



European
Commission



FEAD Network

Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

**Background information on the complexities
of the provision of food assistance**

4th FEAD Network Meeting on 'GOOD PRACTICES IN THE SELECTION OF FOOD PRODUCTS'

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Social Europe

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1. Introduction

By 2014, almost a quarter of the population of the European Union (EU) was still at risk of poverty or social exclusion¹. Notably, over 30% of young people (between 18 and 24) and 27.8% of children (under 18) were at risk of poverty². Moreover, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) states that there is significant evidence showing that homelessness is becoming a more prevalent issue, and estimate that approximately 4.1 million individuals annually are to some extent exposed to being roofless or houseless³.

One of the key issues that individuals living in poverty are faced with is a lack of access to adequate food. Issues of food insecurity, hunger, malnutrition and undernourishment are essential when tackling poverty and social exclusion as it is unlikely that individuals are able to transition out of poverty if their basic needs are not met. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations identifies four main dimensions of food security: (1) the physical availability of food; (2) the economic and physical access to food; (3) the utilisation of food; and, (4) the stability of the other three dimensions over time⁴. A recent EU-SILC survey indicates that in 2012 11% of the EU population was unable to afford a meal with meat, chicken or fish (or a vegetarian equivalent) every second day. While improvements can be seen by 2015, with the figure decreasing to 8.5%, the situation remains dire and issues of food insecurity have also been given careful consideration in the European policy arena⁵.

One of the key instruments introduced by the EU to tackle issues of food insecurity is the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). This fund was established in 2014 to address the prevailing deprivation across the EU through the provision of material assistance (e.g. food, clothing and hygiene items) as well as particular social inclusion measures. The European Commission has additionally supported the development of an active “FEAD Network,” a community of practice of actors involved with the fund. The network not only discusses key issues on a designated online platform, but also meets face-to-face at several annual meetings.

As one of the uses of the fund is to provide food assistance in the form of food parcels to the most vulnerable individuals living within the EU, the upcoming **FEAD Network meeting on 22 February 2017** will focus particularly on the importance of the careful selection of food products when distributing food aid to ensure a healthy and nutritional diet. The purpose of this background paper is to outline the context in which these topics will be discussed. It will outline the global and European policy framework surrounding poverty and food deprivation as well as presenting the current academic discourse on the subject. It will furthermore present several examples of good practices in the selection of food in FEAD-funded initiatives and highlight several key challenges and issues that could be discussed at the meeting.

2. Global and European policy context

The right to food has been recognised as a fundamental human right for decades, and was included in the milestone document of the United Nations; the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** of 1948.

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and

¹ Eurostat defines the ‘at-risk-of-poverty rate’ as the share of people with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfer) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers.

² Eurostat (2016) Europe 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Europe_2020_indicators_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion

³ European Federation of National Organisations (2016) FEANTSA, <http://www.feantsa.org/en>

⁴ EC – FAO Food Security Programme (2008). Introduction to the basic concepts of food security, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/al936e/al936e00.pdf>.

⁵ Eurostat (2017) European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database>

the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstance beyond his control.” – Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948⁶

This particular human right was subsequently underlined in Article 11 of the **International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** of 1966⁷, and its increased recognition as a right spurred a series of political declarations and policy developments. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) organised the first World Food Conference in Rome in 1974 where the **Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition** was signed and it was declared that “*every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop their physical and mental faculties*”⁸. At the following World Food Summit in 1996, States agreed to strive to halve the number of undernourished people by 2015⁹.

