Die Tafel Österreich – Press Release, 2026-10-28

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Harvard Makes Policy Recommendations to Sustainably Expand Food Donations in Austria

The "Global Food Donation Policy Atlas" – based on international success stories – calls for simplifications, clarifications, tax incentives, greater collaboration, and more public education

Food waste is a massive global problem. Charitable food distribution is an efficient and cost-effective solution to this issue. What hinders it, and what promotes it? As part of The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas, the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic researched these issues and presented recommendations for policymakers in Austria.

Vienna, October 1, 2026 – For nearly a year, a team of experts from the Food Law and Policy Clinic at Harvard Law School took a close look at Austria: What measures to prevent food waste are already in place? What laws and guidelines promote charitable food donations? What laws and policies hinder donations? And what adjustments would help make progress in this area?

The policy recommendations of the "Global Food Donation Policy Atlas" for Austria are now available. While they attest to the government's good will and interest in reducing food waste, they also point to a lack of "sustainable momentum."

The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas is a collaboration between the Food Law and Policy Clinic at Harvard Law School, The Global FoodBanking Network, and in Europe, the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA). To date in Europe, the Atlas has reported on the food waste policies in Ireland, Poland, Greece, France, and Austria, in addition to many countries in South and Latin America, as well as North America, Africa, and Asia. In total, the Global Food Donation Policy Atlas now includes publications on approximately 30 countries.

The EU Waste Framework Directive as an Opportunity and a Framework

Trevor Findley, Clinical Instructor at the Food Law and Policy Clinic at Harvard Law School noted that "*Austria has already set goals and proposed measures to reduce food waste and promote the distribution of surplus food. Eliminating the value added tax as a barrier to food donations and requiring certain retailers to report the amount of food donated and wasted are positive steps. However, there is still much room for improvement. The EU Waste Framework Directive, with its binding food waste reduction targets*, offers a clear opportunity and a timeline for concrete and coordinated measures. Our recommendations are based on real world experience in other countries and are intended to provide guidance on which changes may have the greatest impact.*"

Ignazio Corrao, Senior Policy Advisor, FEBA (European Food Banks Federation), said, "*We are very proud to bring the Food Donation Policy Atlas to Europe in collaboration with Harvard Law School. The country analyses show just how much environmental and social potential lies in charitable food distribution and how we can better harness this added value in collaboration with policymakers. The various models at the country level also provide an opportunity to identify best-practice examples and explore their positive impacts in real-world settings*."

Since 1999, Die Tafel Österreich has been a leader in charitable food redistribution. Over the past 27 years, it has not only built up extensive expertise in all areas of food rescue along the entire value chain – from farm to table – but has also gained a deep understanding of all the challenges involved. The recommendations from Harvard Law School were therefore eagerly anticipated.

Hurdles, Opportunities, Recommendations
The study examined the following topics: "national laws, guidelines, or strategies on food loss and waste," "food safety for donations," "date labels," "liability protection," "tax barriers" and "tax incentives," "measures to prevent food waste," "government grants and incentives," and "reporting on waste and greenhouse gas " (see table).

First, the good news: No tax-related obstacles were identified in Austria. Harvard also considers Austria to be well-positioned when it comes to date labels. In the other areas, however, there are a number of recommendations – the renowned law school sees a particular need for improvement in the area of liability protection.

Policy recommendations for Austria include, among others:

- The creation of a platform to coordinate all efforts to reduce food waste – including the government, all stakeholders along the value chain, and charitable organizations involved in food redistribution
- The publication of uniform, clear, and user-friendly food safety guidelines
- The clarification of liability issues (including explicit liability protection)
- Tax incentives for donors of goods, including those in the agricultural sector
- The provision of funding to improve food redistribution infrastructure (particularly investments in cold chain infrastructure and other "last mile" logistics solutions)
- The expansion of reporting requirements for food waste, with a particular focus on the interfaces along the value chain

Alexandra Gruber, Managing Director of Die Tafel Österreich, said, "*For nearly three decades, we have been advocating for better conditions for charitable food rescue in Austria. The results of the Harvard analysis won't change everything overnight, but in many respects they reinforce our long-standing demands – specifically regarding liability. And they clearly show that we need policymakers to take steps to make our work more sustainable, because there is still a great deal of room for improvement in charitable food distribution.*"

Following the presentation of the results, the next steps will be taken toward concrete improvements in charitable food distribution – a goal that the federal government has also set out to achieve in its current government program. Now that the results are available, Die Tafel Österreich will intensify its dialogue with all relevant ministries and stakeholder groups. This is because, under the Waste Framework Directive, food waste must be reduced by a mandatory target by 2030; at the same time, the approximately 420,000 people in Austria suffering from severe food insecurity highlight an urgent need for political action.

* By 2030, the EU requires member states to achieve a mandatory 10% reduction in food waste at the production stage and a 30% reduction in retail, institutional catering, and households.

Table: Thematic Areas of the Global Food Donation Policy Atlas and Barometer on the Status of Implementation in Austria

National laws, guidelines, or strategies on food loss and waste	moderate policy
Food safety for donations	moderate policy
Date labeling	strong policy
Liability protection	no policy
Tax incentives	moderate policy
Tax barriers	none
Measures to prevent food waste	limited policy
Government grants and incentives	limited policy
Regulations on reporting emissions, environmental impacts, and food waste	moderate

About Die Tafel Österreich
Since 1999, Die Tafel Österreich has been providing people affected by poverty with rescued food free of charge through charities. This relieves them of one essential worry and allows them to find ways out of their hardship with professional assistance. In 2025 alone, over 1,500 metric tons of rescued food were distributed to more than 85,000 people throughout Austria. The nonprofit organization is primarily funded by donations and relies on monetary, volunteer, and in-kind contributions. For more information, visit tafel-oesterreich.at.

About the project
The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas Europe is a project led by The Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic (FLPC) and The Global FoodBanking Network (GFN), in collaboration with the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA). It examines the legal frameworks and national strategies that support food recovery and donation in countries, comparing them to policies from around the world, and providing up-to-date insights to help countries identify and overcome barriers to preventing food loss and waste.
The Austria report is the latest country analysis in the Atlas -Europe series, following reports on France, Ireland, Poland and Greece.For more information, visit: atlas.foodbanking.org

About the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic
FLPC serves partner organizations and communities by providing guidance on cutting-edge food system legal and policy issues, while engaging law students in the practice of food law and policy. FLPC focuses on increasing access to healthy foods; supporting sustainable food production and food systems; and reducing waste of healthy, wholesome food. For more information, visit www.chlpi.org/FLPC.

About the European Food Banks Federation

The European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) is a nonprofit organisation that brings together more than 350 food banks and branches, with members in 28 countries in Europe. With 40 years of experience in combating food insecurity and preventing food loss and waste, the FEBA network recovers surplus food and redistributes it to those in need. For more information, visit www.eurofoodbank.org.

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