



SUMMARY REPORT

JOINT MEETING OF THE EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES AND FOOD WASTE

AND OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZEN'S PANEL

DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

Hybrid

7 November 2023

Chair (1): Mr Klaus Berend, DG SANTE

European Commission and EU bodies (9): DG SANTE, ENV, AGRI, RTD, JRC, ESTAT, EEA (European Environment Agency), EASME (Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), EESC (European Economic and Social Committee), COR (European Committee of the Regions)

Member States represented (23): AT, BE, BG, CZ, DK, EL, EE, FI, FR, DE, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK, SI, ES

Private sector organisations (39): BEUC (the European Consumer Organisation), BOROUME, COPA COGECA (COPA COGECA- The European Voice of Farmers and Agri-Cooperatives), CTC (Clean Technology Centre ((Munster Technological University)), Consorzio Bestack, DUH (Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V.), ECSLA (European Cold Storage and Logistics Association), EFFPA (European Former Foodstuff Processors Association), EuroCommerce (European organisation representing the Retail and Wholesale sector), EuroCoop (the European Community of Consumer Co-operatives), EUPPA (European Potato Processors' Association), Europatat (European Potato Trade Association), FEBA (European Food Banks Federation), FoodCloud, FoodServiceEurope, FOODWIN (Food Waste Innovation Network), Freshfel Europe, EUCOFEL (European Fruit and Vegetables Trade Association), Azti Foundation (Fundación AZTI - AZTI Fundazioa), HOTREC (Hotels, Restaurants & Cafés in Europe), HUA (Harokopio University), HFBA (Hungarian Food Bank Association), Independent Retail Europe, IFWC (International Food Waste Coalition), Last Minute Market, Les Restos du Coeur, MATVETT-NORSUS-NOFIMA CONSORTIUM, Rabobank, Regal Normandie, SWF (Stop Wasting Food Movement), Too Good To Go, Venturis Horeca, WUR (Wageningen University & Research), WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Program), World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM), Zero Waste Scotland.

Other public organisations (5): OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations), UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme).

Observers (1): NO

Joint meeting of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (FLW) and the European Citizens' Panel

1. Welcome and introduction into feedback session by Chair: Klaus Berend, Director Food safety, sustainability, and innovation

The Chair opened the session by welcoming the participants to the joint meeting of the European Citizens' Panel and Members of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (FLW). The Chair thanked members of the European Citizens' Panel for providing recommendations to help step up action against food waste in the EU. The Chair referred to the adoption, by the European Commission, of the legislative proposal setting food waste reduction targets to be achieved by Member States by 2030 and the publication of a citizens' report alongside the impact assessment accompanying the proposal. In the report, the European Commission provided its perspective on citizens' recommendations and indicated how these would support its overarching work on food waste and serve as a guide to help Member States in achieving future targets.

2. Introduction by the moderator

The moderator welcomed the participants joining online and in Brussels and presented the agenda of the meeting.

3. Opening remarks (video) by Sandra Gallina, Director-General, DG Health and Food Safety

In her opening remarks, **Director-General** Gallina elaborated on the European Commission's legislative proposal and highlighted the relevance of citizens' recommendations for food waste prevention in the EU. Citizens' recommendations are reflected in the binding targets put forward in the legislative proposal, which, when adopted, will require Member States to take an integrated approach, involving all key players in taking action to prevent food waste, and supporting consumer behavioural change. She noted citizens' call for the establishment of a fair and equitable food supply chain and supporting food donation across the EU as well as the importance of food waste monitoring and encouraging commitments from food business operators to reduce food waste through the Code of Conduct for Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices amongst others.

4. Remarks by the Directorate-General for Communication

Richard Kühnel, Director, Representation & Communication in Member States, highlighted the value of this joint meeting as providing an opportunity for the European Commission and platform members to give feedback to citizens on their recommendations. R. Kühnel stated that the preparation of the next round of citizens' panels is ongoing and informed that the citizens' engagement platform will soon be available online.

