



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Food and feed safety, innovation  
Food information and composition, food waste

## SUMMARY REPORT

DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

### Webinar on Food Waste measurement for Member States

*Via WebEx Meetings*

*26 June 2020 – From 10:30 to 12:30*

**Chair:** Mr. Bartosz ZAMBRZYCKI, Policy Officer, General food law and nutrition

**DG SANTE:** Anne-Laure Gassin, Dora Szentpaly-Kleis, Cristina Lisetchi, Vasiliki Boukouvala; **DG EMPL:** Henriett Horvath, **DG ENV:** Chiel Berends, Caterina Savelli; **ESTAT:** Agnieszka Litwinska, Cristina Re; **JRC:** Carla Patinha-Caldeira.

#### **Member States represented (25):**

AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

#### **Observers:**

**EFTA:** Norway

The webinar on food waste measurement, organised by DG SANTE, took place virtually via Webex on 26 June 2020 from 10:30 to 12:30. The webinar focused on concrete examples of national food waste monitoring and it was addressed predominantly to Member States, in light of [their legal obligation to measure and report on national food waste levels](#).

**1//** A representative from the Swedish Food Agency commenced the series of interventions, by presenting its work on [mapping edible food waste occurring from lunches](#) in municipal pre-schools, schools and elderly homes in 2019 (3 million meals per day). The mapping was facilitated by a survey sent to the meal managers in all Swedish municipalities, who were encouraged to report on their food waste data for 5 days, on a voluntary basis. The response rate was 73% (211 municipalities out of 290) and food waste was categorised in three separate groups: kitchen, serving and plate waste.

The main findings of the survey were the following: a) the highest levels of food waste recorded were during serving in all three operational areas; b) on a national level, there are 6100 tonnes of serving waste and 5000 tonnes of plate waste per year in schools; c) the total amount of food waste in schools and pre-schools is around 60-70 gr/lunch/person and it is higher in elderly homes; d) there are few elderly care entities which measure food waste; e) it is not common ground to measure kitchen food waste.

Participants were also informed about the [National model for measuring food waste in public meals](#) and the accompanying tools developed (reporting form and related instructions), as well as the recently launched [handbook](#) about reducing food waste in public meals (which can be also used by the private sector).

During the Q&A session, the representative from the Swedish Food Agency clarified that liquid food waste had not been measured in the mapping exercise, although this might be covered in the future. As inedible food waste was not included in the reporting form, available data cannot be used in the context of the EU legal obligation to report on national food waste levels. Portugal raised the issue of obtaining food waste data per product and the representative from the Swedish Food Agency explained that certain data is already available (eg. there is more vegetable waste in the public meals sector compared to the private sector, where more protein is wasted).

In order to address Portugal's question on whether 2020 food waste data will be representative, due to the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Swedish Food Agency representative argued that schools in Sweden have been open throughout the crisis and public meals continued to be offered. The Commission clarified that the impact of COVID-19 on the food waste measurement legal obligations is being taken into account and further guidance will become available after gathering the first set of data in 2021.

Denmark was interested to know if the data collected was cross-checked with respective data from the Swedish Waste Authorities. The answer of the Swedish Food Agency representative was positive, highlighting that food waste levels reported for the mapping exercise were higher, implying that food waste was more thoroughly measured. Replying to the Netherlands' inquiry on the high food waste levels occurred during serving, the Swedish Food Agency responded that this is due to a number of reasons, among which the size of the plates used or the environment in which public meals usually take place. Finland also took the floor to share with the audience that food waste levels during serving are also the highest in Finland.

**2//** [Statistics Sweden](#) delivered the second presentation, which focused on food waste data from the Swedish grocery retail sector. Five grocery store chains, covering around 80% of the market, voluntarily reported on their food waste data for the year 2018. In order to ensure data consistency and comparison, in-depth interviews were also conducted and back-calculations from economic losses were made.

