



SUMMARY REPORT

COMMISSION EXPERT GROUP ON FOOD LOSSES & FOOD WASTE DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (SANTE)

2nd meeting

Brussels, Centre Borschette, meeting room AB-2B

24 April 2015 – From 10:00 to 17:00

Member States represented (26):

AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK.

EFTA: Norway

Invited speakers: FUSIONS (Toine Timmermans, Clementine O`Connor); Dr.techn. Ole Jørgen Hanssen, **Östfoldforskning Norway**

Commission:

DG SANTE: Chantal Bruetschy, Anne-Laure Gassin, Bartosz Zambrzycki, Konstantinos Sofianidis, Tatiana Tallarico, Thanasis Raikos (point 5), Tim Gumbel (point 5); **DG AGRI:** Olivier Diana, Betty Lee , Lukas Visek; **DG GROW:** Benjamin Vallin; **DG RTD:** Dirk Pottier; **DG ESTAT:** Hartmut Schrör.

Chair: *Ms Chantal Bruetschy, Head of Unit Innovation and Sustainability, DG SANTE*

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The Chair welcomed policy experts from Member States (MS) to the second meeting of the Commission's Expert Group on Food Losses and Food Waste, introduced the new participants and speakers and thanked them for their active contribution to the agenda. All participants agreed with the proposed agenda which was adopted without change.

2. Matters arising from the last meeting

Since the last meeting, the Commission (COM) has compiled the list of national contact points for food waste, based on input from members, in view of sharing with members of the Commission's stakeholder working group on food losses and food waste. At this meeting, the Chair confirmed with participants that they agreed to share the list of national contact points with stakeholders in order to facilitate liaison between the two groups.

Conclusions and next steps:

- MS representatives to keep DG Health and Food Safety (annelaure.gassin@ec.europa.eu) informed of any additions/changes to the national contact point list.
- COM will share the MS list with the stakeholder working group on food losses and food waste.

3. Update by the Chair regarding Circular Economy package

The Chair outlined the focus of the future strategy of the new Commission: Growth, Employment and Investment. In this context, the Commission decided to withdraw the proposal on Circular Economy adopted in 2014 and replace it with a more ambitious one, possibly including provisions on food waste. The Commission will organise by summer a public consultation to help inform development of the new proposal.

The Chair invited participants to ask questions about these developments.

MS asked for further information on possible food waste targets (UK) and on future consultations on the Circular Economy package (AT). The Chair explained that a Road Map would be published and that there are ongoing discussions about the added value of a common measurement framework for food waste. She invited participants to express their possible interest in and views concerning development of common measurement tools and the usefulness of targets as an incentive to prevent food waste.

4. Discussion with Member States regarding measurement and monitoring of food waste at national level

The Chair gave the floor to Mr Toine Timmermans (co-ordinator of EU FP7 project FUSIONS) who gave an overview of the project and, in particular, described a draft manual to support MS in collecting and quantifying data on food waste. (The document had been circulated two week prior to facilitate discussion at the meeting). Mr. Timmermans outlined the **problem of definitions and availability of data** at the national level and indicated that a manual to help MS to establish a common framework for food waste quantification is planned for publication by the end of July.

Mr Timmermans concluded the presentation of the project by asking MS whether they agreed on a common measurement and reporting framework, what was the state of play in MS regarding food waste measurement and any obstacles foreseen, whether they believed such measurement would give sufficient insight to policy makers and whether some MS would be willing to pilot the manual in their own country.

In a "tour de table", MS shared their views on the issues raised by Mr Timmermans.

