



European Food Banks: concrete answers for the new food system

Position paper on the Farm to Fork Strategy

Brussels, 15 October 2020

In the European Union approximately 88 million tons of food are lost or wasted annually with associated costs estimated at 143 billion EUR¹. At the same time, around 110 million people were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2018, and 33 million people were not able to afford a quality meal every second day². Food redistribution to people in need is the best destination when surplus food occurs, because it ensures the highest value use of edible food resources³. Food redistribution is a beneficial solution to addressing food insecurity, to managing surplus food as well as to preventing food loss and waste at source and to shifting from a linear to a circular economy.

When considering the impact of food waste in Europe, it is essential to emphasize the importance to quantify it. A harmonized and reliable methodology to measure food waste in the EU is necessary to 'Target – Measure – Act' in order to assess the scale of the phenomenon, its origins, and trends over time. In fact, at European level the [Directive 2008/98/EC](#) lays down an obligation for Member States to establish food waste prevention programmes and to monitor and assess the implementation using a common methodology. This methodology is defined in the [Commission Delegated Decision \(EU\) 2019/1597](#) of 3 May 2019 supplementing Directive 2008/98/EC, which specifies that Member States shall measure the amount of food waste for a given stage of the food supply chain at least once every four years. Addressing the measurement of food waste in the new [Farm to Fork Strategy](#), is an important step towards a better understanding of the problem and implementing a coherent monitoring and reporting as well as effective exchange of good practices across the EU to achieve the goals.

In order to support the achievement of the SDG Target 12.3 on food loss and waste and maximize the contribution of all actors, as declared in the [2015 Circular Economy Action Plan](#), in 2016 the European Commission established the [EU Platform on Food Losses and Food](#)

¹ FUSIONS, Estimates of European food waste levels, March 2016

² Eurostat, 2018

³ European Commission, [EU guidelines on food donation \(2017/C 361/01\)](#), 16 October 2017



[Waste](#), a multi-stakeholder platform. In this context and as part of the 2015 Circular Economy Action Plan, the European Commission adopted the [EU guidelines on food donation](#) in 2017. These guidelines aim to facilitate the recovery and redistribution of safe and edible surplus food for human consumption. Developed in consultation with the members of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, the EU guidelines on food donation seek to facilitate compliance of providers and recipients of surplus food with relevant requirements laid down in the EU regulatory framework and promote common interpretation by regulatory authorities in the EU Member States of the EU rules applying to the redistribution of surplus food⁴. Moreover, it is also worth recalling that [Directive 851/2018/EC](#) amending the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) requires Member States to reduce food waste at each stage of the food supply chain and monitor and report annually on food waste levels. The latter has been facilitated through the development of a common EU measurement methodology, with results of the first EU-wide reporting of food waste levels expected in 2022. In particular, the Directive 851/2018/EC calls on Member States to prepare national food waste prevention programmes, encourage food donation and other redistribution for human consumption, thus prioritizing human use over animal feed, as well as the re-processing into non-food products as measures aiming at preventing waste generation and provide incentives for the application of the waste hierarchy, such as the facilitation of food donation.

Finally, on 12 December 2019, the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste published the [“Key recommendations for action of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste”](#) developed through a wide consultation process involving all of its members. They address actions required at each stage of the food supply chain, including food redistribution, and involving all key players from the public and private sectors.

Considering the impact that food waste has in Europe and the relevant results achieved so far, mainly thanks to the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, the new Farm to Fork Strategy should build on existing achievements and focus on this topic when considering the reduction of food loss and waste to better contribute to achievements of the SDG 12.3. The primary focus of the agri-food supply chain is to drive out inefficiencies and prevent food waste

⁴ European Commission, [EU guidelines on food donation \(2017/C 361/01\)](#), 16 October 2017



from occurring in the first place in order to invigorate the effectiveness of food business operators.

