

## **Status report of the Tafel food banks and pantries in Germany**

### **1. Facts and Figures**

- 948 Tafels in Germany in addition to their 2,000+ food pantries
- 60,000 volunteers
- 1.65 million beneficiaries
- 12 regional associations
- 265,000 tons of food saved per year

### **2. The Tafels' helpers**

#### **Motivation and age structure**

The Tafel food banks and pantries are a socio-ecological movement as shown by the motivation of their helpers. They advocate on behalf of people who are financially and socially disadvantaged and at the same time, they are supporting sustainability, climate and environmental protection.

Around 60,000 people are active at the Tafel locations throughout Germany. 90% of them are volunteers, the majority of which is made up of retired people. 63% of the volunteers are over 65 years old. As a result, the Tafel not only benefit from their (professional) experience and the time they donate; they also offer these retirees the opportunity to get involved in their communities, become physically active, meet new people and take part in adult education. One disadvantage, however, is the unbalanced age structure. Only 6% of volunteers are under 30 years old. This discrepancy can often be seen in the Tafels' daily work. Picking up, sorting and dispensing food is a physically demanding job. The Tafels in Germany move an average of 500 kg of food per minute. This weight is literally carried by the volunteers, and most of them are well over 60 years old.

At this age they are at particular risk of contracting COVID-19. The management of the local Tafel branches are aware of the danger to their teams, themselves, and are acting accordingly.

### 3. Save food. Help people.

The Tafel pantries support people with food and are also spaces for interaction

When Tafel locations have to close, 1.65 million beneficiaries do not just lack groceries and everyday items. The Tafel helpers also assist people with finding or by providing childcare, tutoring, afternoon coffee or walks for senior citizens – all of which are offers that can no longer take place under the current conditions. In the meantime, the national head office has received many calls for help directly from Tafel beneficiaries. Because kindergartens and schools have been closed, more household members are in need of additional food.

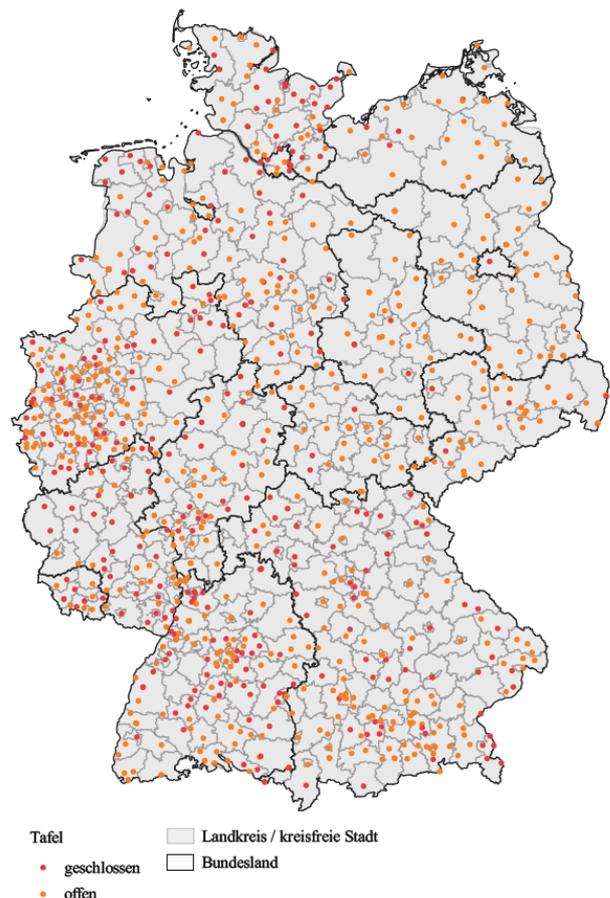
We are also concerned that more people will be affected by loneliness. 20% of the people who come to the Tafel regularly are senior citizens. For many of them, the local table is also a place where meet other people. In this crisis situation it is becoming increasingly clear that the Tafels' services are critical for people in need, not just an additional offer.

### 4. Tafel closings

How many? Until when? Why?

More than 400 Tafel branches are currently closed in Germany. The first ones closed on March 10th. Most hope to be able to open again after Easter. By far the most have justified the closure as a precautionary measure for volunteers and customers. This has to do in particular with the above-mentioned risk group among the volunteers. So far, only two Tafel closures can be attributed to suspected infections. For many Tafels, the lack of helpers was the reason for suspending operations, as well as the lack of food donations due to panic stockpiling by customers at grocery stores.

