



A multi-stakeholder perspective on food loss and waste reduction strategies

High-level event - Valencia, 3 October 2023

BACKGROUND

Food loss and waste have emerged as significant problems following the publication of a comprehensive report by FAO in 2011. Approximately one-third of all food produced globally, equivalent to 1.3 billion tonnes annually, is lost or wasted. The severity of this issue is heightened by considering the number of people suffering from hunger worldwide.

According to the FAO's Report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023, it is estimated that around 735 million people experienced hunger in 2021, accounting for 9.2% of the global population. The food lost and wasted could potentially feed 1.26 billion hungry people each year.

In this context, cities have a key role to play to tackle food loss and waste reduction in the most effective and quick way possible.

FOOD LOSS - FOOD WASTE

Food loss and food waste are different concepts, but both are part of the problem and both need to be taken into account. According to the [FAO report The State of Food and Agriculture \(2019\)](#), about 14% of the world's food production (valued at USD 400 billion annually) is still lost after it is harvested and before it reaches the shops (food loss), while [UNEP's Food Waste Index report](#) shows that 17% of our food ends up being wasted at retail and by consumers, especially in households (food waste).

ACTIVE PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OF FOOD LOSS AND WASTE

Food loss and waste (FLW) is a pressing challenge in the design of sustainable food systems. FLW has a negative impact on food security and nutrition and contributes significantly to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, environmental pollution, degradation of natural ecosystems and loss of biodiversity. It also represents a waste of resources used in food production.



FLW accounts for approximately 8-10% of annual greenhouse gas emissions ([FAO, 2022](#)). The magnitude of this negative environmental impact at the global level is estimated at approximately 3.3 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year and 250 cubic kilometres of water lost per year.

Furthermore, we must not forget the damage caused by the occupation of land, i.e., the territory occupied by crops that are ultimately wasted. The FAO estimates that this is 1.4 billion hectares, a figure that represents around 30% of the world's agricultural area.

Tackling FLW is a target defined in the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (**SDG target 12.3**). In addition, reducing food loss can produce widespread benefits across all dimensions of the hunger targets by improving food availability, access to food and incomes of smallholder producers (SDG 2) and supporting climate action, underwater life and terrestrial ecosystem life (SDGs 13, 14 and 15, respectively).

EUROPEAN UNION

The EU and EU countries have committed to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 12.3, adopted in September 2015, which **aims to halve global per capita food waste at retail and consumer level by 2030**, and to reduce food losses along food production and supply chains. The European Union, in order to avoid it remaining a voluntary target, has included it in its own EU legislation in order to make it binding. Within the legislation where this objective is included, the new [Directive 2018/851 of 30 May 2018](#) is particularly noteworthy.

The year 2022 was the first year in which food waste figures were provided for all EU Member States, data that will most likely be used as a baseline against which the 50% reductions will be based. These data were published in 2022 but refer to food waste generated during 2020, which presents some issues, as 2020 was a unique year greatly marked by COVID-19 impact on different areas and consumption patterns. On the basis of the figures provided, 56.9 million tonnes of food are wasted per year at EU level, although this value is accompanied by a level of uncertainty of ± 13.7 million tonnes. Despite the efforts being made to "measuring more" and "measuring better", especially at EU level, there is still a lot of work to be done in each of the EU Member States to achieve **more accurate data**.

Regarding the source of food loss and waste, the quantification of European food waste levels ([Eurostat estimate, 2022](#)) reveals that 69% of EU food waste occurs in households, food services and retail sectors, with the production and processing sectors accounting for the remaining 31%.

EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

The pioneer country in the EU to develop specific legislation to combat food waste was **France**. It did so in 2016 with the so-called [Garot law](#), which prohibits the destruction or spoilage of food that is still consumable. It also established that supermarkets larger than 400 m² have to donate their surplus food in good condition to authorised food banks or NGOs for distribution. In 2019, the ban was extended to mass catering, both public and private, and to the agri-food industry. Despite these measures, as the [French Ministry of Ecological Transition reports on its website](#), 10 million tonnes of food are wasted in France every year, with a market value of 16 billion euros.

In the summer of 2021, **Portugal** passed two new laws related to food waste: [Law No. 51/2021](#) of 30 July 2021, which determined the carrying out of a national survey of all actors involved in the food chain on food waste; and [Law No. 62/2021](#) of 19 August 2021, which specified the legal framework for food donations made for social solidarity purposes, as well as setting fines in the case of non-compliance with the donation of food.

In **Italy**, the [law of 19 August 2016, No. 166](#) was published with the aim of recovering and donating food and pharmaceutical products for social solidarity purposes. Since its adoption, the Italian government has put forward several initiatives, in addition to the law, to work with actors involved in the food chain, as reported by the Italian [Ministry of Ecological Transition on its website](#).

In **Germany**, the parliamentary group of the Greens proposed in January 2020 to the German parliament the creation of an anti-waste food law in the form of a motion. Their proposals included donating food to NGOs, or removing the use-by date for food that does not have one. Another initiative to fight food waste promoted by the German federal government was approved in February 2019, through its National Strategy. The aim was to halve per capita food waste in Germany at retail and consumer level and to reduce food losses along the production and supply chains. As a deadline, the German government set 2030, as confirmed by the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

SPAIN

The [Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food publishes on its website](#) provides a wealth of information and regulations related to food loss and food waste.

According to the data, in 2021, Spanish households threw away a total of 1,245.88 million kilos of food. A per capita waste of 28.21 kg of food per person is calculated.