5. Presentation of the recommendations of the European Citizens' panel on food waste and exchange with panel members (topic block I: Cooperation in the food value chain: From farm to fork) ([PDF](#))

Representatives of the European Citizens' panel who had worked on Topic Block 1 presented [recommendations 1-7](#) followed by an exchange of views with panellists including representatives from the European Commission (DG Health and Food Safety - SANTE and DG

Agriculture – AGRI), the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, COPA COGECA and FEBA.

DG SANTE thanked citizens for their recommendations, calling for the active involvement of all players in food waste prevention and strengthening collaboration across the food supply chain. Such an integrated approach is reflected in obligations laid down in EU waste legislation and reiterated in the European Commission’s legislative proposal setting food waste reduction targets. DG SANTE provided comments on citizens’ recommendations, focusing on recommendations 3, 4, 5 and 6.

EU waste legislation (the Waste Framework Directive) already requires Member States to encourage food donation and the European Commission’s legislative proposal should provide further impetus and support for this practice across the EU, thereby helping to make available surplus food to those in need. The European Commission has also awarded financial (action) grants to the European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA), under the Single Market Programme, to support the capacity building of food banks. As regards facilitating the sharing of data and best practices, the European Commission explained that the EU Platform on FLW and a digital resource network, the [EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub](#), were established to address this need. Moreover, the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre has developed an evaluation framework to help all players assess the effectiveness of food waste prevention initiatives, including a calculator to quantify related impacts. City networks such as EUROCITIES, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, and ICLEI (Local governments for sustainability) operate a variety of peer-to-peer programmes targeting cities. As for data on food waste levels, EU waste legislation requires Member States to monitor food waste levels at each stage of the food supply according to a common measurement methodology and report findings to the EU’s Statistics Office, EUROSTAT. Finally, citizens’ engagement is a topic that can be put on the agenda of the EU Platform on FLW in the future so that members can share and learn from each other’s experience.

DG AGRI also thanked citizens for their recommendations and commented that citizens’ recommendations 1, 2 and 7 address food sustainability more generally and that the link between local, seasonal and short supply chains with food waste reduction has not yet been demonstrated *per se*. Citizens’ recommendations reflect the European Commission’s overall thinking on food sustainability, ensuring that all relevant dimensions are taken into account. DG AGRI recalled the importance of internal market rules and encouraging regional programmes, territorialised measures, and food systems. DG AGRI mentioned that some Member States have included support for local markets and short supply chains in their national strategic plans under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and indicated that there is no operational indicator in CAP strategic plans which will allow to monitor the efforts towards reducing food loss and waste. DG AGRI highlighted that every actor in the food supply chain has to play a role, indicating that the proposed food waste reduction targets do not currently include primary production. Referring to recommendations 5 and 6, DG AGRI highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement in the development of EU policy on food and agriculture, stating that the European Commission would be launching a strategic dialogue to discuss the future of agriculture in the EU. Referring to the recommendation on Unfair Trading Practices (UTPs), DG AGRI informed that UTPs are closely monitored by Member State enforcement authorities and that supporting farmers in their bargaining power with other actors in the food supply chain has been the rationale for granting farmers exceptions from competition rules, elaborating sustainability agreements and other measures taken to support producer organisations. In summary, citizens’ recommendations are in line with both the European Commission’s current and future plans.

The French Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty thanked citizens for their work and their recommendations which support orientations taken at national level, in particular the territorial

dimension. Through the creation of ‘territorial food projects’ in France, support is given for the setting up of farmers, short supply chains and provision of sustainable, high-quality food in canteens. There are currently 430 such projects, elaborated through collective action, with food waste prevention being one of the dimensions that may be addressed. Furthermore, there are networks, which are fully focused on preventing food waste in France (REGAL). As regards financial incentives for food donation, fiscal rules in France allow corporate tax credits up to 60% of the net book value of donated food. Moreover, legislation requires certain stakeholders to establish partnership agreements with food banks for the donation of surplus food as well as a management plan to ensure the quality of donated food. The French Ministry emphasised the importance of raising awareness about the consumption of healthy seasonal products, stating that education on food and taste is included in the school curriculum and the display of information on the seasonality of fruit and vegetables may in future be required in stores of surface area greater than 400 m².

