



Under the auspices of the Finnish Presidency to the Council of the EU, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) organised, on 12 December 2019, a public conference dedicated to food loss and waste prevention. The event, held on occasion of the 7th meeting of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (FLW), was an opportunity to discuss the *key recommendations for action of the EU Platform on FLW*, published on that day on the [website](#) of the Commission.

The conference was opened by the Chair of the EU Platform on FLW, Ms Sabine Jülicher, Director, Food and feed safety, innovation, DG SANTE who welcomed Commissier Kyriakides, responsible for Health and Food Safety, and Jaana Husu-Kallio, Permanent Secretary of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland.

This event was open to all stakeholders active in food loss and waste prevention. In an interactive format, facilitated by journalist Aminda Leigh, speakers and audience discussed the Platform's recommendations for action and their role in helping to mobilise EU action and path towards the global target of halving food waste by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 12.3). The documents of the event were made available electronically to the participants.

1. OPENING REMARKS

Commissioner Kyriakides highlighted in her opening speech that food waste will be an important element of the new '[Farm to Fork Strategy](#)', to be developed by the Commission in the context of the [European Green Deal](#). She underlined the urgency of transforming the current food system and moving towards more sustainable practices, reducing its environmental impact and strengthening its contribution to public health and society at large. In closing, Commissioner Kyriakides welcomed the adoption of the EU food waste measurement legislation and called on all stakeholders to intensify efforts towards reaching the SDG Target 12.3.

On behalf of the Finnish Presidency, Jaana Husu-Kallio emphasised the importance of tackling food losses and food waste to achieve better food and nutrition security, environmental sustainability and financial prosperity, referring to the international agreements that set ambitions in this field. The Permanent Secretary welcomed the Commission's work on the new '[Farm to Fork Strategy](#)' and the extension of the mandate of the EU Platform on FLW until the end of 2021. She also reiterated Finland's commitment to prevent and reduce food losses and food waste, giving examples of actions taken in the country.

2. COMBATTING FOOD WASTE

Dr Liz Goodwin, first Senior Fellow and Director, Food Loss and Waste at the World Resources Institute, focused in her speech on the importance of fighting against food losses and waste in order to achieve more sustainable food systems by 2050. She highlighted that

reducing food losses and food waste can significantly reduce the quantity of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) from agriculture and land use. She referred to the work of the Champions 12.3, a coalition of executives from governments, businesses, international organizations, research institutions, and civil society dedicated to mobilising action towards the SDG 12.3 Target, and commented on the progress made¹ by companies and governments towards this global goal. In closing, Dr. Goodwin presented 10 scaling interventions to accelerate the food waste fight, as indicated in a recent report² of the World Resources Institute.

Sabine Jülicher, Chair of the EU Platform on FLW took stock of the EU actions taken to halve food loss and waste by 2030 as part of the Circular Economy Action Plan, referring in particular to: the establishment of the [EU Platform on FLW](#) (2016); the adoption of [EU food donation guidelines](#) (2017) and [guidelines to facilitate the valorization of former foodstuffs as a resource for animal feed](#) (2018); the adoption of EU-wide legislation for [monitoring and reporting](#) as well as to the on-going work to improve the understanding and use of [date marking](#). She welcomed the publication of the Platform's [recommendations for action](#), which shall frame the future actions of all actors of the food supply chain to prevent and reduce food loss and waste as well as that of public authorities, and indicated areas where further work is needed at EU, national, regional and local levels. Lastly, she highlighted the important role that food loss and waste prevention will play in the '*Farm to Fork Strategy*', with work on the latter being led by DG SANTE.

Minna Huttunen and Hanna Hartikainen, representing, respectively, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland and the Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke), presented the timeline of different actions taken by Finland in order to tackle food waste, including the development of a food waste prevention roadmap (to be completed in 2020). The intervention also highlighted the efforts to establish a national food waste measurement system in Finland, explaining the methods used for the development of the monitoring system, the planned sample size as well as results obtained. For example, at the consumers' level, online questionnaires were filled in by more than 1000 households, waste composition analysis was conducted in more than 5000 households and online food waste diaries were kept in more than 200 households.

