food supply chain (eg restrictions related to catering waste from international transport) and that, notably due to space restrictions, it was difficult for airplanes to ensure segregation of food from food waste required to comply with the EU regulatory framework.

## **5.2 VEGETABLE AND FRUIT BRIGADE, AN INITIATIVE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF DUTCH FOOD BANKS – PRESENTATION BY THE NETHERLANDS**

The Netherlands presented a pilot project on recovering fruits and vegetables discarded due to aesthetic standards, overproduction etc., coordinated by the Dutch Food Banks Association in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. By setting up a collection and sorting point in Westland, an area known for its intensive horticulture activities, the association was able to redistribute a significant quantity of fresh produce to regional distribution centres and further on to food banks in two major Dutch cities.

In regards to the potential commercial interest for the discarded products (FI), NL explained that the recovered fruit and vegetables came from a different stream than from primary production.

In closing the meeting, the Chair announced the upcoming EFSA opinion on hazard analysis approaches for certain small retail establishments addressing also food donation activities, which would be circulated to Platform members once published. An EFSA representative would be invited to present the opinion at the next meeting of the food donation sub-group, scheduled for spring 2019.

In closing, the Chair thanked all subgroup members for their active involvement and for providing direct input on the Platform document on food redistribution practices.