



SUMMARY REPORT

EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES & FOOD WASTE (9th meeting)

DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

Via WebEx Meetings

10 December 2020 – From 10:00 to 17:00

Chair: Nathalie Chaze, Director, Food sustainability, international relations, DG SANTE

Commission: DG SANTE; DG AGRI; DG ENV; ESTAT; DG GROW; OIB; EASME; JRC

Member States represented (21):

AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, LU, LT, LV, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

Private sector organisations (23):

AIBI - International Association of Plant Bakers AISBL; BEUC - The European Consumer Organisation; BOROUME – "We Can"; COPA COGECA - European Farmers and Agri-Cooperatives; ECSLA - European Cold Storage and Logistics Association; EFFPA - European Former Foodstuff Processors Association; EUROCOMMERCE - the retail, wholesale and international trade representation to the EU; EUROPATAT - European Potato Trade Association; EDA - European Dairy Association; FEBA - European Food Banks Federation; FOODCLOUD; FOODDRINKEUROPE; FOODSERVICEEUROPE; FoodWIN - Food Waste Innovation Network; FRESHFEL - European Fresh Produce Association; HCWH Europe - Health Care Without Harm; HFBA - Hungarian Food Bank Association; HOTREC - Hospitality Europe; OSTFOLD RESEARCH, Nofima and Matvett Consortium; SMEunited; WAGENINGEN University & Research; WRAP - Waste and Resource Action Programme; ZERO WASTE SCOTLAND.

Public entities (4):

EESC - European Economic and Social Committee; CoR – European Committee of the Regions; FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations; United Nations Environment Programme.

Observers:

EFTA: Norway.

The 9th Plenary meeting of the [EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste \(FLW\)](#) took place **virtually** via Webex Meetings on **10 December 2020** from **10:00** to **17:00**. The meeting provided the opportunity to take stock of the assessment carried out by the German Presidency to the Council of the European Union, of progress made by Member States and the Commission on the implementation

of the 2016 Council conclusions on food losses and food waste. The Commission provided an update on the implementation of the Farm to Fork Strategy, as well as on the progress and future outlook of EU actions to prevent food loss and waste. The meeting also facilitated the exchange of information on initiatives related to date marking, food redistribution and preventing food loss and waste in the food services and hospitality sectors, including presentation by the European Food Safety Authority of the first part of its scientific opinion for 'Guidance on date marking and related food information'.

The meeting was web streamed for all interested stakeholders and the recording and the presentations are published on the [European Commission's food waste website](#).

1. Opening statement by Claire Bury, Deputy Director General for Food Sustainability, DG SANTE, European Commission

In her opening speech, Claire Bury welcomed the progress review on the implementation of the 2016 Council conclusions on food losses and waste, while underlining the need to accelerate efforts by all stakeholders, in order to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) Target 12.3](#) by 2030.

She highlighted on-going and planned actions in food loss and waste prevention, as part of the EU [Farm to Fork Strategy](#), and announced the re-establishment of the EU Platform at the end of its mandate in 2021. She encouraged Member States to continue strengthening national food waste reduction policies in several key areas, by:

- setting national targets and monitoring progress in food loss and waste reduction;
- integrating food loss and waste reduction in relevant policy areas - notably climate action;
- and minimising food loss and waste caused by supply change challenges and changes in consumption patterns, resulting from the Covid-19 crisis.

The Deputy Director General referred to the [International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste](#), observed for the first time on 29 September 2020: food loss and waste prevention activities were carried out across the EU and new voluntary agreements for food waste reduction were established, including in Denmark, Greece and Slovenia. She also pointed to the [2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit](#) as an opportunity for new impetus in the fight against food loss and waste at global level.

2. Update on the implementation of the Farm to Fork Strategy, presentation by the Commission and exchange with members [ppt]

The Commission provided an update on the implementation of the Farm to Fork Strategy and related actions. The strategy includes food loss and waste reduction as one of its main strands.

The presentation focused on the [conclusions](#) formulated by the [Council of the EU](#) on the Farm to Fork Strategy, as well as the [opinion](#) issued by the [European Economic and Social Committee](#) on the strategy. The Commission also reported on the main take-out messages and highlights of the first [Farm to Fork Conference](#) which took place on 15 and 16 October 2020, as well as the publication of a [Eurobarometer survey](#), "*Making our food fit for the future – Citizens' expectations*", which assesses European citizens' attitudes and views on sustainable food and sustainable food systems. In terms of ongoing work, the presentation referred to the development of an EU Code of Conduct (CoC) for responsible business and marketing practice, the creation of a contingency plan ensuring food supply and food security to be put in place in times of crisis, as well as the revision of marketing standards for fisheries and aquaculture products and for agricultural products.