During the Q&A session, the participants could address questions to the speakers by the use of digital tools and participate in online polls. On the challenging issue of how to find the necessary funding to continue fighting food waste, the Chair of the Platform pointed to EU funding opportunities for research, as well as recent 'green finance' initiatives of the financial market that are becoming key in supporting green and sustainable investments. On the functioning of the EU Platform on FLW, the Chair explained that, while membership to the Platform³ was limited in order to ensure efficient operations, work has been carried out in a highly open and transparent way. In her concluding remarks on behalf of the Finnish Presidency, Jaana Husu-Kallio highlighted the importance of actions taken at national level,

¹ World Resources Institute, SDG Target 12.3 on Food Loss and Waste: 2019 Progress Report, <https://champions123.org/2019-progress-report/>

² World Resources Institute, Reducing Food Loss and Waste: Setting a Global Action Agenda, <https://www.wri.org/publication/reducing-food-loss-and-waste-setting-global-action-agenda>

³ The **EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (FLW)**, established in 2016, is an informal expert group of the European Commission and brings together EU institutions, experts from the EU countries and relevant stakeholders selected through an open call for applications. The Platform aims to support all actors in: defining measures needed to prevent food waste; sharing best practice; and evaluating progress made over time.

giving the example of how food donation is facilitated in Italy and Finland, and further explained that there is no need to regulate all relevant areas at EU level.

In the last session of the morning, the EU-funded *Food Heroes Project* was presented by Marjon Krol, Project Leader. The project focuses on the reduction of food losses and waste in the primary sector by creating higher value uses for by-products and products that do not conform with marketing specifications. The *Food Heroes Awards*, created as part of the project, aimed to showcase best solutions to inspire others and raise awareness. The winners of the three categories presented their solutions: Naomi Smith from *EnVie* (social enterprise making soups from fresh surplus vegetables supplied by Belgian farmers), Wouter Bruins from *In Ovo* (screening technology to detect, before hatching, the gender of eggs in the laying hen industry) and last but not least, Axel Briere from *Mussella* (developing marketing opportunities for undersized mussels and for shells).

The catering for the event was carried out in such a way as to minimise food waste, with tasty dishes prepared from food components that are often discarded. Surplus food was redistributed to a local association with the help of the European Food Banks Federation.

3. EU PLATFORM ON FOOD LOSSES AND FOOD WASTE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION IN FOOD LOSS AND WASTE PREVENTION

The second part of the event was dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the recommendations for action of the EU Platform on FLW. In line with the integrated, holistic approach needed to tackle food waste, the Platform recommendations address action required, at each stage of the food supply chain (primary production, manufacturing, retail, hospitality/food service, consumption, food redistribution). The recommendations are forward-looking and also include a set of horizontal ‘cross-cutting’ recommendations. The latter are common across various stages of the food value chain, often involve multiple actors and are addressed to both public and private entities, suggesting relevant actions for specific players and, importantly, calling for cooperation amongst the different actors concerned.

The Platform’s Chair also reminded the audience that actions to prevent food waste can also go beyond the key recommendations proposed by the Platform. For example, Platform member Feedback Global considered that the recommendations were not sufficiently ambitious, particularly in their omission to propose binding targets, regulatory approaches, and measurement/targeted reduction of food waste in primary production⁴. In order to ensure that such views are also presented, the Commission published additional actions to reduce food loss and waste, put forward by some but not endorsed by all Platform members, as an annex to the key recommendations.

In the round table discussion, representatives from the member organisations of the EU Platform on FLW who led the work to elaborate the recommendations for action, presented those related to their respective sector. The panel featured Anette Toft (Copa-Cogeca) for primary production, Bruce Learner (Kellogg Europe/ FoodDrinkEurope) for manufacturing, Vic De Meester (Colruyt Group/ EuroCommerce) for retail, Johannes Cornelis Kant (The

⁴ See the additional actions for National Public Authorities in [Annex 3](#) (p27) of the Recommendations. For further info, see the [joint-letter](#) and [statement](#) from European organisations, which call for EU Member States to adopt binding food waste reduction targets and to include unharvested food at primary production in food waste measurement and reduction targets.

