



## **SUMMARY REPORT**

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

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

*Online / Webex*

*25 October 2023 – From 14:00-17:00 CET*

**Co-Chairs (3):** Anne-Laure Gassin, DG SANTE; Anton van den Brink, EFFPA; Toine Timmermans, WUR

**Commission and EU bodies (5):** DG SANTE, CINEA, AGRI, RTD, JRC

**Member States represented (6):** CZ, IE, ES, HU, PT, SK

**Private sector organisations (18):** BOROUME, COPA – European Farmers, , FUNDACIÓN AZTI – AZTI Foundation, DUH – Deutsche Umwelthilfe, ECSLA – the European Cold Storage and Logistics Association, EFFPA – European Former Foodstuff Processors Association, FEFAC – The European Feed Manufacturers' Federation, EuroCommerce, Euro Coop – European Community of Consumer Co-operatives, FEBA – European Food Banks Federation, FOODDRINKEUROPE, HAROKOPIO University, HFBA – Hungarian Food Bank Association, RISE RESEARCH INSTITUTES OF SWEDEN AB, WRAP – The Waste and Resources Action Programme, WUR – Wageningen University & Research, Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut, Venturis HORECA

**Public entities (1):** European Committee of the Regions

**Observers:** NO

## **1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda**

The SANTE co-chair opened the meeting by introducing the co-chairs from EFFPA and WUR and presenting the main points on the agenda, focusing on biomass use and its implications for food waste prevention and valorisation of by-products and use of side streams from food production.

## **2. Preparation of a Platform report on Voluntary Agreements (VAs): state-of-play by the Commission and discussion with members**

The **Commission** gave an overview of the progress made on the preparation of a Platform report aiming to capture key learnings from members' implementation of VAs to reduce food waste. The Commission sent the second draft of the report for validation to Platform members.

**WUR** highlighted the importance of VAs as the way forward to reduce food waste and for collaboration with different sectors and private-public partnerships. WUR stressed the importance of presenting a consistent overview of the situation as regards to implementation of VAs across Member States to learn from each other's models. WUR mentioned the Netherlands as an example, where the establishment of the voluntary agreements resulted in a reduction of 30 % of food waste in households and 20 % in retail. WUR informed that the Netherlands is planning to organize a conference in June 2024, where VA models will be discussed to understand what is further needed. WUR proposed that the current work on the Platform report should be a living document and be updated in the coming years.

The **Commission** explained that not all Member States with experiences of VAs had reported on their voluntary agreements and that follow up will be done bilaterally.

## **3. Food waste in a bioeconomy context**

### **3.1 Biomass use and its implications for food waste prevention – presentation by EFFPA ([PDF](#))**

**EFFPA** introduced the agenda item on food waste in a bioeconomy context. EFFPA explained that there are different uses of food waste as biomass, examples of flows of biomass into renewable energy streams (such as biofuels and biogas) rather than feed. EFFPA emphasized the importance of preventing drivers from creating more food waste through alternative uses of different biomasses such as feed. EFFPA further elaborated on possibilities to identify different stages of fall out of products that cannot be used for the human consumption market, and then find destinations for their uses, preferably feed. EFFPA informed about the 10-year anniversary event, which took place on 19 October in Brussels. EFFPA presented the key takeaways from the event, also relevant for the discussion in the Action and Implementation subgroup, namely the diverging sustainability expectations for renewable energy production from residual biomass (as an advanced biofuel) and food waste reduction.

### **3.2 Biomass production, uses, flows and related impacts – presentation by JRC ([PDF](#))**

**JRC** presented outputs of the ongoing JRC biomass project, mandated by several Commission services to better understand the state of biomass supply and use. Based to a large extent on the 2023 report

[”Biomass production, supply, uses, and flows in the European Union”](#), JRC explained that the main use of agricultural biomass (calculated in dry matter) in the EU remains animal feed and bedding, reflecting the consumption patterns. The second biggest category are non-harvested crop residues. Details of the supply and use are also visualized in flow diagrams, as in the EU Agricultural Market Outlook, released in December 2023. The presentation provided a brief overview on food waste in the EU, the importance of linking external dimensions to biomass discussions in the EU, as well as land use and land use cover, keeping in mind the pressure on the land system and tradeoffs with ecosystem services. JRC stressed that this research is also important to understand what kind of land is available for future production and use. Finally, JRC gave some insights into the use of biomass for selected bio-based industrial value chains.

**EFFPA** asked how measuring biomass flows and the circularity aspect of bioeconomy can be captured in statistical exercise. **JRC** replied that it is more advanced and relevant in the forestry sector, where there is more circularity, and that the EU Agricultural Market outlook data also includes the use of relevant agricultural by-products. Focussing on specific circular streams is a challenge and should be investigated as a key for the circular bioeconomy.

