FUSIONS Policy Brief

Social innovation projects to reduce food waste: key recommendations for the private sector

May 2016

The FUSIONS project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 311972.

Implementing social innovation solutions across the EU

Seven feasibility studies have been implemented across Europe as part of the FUSIONS Work Package 4 (WP4)[1]. The objective of WP4 was to identify social innovation solutions to prevent and reduce food waste[2] and **to test them through feasibility studies** by using a multi-stakeholder approach throughout all stages of the food chain.

Assessing results and key impacts of the Feasibility Studies

The impact of the feasibility studies were **individually evaluated by FUSIONS partners**[3] based on criteria[4], set by WRAP, Deloitte Sustainability, WUR and the Institute for Food Research (IFR), around food waste reduction and social benefit.

WRAP then evaluated the overall impact of the seven feasibility studies, as well as selected examples from the Social Innovation Inventory[5] to demonstrate the potential impact of social innovation activities if scaled up across the EU.

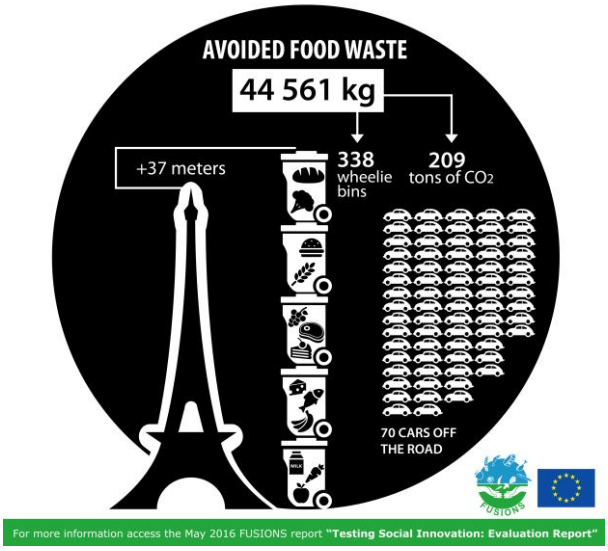
The following table outlines the scope and targets of each feasibility study:

Feasibility Study	FUSIONS Partner	Aim of the FS	Key Results
Cr-EAT-ive	Anatoliki (Greece)	*Cr-EAT-ive* worked with school children and their parents to reduce food waste within households.	Anatoliki delivered the Cr-EAT-ive project in six kindergartens, reaching 480 children and working closely with 7 kindergarten head teachers, 25 teachers and two canteen staff. The participant families saved on total 1,417kg of food, the equivalent of €100 per week. Two large cooking events were organised which are estimated to have attracted over 1,000 people and redistributed 100kg of surplus food.
Food Service Surplus Solution	HFA (Hungary)	*Food Service Surplus Solution* redistributed surplus food by connecting charities with organisations from the food service and hospitality sector.	The *Food Service Surplus Solution* successfully implemented two working pilots, redistributing a total 35,096 portions away from landfill or biogas plants, the equivalent of €70,192 and 14,038kg. The project also provided social benefits and created a suite of materials ready for replication such as the Hospitality Food Surplus Redistribution Guidelines.
Disco Bôcô	Disco Soupe community (France)	*Disco Bôcô* rasied awareness on food surplus by teaching a range	*Disco Bôcô* organised and implemented 20 sessions of different formats, engaging 627 participants and diverted 825kg of fruit and vegetables from landfill. In addition to re-distributing surplus food, Disco Bôcô achieved

[1] More information about FUSIONS can be found on the project website : http://www.eu-fusions.org
[2] Social innovations are new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. More information about how social innovation can help reduce food waste can be found on the FUSIONS website : http://www.eu-fusions.org/index.php/publications/268-stimulating-social-innovation-on-food-waste
[3] A report on each FS can be found in the Appendices of the WP4 Evaluation report.
[4] This criteria included the following aspects: amount of food distributed, previous disposal routes of distributed food, final use and benefits of distributed food, number of food donors, number of recipient organisations, qualitative feedback from participants and donors, number of volunteer hours, match funding.
5 More information can be found on the project website : http://www.eu-fusions.org

Feasibility Study	FUSIONS Partner	Aim of the FS	Key Results
		of individuals how to make jam and chutney from surplus food.	a number of social goals, including reducing tension between different groups within certain social residences, improving cooking skills and also improving the taste education of participants.
Gleaning	Feedback (UK)	*Gleaning* focused on creating a series of gleaning networks across the EU.	*Gleaning* implemented gleaning hubs in Belgium, France, Greece and Spain. As a result 82 gleaning days were facilitated delivering 29,571kg worth of surplus food to 33 charities that feed people who are food insecure. The food gleaned was mainly vegetables and fruits.
Social Supermarkets	BOKU (Austria) & Deloitte Sustainability (France)	*Social Supermarkets* was a desk based study providing an overview of social supermarkets in Europe.	The *Social Supermarkets study* provided useful insights into the state of social supermarkets in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France and the United Kingdom, the different variants in existence and their strengths and weaknesses. The main outputs from the feasibility study are six recommendations and a set of key points for replication for each country.
Surplus Food	Communique & Stop Spild Af Mad (Denmark)	*Surplus Food* tested the possibility of setting up an IT system that would connect food surplus donors with charities.	*Surplus Food* was successful in mapping the Danish context to a degree, gathering and ensuring an element of engagement from donors and recipients, and making a test website for the test audience.
Order Cook Pay	SP Food and Bioscience (Sweden)	*Order Cook Pay* aimed at reducing food waste within the school environment by creating an IT service that determined how many meals to prepare each day for children.	*Order Cook Pay* ran for 10 months before it was announced that it would no longer be going forward. Key barriers were recruiting stakeholders to be involved in the study (such as municipalities), the complexity of the IT tool to be compatible in each school, funding the project and the time frame of FUSIONS.