COPA COGECA thanked citizens for the comprehensive recommendations and noted that they had acknowledged that farmers have no interest in wasting food produced and that there is a power imbalance in the market. COPA As regards recommendation 1, COPA COGECA welcomed the suggestions made to empower producers and reduce power imbalance in the food value chain through monitoring and better enforcement of the UTPs Directive. COPA COGECA expressed concerns with regard to the recommendation to use the closest producer possible, as this could conflict with competition rules and might not bring the desired results. COPA COGECA welcomed efforts to promote the direct sale of ‘ugly’ fruits and vegetables and highlighted the importance of marketing standards, which are the ‘common language’ of the market, ensuring high quality and avoiding market distortions, and clarified that these do not apply to direct sales. COPA COGECA offered examples of initiatives in which farmers and agri-cooperatives are involved such as a Hungarian pilot programme, connecting the Hungarian Food Bank Association and the Budapest wholesale market in order to find outlets for ‘ugly’ fruit and vegetables. A similar project exists in the Netherlands, with transformation of ‘ugly’ fruit and vegetables into processed foods. In respect to recommendation 2, COPA COGECA supported the promotion of local products as this brings farmers closer to consumers and can help build appreciation for the value of food (with such projects existing in Italy, Austria, Finland etc). As regards recommendation 7, COPA COGECA emphasised the need to define what is seasonal and local food.

FEBA thanked citizens for their recommendations and focus on food donation in particular in a context where the donation of surplus food is decreasing while there is an increasing demand for food from charities, due to a growing number of people in need, and the operational costs of food banks are increasing (due to inflation and increased energy costs linked to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine). Food banks are addressing many of the areas highlighted by citizens’ recommendations, in particular the need for financial support, digital tools and collection and sharing of data. Citizens’ recommendations were shared and discussed with the network, peer-to-peer exchanges have been organised to share knowledge on national policies, and visits were also arranged to facilitate knowledge exchange with food banks outside the EU (e.g. Moldova). FEBA also organised a meeting with its members on the use of digital tools, which took place in Dublin. FEBA also reassured citizens that work to facilitate food donation was ongoing and would be pursued, mentioning discussions in this regard held at its Annual Convention as well as the ongoing assessment by the EU Platform on FLW concerning challenges and opportunities related to food donation.

Following this first response from panellists to citizens’ recommendations, the moderator invited questions from meeting participants (on- and offline). A citizen asked if countries other than France have a system of tax incentives for food donations. **DG SANTE** replied that countries such as Portugal, Italy and Spain apply such measures and that the food donation guidelines, adopted by the European

Commission in 2017, include a section on fiscal incentives applied at the time in the EU. **FEBA** confirmed that the abovementioned countries apply tax incentives in favour of food donations and added that adjustments of VAT to take into account the reduced economic value of food that is donated are also important, is a further fiscal measure that can be utilised by Member States. In addition to fiscal incentives, some countries, such as Italy, have simplified administrative procedures for the donation of food by food business operators (in comparison with those required for its destruction or for other uses of surplus food). **The French Ministry** further elaborated that, in parallel with tax incentives, there is support for charities that allows them to access directly healthy and quality products (the ‘Better food for all’ initiative, for which 100 Mio EUR will be allocated in 2024).

International Food Waste Coalition pointed out – to the EU Platform on FLW but also in particular DG AGRI - that it is important to connect the impact of food quality and locality as well as short supply chains with the effect that these can have on food waste throughout the food value chain given the lack of knowledge in this area. **DG AGRI** replied that the European Commission is currently conducting research in this area and there is a need for a continued exchange of information between all stakeholders on how local food systems can assist in addressing food loss and waste, thereby also addressing challenges to food security, while respecting rules governing the internal market (i.e. ‘local’ needs must be carefully defined and not be assimilated with ‘national’). DG AGRI also underlined the importance of understanding the drivers of consumer behaviour as regards food waste and the role of other factors such as time allocated to meal planning and preparation, appreciation, knowledge about food etc.

