

# Sowing the seeds for short and long term improved EU policies for food waste

## REFRESH Policy Workshop

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### Minutes

08. November 2017, 9:00-17:30 | Thon Hotel EU, Rue de la Loi 75, 1040 Brussels

Meeting documentation available at <http://eu-refresh.org/sowing-seeds-short-and-long-term-improved-eu-policies-food-waste-refresh-policy-workshop>

#### Introduction and welcome

*See presentation slides*

#### “Speed dating” networking session

#### Overview of the day’s set-up and participants’ responses about future policy needs

*See presentation slides*

#### Presentation and discussion of the REFRESH EU policy analysis “EU policy review for food waste prevention and valorization”

**Topics covered** included policy areas that directly target food and waste, and those which affect food waste indirectly but substantially. The analysis also covers the question of a need for an integrated EU food policy:

1. Waste and resource policy
2. Food safety and hygiene
3. Special case: use of former food for animal feed
4. Agriculture & rural development
5. Fisheries policy
6. Unfair trading practices
7. Bioenergy
8. Product info & date labelling
9. Changing consumer behaviour
10. Voluntary cooperation
11. The need for an EU food policy?

See presentation for details and recommendations from individual topics.

### Discussion questions:

- Were the most relevant EU policies to reduce food waste identified (considering that 3 important areas were outside of the REFRESH scope)?
- Do you have feedback on the identified opportunities for improvement and about their short-, medium and long term feasibility?
- How can MS policy better contribute to EU policy efforts to reduce food waste?

### Discussion points

- Participants and presenters discussed how the bioeconomy was taken into account in the analysis
  - Food waste has a big potential to contribute to the bioeconomy, but it needs to be according to the food utilization hierarchy (FUH). In bioeconomy policy, the goal is to replace fossil products with renewable-based products. If done wrong, then the food utilization hierarchy is not followed (i.e. use for human or animal consumption is not prioritized over recycling to bio-based products).
  - The Committee on World Food Security also recommended a food use hierarchy
  - Participants supported the strengthening of FUH in policy discussions, emphasized need to support with evidence
- Uncertainty was expressed about if animal feed and biomaterial are considered food waste because they are utilized: If something is not waste, it won't be regarded as food waste
  - The FUH still justifies attention on food removed from supply chain, but it is necessary to ensure that the right amounts of unavoidable/avoidable waste go where they should be in the hierarchy. Debate on scoping/definition not settled, related to the WFD, a response is expected from this debate. Policy could contribute to more utilisation higher up hierarchy.
- Discussion turned to focus on extracting value added products from food waste. Bioenergy is an option when the value is low, otherwise higher value biomaterials could be produced.
  - REFRESH works for more ingredient-based valorization coming from larger available food waste stocks e.g. spent grains. While this is not the focus of the REFRESH policy work, it is an important issue.
- A participant emphasized that more precise details on problems with policy implementation and underutilization would be helpful – what are the barriers and problems. This would help the work of the EU FLW Platform
  - There is not much public info on utilization of instruments
  - Other REFRESH work covers practices and barriers in practice: activities of Pilot Working Platforms, System map supply chain analysis for specific products. Research is underway on potentials of Voluntary Agreements and Unfair Trading Practices, looking at how these work in the policy mix. We agree with the need, and see this is where EU policy ends and where MS policy begins.
- A participant pointed out that organic products are rejected more than conventional products, mostly for cosmetic reasons. This disparity could be investigated.

- There are differences between product types and between organic and conventional products
- Good practice example: German retailer Penny's organic line for cosmetically irregular produce could be a source of learning
- More details on how to increase policy coherency would be appreciated
  - This was not the focus of this report, but in next steps REFRESH will develop specific policy recommendations

### **Working session on short-, medium-, and long-term policy options to improve food waste reductions**

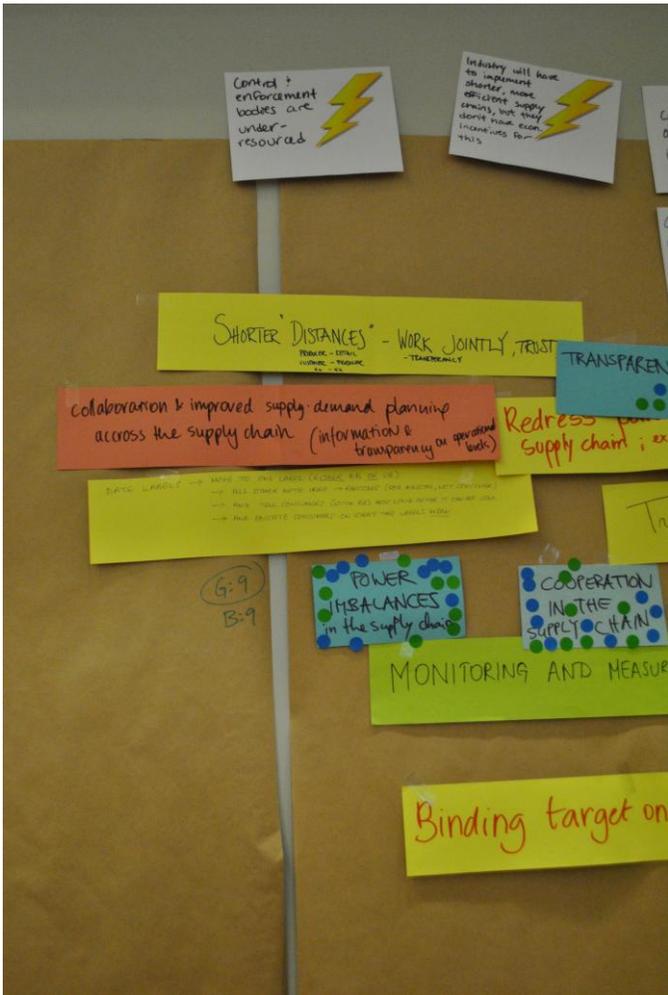
#### **Discussion questions:**

1. What is most important that needs to happen (in and beyond policy) to radically cut food waste?
2. What are the short, medium, and long term options to make this happen?