The majority of MS (UK; SE; FI; SI; RO; PT; AT; NL; MT; HU; LT; CY; IT; HR; FR; ES; EL; IE; EE; DE; DK; BG; BE) and NO **expressed support for the manual as a useful tool** and highlighted the need for consistent, accurate data to help inform policy making. However some MS (eg UK; ES; IE; BE) **expressed concern that the manual could be too prescriptive** and that country-specific issues (including current data

collection schemes) needed to be taken into account. Other MS (eg SI; PT; EL) also raised **practical questions** related to the manual (e.g. national adaptations needed; deadlines; sectors included and typology of data). Many MS (including AT, SE; IE; EE, DK; CZ) stated that they would need to consult further relevant institutions at national level – for instance on the issue of definitions- prior to sending their comments and contributions.

Finally, MS took the opportunity to outline progress made at **national level to address food waste**: NL presented its position paper on reducing food waste focussing on definitions and measurement and proposed this paper as a contribution to Circular Economy discussions; CZ reported on an ongoing study to monitor food waste to be finalised by end May; BG referred to an ongoing project related to food donation; BE referred to a new initiative in Flanders (Food Supply Chain Roadmap 2020) to be presented under agenda item 7.

The floor was given to Mr Hartmut Schrör (DG ESTAT) who gave a short presentation of the current COM project on food waste statistics, built upon data provided by MS on a voluntary basis, the so-called **food waste "plug-in."**

At the end of the presentation Mr Schrör proposed that contact details could be shared between the two MS expert groups (statistics and food waste) to facilitate sharing of data, approach and methodologies; this proposal was agreed by participants. In this context it was suggested for instance that, in context of the consultation on the FUSIONS manual, MS could bring together statistics and food waste experts in order to provide joined-up views and input to the FUSIONS team.

NL asked whether it was possible to collect food waste data, in line with the proposed Manual, based on the current Regulation on Waste Statistics. Mr Schrör explained that without a modification of the legal basis (i.e. the Regulation), this would not be possible. He also reminded participants that EUROSTAT does not carry out primary data collection but can provide support in analysing and reporting on data collected by MS. The Chair encouraged the exchange of collected data at national and EU levels.

Ms AL Gassin, who chaired the session (in part) in the absence of Ms. Bruetschy, gave the floor to Mr Per Hallvard Eliassen (Norway, Ministry of Agriculture and Food), who presented the collaborative ForMat-project set up in Norway to collect food waste data between producers, retailers and research institutions, supported by government.

Finally, Ms. Esther Valverde (Head of Food Value Chain Unit, Spanish Agriculture Department) presented the Spanish strategy to reduce food losses/waste including approach to food waste measurement.

Conclusions and next steps:

- **MS supported overall the proposed manual** developed by FUSIONS to facilitate quantification of food waste at national level, as long as it was not too prescriptive and took into account national differences;
- MS expressed interest in the quantification of resource flows throughout the food chain as well as their destinations in order to optimise food use.
- MS were asked to contact directly Mr Toine Timmermans/FUSIONS via email to **provide their feedback on the proposed manual (with copy to DG SANTE for information), if possible by 10 June** with final deadline of 1 July). In the event MS did not have any comment on the manual, they were invited to confirm this also by email.
- COM will circulate the updated version of the manual as soon as it is available. The manual will be sent by COM to both the statistics and the food waste MS expert groups as well as the COM stakeholder working group on food losses and food waste.
- Those MS wishing to pilot the manual at national level were invited to inform Toine Timmermans/FUSIONS (BE expressed openness to volunteer to test the FUSIONS measurement framework).

5. Date marking and food waste prevention

The Chair invited AL Gassin to provide an overview of DG SANTE's ongoing work. AL Gassin indicated that **COM was considering options for simplifying date labelling rules at EU level** including the possible extension of the list of foods exempt from the obligation to include a "best before" date and possible modification of the term "best before" if there is evidence that alternate wording is better understood. She indicated that discussions on this matter have been undertaken with the Working Group on Labelling under the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed. She stated that COM would also further explore, in co-operation with industry, date marking practices in relation to food waste prevention. COM intends to commission a study to map current implementation practices related to the use of date marking in the food supply chain. Finally, she outlined DG SANTE's intention to launch a consumer survey (Flash Eurobarometer) addressing food waste and date marking.

