



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Food sustainability, international relations  
**Farm to fork strategy**

## SUMMARY REPORT

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

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

*Online / Webex*

*14 October 2024 (13.30-16.30 CET)*

**Co-Chairs (3):** Rikke Karlsson, DG SANTE, Eva Sali, COPA, and Tomasz Szuba, Venturis HoReCa

**Commission and EU bodies (4):** DG SANTE, AGRI, RTD, JRC

**Member States represented (7):** IE, EE, IT, LV, HU, NL, SK

**Private sector organisations (14):** BOROUME, COPA – European Farmers, Cooperativas alimentarias, DUH – Deutsche Umwelthilfe, ECSLA – the European Cold Storage and Logistics Association, FEBA – European Food Banks Federation, FoodDrinkEurope, Harokopio University, HOTREC, REGAL Normandie, WRAP – The Waste and Resources Action Programme, WUR – Wageningen University & Research, Thünen-Institut, Venturis HoReCa, Slow Food

**Public entities (1):** FAO

**Observers:** NO

## 1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The **Commission** co-chair opened the meeting, introduced the co-chairs from COPA and Venturis HoReCa and presented the main points on the agenda.

## 2. Optimizing food chain collaboration to prevent food waste, presentation by Filiera Italia

**Filiera Italia** emphasised the importance of coordinated efforts across the agri-food supply chain to tackle food waste. It also expressed concerns regarding the need to intervene on food waste, considering the global food waste data (1/3 of food produced globally is wasted according to the FAO) and the challenges for the agrifood sector at global level which might need to double food production within 25 years. Filiera Italia highlighted how supply chain contracts have contributed to reducing food waste, promoting sustainability, and improving pay for farmers, with success in the tomato, livestock, and dairy sectors.

**COPA** asked whether Filiera Italia's initiatives align its global vision. **Filiera Italia** responded, outlining various initiatives aimed at collective goals and awareness raising, including educational programmes across Italian schools. These initiatives focus on educating citizens on healthy eating, biodiversity, sustainability, product seasonality, and the fundamentals of the Mediterranean diet, reaching over 10 million students over 20 years.

The **Commission** asked about Filiera Italia's involvement with Italy's national food waste strategies and collaboration with national authorities. **Filiera Italia** confirmed that their organization collaborates with institutional bodies to align on a vision and a common understanding of food waste. Filiera Italia also noted that Italy is developing specific awareness and support measures to help companies reduce food waste.

The **Commission** also sought clarification on Filiera Italia's use of the term "zero waste" in reference to composting and biogas, typically seen as recycling of biowaste. **Filiera Italia** explained that "zero waste" here underscores Italy's focus on waste reduction across the supply chain. Many companies, including large processing companies, are using byproducts that would typically have gone to waste treatment.

**COPA** asked how **Filiera Italia** measures the action's impact. COPA acknowledged, also according to Filiera Italia, that while some supply chain contracts offer solutions, quantifying impact remains challenging.

## 3. A greenhouse producers' fight against food waste – presentation by Nordic Greens

The Danish vegetable producer, **Nordic Greens**, presented its approach to reduce food waste, in collaboration with the voluntary agreement "Denmark Against Food Waste" and "Stop Wasting Food Denmark", with retailers to sell lower grade produce at discounted prices and with food banks and food processors. Nordic Greens also developed packaging solutions and tested new varieties to extend shelf life.

**COPA** inquired about the future goals of Nordic Greens. **Nordic Greens** replied that the company aimed to continue reducing food waste by testing new varieties with longer shelf lives and pre-selling produce before planting. Any excess production is managed through different ways to sell it or produce other food products or other uses. Collaboration with retailers and movements like Stop Wasting Food Denmark is crucial to their success, with efforts in packaging, storage, and transport

significantly reducing waste Nordic Greens also noted the importance of raising awareness among consumers as customers now demand more second grade products, making them more popular.

The **Commission** asked which of Nordic Greens' actions to reduce food waste have been most effective. In addition, the Commission asked how they are collaborating with retailers on ensuring products that are reaching the end of their shelf life are not wasted. **Nordic Greens** referred to the collaboration on sales forecasting with retailers as effective. Another example of a successful initiative is the development of a new salad production method, which uses advanced AI technology to eliminate the need for manual handling. The use of AI ensures food hygiene and is extending the shelf life of their lettuce variants by 14 days. The success of these types of products is dependent on consumer readiness. While retailers allocated shelf space for these products, interest from consumers grew through greater recognition of their quality and cost-effectiveness.

### **t3. Recovery of surplus food from the agricultural sector – presentation by FEBA**

**FEBA** outlined the role of European food banks in reducing food waste while addressing hunger and poverty. FEBA discussed the impact of the AGRI market withdrawal scheme on the accessibility of fresh fruit and vegetables, noting a decline. FEBA highlighted initiatives such as gleaning, partnerships with farmers, and government-supported programmes to recover surplus food.