The Commission informed Platform members that all legislative proposals will be preceded by impact assessments and stakeholder consultations, in line with the [Commission's Better Regulation agenda](#). In terms of external governance, the Expert Group on the General Food Law will be revamped and will become the Expert Group on the General Food Law and Sustainability of Food Systems, in order to discuss cross-cutting issues related to the Farm to Fork Strategy. Recognising the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as one of the main tools supporting the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission will issue relevant recommendations to the Member States by the end of 2020, prior to the submission of their CAP National Strategic Plans.

3. EU actions to prevent food loss and waste: progress and future outlook

3.1. Assessment by the German Presidency of progress made on the implementation of June 2016 Council conclusions (update from 16 November informal videoconference of Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries) [[ppt](#)]

Following the adoption of [Council conclusions on food losses and waste](#) in 2016 and the [first assessment of progress](#) made in implementing these conclusions in 2018 by the Bulgarian Council Presidency, the German Presidency carried out a [second assessment of progress](#) made by Member States and the Commission, which was the subject of discussion with Member States agriculture and fisheries ministers at a [video conference](#), held on 16 November 2020.

The German Presidency highlighted milestones achieved at EU level, such as the [revision of the Waste Directive](#) and the [adoption of an EU methodology to measure food waste consistently](#), as well as measures taken by Member States, such as the development of national strategies, adoption of legislative and non-legislative initiatives and consumer awareness campaigns. The assessment also addressed activities undertaken to mitigate risks of food waste linked to Covid-19. Finally, areas for further work were also presented including the need for continued cooperation through the EU Platform on FLW.

In order to facilitate information sharing, the European Commission is requesting permission of Member States to share their contributions on the [Platform's digital network](#). The Chair reminded Member States who wish to do so to send their Council contributions to the SANTE food waste team for publication.

3.2. Perspective from the Commission, including implementation of the EU Platform's recommendations for action and exchange with members [[ppt](#)]

To complement the German Presidency's assessment of Member States' contributions, the Commission provided a perspective as to the degree to which these reflect fulfillment of the [Platform's recommendations for action](#), adopted in 2019. Member States have made significant progress in food loss and waste prevention, adopting measures in line with these recommendations (e.g. the majority have developed or are in the process of developing national plans or strategies). However, there is also room to pursue and accelerate efforts in certain areas (e.g. only around half have set food waste reduction targets).

The Presidency's report also confirms that Member States and actors in the food value chain have benefitted from sharing information through the EU Platform on FLW. The Commission announced that it will **re-establish the Platform** as of 2022 in order to ensure the continuity of its work for another 5-year term (2022-2026). Public entities will be invited to join the Platform for its second mandate,

and a public call for expression of interest will be launched in 2021 to renew membership of private sector organisations.

The Commission also provided an update on the **implementation of its food loss and waste action plan**, as part of the Farm to Fork Strategy. The Commission is facilitating information sharing on implementation of Member States food waste monitoring obligations through webinars. In order to help inform the proposal to revise EU rules on date marking, the Commission will carry out consumer behaviour research to better understand how consumers perceive and use date marking. An update was provided on amendments proposed to EU food hygiene rules related to food donation, including allowing the freezing of meat at retail level under certain conditions for its safe redistribution by food banks and other charities. The Commission will promote scaling up of action and mobilisation of key players across the EU by strengthening the evidence base for food waste prevention and promoting best practice sharing (notably through digital tools) and supporting key players in taking action through research and innovation and relevant financial instruments (e.g. future Single Market Programme). Finally, the Commission informed members of planned meetings dates for the Platform and its sub-groups in 2021, as follows:

- Plenary meetings: 18 March and 14 October 2021
- [Sub-group on Food Donation](#): 11 February 2021
- [Sub-group on Action & Implementation](#): 25 February 2021
- [Subgroup on Food Waste Measurement](#): 4 March 2021
- [Sub-group on Date Marking](#): July 2021 (date TBC)