A citizen asked if there is a possibility of developing the connection between competition law and prioritising local producers. **DG AGRI** replied that the EU’s single market ensures the free movement of goods, people, services and capital, and brings many benefits to citizens. Competition must be fair, and therefore open and transparent. It is not possible, for example, to create obligations that would favour national production over that of other Member States or trading partners. In this regard, DG AGRI emphasised the importance of the recommendation on monitoring and enforcing the UTP Directive and further explained that the application of competition rules to collective initiatives that promote sustainability in the food supply chains has been clarified. Local and short supply chains can be favoured through the CAP strategic plans and the challenge is to scale these up, avoiding nationalistic approaches and seeing how to best serve regions.

The moderator invited citizens on the panel for short, closing statements. Citizens stated that they welcomed progress made concerning the proposed recommendations, for example, prioritising data gathering, fiscal incentives for food donation, encouraging sharing of good practices across the EU, and raising more awareness both about the EU platform on FLW and the role of citizens in driving change. The role of social media in promoting food waste prevention was also highlighted.

Citizens asked if the introduction of a tax on food thrown away at retail would be an option to consider. **DG SANTE** replied that some municipalities have introduced fiscal incentives, for example, schemes to reduce waste treatment costs for companies that donate food. Citizens asked if – given the possible positive impact of short supply chains on preventing food waste - the European Commission envisions possible changes to competition law to make it obligatory for some retailers to buy products locally. **DG AGRI** replied that while there is ongoing work around competition rules related more broadly to food sustainability, there is a need for clearer evidence that such actions would have a positive impact on food waste prevention. DG AGRI stated that the European Commission will look further as to how to support territorial food systems in the context of the broader debate around the transition to sustainable food systems. Finally, in order to move forward quickly, citizens

highlighted the need for evidence-based action, focussing on low hanging fruit and where the biggest wins can be made as well as adopting a systemic approach across the food value chain.

6. Presentation of the recommendations of the European Citizens' panel on food waste and exchange with panel members (topic block II: Food business initiatives) ([PDF](#))

Representatives of the European Citizens' panel who had worked on Topic Block II (Food business initiatives) presented [recommendations 8-15](#) followed by an exchange of views with panellists including representatives from the European Commission (DG SANTE), the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, EUROCOMMERCE and the International Food Waste Coalition.

In respect to recommendation 13, **DG SANTE** stated that it was encouraged to see citizens' strong support for the setting, at EU level, of quantitative food waste reduction targets to be achieved by Member States, with the latter being free to define the measures needed to achieve these targets. This approach was put forward in the legislative proposal adopted by the European Commission on 5 July, which is currently under negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. DG SANTE noted that the proposal goes beyond the setting of guidelines by setting legally binding targets, requiring Member States to reduce food waste in processing/manufacturing by 10% and by 30% per capita jointly at retail and consumption. These reductions are to be achieved by 2030 in comparison with the baseline year of 2020. DG SANTE further explained that EU waste legislation already lays down a hierarchy for the prevention of food waste, in line with citizens' recommendations, notably the prioritisation of the use of surplus food for human consumption.

As regards recommendation 8, DG SANTE highlighted that there are many networks and digital tools available today to facilitate the redistribution of surplus food between food business operators and food banks/charities and directly to consumers. The organisation of such exchange at EU level is not feasible, in particular, for food that is close to the end of its shelf-life.

In reference to recommendations 11, 12, 14, DG SANTE was encouraged to see citizens reaffirming the need for an evidence-based approach to guide effective food waste prevention by all players, highlighting the importance of monitoring and ensuring transparency of data and results achieved. With annual reporting of food waste levels by Member States, the EU is well placed to track its progress towards global and EU targets. While the obligation to report food waste levels at each stage of the food supply chain, according to a common methodology, is set on Member States, national authorities can adapt such methodologies to their national situation and specificities. As regards involvement of food business operators in data collection, some Member States require companies to monitor food waste and others support companies in carrying out food waste diagnoses and putting in place prevention mechanisms. At EU level, the European Commission is also encouraging commitments from food business operators to reduce food waste through the Code of Conduct for Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices.

