



Action & implementation sub-group meeting
27 October 2021
14:00 - 17:30

1. What has changed (since 2016, or in the past few years, more generally)

The topic of food waste prevention is far more relevant at European level today, in comparison to 2016. However, it is crucial to remind that the world's first Food Bank was created in 1967 and then followed by the European's first Food Bank in Paris in 1984 and the second one in Brussels in 1986. Since then, Food Banks belonging to the European Food Banks Federation have contributed to food waste prevention and food insecurity reduction through the daily recovery and redistribution of safe and edible surplus food to charities helping people in need. At EU level this journey accelerated in 2015 with the publication of the Communication "Closing the loop – An EU action plan for the Circular Economy",¹ followed by the establishment of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (FLW Platform) in 2016, the first concrete outcome of which was the adoption of the **EU guidelines on food donation** in 2017 to facilitate the recovery and redistribution of safe and edible surplus food to those most in need. Following this, the FLW Platform released in 2019 the **Key Recommendations for Action in food waste prevention**, addressing specifically the topic of food donation. Both the EU guidelines and the 'Key Recommendations for Action' have played a key role in helping scale-up action across the EU, mobilising Member States, food businesses operators, and actors of civil society, as called for by the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Food waste is one of the biggest and most profound challenges of our time. We firmly believe that today the Farm to Fork Strategy, which is an integral part of the European Green Deal, is an opportunity to rethink the agri-food system in line with the Agenda 2030 and in the light of the disruptions caused by COVID-19 in order to move towards a more sustainable food system.

Today, there is more awareness than before and the legislative frameworks both at European and national level have evolved to address this challenge. Although the journey is still long, a lot of good results have been achieved so far. Future steps and achievements should be led by a comprehensive and structured legislative framework, together with a multistakeholder collaboration and on the basis of measured and factual best practices.

¹ "Discarding food that is still edible increases these [environmental] impacts, and causes financial loss for consumers and the economy. Food waste also has an important social angle: donation of food that is still edible but that for logistic or marketing reasons cannot be commercialised should be facilitated."



2. What has been achieved (since 2016, or in the past few years, more generally)

From a policy and legislative point of view these are the milestones since 2016:

- 2017, EU guidelines on food donation
- 2019, Key Recommendations for Action in food waste prevention
- 2020, A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy, and environmentally-friendly food system
- 2021, the revisions to the Regulations (EC) No 852/2004 (hygiene rules of foodstuffs) and (EC) No 853/2004 (hygiene rules for food animal origins) aimed to reduce food waste, as part of the European Green Deal. For example, with reference to the activity of Food Banks, the most relevant amendments to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 deal with the possibility to donate food after the expiry of the 'best before' date. Regarding Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 the purpose of the amendments is to increase/facilitate the means of ensuring the safe redistribution by Food Banks and other charities by the freezing of meat at retail level under certain conditions.

Looking back at 2016, these are great achievements and turning points. These are all opportunities that cannot be missed, since they denote the importance of an integrated approach to reduce food loss and waste in our food systems, for the people and for the planet.

Zooming on the activity of FEBA members, we can notice that the general environment in the past 5 years has changed considerably, both in terms of legislative framework and awareness attitude from all the actors of the food supply chain, public administrations, civil society organisations and consumers. For example, from 2017 to 2020 the quantity of food recovered and redistributed from FEBA members in 29 European countries has increased of almost 70% (2017: 501,000 tonnes > 2020: 860,000 tonnes)² and the breakdown percentage of surplus food has increased of about 10% (data available just for 2018 and 2019).

Over the last five years FEBA members have developed many innovative activities, for instance:

- Recovery of fresh food and cooked meals from the HORECA and catering sectors as well as from cruise ships;
- Recovery of surplus fruit and vegetables from wholesale markets;
- Recovery of food from the large-retail trade, also with the support of technology;
- Gleaning in the fields;
- Processing of fruit and vegetables into juices, jams, soups, and other products to extend the shelf life and minimise the generation of waste in Food Bank warehouses;
- Deep-freezing of vegetables or meat;

² In addition to surplus food from food business operators, these quantities include food from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and national programmes, the EU Fruits and Vegetables withdrawal scheme, as well as from individual and corporate donations through food collections.



- Dehydrated fruit;
- Recovery of confiscated fish.

All these initiatives demonstrate that, also thanks to the adaptability FEBA members, the context has promoted the activity of FEBA members not only from a quantitative but also from a qualitative point of view. In this way FEBA members have increased the nutritional value of food products redistributed.

3. Key learnings: challenges and opportunities

A better legislative framework at EU and national level in the different MSs have supported the recovery and redistribution of edible surplus food, preventing the generation of food waste.

At the same time, innovation, and adaptation to change from the actors involved in these processes have turned out to be key ingredients of success.

