

Integrated policies for Food Waste and sustainable food systems in the Circular Economy

REFRESH Policy Workshop

22 March 2019, 9:00-16:15 | Greenbizz, Rue Dieudonné Lefèvre 17, 1020, Brussels (BE)

Minutes

Welcome & introduction

See presentation slides

Ice breaker

Presentation around the table

Icebreaker: Discussions around the table:

- Who are you?
- Why are you here?
- What is your favourite, personal anti-food waste tip at home?
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Presentation of REFRESH insights

See presentation slides

The results of the consultation session are collected under the Chatham House Rules; the findings below are not expressing the view or opinion of the REFRESH project or its funding agent, the EC / DG Research or affiliated agencies. The views presented below serve for discussion purpose only. The results feed into the REFRESH deliverable reports on Policy Recommendations D3.5.

Interactive Consultation 1: Policy areas constellations exercise

Organisation & objectives of the session

Objective of the session: Discuss the different angles of policy areas, and how they relate to the generation and prevention of food waste

The policy areas considered are:

- Waste Management
- Food Safety
- Food Information
- Animal Feed
- Climate Change / Environmental policy
- Agricultural policy
- Fisheries policy
- FEAD
- Unfair Trading Practices (UTP)
- Bio-energy
- Health
- Resource Efficiency / Packaging
- Taxation / VAT regulation
- Education
- International trade
- Donation
- Animal Welfare
- Public procurement
- International trade
- Integrated food policy



A constellation technique serves to create a physical set up, where people representing different policy areas position themselves in relation to each other, and to the signposted "Goal"

Different steps of the session:

- **Choosing policy areas:** During this interactive session, participants choose a policy area that they represent throughout the exercise.
- **Creating the constellation:** Participants then form a circle, at the centre of which was placed a signpost representing food waste. Participants place themselves in the circle according to two factors:
 - o Their distance to the signpost represents the impact that the chosen policy area has on food waste. If placed close to the sign post (close to the middle of the circle), they considered that the chosen policy area was a strong contributor to food waste.
 - o Their position with respect to other participants, representing other policy areas, depicted the links between policy areas. The closer participants are from one another, the stronger the relation between them.





Results from the Constellation Exercise

Group 1

- Least contribution to food waste generation: integrated food policy, education and donation
- Controversy: food safety, CAP and UTPs

Food safety: It has a dual role → can reduce but also lead to the generation of food waste. Food safety policies ensure that food is safe to eat and more reliable. However, in the event of food safety incidents, large amounts of food products can be thrown away, causing vast amounts of food removed from the food supply chain. Food safety was clustered close to animal feed.

The **CAP** also has a dual effect. The subsidies [direct payments] provided by the CAP serve to support farmers' income in EU Member States. The CAP has proven to be very effective to stimulate agricultural primary production. However, existing market imperfections cannot always absorb the produced volumes, potentially leading to the loss of food from the food supply chain. Developing the new CAP, the importance to move towards a more sustainable agriculture is emphasized.

There are some best practice examples for which **public procurement** is carried out in such a way that limits food waste (e.g. public procurement in hospitals). However, in many schools, the amounts of wasted food remain strong.

Taxation was placed near the centre, as it was considered as a barrier to donation: food donors would in some cases have to pay VAT on donated products, limiting their willingness to donate food products. However, other participants argued that this issue was resolved in a large number of Member States, where VAT and taxation policies are favourable to food redistribution, and hence limit food waste. It was also reminded that some policies like taxation or **waste management** are Member State dependant.

Bio-energy can also be seen under two lights, as it can efficiently valorise food waste, but it can also come in competition with other flows higher up in the food use hierarchy (e.g. redistribution).

For several policy areas (e.g. **education**) there is often a gap between the reality and the potential benefits brought by the policies in question.

Finally, **integrated food policies** were placed far away from the centre. Despite its aim to limit food waste, there is no such policy at the moment, therefore the potential positive impact on food waste does not exist and is hard to assess.