DG SANTE highlighted that through the EU Platform on FLW, the European Commission aims to foster sharing evidence-based best practices. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre has developed an evaluation framework to help all players assess the effectiveness of their interventions and carries out a periodic assessment of food waste prevention initiatives implemented in the EU. The European Environment Agency also reviews and regularly evaluates Member States' national food waste prevention programmes. DG SANTE reiterated that research and innovation projects funded under the EU's Horizon Europe programme provide data and learning to help inform food waste prevention such as improving understanding as to how social norms influence behaviour and food waste

generation (project [CHORIZO](#)) and the ongoing [SISTERS](#) project, which is investigating packaging innovation linked to food waste and the implementation of “smart” containers for use in supply chain logistics.

The Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry acknowledged the very constructive and useful work carried out by the citizens’ panel and referred, more specifically, to recommendations 10, 13 and 15. Finland has been measuring food waste since 2008 and hotels and restaurants are required not to throw away food if it still can be used for consumption. A logo (recommendation 10) is a type of quality symbol and could be useful in identifying companies that manage food well, and also raises awareness among consumers through food packaging. In respect to recommendation 13, the Finnish Ministry stated that there should be a good overview of the hierarchy of the waste flow in order to focus on priorities. In Finland there are policies and procedures at national level to help those in need access food and to support companies willing to donate food, and to bring together both donors and beneficiaries of food aid. In reference to recommendation 15, the Finnish Ministry highlighted the importance of packaging in protecting food and ensuring food safety whilst also noting the need to improve food packaging to reduce food waste, mentioning that 0,5 to 2% of the environmental effects of food is linked to packaging.

EuroCommerce thanked for the invitation, acknowledging the inspiring nature of the exercise, and provided feedback on recommendations 9, 12 and 15. EuroCommerce recalled the privileged position of the retail and wholesale sector, at the crossroads between supply and demand, and therefore particularly engaged in food waste prevention. Referring to recommendation 9, EuroCommerce underlined that food waste does not make economic sense for a business as it generates costs and the sector therefore has invested significantly in supply forecasting, including the use of artificial intelligence (in addition to sales data) in order to better understand and predict what will be bought and when. Businesses need flexibility (rather than legal frameworks) in order to best respond to changes in supply and demand, key for the prevention of food waste. In this regard, EuroCommerce highlighted the importance of supply chain dialogue. In respect to tax incentives, EuroCommerce expressed support for a VAT zero rate for food donations, which was seen as a barrier previously. As regards a mandatory reporting system, EuroCommerce informed that many of its members are already reporting on food waste on a voluntary basis as a means of informing both customers and investors and ensuring transparency. There are many mandatory requirements already for food business operators including on non-financial reporting. EuroCommerce noted also – in the light of climate commitments- the increased focus on food waste given its impact on greenhouse gas emissions. EuroCommerce highlighted the upcoming Regulation on Packaging and Packaging Waste and indicated the important role that packaging plays in ensuring food safety and protecting food, thereby preventing food waste. EuroCommerce underlined that packaging sizes must also be convenient for different types of consumers (e.g. single households vs. large families). As regards packaging innovation, EuroCommerce recalled the importance of an appropriate legislative framework so that businesses can make the necessary investments and products can enter the market.

International Food Waste Coalition (IFWC) thanked citizens for their commitment and their work and, referring to recommendations for the private sector, highlighted that reporting about food waste quantities by all actors along the supply chain is key, and that the private sector is actively working on standardisation of measurement methodologies, including on a sectoral basis (e.g. for mass catering). As regards citizens’ proposal to create a logo, this could also be utilised to reward companies that measure and report on food waste and define a food waste reduction action plan. IFWC informed of ongoing work to develop an ISO norm on how to manage food waste reduction and highlighted the importance of supporting implementation of such standards - for instance through training and other

measures - on a sectoral basis. IFWC explained that food waste prevention initiatives require action from multiple actors: for instance, whilst doggy bags can be implemented in restaurants, they may not be utilised if these are considered not culturally acceptable by consumers. To address this barrier, the measure would then need to be supported with awareness raising, nudging etc. IFWC highlighted the importance of awareness raising and promoting collaboration between stakeholders to implement a food waste prevention framework, with support provided to actors involved, for example, through voluntary agreements, awareness-raising campaigns, EU-funded research projects and networks such as the EU Platform on FLW.