Offene und geschlossene Tafeln in Deutschland (Stand 22.03.2020)



## **5. The Tafels are still open** Safety measures during the pandemic

Over half of the Tafel branches are still open. The helpers are continuing their vital work under difficult conditions. There are already many creative solutions. Additional offers such as homework tutoring, cooking courses or activities for senior citizens have been canceled. There is now a limit on the opening hours per week and the number of customers at any given time. Further measures have now been implemented since the beginning of social/physical distancing measures and bans on going out.

- Delivery services
  - o With Tafel vehicles
  - o With supporters' vehicles
  - o With cargo bikes
- Limits on the number of beneficiaries in spaces where food is being distributed
  - o Distribution to individuals
  - o Demarcation of the safe distance between people waiting in lines
- Distribution of goods outdoors
  - o Distribution of pre-packed bags of groceries
  - o Setting up refrigerators outside to cool perishable goods
  - o Distribution directly out of the vehicles
- Pre-Packed bags or boxes or grocery items
- Mobile Tafel (e.g. in central locations in a city)
  - o Tent with isolated space
- Acquisition of additional/new helpers
- Acquisition of new donors
  - o Hotels, Restaurants etc. that have closed
  - o Festivals
  - o Support by the municipalities
- Cooperation with other organizations
  - o helpers supporting from youth groups and food saving initiatives
  - o Diakonie, Workers' Samaritan Foundation or the Federal Agency for Technical Relief assist with the distribution, deliver and compliance with security measures.
  - o Education of new volunteers about hygiene and safety measures by partners e.g. Doctors without Borders
- Education of the helpers and beneficiaries about hygiene and protective measures

- Informational material
  - o Tafel helpers and beneficiaries are informed about general measures of precaution (multilingual)
  - o Guidelines on physical distancing (multilingual)
  - o Explanatory pictograms

Even the Tafel locations that have suspended operations are often still continuing to work in some other ways. They are collecting and storing groceries from supermarkets so that they have enough to distribute when they reopen. Other Tafels are helping neighboring branches that are still open rather than storing food for later.

**Tafel locations in big cities**

State	Number of Tafels in large cities	closed	percent
<b>Baden-Württemberg</b>	10	6	60.0
<b>Bayern</b>	8	3	37.5
<b>Berlin</b>	1		0.0
<b>Brandenburg</b>	2		0.0
<b>Bremen</b>	2		0.0
<b>Hamburg</b>	4	1	25.0
<b>Hessen</b>	5	1	20.0
<b>Mecklenburg-Vorpommern</b>	1		0.0
<b>Niedersachsen</b>	8	3	37.5
<b>Nordrhein-Westfalen</b>	30	6	20.0
<b>Rheinland-Pfalz</b>	4	1	25.0
<b>Saarland</b>	1	1	100.0
<b>Sachsen</b>	3	1	33.3
<b>Sachsen-Anhalt</b>	2	1	50.0
<b>Schleswig-Holstein</b>	2	2	100.0
<b>Thüringen</b>	2		0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30.6</b>

Of the 85 Tafel branches in large cities, 59 are still open, around 70%. They have fundamentally changed their operations but are now able to ensure that a large number of Tafel beneficiaries in Germany continue to receive support. Nearly 500,000 people still receive regular support from just these Tafel branches alone. They are finding various ways to deal with the corona crisis.

**Example: Leipziger Tafel e.V.**

The Tafel in Leipzig adapted its hygiene requirements and formulated restrictions regarding access to the rooms. By doing so, they are able to guarantee basic emergency aid. In exceptional cases, the Tafel is able to organize a home delivery.

**6. Tafel closures by region**  
East/West comparison

State	Total branches	Closed branches	Open branches	Percentage closed
<b>Baden-Württemberg</b>	146	77	69	<b>52.7</b>
<b>Bayern</b>	165	65	100	39.4
<b>Berlin</b>	1	0	1	0.0
<b>Brandenburg</b>	43	1	42	2.3
<b>Bremen</b>	1	0	1	0.0
<b>Hamburg</b>	4	1	3	25.0
<b>Hessen</b>	57	46	11	<b>80.7</b>
<b>Mecklenburg-Vorpommern</b>	29	4	25	13.8
<b>Niedersachsen</b>	104	46	58	44.2
<b>Nordrhein-Westfalen</b>	169	59	110	34.9
<b>Rheinland-Pfalz</b>	54	34	20	<b>63.0</b>
<b>Saarland</b>	11	7	4	<b>63.6</b>
<b>Sachsen</b>	42	13	29	31.0
<b>Sachsen-Anhalt</b>	33	6	27	18.2
<b>Schleswig-Holstein</b>	57	37	20	<b>64.9</b>
<b>Thüringen</b>	32	4	28	12.5
<b>total</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>42.2</b>

*As of 23 March 2019, 15:00*

Most of the Tafel branches are located in the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, the states in which the number of COVID-19 infections are highest. Accordingly, many Tafels have taken precautionary measures there and suspended operations.