Group 2

The group agreed that **UTPs** were the strongest contributors to food waste.

Likewise, **education** was placed quite close to the centre (strong contributor to food waste), as the current state of the current state of consumer/business education is not perceived as helping to limit food waste.

The **resource efficiency & packaging** policy area was considered as being a mix between packaging, date marking, education and resource efficiency, with potential positive and negative impacts.

Similarly as the conclusions from group 1, the **integrated food policy** area was placed towards the middle of the circle, as no such policy exists at the moment.

Animal Feed was placed further from the centre than **bio-energy**, as it was considered as having a more important role in food waste valorisation compared to bio-energy, hence limiting avoidable food waste.



Discussion on the differences between groups 1&2:

Both groups agree on the influence of **UTPs** and of **agriculture** on food waste generation: UTPs being the strongest contributors to food waste generation, while PAC subsidies potentially leading to market distortion, resulting in food waste. In both groups the **environmental and climate change** policies were clustered with resource efficiency and with bio-energy.

Group 3

Bio-energy is considered as being a strong contributor to food waste generation, as there are still incentives to send surplus food towards this option in some Member States. This policy area is strongly linked to **waste management**.

The **animal welfare** policy area was not clustered near any other areas, and was not considered to have a strong impact on food waste.

The **health, food information and education** policy areas were clustered together, close to packaging.

Education was put further away from the centre than in the other groups: group 3 did not consider that the lack of education hindered food waste prevention. It considered that education would have to be very bad if it resulted in food waste.

The potential negative and positive effects of **international trade** but also public standards and the role of producers / exporters were also mentioned.

Overall, food and food waste policies should go beyond what they are commonly affected to, and should also consider land use and agricultural aspects to better integrate food waste in food and land use policies.

Food for Thought

A Vision towards a Common Policy, International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food)

See presentation slides

Established in 2015, IPES-Food is a transdisciplinary panel of 27 experts working to shape debates on food system reform through policy-oriented research and direct engagement with policy processes around the world. The panel brings together environmental scientists, economists, nutritionists, agronomists, and sociologists, as well as experienced practitioners from civil society and social movements.

Published in February 2019, the "Towards a Common Food policy for the EU" report argues for an "umbrella policy" which sets a direction of travel for the whole food system, bringing together the various sectoral policies that affect food production, processing, distribution, and consumption, and refocusing all actions on the transition to sustainability. The Common Food Policy vision draws on the collective intelligence of more than 400 farmers, food entrepreneurs, civil society activists, scientists and policymakers consulted through a three-year process of research and deliberation.

It is based on the observation that since several issues are strongly interconnected (access to food, poverty, soil degradation, agricultural policy, food waste, etc.), the response needs to be transversal. The report also strongly highlights the needs for a change of the existing modes of governance. The aim of this report is to present a common food policy, which would be an umbrella policy for all food-related policies. However, the policy would not replace the CAP but rather complement it.

The current numbers on food and farming systems remind us that the situation is still far from perfect, and that the problems are highly interconnected:



Q&A:

- What scale is the most appropriate to tackle these issues (local/regional/national/EU)?
 - ➔ Many innovative solutions are born at the local and regional scales. These are also the scales at which the question of public procurement comes up a lot. The push for a common food policy must however come at the EU level, because it needs the structure and the overarching mandate at this level.
- The current food system is not perfect, but when changing it we must be very prudent to avoid the event of a food crisis.
 - ➔ The idea of the common food policy would be to create more coherence between different policy areas, and not to replace the CAP. It would also foster more discussions between the relevant DGs within the European Commission.
- How would this policy fit in with the needs of market competitiveness? Large businesses would still want to be profitable. Is it possible to move towards more sustainable food systems, while still maintaining a profit-based strategy guiding large businesses?
 - ➔ In an ideal world, the response would be yes, but it is unrealistic to get rid of the paradigm so quickly. Positive achievements have been observed (UTP regulations, plastics directive), and therefore paradigm shifts happen gradually.