COVID-19 has placed the global economy under tremendous strain, and the agri-food supply chain has been affected with disruptions in food supply, a reorganization of food manufacturing and distribution, as well as new food habits of consumers shifting to production and consumption back into homes. At the same time, it is worth recalling that according to the UN, currently 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion that was expected to increase to 60% by 2050⁵. However, the pandemic is disrupting urban food systems worldwide and posing a number of unexpected challenges for public authorities, food business operators, cities and also non-profit organizations such as FEBA network and their affiliated partner charities that deal with rapid changes in food availability, accessibility, and affordability – especially for disadvantaged people. Measures to contain COVID-19, such as lockdowns or social distancing, disproportionately affect disadvantaged people compromising their capacity to access food and leading to food insecurity and deficient nutrition⁶. At the same time, the paradox of the scarcity in the abundance emerges once again in the current economic and social crisis. The level of surplus food generated is extremely high from some stages of the food supply chain such as food service and HoReCa companies, which were forced to closure during the lockdowns or to limit their opening hours⁷. At the same time this is also impacted by emerging trends such as new ways of living and working outside the city, in response to the pandemic⁸, especially of people at higher income levels.

This is where the members of the European Food Banks Federation come in: since the beginning of the pandemic they have proven to be reliable partners, not only by supporting charities helping those in need, but first of all by providing an efficient and rapid solution to the agri-food supply chain dealing with suddenly available surplus food. In a survey conducted among the FEBA network in September 2020, European Food Banks are managing twice the

⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050, says UN](#), 16 May 2018

⁶ FAO, [Urban food systems and Covid-19: The role of cities and local governments in responding to the emergency](#), 9 April 2020

⁷ FEBA, [Present challenges and urgent needs of European Food Banks due to COVID-19](#), April 2020

⁸ United Nations, [Policy brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World](#), July 2020



amounts of food and simultaneously record an increased food demand of around 30%⁹. Furthermore, most of the respondents declared that their affiliated charities are experiencing a sharp increase in the number of final beneficiaries. This is a new kind of poverty: almost 90% of the respondents explained the increase was due to job losses due to COVID-19. More than 60% declared that the beneficiaries are families with children who relied mainly on school meals and elderly people living alone¹⁰. The social and economic consequences of COVID-19 are emerging, and these findings are a clear warning sign. As emphasized by the Norwegian Nobel Committee when awarding the Nobel Peace Prize 2020 to World Food Programme (WFP) “providing assistance to increase food security not only prevents hunger, but can also help to improve prospects for stability and peace”¹¹ as well as strengthen social cohesion in our communities.

At the heart of the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy aims to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly. The [European Food Banks Federation](#) welcomes the Farm to Fork Strategy because, especially in light of the crisis generated by COVID-19, it will allow us to address the important challenges faced by our food systems from production to consumption, including food redistribution and will enable progress toward the SDGs of the Agenda 2030.

Food waste is one of the biggest and most profound challenges of our time. We firmly believe that today the Farm to Fork Strategy is an opportunity to rethink the agri-food supply chain in the light of the disruptions caused by COVID-19 and move towards a sustainable food system. By doing so, we can achieve the goal to prevent food waste while reducing emissions and environmental impact, creating business opportunities and alleviating food insecurity in Europe. This transition should be led by a comprehensive and structured legislative framework, together with a multi-stakeholder collaboration and based on measurement and factual best practices. In this context, the European Food Banks Federation welcomes the aim to integrate food loss and waste prevention in all other relevant EU policies¹². These are all

⁹ FEBA, [European Food Banks today : commitment, creativity, and openness to change](#), September 2020

¹⁰ FEBA, [European Food Banks today : commitment, creativity, and openness to change](#), September 2020

¹¹ [The Nobel Peace Prize for 2020. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2020](#), 9 October 2020

¹² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, [COM/2020/381](#), p. 14



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.

The European Food Banks Federation, together with its membership, wants to renew its commitment to prevent food waste and reduce food insecurity. 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 for a more sustainable, healthier, and equitable food system for all.

About FEBA

The European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) is a European umbrella non-profit organization and works in collaboration with 24 Members and 5 Associate Members in European countries. For more than 30 years, FEBA mission has consisted in representing its membership at European and international level, supporting and strengthening food banks in Europe by providing training, sharing best practice and knowledge, and developing partnerships, and fostering the creation of new Food Banks. FEBA brings together 430 Food Banks and branches which are committed to fight against food waste and to feed the most deprived. Our members provide 4.2 million meals each day to 9.5 million most deprived people through 45,283 charitable organizations thanks to the professionalism of 32,280 co-workers (84% volunteers). In addition to surplus food from the food supply chain, FEBA members also redistribute food from the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) and the Fruits and Vegetables withdrawal scheme, as well as from individual donations.

