



# Circular letter regarding the provisions applying to food banks and charities

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DG Control policy - Transformation and distribution of foodstuff

# Purpose of the circular letter (2017: version 1)

This initiative has been taken within the framework of a social and sustainable policy on food safety aimed at providing maximum protection for consumers and reducing food wastage → “no food safety at 2 speeds”.

- Guidelines for understanding best-before and use-by dates
- Guidelines for traceability
- Guidelines for labelling
- Guidelines for freezing food
- ...

EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub → BE →

## Relevant resources

### Files



**Circular on the provisions applied to food banks and charity (EN)**

(omzendbrief BE -  
Banquesalimentaires\_EN.pdf - 207KB)

[Download](#)

# Guidelines for freezing food

For foodbanks and charities, it is not always possible to distribute refrigerated food (e.g. fresh meat, fresh fish, charcuterie, etc.) before the end of its shelf life.

For donors (e.g. supermarkets, ...) it is not always possible to organize the donation before the end of the shelf life.

→ Food intended for donation can be frozen under certain conditions. The freezing of food can be done by the donors or by the food banks or charities.



# Guidelines for freezing food

Freezing of food that is to be kept refrigerated (e.g. prepared meats, fresh meat or fish, etc.) is permitted provided that:

- The foodstuffs are frozen no later than the use by date
- The cold chain is never interrupted, especially during collection and transportation  
This implies that collection and transportation times must be kept to a minimum, in particular during high weather temperatures. Ideally, refrigerated vehicles should be used and at the very least, the foodstuffs must be placed in a cool box.
- The temperature of the foodstuffs is checked randomly upon reception of the food



# Guidelines for freezing food

- Freezing must take place in the appropriate installations with sufficient capacity. Build-up and food with large volumes should be avoided to allow good air circulation in the freezer. This allows the food to be frozen to the core as quickly as possible. Once the food has reached a core temperature of  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$ , more can be stacked.
- The foodstuffs were frozen at least 48 hours prior to distribution
- Time for frozen storage after the food is frozen on the use-by date:
  - \* 4 months for meat of ungulates and poultry,
  - \* 2 months for fish, prepared meals and other food(\*advice from Scientific Committee – SciCom 2019-02 <https://www.favv-afsca.be/wetenschappelijkcomite/adviezen/2019/>)
- On the label/packaging: the date of freezing + “to be consumed immediately after defrosting”

# Revision of the circular letter (2022)

- Amendments to Regulations (EU) 852/2004 and 853/2004
- Project launched by FASFC '*Foundations for food safety: food donations*':
  - In May 2019: a round table discussion with all the stakeholders involved in donating food (representatives of food banks, charitable organizations, sector federations, public authorities, ...)
  - To clarify current difficulties and search for constructive solutions
  - Result: adjustments and expansion of the circular letter (ongoing at the moment)