Royal Dutch Horeca Association/ HOTREC) for hospitality and food services, Ylva Haglund (Zero Waste Scotland) for consumers, Jacques Vandenschrik (European Food Banks Federation) for food donation and Anne-Laure Gassin (DG SANTE), who presented the cross-cutting recommendations for action on behalf of the Platform. The audience voted through a digital tool on what they considered to be the most important recommendations, with the following results:

- **Primary production** – to include farmers and their cooperatives and farming service providers in research and innovation activities from the beginning of the process.
- **Manufacturing** – to monitor, measure and report on food loss and waste quantities in order to identify and take action on hotspots.
- **Retail** – to establish trustful relations with suppliers and share data and information on forecasting to match supply and demand.
- **Hospitality/food services** – to motivate and engage businesses to adopt measures against food waste in their operations.
- **Consumers** – to initiate individual and community behavior change.
- **Food donation** – to promote the uptake of the EU guidelines on food donation and, where needed, adopt national guidelines and/or legislation to further facilitate food donation.
- **Cross-cutting recommendations** - to develop national strategies for preventing and reducing food loss and waste, in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 12.3.

During the Q&A session, the urgency to take immediate, meaningful and scalable actions prevailed. The speakers referred to research projects and stakeholder networks put in place, with a common objective of sharing learning and helping to drive change regarding food waste. In relation to the link with climate action, it was explained that the European Green Deal and the ‘*Farm to Fork Strategy*’ would offer opportunities for joined-up action and that such integrated efforts were also taking place in the Member States. With respect to reducing the use of packaging, it was highlighted that its role in helping to ensure food quality and safety and preventing food loss and waste also needs to be taken into account. As regards the suggestion that date marking could be removed from food labels in order to prevent food waste, the Commission reminded that date marking informs consumers about product shelf-life, and ‘use by’ dates in particular, are essential to ensure food safety. It is key that people understand the difference between ‘best before’ which provides information on food quality and ‘use by’ dates. In this context, particular reference was made to ongoing work of the European Food Safety Authority to provide scientific advice to support food business operators in making decisions about date marking⁵, which once finalised, should help ensure more consistent date marking practices. At the end of the Q&A session, the debate focused on the opportunity of changing social norms regarding food waste (so that this behaviour is no longer considered acceptable), as well as the role of engaging with high-profile opinion leaders in this regard.

4. ENABLING FOOD LOSS AND WASTE PREVENTION: ROLE OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

In the final part of the conference, an interactive round table discussion was held on the role of public authorities in enabling food loss and waste prevention. The panel included speakers from various levels of governance, such as the Deputy Mayor of Gent Tine Heyse, national

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/fw_eu_actions_mandate-efsa-date-marking.pdf

representatives from Germany, Finland, Croatia, the Netherlands and France, as well as Alexandra Nikolakopoulou, Head of Unit, Food information, composition and food waste at DG SANTE and Rosa Rolle, Team Leader Food Losses and Waste, Nutrition and Food Systems Division at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Starting from the local perspective, Tine Heyse informed the audience that the City of Ghent launched its own food policy named ‘*Gent en Garde*’ in 2013, which incorporates a series of projects and activities for more sustainable food systems (e.g. the ‘*Food savers*’ programme that redistributed more than 1.000 tonnes of food surpluses from supermarkets to social organizations with the help of individuals in difficult financial situations).