Following this first response from panellists to citizens' recommendations, the moderator invited questions from meeting participants (on- and offline) indicating also questions and comments raised in the chat, notably referring to packaging and consumer habits.

The Ministry of Agriculture from Portugal stated that it is not feasible to create a platform for food business initiatives at EU level, linking businesses to food banks and consumers, because of the transport logistics involved. The Portuguese Ministry mentioned that some Member States have already implemented this type of platform at national level for redistributing products that are close to their 'use by' or 'best before' date, and asked if these were efficient. In their view, there is not one homogeneous methodology for measuring food waste at EU level, suggesting the need for a single methodology at Union level. The Portuguese Ministry further stated that whilst packaging needs to be reduced, it is also critical for protecting food and ensuring food safety and information to consumers.

As regards connecting food business operators, food banks and consumers through digital platforms, **EuroCommerce** replied that it is not in favour of a centralised European database and that connecting companies with food banks and consumers is better organised on a local or regional level, highlighting also constraints linked to the logistics and practical organisation of such redistribution. EuroCommerce confirmed that such initiatives exist already on a local level which are working well.

As regards reduction of packaging, **The Finnish Ministry** reiterated that superfluous packaging should be avoided. However, it is not possible to avoid packaging completely as it is necessary to ensure food safety.

International Food Waste Coalition emphasised that it is important to bring businesses together on priority topics where common investment and research are needed, for example how food waste is measured in a sector. IFWC stated that voluntary agreements are important and require Member States' support at national level.

DG SANTE pointed out that Member States, which have made significant progress in the reduction of food waste, have established voluntary agreements with the private sector, that is public-private partnerships with agreed food waste reduction targets. The EU Platform on FLW is currently assessing voluntary agreements implemented to date in order to derive and share learning from these experiences.

The moderator invited citizens on the panel for short, closing statements. Citizens emphasised that EU institutions should ensure that all Member States make progress through a common or more standardised approach as well as the importance of defining short, medium and long-term plans and communicating success achieved. As regards the latter, while all citizens need to be involved, greater efforts should be made to reach out to young people, notably through social media channels, aiming not only to provide information but to motivate and engage.

7. Presentation of the recommendations of the European Citizens' panel on food waste and exchange with panel members (topic block III: Supporting consumer behavioural change) ([PDF](#))

Representatives of the European Citizens' panel who had worked on Topic Block III presented [Recommendations 16-23](#) followed by an exchange with panellists including representatives from the European Commission (DG SANTE), the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, Independent Retail Europe and EUFIC.

DG SANTE thanked citizens for their concrete recommendations and highlighted that a country-specific approach is important to have impact on the consumers' behaviour, with interventions and actions carried out at national and local levels. DG SANTE emphasised that it is crucial to consider consumers' food habits, attitudes to food and food waste, as well as their knowledge and skills in managing food to avoid food waste and their motivation to take action. An EU-level, 'top down' approach would not be an effective means of tackling consumer food waste; however, EU-level actions seek to facilitate the sharing of best practice, in particular through the EU Platform on FLW and also drive and support action taken by Member States. The European Commission's legislative proposal setting food waste reduction targets should provide an impetus for Member States to take ambitious actions and to invest in behavioural change programmes, as well as strengthen collaboration between actors across the whole food supply chain and other relevant players such as academia, NGOs and financial institutions. The International Day of Awareness of FLW, held each year on 29 September, provides an opportunity to communicate on this issue. In 2023, the European Commission also included the citizens' panel in its dissemination of communications materials.