However, it turns out that the Tafel closures do not correlate with the spread of the virus. Rather, it appears that where the poverty rate is particularly high, many Tafel remain open.

While over half of the Tafels have closed in Hesse (80.7%), Schleswig-Holstein (64.9%), Rhineland-Palatinate (63%), Saarland (63.6%) and Baden-Württemberg (52.7%), the picture is different in the areas with a high poverty rate (according to the 2019 poverty report by the Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband). In the states of Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, more

than 80% of the Tafels are still open. Saxony is an exception in the east, where 31% of the Tafels are closed.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, the area of Germany with the highest poverty rate, well over half of the Tafel branches are still open despite the spread of the virus.

363 of the 548 Tafels that are still open are located in eastern Germany. This means that 66% of the Tafels which are still operating during this crisis are in regions where it was already difficult to find volunteers.

While there are exit and contact restrictions in the federal states, further panel closures can be assumed. On the one hand, panels protect their helpers and customers, and on the other hand they help to prevent the virus from spreading further.

More closures can be expected while the federal states continue to issue ordinances restricting personal contact and the freedom of movement. Closures protect volunteers and also keep the virus from spreading.

Karte 2: Armutsquoten 2018 für Landesteile

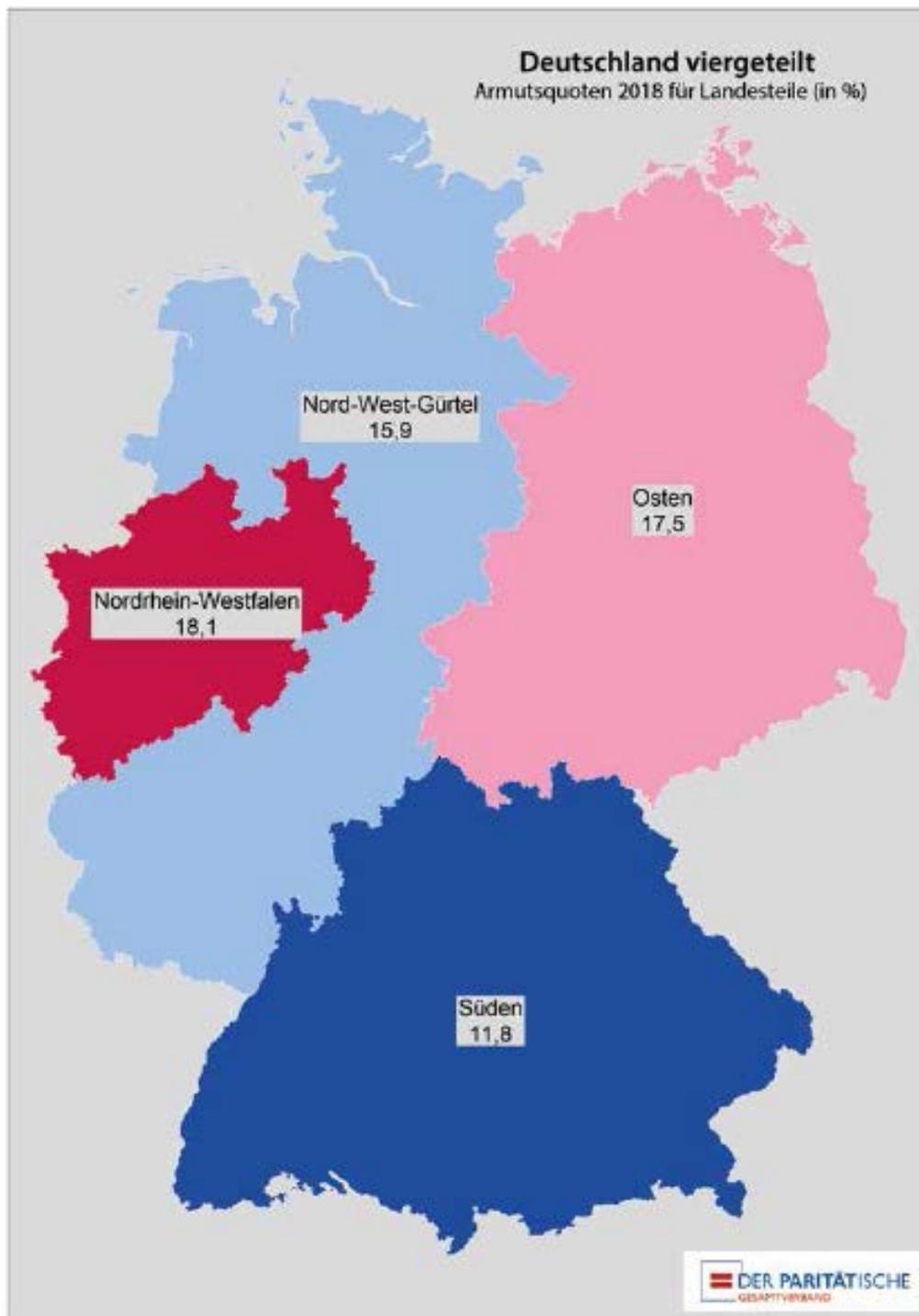


Figure 1 Poverty rates by region

## **7. Challenges to the work of the Tafel by the corona pandemic** **Tafel operations with reduced or no contact**

The leadership at the Tafel is supporting the transition from normal operations to low- or no-contact. The regular work of the Tafel was designed to ensure as much personal contact as possible. The drivers drove to the markets and received the sorted goods from the market employees. They brought them to the Tafel premises, where they were sorted and cleaned by several Tafel volunteers. During the delivery, the customers waited together in front of the Tafel or in waiting rooms until it was their turn, and the handing out of groceries itself was usually conducted in such a way that the volunteers accompanied the Tafel beneficiaries through the Tafel's shop. The Tafel as a space to interact naturally led to close contact. For many volunteers and for many beneficiaries, this was an additional reason to visit.

The low- and no-contact work at the Tafel must be designed to largely or completely avoid contact between the helpers and beneficiaries and among themselves. This means not only an organizational change in handing out the food, but also a mental change in the people who meet at the Tafel.

