



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Food sustainability, international relations
Farm to fork strategy

SUMMARY REPORT

EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES & FOOD WASTE (FLW) SUB-GROUP ON FOOD DONATION

DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

6th meeting via WebEx Events

11 February 2021 – From 14:00 to 16:30

Chair: Anne-Laure Gassin, Team Leader, Food waste, Farm to fork strategy, DG SANTE

Commission: DG SANTE; DG AGRI; DG EMPL; OIB

Member States represented (13):

BE, BG, DK, ES, FI, FR, HR, LT, LV, NL, PL, RO, SI.

Private sector organisations (5):

EUROCOMMERCE; FEBA - European Food Banks Federation; FOODCLOUD; FOODDRINKEUROPE; HFBA - Hungarian Food Bank Association.

Public entities (1):

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

Observers:

EFTA: Norway.

A meeting of the [Food donation sub-group](#), established under the [EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste \(FLW\)](#), took place virtually via WebEx Events on **11 February 2021** from **14:00 to 16:30** CET. The meeting provided the opportunity to exchange lessons learned and to discuss actions undertaken to facilitate the recovery and redistribution of food during the Covid-19 pandemic, including the use of on-line platforms. The Commission offered an update on the latest developments concerning the EU Contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security and the European Fund for the Most Deprived (FEAD).

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

1. Update on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) – European Commission [[ppt](#)]

The Commission informed participants about the study currently underway to **facilitate the financing and administrative handling of food donations**, for the next programming period (2021-2027) when [FEAD](#) will be integrated in the [European Social Fund+](#) (ESF+). The use of Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) that derived from the study is not mandatory for Member States, but can be used as ‘off-the-shelf’ tools to simplify the claiming of costs for donated foods. The Commission will share the final report of the study, due for April 2021, with the EU Platform and will present the final outcomes of the study at one of the Platform’s upcoming meetings.

The [Commission’s proposal](#) to amend the FEAD regulation so that **additional resources** under the [REACT-EU programme](#) could be allocated to FEAD, in order to tackle the social and economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, [was adopted by the Council and approved by the European Parliament in January 2021](#). The additional resources will allow enhancing food and basic material assistance (e.g. clothing, personal use items), together with accompanying measures (e.g. for social inclusion). In addition to allowing use of electronic vouchers, other recent amendments to the FEAD regulation include the possibility for Member States to receive a substantial pre-financing payment on the additional resources allocated and abolishment of the requirement for additional national co-financing.

The FEAD Community offers a platform for FEAD Managing Authorities, organisations delivering or interested in FEAD-funded activities, EU level NGOs and EU institutions to exchange information and share experiences and best practices on the implementation of the FEAD Programme. The Commission invited participants to visit the [FEAD Community website](#) to view the results of its recent activities, including the February thematic seminar and the case studies report. Finally, the Commission will share with the EU Platform the lessons learned on the use of the electronic vouchers for the delivery of food aid, as soon as the related on-going study is completed.

FEBA renewed its commitment to continue close cooperation with the Commission both in relation to the SCOs study, as well as the provision of assistance to Europe’s most deprived through FEAD.

2. EU food supply and food security contingency plan – European Commission [[ppt](#)]

The development of a contingency plan to **ensure the EU’s food supply and food security in the event of future crises** is one of the key deliverables of the [Commission’s Farm to Fork Strategy](#). This action is envisaged as an agreed set of procedures to follow in order to respond to crises (e.g. recommendations and non-binding agreements with Member States), building on the lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic and other recent events. Examples of such lessons learned are to allow certain flexibility regarding the practical implementation of food safety requirements and official controls, without putting food safety at stake, as well as the amendments proposed in June 2020 to EU food hygiene rules related to food donation (expected to be published in June 2021). These include allowing the freezing of meat at retail level under certain conditions for its safe redistribution by food banks and other charities. The Commission informed that it was undertaking a wide consultation process to help inform development of the contingency plan which would take the form of a Communication and Staff Working Document to be adopted by Q4 2021.

