

European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform



European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP) Coordination Group

Leadership Group on
Food Waste

Orientation paper

Lead: Copa-Cogeca

Participants: CSCP, ENEA, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

June 2020

General Outline

Food production represents a vital sector as it allows answering one of the most basic human needs. Feeding the world's population is a challenging exercise and the EU represents one of the main actors involved in this challenge, as it is the largest global exporter and importer of agri-food products (€138 billion of exports and €137 billion of imports in 2017)¹. However, food production is extremely demanding in resources. Therefore, we should always be looking for all the ways that would allow us to reduce to a minimum the environmental impact while maintaining food security. Food waste is the perfect example of one of the ways by which we can reduce the impact of food production.

Food waste represents indeed a major economic and environmental issue in Europe and worldwide. In the EU, between 88 and 140 million tons of food waste are generated each year for a cost estimated at 143 billion euros²³. Furthermore, food waste generates around 8% of greenhouse emissions while 55 million EU citizens cannot afford a quality meal every other day⁴. Therefore, both for the environment and the people suffering from malnutrition, we should explore all the possibilities to reduce food waste and to create a food production and consumption maximising the benefits of the food produced.

Food losses and food waste take place at all the stages of the food chain, from the primary production level to the consumers level, while also including the processing, the retailing and the food services levels. This means that in order to reduce food waste efficiently, all actors have to be involved, including consumers who represent the major source of food waste as they generate more than 53% of it⁵.

Adopting the circular economy approach to food waste would probably be the best way to solve this issue. For decades, many initiatives have been put in place to avoid food waste, however, most of them focus on food redistribution. Food donation should always be encouraged and will always remain an

essential contributor to food waste reduction, however, we need to explore new ways of avoiding food waste that would offer economic opportunities. In order to succeed, those new paths towards food waste reduction should involve all actors and feature both the environmental benefits and its economic value. Furthermore, in order to be as efficient as possible in our work to tackle food waste, we should avoid working in silos and try to create synergies between the different initiatives and organisations involved in food waste reduction. In light of this, we would like to involve the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste in our work on food waste and coordinate our efforts with them to achieve the highest possible impact.

Possible Stakeholders

- Consumers associations
- Farmers and agricultural cooperatives
- Food manufacturers
- Feed producers
- Organic waste managers
- Waste managers and Municipalities
- Food retailers
- Policy makers
- Research and innovation representatives

All those actors either produce food waste or/and could potentially recycle it into valuable outputs. It is important to note that there are two main ways to reduce food waste, either by preventing it or by recycling/reusing/finding new purposes for it. The following point presents some of the main possibilities to reduce food waste at each stage of the food chain both through prevention or recycling. However, this is not an exhaustive list.

Opportunities for food waste reduction along the food chain

- Primary production:
 - Prevention:
 - Strengthen the position of food

¹ Bas-Defossez F, Allen B, Weigelt J, Marechal A, Meredith S and Lorant A, (2018), Feeding Europe: Agriculture, and sustainable food systems, Policy Paper produced for the IEEP Think2030 conference, Brussels.

² FAO (2011). Global food losses and food waste – Extent, causes and prevention. Retrieved on <http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/mb060e/mb060e.pdf>

³ FUSIONS (2016), *Estimates of European food waste levels*. Consulted on <http://www.eu-fusions.org/phocadownload/Publications/Estimates%20of%20European%20food%20waste%20levels.pdf>

⁴

⁵ FUSIONS (2016), *Estimates of European food waste levels*. Consulted on <http://www.eu-fusions.org/phocadownload/Publications/Estimates%20of%20European%20food%20waste%20levels.pdf>

producers in the supply chain in order to avoid last minute order cancellations by retailers or cosmetic out-grading which can lead to food waste.

- Direct sales, they allow to more easily adapt the production to the demand.
 - Improve farmers access to information on demand in order to better adapt food production to demand.
 - Application of low-impact agricultural production models to reduce losses due to biotic agents.
 - Defragmentation of agri-feed and food chains.
 - Setting of marketing standards allowing the marketisation of non-good looking fruits and vegetables.
 - Create new sales opportunities for products disregarded by food retailers and processors because of cosmetic concerns.
- Recycling/reuse/new purposes:
 - Use of food losses for the creation of high quality agricultural inputs .
- Processing level:
 - Prevention:
 - Find new ways of food processing maximising the use of the raw materials and reducing food waste to a maximum.
 - Improving storage and conservation techniques to reduce the amount of food wasted due to decay.
 - Provide on-label information to consumers about better food management.
 - Develop novel utilisation options for crops with superior product and process quality.
 - Recycling/reuse/new purposes:
 - Find new processes to use some food parts that were previously disregarded, preferably for food consumption and if not possible, for other uses.
 - Find new processes to use the non-edible parts of food that were previously thrown away.
- Retail level:
 - Prevention:
 - Better evaluate the demand for food products and share this data with the other actors of the food chain to adapt
- the orders passed with the producers and consequently the production levels. Market the products that do not respect cosmetic standards and make them attractive for the consumers.
- Collaborate with food donation charities.
 - Recycling/reuse/new purposes:
 - Create in-house reprocessing of food products close to the end of their shelf life.
- Waste managers and municipalities:
 - Prevention:
 - Ensure a better sorting of the different type of waste so they don't cross-contaminate.
 - Recycling/reuse/new purposes:
 - Promote the recycling and reuse of food waste materials.
- Consumers level:
 - Prevention:
 - Learn how to shop and cook in a sustainable way.
 - Sort its waste in the best way possible to avoid cross contamination between food waste and other wastes.
 - Food procurement: frequent purchase at the local market instead of a weekly one at the supermarket to better tailor food purchase to food consumption.
 - Recycling/reuse/new purposes:
 - Learn on how to use their own leftovers.
- Policy-makers and institutions level:
 - Prevention:
 - Create guidelines for public procurement which limit food waste (adapt the portions, favour highly available products,...).
 - Create awareness-raising and education campaigns to sensitise consumers to the issue of food waste (i.e. encourage to shop by exceeding purely aesthetic criteria in favour of food nutritional and health values).
 - Integrate food waste in education programmes in primary and secondary schools.
 - Adopt new legislations on date-marking.
 - Recycling/reuse/new purposes:
 - Open the possibility through the adoption of new legislations to recycle human food left-overs to produce animal

feed (this the case in Japan).

- Incentivise the creation of new companies or new department of already existing companies dedicated to the recycling of food waste through subsidies and tax incentives.
 - Improve food waste monitoring and knowledge sharing.
 - Integrate food waste in professional training both in public and private sectors.
 - Invest in research on the possible commercial uses of food waste.
- Research and innovation representatives:
 - Prevention:
 - Conduct research on food waste prevention at all the stages of the food chain.
 - Recycling/reuse/new purposes:
 - Conduct research programmes on new ways to recycle and reuse food waste.