DG SANTE stated that promoting better understanding and use of date marking ('use by' and 'best before') in order to avoid food waste is one of the aims of the EU Platform on FLW, where members share their learning, experience and best practices in this area on an ongoing basis through the Platform, its dedicated sub-group and the online EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub. Referring to the planned revision of date marking rules (communicated to the citizens' panel at its first meeting in December 2022), the European Commission had explored with Member States whether this initiative could be pursued alongside the legislative proposal setting food waste reduction targets. While Member States supported a harmonised approach in the field of date marking, most stressed the need to further reflect on the most suitable wording and the need for more consumer research, with some arguing that more investment should be made in better informing consumers about the current date marking concepts. Most Member States also preferred to address this issue, not in isolation, but as part of a broader revision of food labelling rules for which work is still ongoing.

As regards recommendation 16, DG SANTE elaborated that addressing food losses is on the agenda of the EU Platform on FLW with ongoing information sharing in the context of the Food loss and waste monitoring sub-group. DG SANTE explained that on-farm food losses are not addressed under the Waste Framework Directive as such material is not regarded as waste, and that there are no reliable data on the dimension of this issue. The European Commission continues to investigate food losses and explore ways of preventing them, taking into account work carried out under relevant EU-funded research projects. For example, project [FOLOU](#) aims to deliver a robust methodology for quantifying food losses in primary production, focussing on losses occurring from the point that products are ready-to-harvest until they are harvested.

The Netherlands Nutrition Centre thanked citizens for the inspiring work and referred more specifically to recommendations 17 and 20 related to consumer campaigns. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre highlighted that raising consumer awareness and offering an action perspective are crucial to

motivate them to reduce food waste. The Netherlands has achieved a 23% reduction in household food waste since 2015 and is pursuing its efforts, notably through the organisation of a national ‘Week without food waste’ campaign. Organised by the Netherlands Nutrition Centre and the foundation Food Waste Free United, the campaign took place for the 5th time in 2023 with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and focussing on the link between food waste prevention and climate action. The success of the initiative was linked to the active cooperation between public and private stakeholders and pooling of resources to increase outreach as well as production of educational and practical measurement tools for use at home. The Netherlands Nutrition Centre encouraged other Member States to organise similar campaigns, recommending focusing actions on a single week to put the topic high on the agenda. However, taking action over seven days is not enough, and ongoing efforts are needed across the whole food value chain in order to make it easier for consumers to waste less food.

Independent Retail Europe also thanked citizens for this work and highlighted the importance of education in reducing consumer food waste and helping consumers to better manage food. Consumer education pertains to the Member States. Retailers can play a role together with other economic actors, helping to inform, assist and facilitate food waste prevention through a wide range of tools such as publications and apps. However, retailers cannot control what consumers decide to waste, and can therefore not be made responsible for food waste at consumer level. As regards recommendation 23 on the promotion of products close to the expiration date, Independent Retail Europe stated that this is already a widespread practice as not selling food, for retailers, is a cost. Retailers have many different ways of informing their customers (e.g. stickers and other in-store promotion tools) and are best placed to identify the most effective ways of doing so. It is then important that the sold products are consumed by buyers otherwise food waste is transferred from retail to households. Independent Retail Europe explained that retailers are actively engaged in preventing food waste through management of supply and demand, price promotions, redistribution of surplus food to food banks and via apps, further processing of unsold food (e.g. making soups or juices). Whilst retailers actively engage in consumer information on food waste prevention, Independent Retail Europe did not share the view, however, that food waste prevention campaigns should be organised around festive days as mentioned by the Netherlands Nutrition Centre.

The European Food Information Council (EUFIC) referred to recommendation 16 about saving unharvested food and communicating such opportunities to consumers and farmers. EUFIC gave the example of a communication campaign in the city of Ghent, where the Food Council, in collaboration with a local NGO, created a digital map in order to inform the public as to where fruit can be picked for free. EUFIC stated that in France an organisation called SOLAAL, brings together actors from the agriculture, food industry and distribution sectors to encourage food donations, including unharvested food and, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, created a National Agricultural Food Donation Day. In respect to recommendations 18 and 21, EUFIC indicated that food education in schools has been implemented in some countries, for example, in Hungary, where the National Food Waste Authority developed an educational programme and, since 2017, reached over 25,000 children and provided training and mentorship to 1800 teachers. In other countries such as Finland, food waste education is integrated in the curricula in subjects addressing environmental sustainability such as environmental studies, geography and home economics, and the Finnish Food authority has developed related teaching materials. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, in collaboration with the International Food Waste Coalition, has developed educational manuals on food waste aimed toward primary and secondary school children, available in 10 languages on their website. These teach children about the social, environmental, and economic consequences of food waste, benefits of food waste reduction, what can be done about food waste and