The Chair invited MS to share any information that they have on date marking and food waste prevention.

The Chair gave the floor firstly to NL to present the Wageningen UR's study on date marking and food waste (2013)¹ and secondly to the Nordic Council of Ministers to present its report on *Date labelling in the Nordic Countries*².

¹ [Wageningen UR - Study on date marking and food waste, 2013](#)

² [Nordic Council of Ministers – Date labelling in the Nordic Countries: practice of legislation, 2015](#)

NL outlined the ongoing work on date marking in relation to food waste prevention, including research, stakeholder dialogue and information materials for consumers and industry. The NL representative indicated that while the effect of extending the list of foods exempt from "best before" labelling is estimated to be modest, it could send an important signal and have a broader effect on the food supply chain, for instance through possible facilitation of food donation. The NL are intending to carry out research on the term "best before" and have requested risk assessment advice at national level regarding criteria which could be utilised to select foods which could be exempt from "best before" labelling (ie Annex X of Regulation N° 1169/2011).

Ole Jörgen Hanssen (Östfoldforskning Norway) presented **main findings of the Nordic Council study on date marking**: differences in shelf-life and date marking practices for several food categories were demonstrated in the 4 Nordic countries; differences noted also in the interpretation of legislation in relation to date marking. Phase II of this study will explore possible development of common Nordic guidelines and principles for establishing date marking and mapping of empirical data for food waste which are directly linked to food labelling.

The UK asked whether the impact of removing date labelling ("best before) on consumer behaviour had been evaluated. The NL indicated that no data were available on the possible reaction of consumers to the absence of "best before" labelling. Mr Toine Timmermans added that a new project would be launched soon in the Netherlands which could provide further insights on consumer behaviour in relation to date marking more generally.

The Chair informed participants of the negative **response received by COM from the European Consumers Association (BEUC)** regarding the possible extension of the list of foods exempt from "best before" labelling. BEUC recommended not to reduce the level of date marking information made available to consumers in food labelling.

SE took the floor to raise the **issue of egg waste in relation to date marking**. The Chair explained that the issue of date marking for eggs relates to food hygiene matters and should be addressed by the Food Hygiene working group (under the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed). She indicated that data are required in order to make a possible case for the contribution of date marking to egg waste; to date, the COM has not received such data from MS. In the absence of further evidence of egg waste linked to date marking, the Chair suggested that SE go back to the Food Hygiene working group to further discuss the issue. NO reminded the Chair that NO already in the first meeting of this group referred to data of 850 tonnes of eggs per year wasted in the retail sector of Norway, mostly due to the date marking. NO also supported SE's raising of the issue of egg waste in relation to date marking.

Conclusions and next steps:

- The Chair thanked MS for sharing their respective studies and work. She indicated that analysis of the current situation on date marking is the first step

in order to determine how best to proceed. The Chair suggested that we needed to clarify labelling rules before considering changes.

- COM will pursue its dialogue with MS and stakeholders on date marking and keep interested parties informed regarding its ongoing/future work in this area.

6. How to facilitate donation of surplus food to food banks

The Chair invited AL Gassin to provide an overview of DG SANTE's ongoing work. AL Gassin outlined that following discussions with stakeholders, who confirmed the potential benefit of guidance/guidelines on food donation at EU level, DG SANTE would like to invite MS to participate in their development.

The Chair highlighted the importance of appropriate guidelines being developed **at the national level to facilitate food donation; the COM initiative would focus on those issues which need to be addressed at EU level** and would be a common basis to help MS develop and/or complement their own guidance.

The Chair stated that, in order to help inform development of such guidelines, DG SANTE would set up **an ad hoc consultative group involving a few MS and stakeholders** willing to share their expertise and contribute to a draft document. She asked MS whether they agreed on the need for such guidelines at EU level and whether any of them would be willing to support this work.