Key impacts



To date, the actions conducted through WP4 feasibility studies prevented a total of 44,561 kg of food from being wasted. This is the **equivalent of 338 wheelie bins full of food**. Stacked up on top of each other, these wheelie bins would be **37 metres higher than the Eiffel tower**. These **44,561 kg** of avoided food waste are also equivalent to **209 tonnes of CO_2** emissions avoided, which would be the same as **taking 70 cars off the road**[6]**.** Whilst the numbers could be considered relatively small, so was the scope of the feasibility studies. The FS prove to be an effective prevention activity. Moreover, if scaled up, the results could be more important.

Aside from generating environmental benefits, these seven feasibility studies have generated **considerable social impact, for example by** redistributing surplus food. These impacts include changing social attitude towards food waste, **feeding food-insecure individuals**, increasing the intake of nutritional food for food-insecure individuals, developing social capital, learning kitchen and cooking skills, and **becoming part of a community**.

The ability to implement feasibility studies has been a success. In the short term, the Food Service Surplus Solution, Cr-EAT-ive, Disco Bôcô and Gleaning feasibility studies have **continued to carry out activities beyond the scope of FUSIONS**, and in some cases have expanded the project further.

These results show that social innovation is an effective way of preventing food waste and that if these activities **can be scaled up**, they can make a significant impact, both environmentally and socially. Below are four key recommendations for simple, practical measures which could be introduced by the private sectors at EU, national or local level in order to facilitate the scaling up and replication of these activities.

Key recommendations for retailers and manufacturers

In the eyes of consumers, **retailers** and **manufacturers** are amongst the **key actors** that have the **ability to implement immediate and sustainable action** towards food waste reduction and food surplus management.

Although actions and legislations set in place by the European Commission are crucial towards unified EU-wide efforts for food waste reduction and recovery, **private-led actions** have the **ability to drive further action from EU-wide initiatives** via their marketing reach and public image. Furthermore, as pressure from consumers continues to increase, retailers and manufacturers continue to find the benefits of enhancing internal action via external partnerships with food surplus social entrepreneurs.

[6] This is calculated on the fact that 240l wheelie bin full of food weighs approx. 132kg, and that a wheelie bin is 107cm high

- **Ensuring a harmonised application of EU and national legislative framework**

Retailers and manufacturers alike are responsible for staying up to date on EU and national laws related to food redistribution and management. **Health** and **safety**, **environmental health**, **trading standards** and **taxation** laws affect the everyday operations of these actors via their corporate actions. A main finding from the FUSIONS Feasibility Studies was that policies sometimes lack **clarity** and **conciseness**, leading to uninform application across EU countries. Furthermore, retailers and manufacturers face unintentional hurdles towards food surplus redistribution in part from policies and laws that **compromise favourable food surplus management by overly strict application of laws** (i.e. health and safety laws –food date labelling in particular).

- **Developing partnerships with social innovation projects**

The most significant barrier identified within the FUSIONS feasibility studies is on how to carry out sustainable **financing of social innovation projects**. As food surplus social entrepreneurship continues to grow in parallel to retailer and manufacturer needs for viable food surplus management solutions, opportunities for collaboration between these two entities are imminent. Instead of purely relying on internal efforts, manufacturers and retailers could capitalise on innovative ideas and technology by **investing in social innovation projects.** Actors within the private sector could **launch calls for partnerships via interactive online forums** to search for solutions concerning their specific needs within the food supply chain.

- **Building and expanding a food surplus social innovation network**

Another key recommendation from this study outlines the need to have a **centralised hub** of **social innovation projects** in order to **share best and worst practices**, **scale up actions** on the national or EU level, and to target concerned actors. Currently, the Food Surplus Entrepreneurs (FSE) Network is undertaking this role[7] as a bottom up approach. However, retailers and manufacturers could enhance these efforts by assuming a leading top-down approach. By creating or partially hosting a network, mentorship, or online platform, **entrepreneurial efforts** could be **scaled up** and **replicated in other EU countries** by passing through a retailer or manufacturer's EU company network. This type of action furthermore inherently enhances company image.

- **Encouraging dialogue around food reduction and redistribution**

The need to establish a physical or virtual forum where best practices, lessons learned and potential to scale up actions was found to be paramount. Barriers can be better resolved by **opening up dialogue amongst all actors** of the **supply chain** via **annual conferences or symposiums** about **European food reduction and redistribution.** The private sector, and in particular, federations/associations such as the Consumer Goods Forum[8], could use their already existent and developed network to pioneer EU-wide conferences and educate actors within the food supply chain on food waste redistribution solutions. This type of private initiative could **create significant buzz** on the **consumer level** (inherently sparking dialogue on food waste) as well as **form pressure** on the **public sector** to take further action and participate in dialogue.

[7] The FSE network is a European virtual community that connects food surplus projects, allowing them to work together to achieve the goal of reducing food waste.
[8] The Consumer Goods Forum is a global, parity-based industry network composed of retailers and manufacturers.