At national level, Germany adopted a [National Strategy for Food Waste Reduction](#) in 2019. This includes the establishment of a dialogue process with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and with dialogue fora for each sector (primary production, processing, wholesale and retail, away-from-home consumption and private households), which will identify measures to reduce the amount of food waste per sector. It is underpinned by the quantification of food waste that occurs along the whole food supply chain. The latter also helped Germany to set the baseline for 2015, needed to set targets and monitor progress made in reducing food waste. Croatia recently adopted a national food waste prevention plan, which includes measures to improve the food donation system as a whole, fiscal incentives for food donation, a feasibility study to establish a Croatian food bank, as well as an IT system to improve communications between donors and charity organizations. France emphasised that food waste is an important political issue and that specific legislation aiming to prevent and reduce food waste has been adopted. Policy and legislative measures include the National Pact against Food Waste (2013), defining the objective of halving food waste by 2025, and the Law on the ‘fight against food waste’⁶ (2016) banning retailers of a certain size from discarding unsold food and requiring them to donate surplus to those in need. In 2018, this obligation has been extended to agrifood and catering businesses. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Taskforce Circular Economy in Food was launched in January 2017, an initiative undertaken by Wageningen University & Research, in collaboration with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Sustainable Food Alliance. The Taskforce is a coalition involving companies across the food supply chain, national and local authorities, a civil society organisation and other invited members. Recent findings show a decrease (7 kilos less per capita than in 2016) in food waste by Dutch households.

On behalf of the European Commission, Alexandra Nikolakopoulou explained that the ‘*Farm to Fork Strategy*’ will aim to reduce the environmental impact of the food processing and retail sector, taking action, amongst others, in the area of food waste and encouraged all stakeholders to contribute to discussions in this respect.

At a global level, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) facilitates and promotes dialogue among stakeholders to address different dimensions and critical issues relating to food loss and waste. FAO also helps countries raise awareness on food waste and supports them through various mechanisms and tools, such as the development of campaigns, educational programmes and networks. Another major area of their work is to assist with setting up partnerships to support efforts of public and private sector actors in reducing food loss and waste.

⁶ France Gouvernement, ‘LOI n° 2016-138 du 11 février 2016 relative à la lutte contre le gaspillage alimentaire’, JORF n°0036 du 12 février 2016, texte n°2, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/eli/loi/2016/2/11/AGRX1531165L/jo/texte>

During the Q&A session of this last panel, some panelists affirmed the value of utilising a mix of regulatory and non-regulatory measures in order to achieve efficient and successful results in reducing food waste. Panelists agreed that all stakeholders, from each stage of the food supply chain and including non-governmental organisations, need to be involved in the process and that collective action and a participatory approach is imperative.

When asked to advise on the most effective way to put food waste on the political agenda, Minna Huttunen (FI), explained that bringing in concrete facts and figures can capture politicians' attention. Daniëlle Kretz (NL) stated that putting food waste in a broader context, linking it to broader objectives (such as climate change or sustainable food systems) is also important.

In reply to the question of how to engage households and consumers in the combat against food waste, without inferring blame and while highlighting the value of food, Tine Heyse (Deputy Mayor of Gent) proposed that this can be achieved by reconnecting consumers to the food supply chain and making them understand how food is produced. Daniëlle Kretz (NL) shared experience from campaigns launched in the Netherlands, using consumer-friendly tools and information in order to engage directly with people and convince them to act upon food waste. Angelina Balz (DE) highlighted the importance of consumer engagement by practical information and by promoting a positive narrative for a change of mindset within society, a key aim of Germany's '[*Too good for the bin!*](#)' campaign that was expanded to the communication brand of the National Strategy.

On how to successfully engage businesses in the fight against food waste, Angelina Balz (DE) recommended showcasing best practices and enabling dialogue with other actors of the food supply chain, as well as public authorities. Similarly, Daniëlle Kretz (NL) stressed the importance of making businesses part of the solutions, to actively involve them in the process and to show the ways in which they can benefit from the reduction of food waste.

5. CLOSING ADDRESS: 'MOVING FORWARD TOWARDS SDG 12.3'

In her closing remarks, Anne Bucher, Director-General of DG SANTE, referred to the importance of the Platform's key recommendations for action in driving food waste initiatives at EU, national and local levels. Ms. Bucher also spoke about the importance of the recommendations in the context of elaborating on the '*Farm to Fork Strategy*', as well as shaping the future EU agenda on food waste prevention and ensuring progress towards the global SDG 12.3 Target.