Some MS (eg AT; DK) outlined difficulties in donating surplus food stemming from regulations related to food safety, food hygiene, liability issues etc. Clementine O'Connor stated that the recent comparative study on EU Member States' legislation and practices on food donation commissioned by the European Economic and Social Committee³ pointed to the need for clarification of EU rules in order to facilitate food donation in particular in the food service sector.

The Chair gave the floor to Norway to present a recent research carried out by Nordic Council of Ministers on food redistribution in the Nordic Region⁴. The study found amongst others that food redistribution guidance and regulations existing in the Nordic countries are more focussed on food banks than direct redistribution. Following questions, the Chair explained that recipients of surplus food are not only food banks but charities and non-profit organisations in general.

Following the presentation, the Chair asked MS whether they would agree to establish a smaller working group to draft possible guidelines in co-operation with stakeholders

³ <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.publications.34210>

⁴ [Nordic Council of Ministers - Food Redistribution in the Nordic Region: experiences and results from a pilot study, 2015](#)

concerned. BG, NO, RO and NL expressed their availability to participate. On request of AT, the Chair confirmed that COM would further clarify via email the scope of the work to be undertaken.

Conclusions and next steps:

- MS agreed to establish a smaller, *ad hoc* consultation group to help COM in developing guidelines on food donation in co-operation with interested stakeholders, with regular reporting back to the broader group.
- COM to clarify scope of the initiative and confirm volunteers via email in coming weeks.

7. Future initiatives, events and outreach on food waste Prevention

The Chair shortly outlined the upcoming events related to food waste. AL Gassin gave a brief overview of the conference on food waste to be organised by DG SANTE at EXPO 2015 on 15 October ("Fight Food Waste, Feed the Planet") in Milan to which members of the group will be invited. The NL representative gave a brief overview of the conference to be held 16-19 June in The Hague ("No more food waste"). The Chair suggested that this conference could perhaps give the opportunity for further consultation on the FUSIONS manual and/or the guidelines on food donation. The BE representative informed participants of the recent launch of the Food Supply Chain Roadmap 2020 by the Interdepartmental working group in the region of Flanders (BE). The long term objective is to reduce food losses in Flanders by 30% by 2025. The Chair also gave the floor to FR for a short update on the recent report published on food waste prevention (*Lutte contre le gaspillage alimentaire: propositions pour une politique publique*).⁵

The Chair went on to raise an issue not yet discussed by the group, that is **EU Energy Policy in relation to the "food use" hierarchy**. She indicated that more information is needed about the possible effect of economic incentives related to renewable energy policies which, in some instances, can lead to the use of food as an input to produce renewable energy.

SE added that the situation will no doubt vary by country. In SE, they are working to donate more surplus food to feed (where redistribution to people is not possible) rather than its use for energy production but there are competing objectives (e.g. municipal targets on food sent to AD).

Conclusions and next steps:

- MS were invited to provide their contributions and information regarding the possible link existing between food waste prevention and energy policies in order to help COM prepare for a more in-depth discussion at the next meeting.

⁵ http://agriculture.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Rapport-Gaspillage-alimentaire_cle0ea927.pdf

Overall conclusions and next steps

The Chair highlighted the productive and constructive discussion held throughout the day and the positive response from MS who confirmed the value of pursuing the dialogue on food waste. MS have indicated their support for the development of a comparable measurement framework for food waste and are invited to provide further comments on the FUSIONS manual (cf point n°4). An ad-hoc group will be established to support COM in development of EU guidelines for food donation in co-operation with stakeholders.

At the next meeting the results achieved by MS in reducing/prevention food waste at national level will be discussed as well as the relation between energy policies and food waste prevention.

COM has not yet defined a date for the next meeting of the Expert group on food losses and food waste which will be determined taking into account amongst others developments in discussions regarding the Circular Economy package. The Chair invited MS to continue to share information via email and invited participants to pursue food waste discussions at the conferences to be held in the NL and at EXPO 2015.