### **Challenges of the reducing contact at the Tafel**

- Closure of food pantries
- Older volunteers no longer coming
- No goods being donated
- New, unusual donor requests (e.g. hotels or restaurants)
- Lack of hygiene and disinfection products
- Organization, planning of the new distribution modes
- Coordination of volunteers
- Informing people interested in volunteering
- Passing on information to the Tafel beneficiaries
- Feedback and information to interested parties, sponsors, potential supporters, press, politicians
- Compliance with physical distancing and restrictions on movement
- Protection of Tafel helpers
- Protection of the Tafel beneficiaries
  - o Information for people who do not speak German
- Compliance with hygiene and food safety regulations
  - o Training new helpers

**Example: Berliner Tafel e.V.**

Out of 45 food pantries throughout the city operated by the Berlin Tafel food bank, only 4 are currently open to pass out groceries to people on site. The Berliner Tafel food bank has taken over the central coordination for all 45 pantries. It not only picks up donations from the usual supermarkets, but also from the stores' branches that are normally handled by the 45 food pantries directly. The Berlin Tafel delivers the collected goods to all charitable organizations in Berlin that are still open. The volunteers are currently also planning to deliver to 50,000 Tafel beneficiaries in Berlin. The coordination of vehicles, helpers and tour plans takes a lot of time.

An enormous organizational effort is necessary for this transition. The Berliner Tafel needs the addresses of 50,000 individuals, which must be saved, sorted and transferred to route plans.

A completely new system in volunteer management is also required. While helpers previously turned to one of the 45 pantries in the Berlin districts to help collect, sort or pass out the food, they now have to be recorded centrally by the Berliner Tafel team. This means that contact details, possible operating times, areas of activity must be recorded. It must be possible to show whether the people have a driving license, whether they want to support with the cargo bike, whether they have registered privately or through their employer as a supporting company.

At the same time, a service telephone must be manned at all times to inform beneficiaries, keep new recruits interested and to motivate existing volunteers. In addition, a large institution like the Berliner Tafel receives press and media inquiries in times of crisis, which must be answered quickly to remain relevant.

This logistical and organizational effort cannot be achieved by volunteers alone. In this area, the Tafel urgently need financial resources for full-time staff.

