

Circular economy in favour of the most deprived: Addressing food waste through food redistribution

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About FEBA

The European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA) is a European umbrella non-profit organization which brings together 321 food banks and branches in 23 member countries in Europe. For more than 30 years, FEBA's mission has been to contribute to reducing hunger and malnutrition, through the fight against food waste and the call for solidarity.

FEBA member food banks are primarily operated by experienced volunteers who recover edible surplus food at any stage of the food supply chain (manufacturing plants, distribution platforms, supermarkets, caterers, etc.) and redistribute it to partner charitable organisations taking care of people in need. In addition, FEBA food banks also distribute food originating from the EU programs Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and Fruits and Vegetables withdrawal, as well as from individual donations.

FEBA's recommendations on the EU Waste Policy review

FEBA welcomes the focus on food waste in the on-going EU Waste policy review in the framework of the Circular Economy Package, which supports the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' target of halving per capita food waste by 2030.

FEBA supports the contribution provided by EU-funded projects such as [EU-FUSIONS](#) and [EU-Saving Food](#) as regards the elaboration of a common EU methodology to measure food waste consistently in cooperation with Member States and stakeholders.

FEBA also supports the creation of the new platform (EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste) involving Member States food safety authorities, food business operators, food banks and charities across the EU in order to help define measures needed to achieve the 12.3 SDG, facilitate inter-sector cooperation, and share best practices and results.

However, FEBA believes that the role of food donation should be enhanced further in the EU legislation, as it prevents food waste while simultaneously alleviating food poverty and social exclusion. FEBA estimates that food banks and the like organizations recover currently a small percentage (less than 10%) of the available edible food which is wasted.

Therefore FEBA recommends to the EU Institutions the following measures in order to increase the amount of surplus food made available for redistribution to vulnerable people rather than being thrown away.

GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recognize the specific role of food banks in the EU waste legislation.

The activity of food banking is spreading across the EU with different types of operating models and entities involved. FEBA member food banks collect, transport, sort, store and distribute large

quantity of products throughout the year to many charitable organisations, which take care of people in need. FEBA member food banks are considered as food business operators, with warehouses, delivery vehicles and professional food handling procedures. By operating in this way, food banks and their partner charities can maximize their impact on the lives of as many vulnerable people as possible.

- 2. Consider taking measures for encouraging the application of the food waste hierarchy** in the EU food waste policy which gives priority to the redistribution for human consumption over animal feeding, biomass production, composting and landfilling.
- 3. Encourage Member States to adopt national legislation with the aim of fostering the recovery of surplus food for charitable purposes while preventing food waste.** In compliance with EU legislation, national laws (for instance, in Italy Law No 166/2016 named "Gadda Law") could represent a fundamental driver to achieve the goal.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON EU WASTE POLICY REVIEW

- 1. Facilitate donation of surplus food that is still edible** but that for logistical or marketing reasons cannot be commercialised by encouraging EU Member States to adopt fiscal/financial measures that have proven to be efficient in certain Member States such as:
 - **Elimination of any remaining taxes (i.e. VAT) on donated food**, in order to make sure that donating surplus food does not cost donors more than throwing it away.
 - **Provision of fiscal incentives** for food business operators that have adopted practices to reduce the disposal of edible food products.
 - **Provision of financial incentives to facilitate the transformation of products** (fruits, vegetables, fish..) into non perishable food and the transport of products from MS where they are in surplus to MS where they are in demand.
 - **Provision of funding to distributing organizations to increase capacity** (infrastructure, IT systems, training and education) and manage operations (logistics, administration) in order to recover and redistribute more surplus food. This would be well spent money if we consider that the value of the surplus food which can be redistributed through food banks is around 10 times higher than the cost of collecting and delivering it to partner charities.
- 2. Recommend to take the following measures on date marking of food**
 - **EU Member States to allow the donation of certain food products after the 'best before' date has expired** as permitted under EU legislation, provided that the required food storage and transport conditions are met.
 - **European Commission to raise awareness among consumers about the 'true' meaning of date marking on food**, i.e. the "best before" and "use by" dates. Both dates are often interpreted by consumers as "good-to-throw-away" date, leading to unnecessary waste of edible food.
 - **European Commission to discourage the use of dual date labelling** (for instance, displaying the "sell by" date, used by retailers for stock rotation, together with the "use by" date) on the same product, as it does not make consumers' decisions about buying and discarding food any easier and as it gives the impression to the beneficiaries of food aid they are consuming expired products whereas the food distributed is perfectly edible.

- 3. Recommend to the European Commission to put in place food donation guidelines in order to clarify the EU rules governing food donation practices.**
- Endorse, when requested, the [food donation guidelines](#) launched by FEBA and EU food trade associations such as FoodDrinkEurope and EuroCommerce, since they provide practical guidance to food manufacturers and retailers to facilitate their food donation practices.

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