

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You must be the change you wish to see in the world.

With these words of Gandhi I would like to warmly welcome you to this FUSIONS conference in Brussels.

No more food to waste that's why you are here.

To achieve this we need global, regional, national and local change.

For that we need you.

You will be the change your wish to see in halting food waste and food loss the coming years.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In a world of plenty, one in nine people lack adequate food and nutrition to lead healthy and productive lives.

Not without reason the Secretary General of the UN and the President of the Worldbank stated that the two main global challenges are: Food security and Climate change.

To achieve Food Security we have to halt food loss and waste. Food waste is not only a global and European policy issue, it is also a moral issue of global scale.

If only one-fourth of the food lost or wasted could be consumed it would be sufficient to feed 870 million people.

It means feeding nearly all who go to bed hungry every night.

That's 12% of the world's current population.

So reducing food loss and waste is a key, or better a must, towards ensuring food security for the 9 billion people in 2050.

That's reason enough for taking bold action.

But there is more.

Our Global leaders have highlighted it as a global problem of enormous economic, environmental and societal significance.

Food loss and waste has an enormous negative impact on already scarce natural resources.

Around 30% of available agricultural land is used to produce food that goes uneaten. That is equivalent to the size of China.

And let us not forget the negative impact on our economies and climate change.

At present, food waste costs over US \$ 400 billion per year. That figure is projected to rise up to US \$ 600 billion within 15 years.

In 2030 reducing consumer waste by 20-25% could save us about US \$ 300 annually.

According to the latest FUSIONS figures (March 2016), the total food waste in Europe amounts to an estimated 143 billion euros.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The magnitude of food waste and loss is clear, it presents an enormous challenge to society.

It is time for bold action, resting on our laurels is not an option anymore.

The European Union can lead the way to the future.

We can be a game changer.

The character of the global and European agriculture and food issues has changed. Food is unevenly distributed on a global level.

Because of population growth, urbanisation and the foreseen changes in eating patterns, the demand for food will rise and the pressure on global food supply will increase even further.

At the same time, challenges appear in the fields of food security, public health, sustainability and the industrialisation of food production.

This means that current challenges in the food chain are no longer solely related to traditional agriculture. This necessitates demand-driven policy, rather than the current supply-driven policy,

Food in the EU is safer than ever. However, because of changing consumption patterns and living habits we increasingly deal with public health risks such as obesity and related illnesses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coming back to food waste. The reduction of food waste results in triple benefits:

- it saves money for farmers, supermarkets and households;
- we can feed more people;
- and it reduces pressure on the climate, water and raw materials.

As the food supply chain has previously demonstrated its ability to join forces and boost productivity, I am convinced that the food chain is also able to reduce food waste and food losses.

Attention is growing strongly within the business sector for the prevention of food waste and the optimum use of by-products.

FUSIONS has made a big contribution for insights in opportunities of the reduction of food loss and waste and provides us with guidelines for solutions.

FUSIONS has performed thorough research over the past four years. With twenty-one partners and more than two-hundred participants from thirteen countries, FUSIONS has

mobilized an enormous network that is making efforts to reduce food wastage.

FUSIONS has demonstrated how we can monitor food waste within the EU. It is clearly needed to measure the scale of the food wastage: after all, knowledge is power. A few companies, some of which are present today, have experienced that first hand. They have encountered the direct advantages of this, both financial but also other advantages. You will be hearing from those companies today.

FUSIONS also has various examples of innovative young entrepreneurs working together with other parties in a new setting, successfully reducing food surpluses or reusing them. This is also referred to as social innovation. You will also be seeing examples of this today.

These are the success stories, which have come about, thanks to leaders who believe in change.

These leaders have really achieved something. In my view, they should be brought into the spotlight. `The most effective teaching and learning is by example.

This was also one of the main conclusions of a major international conference about food waste and losses which was held in the Netherlands, June last year, with the title 'No More Food To Waste'.

Numerous good examples were shown for the reduction of food wastage and food losses. The conference “No More Food To Waste” laid bare the link between food loss and waste, food security, climate change, and sustainable development.

One of the results of this conference was convening a 'group of committed leaders' who will make visible efforts to achieve a reduction in food wastage and food losses. The group was formally launched during the Annual World Economic Forum in Davos in January of this year, and has been named 'Champions 12.3'.

The Champions 12.3, currently an impressive group of 53 high level representatives of government, companies, international organizations and NGO.

They are dedicated to meeting the global achievement of Target 12.3. by, for instance:

- quantify food loss and waste and monitor progress, and
- leverage relationships in working together in the fight against food waste but also to persuade development banks, governments, donors, and/or the private sector to increase financing for strategies needed to meet Target 12.3.

Reducing food losses and waste has been selected as one of the five priority areas in the upcoming AU-EU Ministers of Agriculture Conference in the Netherlands, 6-8 June. The 'AU-EU Investing in a Food Secure Future' Conference will define the basis for improved AU-EU Agriculture policy co-operation in the coming years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Commission has taken up the challenge and, within the framework of the announcement on the Circular Economy. Proposals have been put forward for a European approach to reducing food wastage.

The Netherlands will place these proposals on the agenda within the framework of its EU Presidency and will discuss them in the Agricultural Council.

We aim to be able to formulate Council Conclusions on this in June. As far as we are concerned, these will express a pro-active attitude to the reduction of food waste and losses, throughout the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude

I believe that the insights that FUSIONS has gained over recent years can help us in reducing food waste and losses. You will be hearing and learning plenty today, can be helpful in the further formulation of steps that need to be taken in reducing food wastage.

I am looking forward to hearing about FUSION'S latest insights and lessons learned during the course of today.

You must be the change you wish to see in the world, especially for our children and grandchildren.

No More Time To Waste.

Thank you!