Following the presentation, WRAP informed members about a 27% per capita reduction in post-farm gate food waste (excluding inedible parts) between 2015 and 2018 in the UK¹ and that, during the Covid-19 lockdown, household food waste declined by about one-third (against a backdrop of a 31% reduction per person already achieved so far across the UK)². WRAP informed that similar trends have been reported in other EU countries as well, and highlighted this as a real opportunity for all actors involved to set new social norms around food waste at household level. The Commission welcomed the proposal and underlined that there will be room for further discussion on this topic at a future meeting of the Action & implementation subgroup. The Commission also highlighted future EU actions to curb household food waste (e.g. grants to support such initiatives are expected to be included in the future Single Market Programme).

4. Food redistribution

4.1. Update on food waste prevention activities from the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) [\[ppt\]](#)

The presentation focused on the efforts of FEBA and its members to address the increasing demand for food aid linked to Covid-19 (+30% as reported in [FEBA's September 2020 report](#)). FEBA highlighted various initiatives undertaken by European food banks to address the crisis, such as the [cross-border collaboration between Czech and German food banks](#) and the [project launched by Banco Alimentare in Italy aiming at the recovery, processing and redistribution of fish confiscated by control authorities as resulting from illegal fishing practices](#) etc.

¹ [UK progress against Courtauld 2025 targets and UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3](#), WRAP, January 2020

² [Citizens and food waste as lockdown eases](#), study on UK citizens' food habits, behaviours and attitudes during the Covid-19 pandemic, WRAP, July 2020

FEBA also underscored the importance of digital tools, which can simplify the food donation process. European food banks have already developed and started using such online platforms and tools in their daily operations to better manage donations and facilitate collaboration with their partners and donors (eg. [Foodit](#) in Belgium, [FoodCloud technology](#) in Ireland, [ProxiDon](#) in France). FEBA is currently working to establish an '[Online Observatory on food donation](#)' to collect consistent data from its membership. Last but not least, FEBA invited the audience to attend their [Annual Forum on Food Aid and Social Inclusion](#) titled 'European Food Banks Federation: competences and creativity to feed the future', on 17 December 2020.

4.2. Recovery and redistribution of surplus food through online platforms, presentation by the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and exchange with members [[ppt](#)]

The presentation focused on [FeedUp@UN](#), an innovative digital solution, designed by the [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe \(UNECE\)](#) and supported by blockchain technology, for recording food lost or otherwise wasted, systematically tracing food loss and creating alternative online distribution channels to match supply and demand for recovered food. The tool can be integrated to existing online platforms, assess the environmental footprint of the transactions taking place on the platform, and help mitigate the negative effects of a crisis (such as Covid-19), notably food security. FAO/UNECE will map existing digital tools as the aim is to complement these solutions through the FeedUp@UN tool and not compete with them. FAO has already sounded the members of its [SAVE FOOD network](#) for information in this regard.

The Commission explained that there will be opportunity for a more in-depth discussion on use of digital tools to facilitate recovery and redistribution of surplus food in the context of the Platform sub-group on food donation meeting (11 February 2021), involving experts who have developed similar solutions (e.g. NL, IE). FoodCloud, who has already put in place its own digital solution, expressed interest in learning more about the new tool presented by FAO and explore collaboration opportunities.

5. Date marking

5.1. Scientific opinion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Panel on Biological Hazards – Guidance on date marking and related food information: part 1 (date marking) and exchange with members [[ppt](#)]

In order to ensure more consistent date marking practices by food business operators, the Commission [mandated](#) the [European Food Safety Authority \(EFSA\)](#) to provide, by 2021, a scientific opinion outlining a risk-based approach that can support food business operators' decision-making as regards date marking and related food information.

Within the framework of the [1st part of its scientific opinion 'Guidance on date marking and related food information'](#), published in December 2020, EFSA developed a tool to help food business operators decide when to apply the 'use by' or 'best before' dates to their products. The tool is structured as a decision tree with a series of questions, to guide date marking choices based on food safety. Experts also reviewed the factors that need to be considered by food business operators when setting the shelf-life of a product and when identifying the related information to provide on labelling in order to ensure food safety. The 2nd part of the scientific opinion (foreseen adoption by March 2021)

focuses on other food information aspects (such as instructions of use after opening the package or defrosting advice for consumers).