An integrated perspective on food and food waste in the private sector & among social innovators, European Institute of Innovation & Technology Food (EIT Food)

EIT Food is a European Knowledge and Innovation Community, whose objective is to transform our food ecosystem. The organisation supports innovative and economically sustainable initiatives which improve society's health and access to quality food. EIT Food bridges the gaps between businesses and academia, and promotes entrepreneurship in order to conduct more oriented research.

Our food system can currently be considered as broken, and EIT Food wishes to move away from classic supply chain thinking, to rather create ecosystems in which people can work together and trust each other. EIT Food has six strategic objectives:

- Addressing low consumer trust in food
- Creating consumer valued food for healthier nutrition
- Building consumer-centric connected food systems
- Enhancing sustainability through resource stewardship
- Educating to engage, innovate and advance
- Catalysing food entrepreneurship and innovation

Since 2018, its first running year, EIT-Food has developed 50 projects, including some relative to food waste. They accompanied groups of students during 10 months, giving them access to their industrial partners' facilities. The students developed new products, among which waste banana cereal using bread and bananas, two of the most wasted products in retail.

One of EIT-Food's key ambitions is to reconnect consumers and citizens to food, by enhancing communication (e.g. through surveys). They also wish to strengthen collaborative research and innovation, and to invest in schemes where all players come out as winners.

Q&As:

- How do you support local initiatives?
 - ➔ Involvement of EIT Food in the support of local councils: EIT Food works alongside European DGs. They manage and allocate money to develop projects (innovation and education targeting food professionals) in areas and regions of Europe that are lagging behind.



- Some of the projects funded seem to promote innovation for wealthy consumers. Is something done for the poorest populations?
 - ➔ Audience targeted through the creation of innovative food products making use of surplus food: often, these products are only financially accessible to people with medium to high revenues. It is difficult to include the social aspect when considering the interests of businesses and of start-ups which must make profits to survive.
- What criteria did you use in your survey to evaluate consumer trust towards food actors?
 - ➔ Criteria that were used for the survey: measurement of the public's trust in food system actors, public's perceptions about different food concepts. For instance, the results showed that farmers are well trusted by the public (perceived as hard working, but also responsible for the production of healthy food) and that retailers are trusted the least.