The key areas of action (ranked in order of importance as indicated by participants with a dot clustering – see pictures on following page) that emerged from the discussions were:

- Integrated food policy
- Better cooperation in the supply chain
- Addressing power imbalances in the supply chain (UTPs)
- Changing values and mindsets
- Developing and implementing responsible business models
- Food value and prices, and financial incentives
- Monitoring food waste
- Increasing transparency
- Increasing skills and knowledge

Discussed options to improve action in these areas and key barriers to action were collected and clustered and can be seen on the following page. Participants used dots to mark the areas they found the most important. Green dots represent which topics participants found important, and blue dots mark the topics which participants wanted to further discuss during the workshop.





## Roundtables on action and responsibilities for identified priority policy areas

### Group 1: achieving mindset shifts (1)

- Emphasized building on existing initiatives, e.g. G8/Global Agenda (top-down), and local initiatives (bottom-up)
- Get messages across using a single, clear message to reach people better.
- Short term actions: campaigns, using role models/testimonials, companies communicating good practices
- Medium term: integrate food waste into education programmes
- Long term: look at food prices. They should be fair, proportional to cost of living, and take into account external costs of production

### Group 2: achieving mindset shifts (2)

- If retailers could understand consumption patterns better, they could tailor their strategy better, going further than just what goes off the shelves
- Actions include: different kind of promotions, education for children starting early, economic rewards for good behavior, e.g. tax reductions on donations in Italy as good practice

### Group 3: addressing power imbalances (UTPs)

- Legislation is needed to address UTPs, e.g. based on the UK Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) model – needs to become a political priority (for policymakers esp. Commission, and civil society can push the issue)
- Transparency in evidence of UTPs is needed – but it is important not to slow the reform process by waiting for all evidence
- Evidence must be anonymous so farmers don't jeopardize themselves by reporting
- UTPs need an EU-wide solution. MS either have legislation but don't use it, or people aren't aware of it
- There are differences between MS: e.g. Netherlands might be wary of voluntary approach, whereas other MS prefer it
- Medium term actions:
  - improving processing and developing markets to increase shelf lives of certain products
  - Looking at impact of the rise of online sales
- Long term: looking at market structures: investigating possibilities within competition/anti-trust law, supporting cooperatives as potential alternative market structures

### Group 4: integrated food policy

- What is meant by "integrated food policy": Would integrate policy areas covered in today's workshop
- At EU level have developed food safety policy, but the policies are quite old now and have achieved their goals quite well: Food is usually safe from a microbiological view. Now focus should be shifted to other food issues.

- A similar policy was tabled in 2012: the Sustainable Food Communication was developed but never published. Now could be a good time to resurrect it within a new context. Now have new arguments (SDGs, Paris Agreement) and more evidence to support it.
  - Brexit could be an impetus to do something different in the EU-27
  - Short term action: Focus now on getting things started
  - Different DGs are already around the table working on food waste in the EU Platform, this cooperation could serve as a basis to discuss how a food policy could look
  - EU Parliament, Council, and MS can help push idea
  - Could do a mixed scorecard approach to get sense of direction of travel, looking at different metrics of sustainable food systems and diets
- Medium/long term: New model of cooperation for policymaking is needed

### **Group 5: supply chain cooperation**

- Cooperation in the food chain is now not flexible: it is based on contracts. But food waste is not considered within these contracts, so it is not considered a priority by business
- Price is always the first priority
- Seasonality not directly related to cooperation within the supply chain, but it has big impact on waste (e.g. delayed response to promotions on perishable seasonal products leads to overstocking and underuse – but promotions could be better timed)
- A good practice example is the Supply Chain Initiative. Business actors emphasise the importance of cooperation being on a voluntary basis
- Medium term:
  - Need to clarify responsibility/accountability for waste within supply chain – what department, what stage of the chain is responsible, and who is held accountable?
  - Clarify ownership of waste in supply chain, now unclear in contracts, waste pushed away to supplier
  - Public procurement can set good example/incentives for integrating waste
- Long-Term: need to aim to develop trust between actors

### **Reflection and closing words**

- Participants gave reflections on their take-aways from the meeting and gave feedback on the content and format
- One major take-away was the emerging agreement among many participants that integrated policy solutions, and specifically an EU food policy, will be needed to reach SDG 12.3 within the context of a sustainable food system
- **Next steps:**
  - Input from the workshop will go into the final draft of the report “EU policy review for food waste prevention and valorization” and into the design of future policy workshops and policy recommendations.
  - Participants can comment on the report until 30.11., with the report to be finalized by the end of the year.