5.2. Campaign to increase understanding of date marking, Too Good To Go (TGTG) and French Ministry of Agriculture and Food and exchange with members [\[ppt\]](#)

The Commission invited [Too Good To Go](#) (TGTG)³ to present its work on date marking, focusing on the [date labelling campaign](#) carried out in France with the support of the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The initiative aims to increase consumer understanding of date marking, change practices of food business operators and advocate for date marking improvements with public authorities.

The campaign fits in the context of the French Food Waste Prevention Programme, and is executed and monitored through the [Pact on Consumption Dates](#) (a TGTG multi-stakeholder initiative involving nearly 60 food business operators, trade organisations, NGOs and government authorities in France, who adhere to 10 commitments related to date marking and food labelling), including a national awareness campaign, 'anti-food waste' shelves in retail stores, on-pack clarifications and use of pictograms, as well as dedicated webpages with information on date marking.

France referred to the legislative and non-legislative actions put in place so far, in order to prevent food waste (e.g. prohibition for food business operators to destroy edible food and the obligation for retailers to establish a donation agreement with an approved food aid association, in application of successive laws since 2015, including the '[Anti-waste law for a circular economy](#)'; voluntary agreements such as the Pact described above; etc.).

France announced that the above mentioned law allows the voluntary use of additional explanatory information, placed next to the 'best before' date, in order to help consumers interpret the date correctly. Given that similar work is underway at EU level, the Chair suggested that the Commission and the French authorities should work closely together, in order to align efforts and ensure consistency of actions and coherence. The Commission also clarified that, as part of the EU consumer behaviour research on date marking which it will initiate next year, Platform members and Member States food labelling experts will be consulted concerning the introduction of any new/alternative expression of date marking.

During the Q&A session, Norway informed members that the Norwegian authorities authorized the addition of the text 'often good after' alongside the 'best before' date marking on the label of selected food products.

Replying to BEUC, TGTG confirmed that food products past their 'best before' date, distributed through the 'anti-food waste' shelves placed in various stores in France, are sold at a discounted price in order to encourage consumers to purchase such foods.

Croatia emphasized the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of food waste prevention initiatives (in particular those focusing on awareness raising activities) in order to facilitate transfer of learning and experience. TGTG informed that it is too early, at this stage, to evaluate the effectiveness of its campaigns as these have only been recently introduced. The Chair concluded stating that date

³ Too Good To Go (TGTG) is a privately held social impact company with the mission to inspire and empower all actors (consumers, food business operators, policy makers) to fight food waste. The TGTG app allows people to fight food waste by buying surplus, unsold food from food service operators at the end of their opening hours. TGTG is not a member of the Platform, but is actively engaged with some of its members, national authorities and food business operators.

marking will remain high on the Platform's agenda and that it will be important to come back to these actions when more information is available as to their impacts.

6. Food waste prevention in food services and hospitality sectors

6.1. A voluntary agreement initiative for the hospitality and food services sectors in Europe, presentation by International Food Waste Coalition (IFWC) and exchange with members [\[ppt\]](#)

The Commission invited the [International Food Waste Coalition](#) (IFWC)⁴ to present the voluntary agreement that IFWC plans to launch in 2021, involving leading hotel groups and private catering operators. By signing the voluntary agreement, its signatories commit to implementing concrete and measurable actions to reduce food waste, the results of which will be monitored over time. The initiative will follow the [Champions 12.3 'Target-Measure-Act' approach](#).

IFWC highlighted that the HORECA and food services sectors were among the most severely affected sectors by the Covid-19 crisis and illustrated how companies addressed related supply chain disruptions, including efforts to avoid food waste in context of market closures.

HOTREC concurred with IFWC regarding Covid-19's impact on the sector and outlined the importance of recovery plans, which will provide an opportunity for a 'reset' and to integrate food loss and waste prevention and reduction targets and related actions. HOTREC also shared salient initiatives carried out by its members (e.g. in Belgium, France and Sweden) in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

FoodWIN asked whether IFWC could provide some insights on the amount of resources (notably time and budget) that HORECA and food services businesses should allocate in order to ensure that the food waste measurement methodology employed is both effective and cost-efficient. IFWC explained that the sector is so diverse that there cannot be a 'one size fits all' solution. Instead, the right way forward for businesses in the sector would be to a) decide on the frequency of food waste monitoring activities and b) set clear priorities and targets to guide progress.