The analysis of the data revealed that food waste in the Swedish grocery retail sector is estimated at 100.000 tonnes or 10 kg per capita (to note that household food waste goes up to 70 kg per capita). For a future similar study, Statistics Sweden envisages to include wholesale data and increase the detail and coherence level of the data by means of a questionnaire. They also believe that the fruitful collaboration among the entities participating in the Voluntary Agreement to reduce food waste in Sweden – part of which is also the Grocery Retail Federation – will contribute positively to the improvement of the methodology used, as well as for the quality of the data collected.

During the Q&A session, Ireland pointed out that, in the context of a similar exercise in Ireland, researchers compared data received from grocery stores and data gathered from municipal waste and observed that grocery stores underestimated their food waste levels due to amounts of food waste in general and recycling bins. Statistics Sweden expressed confidence that the data provided by grocery

stores was quite accurate, given the strong incentive that companies have to keep track of their food waste due to financial considerations.

As regards Portugal's question on how the food companies were incentivised to publicly share their food waste data, Statistics Sweden outlined the importance of ensuring the confidentiality of such data. The guarantee that company names would not be revealed at any point made companies feel secure to provide such data.

**3//** A representative from the [Wageningen Food and Biobased Research Institute](#) offered an overview of the Dutch national Monitor on Food Waste and the progress towards measurement in different stages of the food supply chain. It was explained that the Dutch methodology to monitor food waste at a national level has a number of differences in comparison to the EU methodology (eg. no differentiation between stages of the food supply chain, different terminology, use of primary data). The Netherlands is currently working on overcoming these differences in order to be able to utilise its national food waste data for the EU measurement and reporting obligations.

In 2018, the Netherlands focused on the retail sector and collected food waste data, as well as information on the amount (kg) of sold food per product group and destinations, from large Dutch supermarkets (83.8% net turnover from the whole market share in 2018). The results of the study showcased that: a) potatoes, vegetables and fruit have the highest contribution to supermarket food waste (34.5%), followed by bread and pastry (31.5%) and dairy, eggs and chilled convenience products (13.3%); b) the total food waste accounts for 1.7% of the amount sold; c) the main waste destinations are biogas, composting and animal feed and d) 5-10 product groups are responsible for 80-90% of food waste.

Apart from the retail sector, Wageningen looked into other chain links. As regards the 'out-of-home' sector, researchers prioritised measurement activities on the hospitality sector, restaurants, companies, fast services, institutions and fuel stations. A food waste challenge has already taken place for hotel restaurants and an event catering food waste challenge is also foreseen. Regarding company catering, previous studies showed that display waste levels are the most significant, whereas more recent studies revealed that kitchen waste is almost comparable to the former and should not be neglected when collecting data. In relation to other sectors of the food supply chain, Wageningen runs questionnaires among primary producers and fruit and vegetable trade organisations, and they have also developed sector specific measurement templates with 1-2 companies, which are representative for the sector.

Last but not least, Wageningen invited the audience to participate in the food loss and waste monitoring event that they are planning to organise at the end of 2020.

**4//** At the end of the webinar, the Commission updated participants on the food waste measurement activities at EU level. The [EU Statistical Office \(Eurostat\)](#) have recently sent to Member State representatives a Questionnaire and a Guidance document (now available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/waste/methodology>), inviting those who have food waste data available from 2018 to share this with the Commission on a voluntary basis. Although the Guidance document does not include specific data collection instructions, it includes important information about the reporting on food waste data, such as an overview of best practices, as well as standards and guidelines for waste compositional analysis.

As regards future meetings, a similar webinar is foreseen for September 2020 and other activities (technical virtual meetings or the creation of a dedicated space on the [Digital Network of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste](#)) could be envisaged, depending on Member States' interest.

Finally, the Commission invited Member State representatives to express their interest to apply for future grants offered in the framework of the new Single Market Programme. The aim of these grants is to help both Member States and civil society actors take action to reduce food waste, including help to improve food waste measurement in Member States. Pending approval of the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), these grants could be implemented as of 2021.