**FEFAC** inquired regarding elements needed to be involved in circular bioeconomy indicator development, informing that FEFAC is working to set up a robust circularity indicator. **JRC** replied that this is a question of data availability, as there is still a need for details on circular flows to be available. JRC highlighted how to avoid double counting as one of the challenges. JRC emphasized that it is also a question of what kind of measurements and which units one should calculate. JRC suggested to start with a specific industry or a market to do extensive research on circularity. JRC suggested that this could be a new topic for discussion for the subgroup.

**COPA** requested information on how non-harvested residues are measured or calculated. **JRC** replied that this is a combination of available statistics and algorithms calculating the availability of residues. JRC suggested to read chapter 2 on agriculture biomass production in the JRC report on [Biomass production, supply, uses and flows in the European Union](#) which provides an overview and details in related scientific publications.

### **3.3 Development of an EU Biomass factsheet, state of play – presentation by FEFAC ([PDF](#))**

**FEFAC** presented the development of an EU biomass factsheet with participating of a range of different partners. FEFAC highlighted that there is a potential overlap between waste and product, and the definition depends on its destination, therefore, there is also a focus on removing the grey zones. The Russian invasion of Ukraine resulted in a series of different policy initiatives, including the development of the biomass factsheet and the EU autonomy attempt to be self-sufficient, and the parallel discussions on food security. Following the legislative proposal on targets and the REDII review on renewable energy targets led to reflections on the need to provide an accurate estimate of biomass availability and to monitor production and use for food, feed, bioenergy, and other industrial uses at the EU aggregate level. FEFAC set up a roundtable of the key European Biomass producers and users to share knowledge, as part of a fact-finding mission, to develop a comprehensive tool to allow for a robust assessment of the availability of biomass, meeting the new EU political “autonomy” ambitions and targets for the energy and agri-food sectors. In the context of the food security dimension FEFAC suggested avoiding the reduction of one dependency and feed import. FEFAC informed regarding the REPowerEU strategy,

which aims to increase EU biomethane production to 35 billion m<sup>3</sup> before 2030. FEFAC noted that there is currently no clear answer on how much biomass is required to reach the EU target. FEFAC emphasized the importance of creating comprehensive biomass balance sheets. FEFAC further referred to the development of the EU feed protein balance sheet (by AGRI) that allows to project future demands for feed protein and looking at various sources for feed. FEFAC highlighted a case study from Aarhus University, where the study examined a dry matter as a reference as a functional unit. FEFAC suggested further discussion on this topic with the Commission. FEFAC pointed out a number of challenges, including, sources of data on biomass produced, difficulties in assessing the overall available biomass due to diverging terminology, double counting and uniform units.

**AGRI** informed that they are participating in the FEFAC group as an observer on the development of a biomass fact sheet. AGRI mentioned that the need for a biomass factsheet is already mentioned in the [European protein strategy report](#) from the European Parliament. AGRI explained the difference between a factsheet and balance sheet, where the balance sheet has more circularity, and the factsheet is more a practical tool. AGRI suggested that one of the objectives should be the creation of a practical tool, which will allow to have fact-based discussion. AGRI underlined that it is an open question as to who would take the leadership in respect to the creation of a feed protein biomass fact sheet, as it requires significant resources. However, it would be a valuable tool for all sectors represented in the work by FEFAC.

**Slovenia** agreed that cooperation is necessary and raised the issue of trade secrets linked to industrial activities, suggesting that biomass should be economically evaluated. **FEFAC** replied that it is the role of trade organizations. FEFAC pointed out that this issue was also highlighted by ENER, especially in respect to biomethane and biogas, which involves a multitude of industrial processes, where it is more complex to come up with a standard matrix. FEFAC highlighted the need for cooperation with Member States, similar to ENER's established partnerships and suggested to look at the potential frameworks to collect data on biomass use for biogas production. FEFAC further pointed out that there are developments in the food chain, but the importance of the different sectors (including the feed sector) should not be overlooked, when looking at achieving the future targets on biomethane. FEFAC encouraged SANTE to take – at least part share of – leadership on the food waste usage (food waste biomass availability), as there are borderline issues between waste legislation, food and feed safety legislation and energy legislation, and noting that waste, according to the waste shipment legislation, cannot be traded amongst Member States.

The **Commission** clarified that the discussion on defining a waste or byproduct is based on a case-by-case approach in line with a ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union. The Commission noted the existing criteria for byproducts and explained that the definition of a product is based on its final destination (as given to waste treatment or other use).