VALENCIAN COMMUNITY

The [Bon Profit Plan](#) develops a whole line of actions aimed at reducing FLW. It focuses special interest on education and the school environment in order to create good habits from childhood. It also includes the participation of all sectors involved in the production, distribution and sale of the entire food chain and establishes for the first time the bases of an indicative mapping and seeks a standardised methodology for obtaining data and making decisions based on Big Data.

Among the work carried out in the Bon Profit Plan is a study conducted in 2021, the aim of which was to determine the different economic activities with the potential to generate food waste and where they were located, taking as a reference all the links in the agri-food chain. This study identified a total of 32,300 companies with the potential to generate food waste for the entire agri-food chain.

The [ToNoWaste project](#) is a project funded by the Horizon Europe Programme, which aims to reduce and prevent food waste. By assessing the problem from a science-based approach, it aims to improve decision-making in the agri-food chain and promote sustainable solutions.

The project, which started in 2022 and has a duration of four years, is coordinated by the Universitat Jaume I in Castellón, and in Valencia one of the pilots is being developed under the coordination of Las Naves, the innovation agency of the Valencia City Council. Other local partners are Cuinatur, a school catering company in Castellón; Mercavalencia and the Federation of Agri-food Cooperatives of the CV, so that all links in the agri-food chain are reached.

CITY OF VALENCIA

Valencia City Council has approved a number of actions aimed at combating FLW. [Mercavalencia](#), the city's largest food supply market, is developing projects in different fields. Actions such as the Aprofita València programme, or projects with the Department of Pure and

Applied Mathematics of the Polytechnic University of Valencia for big data analysis and decision-making will help to establish a suitable protocol.

On the other hand, the [Palau de Congressos](#) is developing a project with the Faculty of Pharmacy of the University of Valencia and with the Valencian Institute for Agrarian Research (IVIA) to monitor data and establish lines of action based on the fight against food waste at events and congresses. The aim of this project is to share data and conclusions in all areas dedicated to this type of activity.

All these initiatives will be especially highlighted in the upcoming months, as Valencia is **European Green Capital 2024**. This distinction, awarded by the European Commission, recognizes the city's efforts to improve the environment and the quality of life of its residents.

THE EVENT

The International Food Loss and Waste Awareness Day, on September 29th, highlights a challenge that requires knowledge and the involvement of various fields of expertise and actors. In line with this, the **Valencia World Sustainable Urban Food Centre (CEMAS), in collaboration with the European Food Information Council (EUFIC)**, will organize a high-level **event on 3 October**. The event, held under the framework of the Spanish Presidency to the European Council, aims to bring together diverse stakeholders and experts, including universities, civil society, local, regional, national, and European authorities, city networks, and FAO, in a day dedicated to sharing valuable knowledge, and raising awareness.

Key players in the FLW area will attend, such as Dr. Felicitas Schneider (Institute of Market Analysis, Thünen Institute), Sanne Stroosnijder (manager of the Food Loss and Waste Prevention Program, Wageningen University & Research) and Gyula Kasza (coordinator of the Hungarian National Food Waste Prevention Program). Representatives of the main national and international city networks and political representatives from the European Commission, and the French and Turkish Ministries of Agriculture will also take part in the event.

The event aims to connect participants and be a forum of exchange for all actors involved in reducing FLW. The role of the cities is key to capturing messages, measures and lines of action in this area, which is why they have been given a prominent place in the day, with a session during the morning plenary and a sectoral debate in the afternoon.



In addition, the participation of the media will reinforce the spread of information to shape public opinion on good practices, data, realities and small actions that can lead to substantial collective efforts.

The main objectives and expected outcomes of the event are:

- Increased awareness of the problem of food waste and the importance of reducing it.
- Increased collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders across the food value chain to tackle food waste.
- Better understanding of the initiatives aimed at reducing food waste and the policies that have been implemented to achieve this, in Europe and beyond.
- Commitments and specific actions by participants to reduce food waste in their respective sectors.

FORMAT

This in-person technical event is held under the Spanish presidency of the Council of the European Union. It will gather actors from different areas, with cities' networks having a key central role, considering their important function as the voice of civil society and their ability to enable initiatives impacting millions of people in many fields among which is food loss and waste. The goal is to **foster a fertile dialogue** between them and universities, research institutes, producers, industry, media...

The event will feature keynote speeches, panel discussions and interactive sessions, where participants will be able to share their experiences and ideas. The event foresees enough time for networking in person, and will take advantage of social media and digital platforms to amplify its impact and attract a wider audience.

The **venue will be the Palau de Congressos de València**, as this public space is coordinating a year-long programme aimed at monitoring and creating methodologies to quantify and reduce food waste in social events, congresses, etc.

The event will last a **whole day** and will be organised in thematic blocks.

In the morning (9:30h-13:30h), we will go from the global to the local dimension:

- Block I: The global and European landscape
- Block II: Food loss and food waste in national policies
- Block III: City Networks and their key role tackling food loss and waste



In the afternoon (15:00-17h) the focus will be on case studies, with several parallel sectorial sessions. A brief summary of the highlights of each session will be published at the end of the congress.

- Group 1: Primary sector
- Group 2: Food Industry
- Group 3: Food Distribution
- Group 4: Civil Society
- Group 5: Research and Universities
- Group 6: Communication and awareness Raising
- Group 7: City Networks



CONCLUSION

Overall, the high-level event on food waste organised by CEMAS in collaboration with EUFIC presents a timely and strategic opportunity to advance the EU's commitment to reduce food waste. By bringing together stakeholders from across the food value chain and building on the Spanish Presidency of the European Council and World Food Loss and Waste Day, the event can catalyse action and drive progress towards a more sustainable and equitable food system.