**The Lithuanian Food Bank**, supporting 242 000 people every year with 16 000 volunteers recovered 6700 tons of food last year. Despite challenges like high recovery costs and regulations, food donations increased from 347 tons in 2022 to 829 tons in 2023, thanks to collaboration with authorities, local communities, and schools.

**Venturis Horeca** asked if food banks measure food waste levels after redistributing food to the beneficiaries. **FEBA** explained that usually food banks are more of an intermediary and logistics hub, thus only measure food waste that occurs at the warehouse. Minimal food waste is usually reported at this stage. In countries like the Netherlands and Germany, food banks work directly with end beneficiaries, whereas in others, food banks act as intermediaries, distributing food to charities.

**COPA** asked whether Lithuania are using the market withdrawal scheme. **Lithuanian Food Bank** stated that a significant challenge is the lack of motivation for producers to donate food, due to insufficient legal incentives and the lack of awareness of publicly available data on food waste. Although Lithuania collects food from over 600 locations daily, a large gap remains between what is collected and the total amount of food waste. Increased transparency on food waste data and incentives could encourage more donations in Lithuania. FEBA followed up, stating that food banks in only 5 EU countries have access to this tool as market withdrawal schemes are used for price regulation, and not as a food waste measure.

### **4. A digital marketplace to promote the use of biobased side and waste streams – presentation by the Finnish Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners**

**The Finnish Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners** presented the "TREASoURcE" project, a four-year Horizon Europe initiative (2022-2026) focusing on promoting recycling of bio-based agricultural side streams (such as crop residues or food waste) through a digital marketplace. The platform connects farmers and industries, supporting sustainability by facilitating the reduction of food waste and fostering long-term partnerships. Challenges include circular economy awareness and logistical issues.

**Ireland** asked about regulations on trading waste or side streams and whether regulations on by-products apply. The **Finnish Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners** clarified that the regulatory framework analysis revealed a lengthy list of applicable regulations, which vary based on the material in question. The marketplace primarily targets side streams that are not classified as waste, making them easier to transfer. However, some biomass or waste materials may fall under either by-product regulation or waste regulations, depending on the specific characteristics of the side streams.

## **5. Recommendations from the Norwegian Food Waste Committee**

**Matvett** presented the recommendations from the Norwegian Food Waste Committee. The Committee proposes measures to reduce food waste by 70%, including regulatory requirements for food businesses, voluntary agreements, and sector based best practices. The Norwegian government plans to put forward a proposal introducing a due diligence requirement for larger food businesses in the Norwegian food law by spring 2025 with oversight by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

The **Commission** asked how food business operators have reacted to the due diligence requirement to be proposed in Norwegian food legislation. **Matvett** reported broad industry support, noting however that larger companies may find implementation easier than small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). A phased approach, starting with basic monitoring and risk assessment, is planned for businesses with 10+ employees to assist smaller companies.

**WUR** highlighted possible challenges in aligning these types of recommendations with various relevant actors in the food system, emphasizing the complexity due to the numerous stakeholders involved. **Matvett** stressed that government authorities would lead the implementation. The main recommendation focuses on strengthening the existing negotiated agreement with major market players framework in Norway, which already includes major market players such as retail chains and a significant portion of hotels, canteens, and manufacturers. However, the challenge lies in engaging smaller operators, who are numerous and more difficult to involve. While the government will control progress and determine the mix of proposals for implementation, the Committee looks forward to close cooperation with them to reach the goal of halving food waste. Without immediate action, only a 25% reduction would be achieved.

## **6. Food loss and waste practitioners exchange across EU – presentation by Wageningen University & Research**

**WUR** outlined plans for a cross-border exchange programme for food waste reduction practitioners, inspired by their recent international conference ‘Towards halving food waste in Europe’. WUR seeks to provide practical hands-on learning opportunities for practitioners who often lack the opportunity to engage with other practitioners. WUR highlighted past collaborations with Hungary and Australia and highlighted a structured framework they are developing to facilitate collaboration among practitioners across different Member States.

**WRAP** highlighted that while Member State governments and agencies often establish the policy framework for food waste interventions, they may not implement the specific actions. WRAP noted that practitioners’ independent efforts can operate outside government initiatives, underscoring the need for government awareness of these actions to inform policymaking. WRAP suggested that the subgroup could help bridge the gap between practitioners and government agencies, helping campaigns benefit from best practices.

## **7. Happy Hours Market – a Belgian digital and local marketplace for surplus food**

**Happy Hour Market**, a Brussels based startup, addresses food waste by buying food from retailers near expiration dates and selling it via an app at reduced price. Unsold items are donated to local charities. The platform has saved consumers an average of €300 per month and plans to expand to other cities in Belgium and countries, developing a playbook to replicate its model.

## **8. AOB**

**Herbalife** presented its business operations and sustainability initiatives to reduce food waste, focusing on expiration date management, overstock rerouting, and food donations. Since 2020, a key project has involved transforming unused and expired products into animal feed through a partnership with a local manufacturer in the Netherlands.

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

The co-chairs thanked presenters and participants for their contributions and noted that the next meeting will be in 2025.