FoodWIN also stated that, from their experience, convincing canteens in public institutions to publicly report on data collected during food waste measurement exercises is possible given their willingness to engage and report on such efforts. According to IFWC, this is not the case for businesses in the HORECA and food services sectors, which are more hesitant to publicly report data on their food waste levels. The reason being the lack of a common methodology for food loss and waste measurement by the sector to enable homogenous understanding of the data published by the different companies and that robustness of data collected still needs to be improved. In the framework of IFWC's voluntary agreement, IFWC explained that the first step will be to ensure a progressive collection of direct measurement data, and to assess their robustness and quality before making them publicly available in an anonymized way to monitor the global IFWC members' performance over time. IFWC is working towards increasing transparency on FLW to replicate what has been done already on reporting of GHG emissions.

6.2. Developing a circular economy model for food in healthcare facilities, presentation by Health Care Without Harm and exchange with members [\[ppt\]](#)

⁴ The International Food Waste Coalition (IFWC) is a not-for-profit association, leading a collaborative farm-to-fork approach against food loss and waste in the Hotel/Restaurants/Catering (HORECA) and food services sectors. IFWC is not a member of the Platform.

Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) presented the results from the 3-year (2017-2020) [MECAHF \('Modèle d'économie circulaire pour les hôpitaux français'\) project](#), aiming to develop a circular economy model for food in healthcare facilities. The procurement of more fresh and local products and the establishment of partnerships with local and organic farmers were marked as important actions to achieve the goals of the project. In addition, measuring food waste allowed the hospital (which HCWH worked with within the framework of the project) to understand the levels and composition of its food waste, as well as to set a baseline for future monitoring. Measuring was also conducted for recyclable waste and mixed household waste. As regards the objectives of the project, the goal of reducing food waste by 20% in 3 years was achieved, whereas this was not the case for mixed household waste (including masks, single-use materials, etc), which increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the needs of the project, HCWH developed a digital tool helping users to measure food waste and its carbon footprint. In the future, HCWH envisages to strengthen collaboration with project beneficiaries, by offering training and support services, and to further disseminate the outcomes of the project. HCWH invited interested stakeholders to participate in their upcoming webinar, which will be held in English (more information will be shared with the Platform once available).

6.3. Measuring and reducing food waste in canteens in healthcare, schools, and company restaurants, presentation by FoodWIN and exchange with members [\[ppt\]](#)

FoodWIN's intervention focused on its work to measure and reduce food waste in canteens in healthcare, schools, and company restaurants, implementing the 'Diagnosis-Strategy-Action' approach (similar to the Champions 12.3 Target-Measure-Act). During the Diagnosis stage, FoodWIN identifies the right food waste measurement methodology, based on the canteen's specific needs and context. In the Strategy stage, all stakeholders involved work together to define the food waste reduction strategy and set appropriate priorities. In the last stage, specific actions are put in place, with the support of FoodWIN's [Food Waste Alliance](#) partners. Examples of such actions include menu adaptations and modifications in procurement contracts towards more sustainable practices and proposing alternative channels to sell surplus food.

FoodWIN reported that there is a business case for preventing and reducing food waste (20-60% food waste reduction, €2 000 – 16 000 savings per location, motivated and better educated personnel). FoodWIN also supports actions in the HORECA and food services sectors by making available guidance on food waste measurement, as well as ready-to-use tools (cf. an [online calculator](#), which assesses food waste levels, related costs and potential savings). FoodWIN invited interested stakeholders to follow the recordings of the [Digital Food Waste Fest](#) that they organized on 8 and 9 December 2020.

7. Conclusion and wrap up by Chair

The Chair thanked Platform members and speakers for their participation and the initiatives carried out aiming to tackle food waste across the food value chain. These reflect a structured approach (eg diagnosis, target-setting, measurement) which is critical to ensuring timely progress towards SDG Target 12.3. The Chair welcomed the integration of food loss and waste prevention in Member States' and stakeholders' recovery plans. The Chair emphasized in particular the importance of measuring food waste in order to assess the impact of food waste prevention activities. Moreover, at EU level, Member States' monitoring of food waste levels will guide the Commission's work to set legally binding targets to reduce food waste in 2023.

In closing, the Chair thanked members for their active participation as well as presenters and encouraged both Platform members and external stakeholders to [subscribe](#) to the Platform's monthly newsletter.