Interactive Consultation 2: Road mapping for integrated food waste policy

See presentation slides

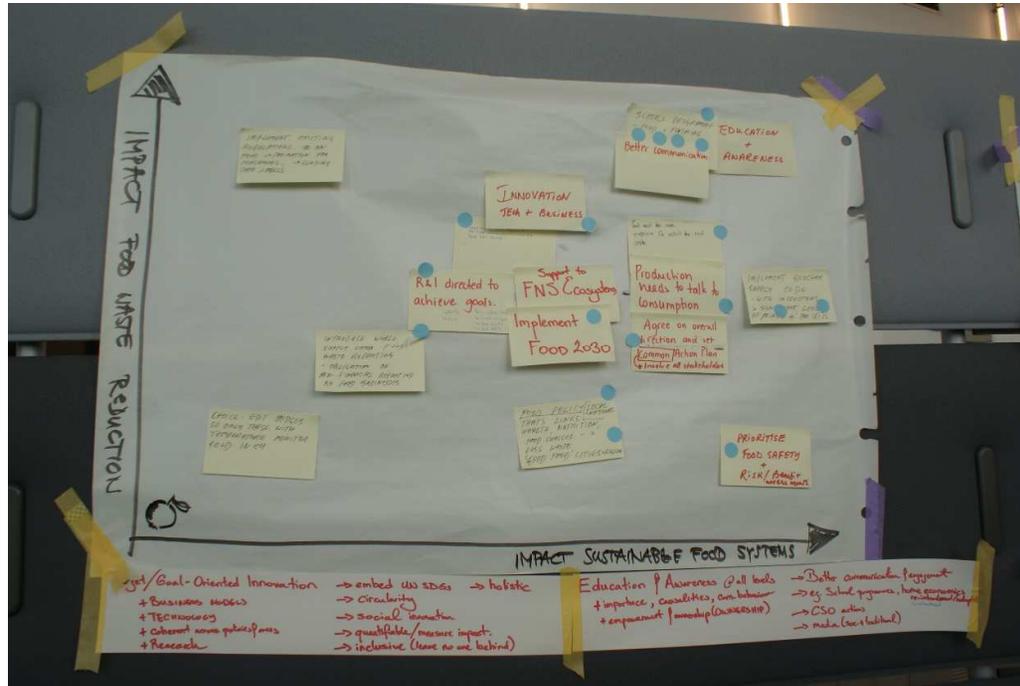
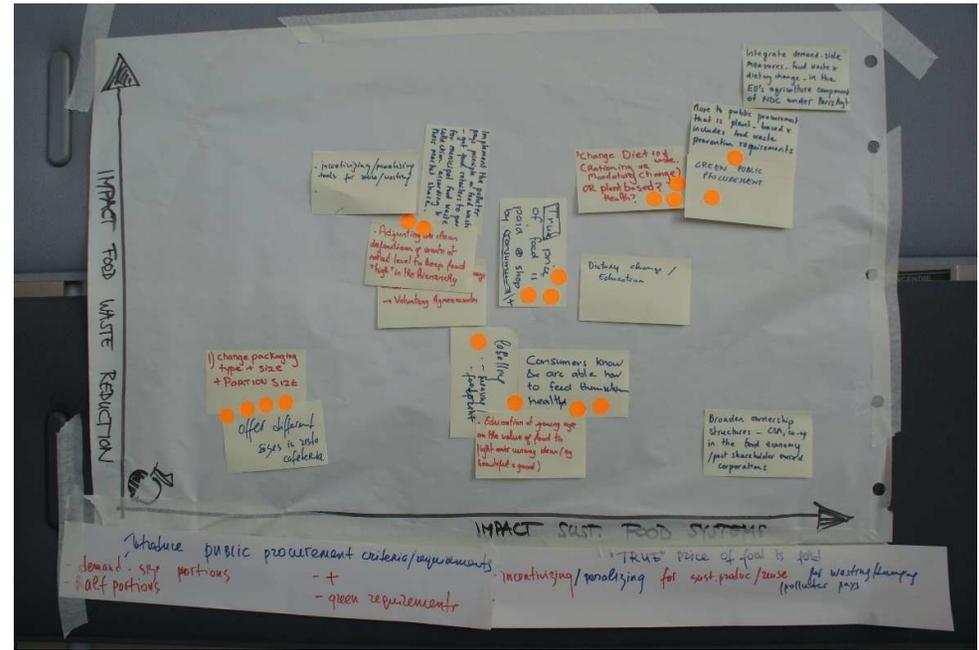
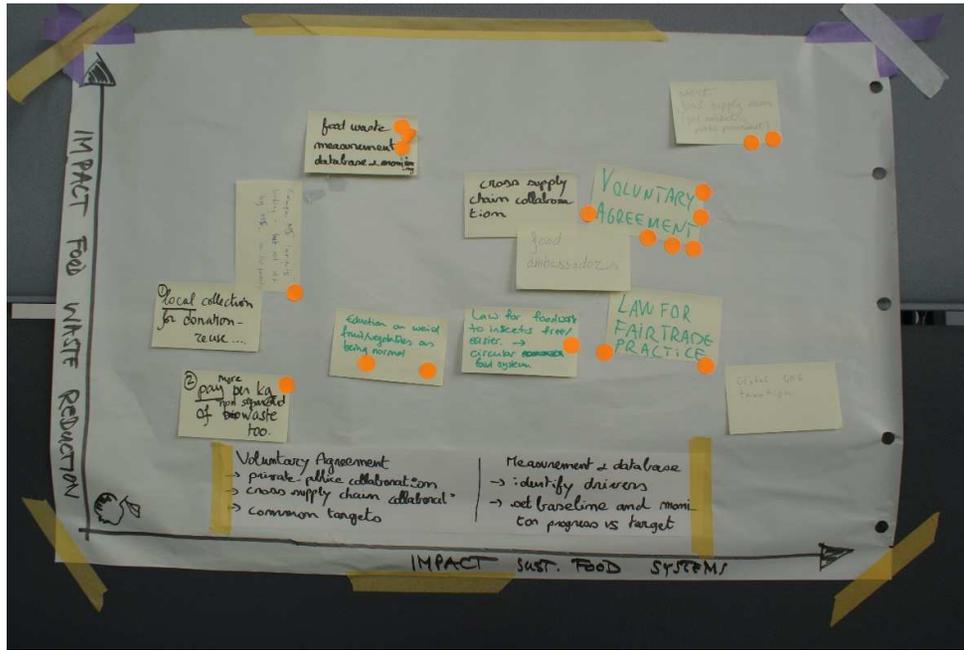
The second interactive consultation exercise aimed to determine policy interventions responding to the question: **"What interventions are needed for more sustainable food systems (that among other things works according to circular economy principles and reduces food waste)?"**