Once everything is planned, volunteers are divided and routes are assigned for the vehicles, costs will mount for gasoline, packaging, inspection and repair of vehicles. When planning volunteers, the applicable restrictions on physical distancing and must be observed so that younger helpers do not infect each other.

**Challenges to the no-contact Tafel work**

- Familiarization with digital instruments
- Building up an offer
- Identification of interested helpers
- Training of the helpers and awareness raising

- lack of technical equipment
- Establishment of webinars, telephone numbers, video conferences
- Promotion and dissemination of information about new offers to beneficiaries
- Research of other existing services for Tafel beneficiaries

## 8. Short-term measures

The more than 940 Tafel branches in Germany differed from one another. Depending on the region, the size, the volunteers, the number of food donations: the local Tafel have very different needs.

### a) Support during Tafel closures

In the event of Tafel closures, it is imperative that the operational and emergency costs be covered.

- **Covering the rent**  
Most of the Tafels have spaces that are financed exclusively from donations. In a best case scenario, the building houses their storage facilities, a space for distributing groceries, a waiting room, offices, a break room for volunteers and parking spaces for the vehicles. The required space varies depending on the size of the Tafel.
- **Covering the bills**  
In order to comply with the hygiene standards and the requirements for food safety when handling food, there are high costs due to water and electricity caused by cleaning, storage and cooling. A reimbursement of costs or benefits from the local public utility company could help many Tafels to quickly resume operations once they are able to reopen.
- **Acquisition / maintenance costs of vehicles**  
Counted together, the fleet all of the Tafels in Germany consists of over 2,000 vehicles. This includes vans with cooling and freezing functions. Gradually the first Tafels are also buying electric vehicles. Others are working on a small scale with cargo bicycles. Despite closures, insurance and possibly maintenance costs are accruing.
- **Assuming costs for technical devices**  
The technical equipment of many small Tafels is far from sufficient to offer contactless Tafel work via telephone or video conferences. This requires laptops, smartphones, a mobile phone and Internet contracts.

b) Support for Tafel that remain open

The Tafelst hat do not suspend operations during the corona pandemic must modify their operations to include new measures e.g. delivery services or packing ready-to-go bags that are placed in the hall for customers to pick up.

- **Covering gasoline costs**

The changeover from regular Tafel operations to low-contact delivery services comes with much higher fuel costs. Instead of just driving to the local supermarkets, the Tafel beneficiaries can get groceries delivered to their home..

- **Covering cost of equipment, repairs and maintenance of the vehicles**

Vehicles that are now being used more often need to be repaired more often. Furthermore, some vehicles will have to be equipped, for example with belts and bars, to ensure safe loading. Cooling is required for other vehicles in order to be able to transport refrigerated goods to customers.

- **Packaging Materials**

To set up delivery services, the food must be individually packaged for all customers. Cardboard boxes and other packaging - if possible made from sustainable materials - are required for this.

- **Purchase of cargo bikes**

In order to work in an environmentally friendly manner and to inspire people without a driver's license to help with the delivery services, the Tafel can buy cargo bikes.

- **Covering the cost of bike equipment**

In order to ensure the safety of the helpers who implement the delivery service with bicycles, helmets, bike locks and other gear must be procured.

- **Equipment for marking off areas for physical distancing**

For the delivery of grocery bags or boxes to individuals inside or on the Tafel premises, the secure distance of at least 1.5 m between people must be ensured. The Tafel need barrier tapes or pylons for this.

- **Purchasing route planning software**

This can prevent unnecessary journeys when planning the delivery of groceries to customers at home

- **Digital training for new helpers**

Hygiene training is mandatory for all Tafel volunteers. Since many new volunteers currently want to support the Tafel, they all have to be trained and this can be done through digital webinars.

- **Payment of security personnel**

In order to implement and enforce the distance regulations when dispensing food, it could be prudent to employ security personnel. It would be very

beneficial if the security staff are sensitized to the topics of the Tafel and can also communicate with customers who might not be able to speak German.

- **Costs of informational material**

Printing, distributing and translating information for Tafel beneficiaries, the local public or for donors can be more expensive than the local Tafel can afford on their own.

**9. Medium-term measures for the reopening of Tafel branches**

a) **Continued development of volunteer management**

- **Covering the personnel costs for volunteer coordination**

Due to the new and unfamiliar situation after a closure, the Tafels will no longer be able to reopen without full-time support staff in particular due to the high volume of inquiries from people interested in helping.