### **3.6 Valorisation of agrifood by-products in practice – presentation by Looop ([PDF](#))**

**Looop** presented its activities on valorization of agrifood co-products. The company operates in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, Poland, Denmark and Chechia. Looop elaborated on the valorization of products from food production and the transition of coproducts from suppliers to other businesses who make use of the coproducts, for example for animal feed, including pet food, and pharma, aiming to facilitate the delivery of products from one business to another within the same day. The

company works with start-ups, universities, and institutes to find new markets and business models. With 35 years of experience in upcycling coproducts, and working with amongst other breweries, potato, and grain processing industry, Loop now facilitates the reuse of 2 million tons of organic co-products per year. Loop initially started operations in the livestock market and explained that the sector sometimes pays more for the coproducts than for primary grains, making it necessary to create the best valorization and to adapt to market changes. Loop stated that it is looking at renewables that can be used for other products, noting that there is competition of products going to renewables rather than for feed use. Loop suggested that the amounts of biofuels made of residual streams will increase more rapidly as this is under EU regulations. Loop further highlighted a need for adapting/revising legislation as regards the use of insects for feed. Loop places valorization for pet food above valorization of feed for livestock. Loop described the bio-based market as dynamic, where it is possible to use coproducts as feedstock to create bioplastic, building materials and application for fermentation processes for feedstocks in cosmetics and pharma.

**WRAP** inquired regarding the value of insects and where the regulatory barriers are the most significant. **Loop** responded that if insects are used to feed animals, the insects need to be fed with GMP plus materials. As insects are considered as livestock, the insect industry is competing with the pig and ruminant feed industry. Loop noted that insects should be able to valorize the lower ranked residual streams and co-products and their position should be in between biogas and livestock, thus being able to take out valuable resources from biogas and create protein in order to be fed to animals or for food. However, due to the legislative barriers (on feed and food safety) there are no business models in the EU as opposed to outside the EU.

**FEFAC** asked, referring to the EU targets for biomethane, where there is the greatest potential to safeguard nutrients for animal feed. **Loop** replied that the competition between feed and biogas started with the invasion of Ukraine, when a number of biogas initiatives appeared, sourcing the same feedstocks as the feed industry. In the Netherlands, as permits and subsidies for biogas installations have been provided, there is now a need for 5 to 10 times more biogas in the total market, leading to a need to import either gas or feedstock. FEFAC emphasized the need to engage all parties in the discussion, and there is an important place for biogas, where materials are not eligible for feed use. FEFAC stated that the feed sector cannot compete with the energy sector and cannot go against national subsidies. The principles are well established in the EU legislation, however, there is a distortion of the marketplace, as national subsidies override the principles, referring also to different national policy targets in terms of renewable energy expansions. FEFAC acknowledged also that feed companies are also investing in the renewable energy sector, however pleading for a more level playing field and for engaging all parties to find a proper balance in reaching all policy targets.

### **3.7 Food waste and other feedstock assumptions behind the 35bcm biomethane target – presentation by Feedback Global ([PDF](#))**

**Feedback Global** provided an overview of the REPowerEU targets and presented an analysis of feedstock projections behind the biomethane target. Feedback Global analyzed [Biomethane production potentials in the EU](#) and [Assistance to assessing options improving market conditions for bio-methane and gas market rules](#) reports, which served as a basis for REPowerEU targets. Feedback Global presented projections of the gas industry in respect to the biomethane feedstock proportions in 2030, where food

waste accounted for 5%. Projections had general mention of overall recycling and all waste prevention ambition, but no mention of specific food waste reduction targets, as well as no consideration of competing uses of food waste currently going to incineration or landfill. Feedback Global noted that the sustainable food systems perspective is missing, when addressing the biomethane targets and the biogas sector expressed that they expected to see an increase in the supply of food waste.

The **Commission** referred to the challenge for the Commission proposal on setting a legally binding 10% reduction target on food waste for processing and manufacturing, where competition between feed and biogas can take place for the proposed reduction target on 30 % on retail and household, there is little that can be done for waste created at these stages, asking what the uses could be. **Feedback Global** replied that household waste can be turned into insect feed, if allowed and done well, provided also work done by EFSA to clear this. Furthermore, Feedback Global noted that food waste prevention at source should remain the priority.

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

**The EFFPA co-chair** thanked all participants, urging to be mindful of the outside drivers, which can increase the amount of food waste, when aiming to achieve sustainability.

**The Commission co-chair** thanked all members for the discussions held during the meeting and insights by industry for policy making. The Commission pointed out that there is a risk of food waste turning into energy being counterproductive and working against the reduction of food waste. The Commission highlighted that in the context of the EU Platform meeting on 7-8 November, it will discuss the pathways to the targets and strategies, as well as messaging to consumers.