how to teach good habits to their families and friends. As regards recommendation 19 on food sharing, EUFIC referred to the food safety challenges when this is done through digital platforms. EUFIC gave an example as to how this can be overcome, citing a community fridge in Helsinki, where consumers can donate and pick up surplus food and staff ensure that food safety procedures are followed correctly (for example, only unopened packaged food can be donated). The operations are approved by the Helsinki city authority every year to ensure that food safety risks are minimised and provide training and tools to allow others to set up such community fridges.

Following this first response from panellists to citizens' recommendations, the moderator invited questions from meeting participants (on- and offline), citing some comments received related to educational activities.

RÉGAL Normandie stated that raising consumer awareness has its limits as regards behavioural change and research results show that practical activities such as showing how to cook using leftovers can be the most impactful.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia encouraged the participation of young people in events such as discussions today with the citizens' panel. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia further referred to school schemes for fruit, vegetables and dairy products, suggesting that donated food should be added to the scheme. The Slovenian Ministry pointed out that retailers donate surplus food, however, there are limitations due to the voluntary nature of such actions and suggested that more be done to support such initiatives. The Slovenian Ministry further stated that farmers need tools and other alternatives to support them in addressing food surpluses (e.g. further processing to avoid food loss and waste) and that such initiatives should be included in national strategic plans. Finally, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia highlighted the importance of training of all players in order to reach the desired goals.

Responding to comments from citizens online, **the Netherlands Nutrition Centre** informed that in order to reach a wide audience, organisers of the Week without Food Waste try to obtain free publicity on television talk shows for instance. **Independent Retail Europe** stated that the use of social media is paramount to reach younger audiences and pointed out that food waste occurs at times simply due to organisational issues in households as well as lack of knowledge or skills as to how to manage, process and store food, particularly when it cannot be used on time.

The moderator invited citizens on the panel for short, closing statements. Citizens underlined the importance of reaching different target groups with relevant messages through appropriate channels and tools as well as assessing the impact of such communications. Food waste prevention should be integrated in school curricula and the full potential of digitalisation and artificial intelligence should be harnessed. Member States should talk to each other more and use all relevant platforms to circulate information widely. Finally, citizens felt confident that as so many people want to help, there could be a real change.

8. Closing/wrap-up

On behalf of the **Directorate-General for Communication**, Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul, Deputy Head of Unit, Citizens' Dialogues Unit, thanked citizens and participants for their contributions and encouraged them to stay in contact through the European Commission's communications channels, in particular the EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub. In this way, citizens can keep themselves apprised of the progress concerning the European Commission's legislative proposal setting food waste reduction

targets and other work ongoing at EU level as well as the implementation of national action plans by Member States.

She explained that the European Commission is entering in a new phase of citizens' engagement and that more European citizens panels would be organized on various topics in the future. She explained that the Commission would like to create a network of alumni from the Citizens' Panels who would receive information on citizens' engagement activities and could play the role of ambassadors. A specific communication will be sent to all the citizens of the Panels to explain how to be part of this alumni network.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all participants and stating that the discussions had shown again how food waste prevention requires action across all members of society, be that at local, national, and international level. The examples shared showed how commitments can be transformed into action and the many networks and opportunities that exist to work together on an issue of such fundamental importance to people, to society and the planet as a whole. Even if there was not full agreement on all points discussed, there is clear commitment to engage and there may well be different solutions possible to tackle issues identified. The Chair expressed confidence that, in the light of citizens' commitment and support, the European Commission's legislative proposal will gain traction and that it can be adopted quickly and in an ambitious form by the Parliament and the Council. In closing, the Chair reiterated that, for DG SANTE, the dialogue with citizens had been a very enriching experience and thanked citizens for their hard work as well as members of the Platform for the discussion and feedback provided today.