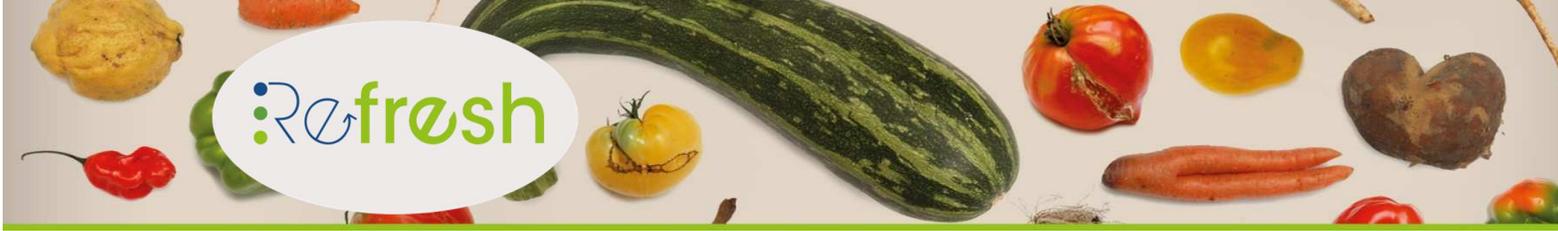
Each participant would suggest two ideas to the group, would present them, and would then place them on a coordinate axes system:

X axis: Impact to achieve sustainable food system

Y axis: Impact to reduce food waste

Participants would then select the two preferred interventions among the group, and would present their results to the plenary.





Group 1

- Getting people to realise the **true price of food** is a key policy driver towards sustainable food systems → incentivising for food systems production, and penalizing for wasting or dumping (based on a polluter pays scheme). Such a scheme exists for plastics in the UK, it could be replicated for food waste.
- Introducing **public procurement** criteria and/or requirements, such as what can be done in schools: green requirements, limiting the size of portions, etc.
- Reviewing the **links between business model capitals and governance structures**.

Group 2

- Implementing regulation, led by governments, to make **green public procurement mandatory**, with transparent principles.
- **Designing and using tools and technologies** (e.g. ICT based applications) that will support the dynamic of the food supply chain, driven by private sector actors: creating innovative solutions to monitor and forecast the food demand.

Group 3

- **Voluntary Agreements**, and setting binding targets for Member States: strong potential for both food waste reduction and driving for sustainable food systems.
- **Measuring and monitoring food waste data**: identification of drivers for food waste reduction, and establishment of a baseline to monitor the progress achieved. Gathering such data has the potential to feed into projects that could drive the reduction of food waste.