- **Purchasing Software for volunteer management**

- o The many additional helpers who are currently willing to help must be managed, coordinated and informed. This requires digital solutions.
- o Training of Tafel managers and employees on the implementation of new models of Tafel work

b) **Local logistics**

- **Provision of digital software for route planning**

It can be assumed that delivery services will continue to have to be offered in the medium-term before reopening. It is also needed to plan and coordinate these professionally, as well as to ensure collection from grocery stores.

c) **Association law**

- **Training of Tafel staff to adhere to association law in times of crisis**

Even in times of crisis, an association must inform its members, the board must remain capable of acting and the bookkeeping must be properly managed. This requires training for the staff and volunteers.

- **Provision of communication tools**

A digital exchange must be possible among the active people at a Tafel, as well as with the neighboring Tafels in order to pass on goods or information.

**8) Development and expansion of distribution centers for the logistics of the Tafels' work**

The Tafel network saves 265,000 tons of food annually, mainly from the local grocery stores, bakeries and butchers. Manufacturers only make up a small proportion of food donors. The acquisition of donations from the manufacturing sector is, however, highly desired by both sides. The quantities of goods donated by manufacturers and producers however are challenging. Most of the regional Tafel associations and food

banks are currently not able to accept large quantities (multiple truckloads). For this reason, Tafel Deutschland and the 12 regional associations have been requesting financial support for the establishment and expansion of distribution centers in the federal states for several years.

The establishment of regional logistics centers at different locations enables a star-shaped distribution of the goods. Large quantities of mostly long-lasting foods can then be delivered to these logistics centers by manufacturers, stored temporarily and picked up from the Tafel branches as required. In particular, the rural Tafel branches (and their customers) will have easier access to food donations.

Overall, this would be an enormous increase in saved food because food waste in the manufacturing sector accounts for 18% of food waste in Germany. The development and expansion of the regional Tafel logistics will also largely relate to the expansion of the cooling capacities in the Tafel warehouses. The purchase of frozen and chilled goods will increase significantly.

### Concrete measures

Covering costs for:

- Personnel in the countries to coordinate national logistics
  - o Office Equipment
- Rent of storage space and operating costs
  - o In particular electricity for cooling & freezing
- Repairs and maintenance costs
- Vehicles and refrigerated vehicles
- Forklifts
- Cold rooms & freezers
- Freight forwarding budget
- Logistics software for the distribution centers

## 10. Development and support of regional associations

The 12 Tafel regional associations are an important interface for communication with the local Tafel branches. They are responsible for member support and advice, for press and public relations, state logistics, fundraising and advocacy. However, they are currently only working on a voluntary basis. Professional development in this regard should begin as quickly as possible. The regional Tafel associations need support in the form of means acquisition, know-how and organizational development. In order to tackle these challenges independently in the future, professionalization and full-time positions are necessary.

To support the identified regional associations, full-time regional coordinators are to be employed who support the voluntary board in the federal states, carry out panel visits and determine the needs of the panels in the country.

#### Concrete actions

- Personnel costs for regional coordinators
- Personnel costs for employees in the regional associations' offices
- Covering / reimbursement of rental costs or the provision of suitable premises for an office of the regional association
- Covering / reimbursement of additional costs
- Promotion of specific educational offers for Tafel volunteers and staff according to regional needs

### 11. Outlook after the crisis

#### Assumptions of the umbrella organization

Due to the difficult economic situation that many companies are will be facing in the coming months, we presume there will be many layoffs and short-time contracts. There will be more people who have very little money at their disposal. In order for the reduced income or social benefits to last until the end of the month, many of these people will go to the Tafel. Some of the Tafel branches are already reporting an increase in new registrations of beneficiaries.

Furthermore, we presume that older helpers will no longer return to their voluntary work at the Tafels around the country. Maybe because the virus is still a danger to them, but also perhaps due to the fact that they cannot muster the strength after such a long at home.

A lack of food donations can still be assumed, since the population is to be supplied first and donations are not the focus. The same applies to monetary donations: companies that have had to lay off employees will hardly be able to continue to donate money to the Tafel. This is a major problem for the Tafels, which are almost exclusively financed by donations.

The Tafel branches will urgently need full-time support from social workers, interpreters and volunteer coordinators.

The many young and new helpers who are currently approaching the Tafel branches and offering their support are a good indicator. To what extent they can still devote time once schools, universities and employers reopen regularly is questionable.