



SolidariFood

COUNTRY

France

PROJECT PROMOTER

SolidariFood

FUNDING

National funds, EUR 2 200
Private, EUR 7 500

DURATION

2015 – on-going

CONTRIBUTION TO

- generating environmental benefits
- mitigating climate change
- increasing efficiency of biomass resource use
- creating value through improved production methods or processing technology
- creating value through increased cooperation among value chain actors
- replicating an existing approach from another area/country

KEYWORDS

Added value, bio-waste, residues, food, cooperation, information & promotion

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The initiative

Food waste is a global problem which has been widely discussed in France in recent years. Consumers – in their search for food that is sustainable, healthy and local – are increasingly demanding that the agri-food sector respond to concerns about the societal, environmental and economic impacts of the current food system.



SolidariFood is an initiative that aims to tackle food waste in Angers, Pays de la Loire - a major agricultural area in France. The initiative's primary role is to raise awareness among consumers through information days and 'collaborative cooking' opportunities. The project also maintains several free-access refrigerated facilities, where consumable food products are made available to all, and supports gleaning via a digital platform ('Eco-Glan') that connects local farmers and consumers.

RESULTS

- ✓ The kitchen workshops contribute to reducing food waste and add value to non-commercial or discarded food products.
- ✓ The 'Share Your Fridge' concept reduces food waste from homes and shops by placing their unused or unsold food in nearby common fridges.
- ✓ The 'Eco Glan' digital platform helps exploit leftovers from agricultural production by organising short and local food chains.
- ✓ 2 individuals are directly employed in/by the initiative and 15 indirectly (e.g. in spin-offs of the initiative, suppliers, transport, etc.).



Context

Food waste is a global problem. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), every year about one third of the food produced globally for human consumption gets lost or wasted.

The issue of food waste has been widely discussed in recent years in France and all actors in the food chain have been mobilised. Public authorities are responding to this issue and are implementing action plans at the various institutional levels to address it. At national level, France aims to halve food waste by 2025.

Private companies are also responding to the call for action, but need encouragement to sustain their efforts. This is particularly important for the food sector, where the aim of making a profit still prevails over environmental and societal needs.

Consumers are becoming more sensitive to the societal, environmental and economic impacts of the current food system and are looking for ways to reconnect with, and regain confidence in, the food that they eat.

Hence, it is necessary to support a multitude of local actions to fight against food waste; making use of the available tools and technology to create ways of sourcing and sharing food that would otherwise go to waste.

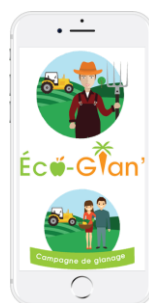
In this context, three young people in the Pays de la Loire region decided to set up an association to contribute to addressing the food waste problem and to promoting sustainable food. Pays de la Loire is one of the most productive agricultural areas in France and is the primary producer of apples in the country. It is therefore of great importance that local initiatives develop ways to work together with producers to tackle the problem of food waste.

Objective

This initiative aims to provide solutions to food waste in Angers, Pays de la Loire, while building links between producers and the public.

Activities

A key component of the initiative is that of raising awareness through education and training. The digital gleaning platform 'Eco Glan Producers' enables producers to make a profit from leftovers on their fields (e.g. non-commercial products or overproduction) by offering them directly to consumers at competitive prices.



Distributors participate by donating products that are no longer of any value to them – earning tax benefits in return for their donations. This also helps distributors to improve their image by showing solidarity and helping to protect the environment.

Citizens as consumers gain increased awareness and share knowledge. The initiative offers them ways to reduce food waste, for example by taking part in inter-generational cooking workshops where they can enjoy anti-waste smoothies and share meals.

The initiative also aims to raise awareness among caterers (at public schools or local companies) by developing specific programs for the reduction of food waste in their context.

In order to support its activities, the association acquired premises and installed a collective kitchen to process food leftovers. It also acquired a refrigerated trailer and a vehicle, and set up a solidarity grocery store and the restaurant 'Anti Gaspil'. Other activities include launching the beta version of the digital platform 'Eco Glan'; installing three new 'Share your fridge' fridges in Angers; and opening a new branch of SolidariFood in Le Mans.

Environmental sustainability

In each action, SolidariFood precisely calculates the quantities of food waste collected and distributed, as well as the waste that the initiative then produces itself.

The digital platform 'Eco Glan' has an algorithm to quantify the amount of recovered food waste in real time.

The actions of the association are aligned with the law on food waste that came into force in France in 2016.

The initiative is an official partner of the National Pact against Food Waste initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in 2013.

SolidariFood is among the winners of the 2018 circular economy call for project proposals from the Pays de la Loire Region (under an agreement since January 2019).

It participated in the 'Food Heroes' call for projects launched by the European Union at the end of 2018.

SolidariFood is also a member of 'France Nature Environment', a national federation of associations committed to the environment and to sustainable development.

Lessons learnt & recommendations

In order for such an initiative to be economically viable it is necessary to have multiple sources of income. In this case these include self-finance through membership payments; patronage and private donations; offering fee-charging services; and through calls for projects and local grants.

Getting an initiative off the ground in the first place and then trying to reach the break even point that will allow it to hire staff and expand its activities, is incredibly hard work. This is where public authorities should intervene and financially support the transition to a sustainable economic model.