Group 4

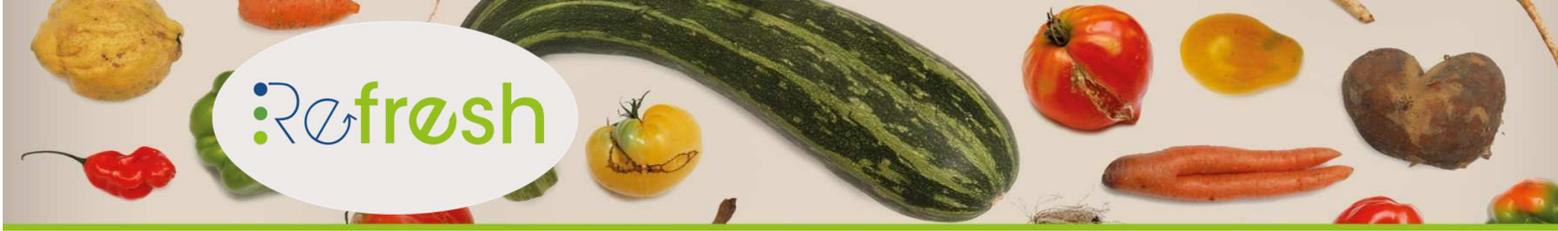
- **Carbon taxes and a functioning carbon trading system** would have a strong impact as it would drive systemic change, notably by setting higher CO₂ reduction goals.
- **Having stronger food waste reduction targets** would create a stronger incentive for Member States to reduce food waste.

Group 5

- **Education and awareness at all levels**, including better communication (school programmes, social and traditional media) and engagement of stakeholders.
- **Target and goal-oriented innovations**, related to: business models and business practices, technology, research, holistic approaches to UN SDGs, social innovations. These innovations should be inclusive, and should have quantifiable and measurable effects.

Group 6

- **Public reporting of food waste**: it should be made compulsory, for the public and private sector -> "When you report on waste you act on it".
- **Connecting the consumer with primary production**: the consumers' wills and needs must be adapted to the reality of primary production, the same being true the other way around. Food producers have a responsibility to educate the public/consumers about the reality of primary production.