Croatia shared the results of a recent study conducted among charity organisations confirming that, as for other charities in the EU, these were confronted with challenges related to the Covid-19 crisis (e.g. shortage of volunteers, lack of logistics etc.). However, key findings of the study indicate that, even though food demand increased in Croatia by up to 50%, food donation in 2020 remained at similar levels as in 2019. In addition, Croatia explained that despite the closure of the hospitality and

food service businesses and food surpluses that probably occurred in this sector, there was no significant increase of donated food. EuroCommerce expressed interest in knowing whether there are available data at EU level on any shifts with respect to the amount of food donated per sector.

FEBA took the floor to confirm that there has been a 30% increase in food demand overall in the EU (as cited in [FEBA's September 2020 report](#)), as well as an increase in food donations, highlighting that European food banks managed to continue recovering and redistributing edible surplus food to charities which provide food to people in need, despite the challenging context under which they are currently operating.

The Commission expressed interest in receiving further information/data regarding food donation and stated that, as regards the food supply chain overall, there have been no significant fluctuations in the demand for food products since the start of the Covid-19 crisis. Regarding specific food categories, important disruptions have been acknowledged (e.g. demand for fruit and vegetables has increased, in contrast to potatoes, chicken, wine or beer for which markets have decreased). The Commission reiterated that the Contingency plan will look further into the interdependencies of the different sectors and will put forward actions to ensure continuity of the food supply chain in times of crisis, including facilitation of food donation without jeopardising food safety.

3. Stakeholders' dialogues: disseminating the EU guidelines on food donation at national level – FEBA [[ppt](#)]

The last deliverable of the [EU pilot project](#) (2018-2020), which set out to further assess food donation practices in the Member States and promote the dissemination and uptake of the [EU food donation guidelines](#), was the organisation of stakeholders' dialogues across the EU. These events, coordinated by FEBA, gathered policymakers and relevant stakeholders at national level, and their goal was to **disseminate the EU guidelines on food donation** and to **discuss barriers to food redistribution on ground**, as well as examples of good practice. Amongst aspects underlined in the dialogues were the continuing need to explain the difference between “use by” and “best before” dates and the importance for Member States to implement financial rules (e.g. VAT) that support food business operators' engagement in food donation. FEBA highlighted the need to provide financial support or incentives not only to food donors but also to food redistribution organizations such as the food banks.

Four factsheets have been created to illustrate different aspects of the EU food donation guidelines and to foster discussions. The factsheets can be downloaded from the [Commission's food waste website](#) and are available for further communications. The Commission thanked FEBA and other members of the consortium led by [Ecorys](#) for the results achieved by the pilot project.

4. Recovery and redistribution of surplus food through online platforms: FeedUP@UN – FAO and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) [[ppt](#)]

The meeting of the Food donation sub-group provided the opportunity for a more in-depth discussion on the potential and functionalities of the new blockchain-based online platform [FeedUP@UN](#), following a first intervention by FAO at the [Platform meeting](#) of 10 December 2020.

Among the **tool's main features** are: a ‘trace back’ function, offering information about the product and tracing its journey along the food supply chain; a calculator assessing the related environmental footprint such as carbon emissions; and an analytics dashboard providing valuable insights such as the

total amount of food loss and waste generated. The tool can also provide information to generate digital certifications which could recognize ‘food heroes’ and ‘champions’, while increasing trust in the products marketed through the platform.

Stakeholders interested in rolling out this new tool and/or integrating the FeedUP@UN tool in existing online platforms are encouraged to contact FAO or UNECE. The Chair invited Platform members to continue sharing their experience with the use of digital tools to facilitate food redistribution at future meetings of the Food donation sub-group as well as on the [Platform’s Digital Network](#).

5. Experiences in the Netherlands with the Market Place #GoodFood and next steps – Wageningen University and Research (WUR) [[ppt](#)]

In order to find alternative destinations for surplus food with no market access due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the [Dutch Food Waste Taskforce](#) launched the [‘Good Food’ B2B market place](#). It is noteworthy that the supply-demand matchmaking was executed manually. The key learnings from rolling out this platform in the Netherlands indicated that there is a wide diversity of needs that cannot be addressed with a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach and that, particularly in times of crisis, it is important to build on existing infrastructures and tools. The expert from WUR also presented the main characteristics of other initiatives implemented to facilitate the recovery and redistribution of surplus food (e.g. [Fruit & Veggie Brigade](#), [Soupalicious](#)), including the online solution put in place for the HORECA sector ([InStock Market](#)).