Especially during the COVID-19 period and the economic and social consequences soon emerged, the importance to ensure the access to food has proved to be a priority, underlining the importance of an easily accessible, affordable, healthy, and balanced diet for all. This situation has been a wakeup call for everyone, and civil society organisations operating in this sector.

Amongst the main challenges: growing demand for food, increase in the number of people in need, unstable food donations, disruption in the logistics and transports processes, lack of PPEs, lack of volunteers, unexpected costs and drop in financial resources, legislative obstacles in some MSs and lack of coordination at national level between all actors involved of the food supply chain, public administrations, and civil society organisations. At the same time, these challenges requested a response generating new opportunities and models.

The flexibility and spirit of adaptation demonstrated and above all the spirit of solidarity translated in concrete facts are lessons learned and processes that should continue to stay. Above all, the digitalisation of traditional activities, the introduction of new and innovative operating models to manage the warehouses and the food delivery, and the strength of some advocacy and communication campaigns. The achievements of the FLW Platform at European level, especially thanks to the EU guidelines and the 'Key Recommendations for Action' favour certain achievements, that could be stronger and more impactful with national legislative frameworks that support food donation and the redistribution of surplus food. In fact, Member States where the EU guidelines and the 'Key Recommendations for Action' had concrete impacts are countries where the legislation in place on this topic is more developed.

4. The role of the Platform and its Recommendations for Action



Looking at FEBA and the steps and achievements over the past 4 years, the FLW Platform has played a key role to position FEBA at the centre of the EU policy-making process, giving FEBA and its members the possibility to be in constant contact with other stakeholders, from EU institutions to national authorities, food business operators, NGOs, and universities and to advocate together to support the work at European and national level for developing a legislative and policy framework on the reduction of food waste in general, specifically favouring the redistribution of surplus food generated at all stages of the food supply chain. Sub-groups meetings and plenary sessions have been a precious occasion to exchange best practices and know-how, to put on the table challenges and issues raised at national level, as well as European level, and to bring the EU closer to all the actors involved at national level creating a sort of *circular approach* of knowledge-exchange. A positive example of this was the Platform newsletter which has allowed the members of the FLW Platform to collect information and stories on food waste prevention actions from its national members and to share them with a broader public.

5. Future outlook: needs and opportunities of the sector, tools to achieve flw prevention/reduction objectives, ways in which the Platform can further support actions.

FEBA together with its membership wants to renew its commitment to prevent food waste and reduce food insecurity in Europe. Our daily activity contributes to ensure that no good food goes to waste while meeting the needs of charities helping the most deprived. Food Banks are an integral part of a more sustainable, healthier, and equitable food system for all. To continue supporting FEBA members as well as other actors of civil society organisations, the 'Key Recommendations for Action' should be further disseminated at national level to raise awareness with all the actors involved.

FEBA asked its national members the main needs and opportunities and how the FLW Platform can support, specifically in terms of developing a regulatory principle, food donation and how the European Commission can better promote the 'Key Recommendations for Action'.

We highlight some recommendations:

- **Raising awareness building on expertise and competence**

The topic of food waste prevention is high on the political agenda both at EU and international level. However, there is still a lot to do in terms of raising awareness with food business operators as well as with consumers. For instance, in some MSs many food companies still do not donate surplus food because they do not recognise the added value of this activity, there



is not a legislation in place at national level, or a comprehensive corporate CSR policy. The FLW Platform therefore could build on the expertise and competence developed over the years to raise awareness on this point and further promote food donation through the use of the EU guidelines on food donation and the 'Key Recommendations for Action'.

- **Sharing successful evidence-based practices**

Leveraging on successful evidence-based practices on food donation can further contribute to food waste prevention. Tools as the EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub, platforms with all the involved stakeholders at national level or exchanges amongst stakeholders of different MSs could scale up and replicate actions.

- **Support those who are already doing food redistribution**

Regarding food donation, Food Banks belonging to FEBA have proven to play an important role in the prevention of food loss and waste by recovering surplus food, with positive social, economic, and environmental impacts. However, the recovery, storage, and redistribution of surplus food to charitable organisations entail a complex organisation which includes administrative and management components as well as logistical and infrastructure costs. It is important to emphasise that EU initiatives are very important because they set the agenda and can influence national governments to act on a field out of their traditional scope.

Therefore, in order to favour and support food donation, the FLW Platform could argue for:

- (1) National legislations boosting food donation in line with European policies and legislations;
- (2) Financial support from European and national authorities, which is necessary to increase the recovery of surplus food from food business operators;
- (3) EU-level harmonised and improved fiscal incentives for a better valorisation of surplus food by tax benefits for food donors (e.g. tax reduction by deducting the net book value of the donated foodstuffs, including storage and transport costs).