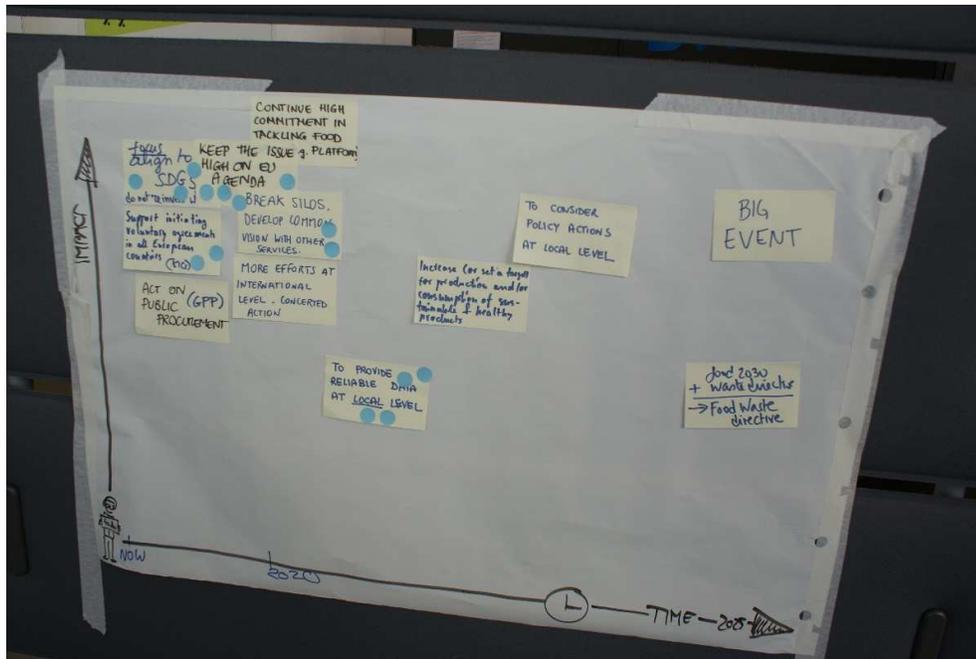


Interactive Consultation 3: From options to actions – Next steps

During this last interactive consultation sessions, participants changed groups. They were asked to think of policy interventions answering the following question: **“What should the next Commissioner do? (DG SANTE or other)”**. Each participant would share his or her best idea with the group, and would place it on a flipchart according to a new coordinate axes system:

X axis: Time (Now -> 2025)

Y axis: Impact on food waste reduction



Group 1 results

- Action on food waste should start right away. At first, **consolidation of data**, including data at the local level, is needed before implementing any actions.
- The actions which will be decided should be focused on **achieving the SDGs** (12.3 but not only), and the topic of food waste should remain high on the EU’s agenda.

Group 2 results

- Strengthen legislation to **improve farmers’ incomes**, and work at the primary production level to avoid the occurrence of Unfair Trading Practices at the short term.
- At the short or medium term, establishing a **food waste action plan**, containing a clear set of actions, part of the circular economy action plan. This plan should be aligned to the key related topics (hygiene, safety, nutrition), involving cross-sectoral teams.
- New priorities should be set at the EC’s DG levels at the long term, including a priority focus given to an **integrated food systems strategy**.

Group 3 results

- Establish an **integrated food policy legislation**, in synergy with a vice-president who would act in favour of the food policy.
- Promote and organise more **inter-commission work**: for instance, aligning agricultural policies with health outcomes (e.g. the production of healthy food).



- Establish **mandatory public procurement** in line with a food waste reduction target defined at the EU level.

Group 4 results

- **Better alignment of food policies with other policies**, by working alongside other commissioners, and ensuring there is more communication amongst all, especially concerning the tools that are available to them.
- **Best practices** that Member States should implement concerning **taxes**, and **subsidies** in the event of **redistribution of surplus food**.
- **Campaigns at the EU level**: support from the Commission could prove useful to set up campaigns. Retailers have already been invested in communication campaigns activities, but the Commission could use its influence to support and disseminate food waste prevention campaigns.

Group 5 results

- Proper review of the **competitiveness of the grocery and retail market across Europe**: having the EC consider these topics could avoid market distortion. There is only a small number of large scale buyers across the EU: a review of the market competition could help identify **priority areas for action** (UTPs, added value at the primary production stage).
- Getting Member States to see **SDGs and other targets as hard commitments**. For instance, national level reporting would help Member States become more active in tackling SDG 12.3.

Group 6 results

- **Standardisation on date marking requirements**.
- More **cooperation among DGs at the EC** that deal with waste and/or sustainable food systems.

Wrap-up and reflections

The importance of establishing a common food policy and the need for coordination between all related policy areas came out as being the key takeaways of this REFRESH workshop.

Other takeaways from participants include:

Holistic approach

- The need for **cooperation along the entire food supply chain**.
- The importance of considering **food policies as a whole**, and to adopt a holistic approach when tackling issues related to food policy (food safety, hygiene, nutrition, health, etc).
- The need to **involve partners from various backgrounds and Member States**, including actors from the trading committee, to tackle this issue at large, but still speaking with **one voice**.
- Food waste is inter-connected with a number of other areas, but it gives an **entry point** for the revision of the food system.
- The need for a shift in the attention given to the **“food supply chain”** to consider **“food systems”**.
- The **current low ambition** that exists relative to food waste.
- The need to increase the **connection and communication** between **primary production** and **consumers**.
- More information needed on the links between **local procurement and food waste**, as green procurement leads to better diet policy.
- The **importance and the role of local institutions**, i.e. voluntary collaboration organised at the local level.
- The ambition to position food waste in the **context of climate issues**.