A **‘next level’ platform** for structural and large scale recovery, processing and redistribution of surplus food is currently being developed in the Netherlands, based on learnings from the ‘Good Food’ platform and a quick-scan of similar European B2B digital marketplaces. The platform comes at a time when the Netherlands has recorded an increase in food demand, as well as a reduction of food surplus that can be recovered from Dutch retailers (due to an intensification of their food waste prevention measures). The new platform will facilitate the production of healthy and sustainable food products, produced at large scale by large and medium size food businesses, with surplus food ingredients, using existing capacities and facilities, following a social impact business model.

6. Lessons learned from food rescue in a pandemic, FoodCloud [[ppt](#)]

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, FoodCloud has experienced increased levels of food demand and changes in the type and amounts of surplus food available for donation from different stages of the food supply chain. FoodCloud also reported on more food waste occurring at different stages of the supply chain and difficulties in redistributing food available in new forms (e.g. eggs in liquid form due to closure of the HORECA sector). Through its [digital tool for the recovery and redistribution of surplus food](#), FoodCloud managed to address the new challenges, connect retailers to charities and rapidly rescue and redistribute highly perishable food. Food redistributed using **FoodCloud’s technology saw a 40% increase**, amounting to 11 000 tonnes of food in total in 2020, across retail stores in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Recognising the benefits of the tool, FoodCloud will launch **Foodiverse**, which will bring food donation technology to the entire food supply chain, supporting food banks globally in rescuing more surplus food.

As **lessons learned from the pandemic**, FoodCloud outlined the resilience of the food supply chain, the adaptability demonstrated by food banks, the importance of strong collaboration among all stakeholders, as well as the need to ensure capacity for re-labelling and re-packaging food products, according to changes in consumption patterns and disruptions caused by exceptional events (such as

a sanitary crisis). FoodCloud also highlighted the importance of emergency funding in order to address transport and labour costs associated with food recovery, notably at farm level.

7. Quantifying the Impact of European Food Banks. From Farm to Fork – FEBA [\[ppt\]](#)

The [project ‘Quantifying the impact of European Food Banks – From Farm to Fork’](#), funded by a grant awarded by the Commission, started in March 2020 and aims to measure the economic, social, nutritional and environmental impacts of FEBA members, demonstrating their contribution to food waste prevention and food poverty reduction. The main objectives of the project are the identification of common **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**, the development of a **consistent data collection methodology** to be adopted across the FEBA network and the creation of an **online Observatory on food donation** (an online platform offering FEBA members access to information about KPIs and the possibility to issue reports). The first version of the Observatory is currently being tested with data from 2019, by a Pilot Group of 8 members involved in the project since the beginning.

The Chair underlined that the Commission could take stock of the key findings of this project regarding KPIs for food donation, to inform further refinement of the [common evaluation framework utilised](#) to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of food waste prevention actions, developed in 2019, in collaboration with the [Commission’s Joint Research Centre](#) (JRC) and the EU Platform on FLW.

8. Conclusion and wrap up by Chair

The Chair thanked Platform members and speakers for their participation and for the initiatives carried out to ensure recovery and redistribution of safe surplus food to people in need, especially in the complex context of the Covid-19 crisis. The Chair also invited Platform members to participate in the upcoming EU survey to be launched by the Commission in order to inform work on the Contingency Plan (relevant information on the survey will be communicated as soon as it becomes available).

Finally, the Chair encouraged Platform members to pursue sharing information on actions undertaken to address food security and food waste prevention in context of the Covid-19 crisis, notably through the [Platform’s newsletter](#). Members are invited to propose topics for interventions for the next meeting of the Food donation sub-group (foreseen for autumn 2021), which could focus on the development and use of online tools to facilitate food donation, or any other aspects related to food redistribution.