Another key declaration was the **United Nations Millennium Declaration** of 2000 whereby States agreed to commit to halving the population affected by poverty and hunger by 2015. States renewed their commitments at the **high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals** in September 2008¹⁰ where they earmarked an additional USD 1.6 billion (approximately EUR 1.12 billion) to combat food insecurity across the globe. This was followed up by a Summit on the Millennium Development Goals in 2010 at which a global action plan was defined and approved¹¹. The importance of the topic was reiterated in 2015 as the first two **Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030)**¹² were dedicated to ending poverty in all forms across the globe, as well as ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Against this backdrop of global policy declarations, the European Union has actively sought to take action to end hunger and poverty across its 28 Member States. The economic turbulence following the financial crisis of 2008 in particular sparked discussion among EU policymakers regarding the need for renewed legislation tackling poverty and deprivation. By 2008, the number of people at risk of poverty was approximately 116 million (a figure that was on the rise and reached 122 million by 2014)¹³. The social systems of the Member States were under increasing strain and recognising the severity of this new trend, poverty reduction was placed at the heart of the **Europe 2020 Strategy**.

The Europe 2020 Strategy set a target to “lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020 compared to the year 2008.”¹⁴

The Europe 2020 targets are to be attained with the support of several flagship initiatives, including: the Innovation Union, Youth on the Move, the Digital Agenda for Europe, a Resource-efficient Europe, an Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era, the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs and the **European**

⁶ United Nations (2015) Universal Declaration of Human Rights booklet, http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (1966). International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

⁸ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (1974). Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/EradicationOfHungerAndMalnutrition.aspx>

⁹ Food and Agriculture Organisation (1996). World Food Summit, http://www.fao.org/wfs/index_en.htm

¹⁰ See the compilation of initiatives and commitments relating to the High-level Event on the Millennium Development goals for more information: United Nations (2008), Compilation of initiatives and commitments relating to the High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals,

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/pdf/commitments/Commitments%20compilation%20ENGLISH.pdf>

¹¹ United Nations (2010). High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly. 2010 UN Summit, <http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/>

¹² United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goals. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

¹³ European Parliament (2016). Poverty in the European Union. The crisis and its aftermaths: in-depth analysis, <https://bookshop.europa.eu/en/poverty-in-the-european-union-pbQA0216224/?CatalogCategoryID=twMKABstaW8AAAEjopEY4e5L>

¹⁴ Communication from the Commission - Europe 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth ([COM\(2010\) 2020 final](#)).

Platform Against Poverty¹⁵. Key actions of the Platform include the monitoring of Member States' economic and structural reforms in relation to the European Semester, the publishing of a **Scoreboard** on European progress¹⁶ with regard to meeting of the poverty target as well as the organisation of an annual convention.

The policies specifically aimed at tackling food deprivation and hunger are intertwined with general policy developments related to poverty alleviation. One of the first significant programmes was the **EU's Food Distribution programme for the Most Deprived Persons (MDP)** which was introduced in December 1987. The aim of the programme was to redistribute surplus stocks of various foods to the most vulnerable individuals in Europe through charitable organisations. The European Commission contributed EUR 2.5 billion to the programme and Member States were free to opt in. Following reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Commission proposed revisions to the programme¹⁷. After a series of revisions to the proposal, a new **Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)** was introduced by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union in March 2014¹⁸.

The EU has committed EUR 3.8 billion for the period 2014-20, to support Member States' actions in providing non-financial assistance to Europe's most vulnerable individuals through FEAD. Member States are able to choose what type of assistance they wish to provide according to their specific national contexts and contributions from national funds make up at least 15% of their programmes. While FEAD's preceding MDP programme focused solely on food, under FEAD Member States have the flexibility to define their programmes according to their specific national contexts. They subsequently opt for one of the two types of operational programmes (OPs). The first type focuses on the provision of food and/or basic material assistance (OP I) and the second type strives to foster the social inclusion of the most deprived individuals (OP II).

The multifaceted nature of poverty means that policy initiatives need to take a variety of shapes. The distribution of food is one of the key strands, and subsequently is also the focus of the majority of Member States making use of FEAD funding. The provision of food assistance itself, however, is a complex task as it is important to ensure that the food items in the food parcels offer a balanced and nutritional diet to end recipients. The importance of this issue is emphasised in article 5 of the FEAD regulation:

“Member States and beneficiaries shall choose the food and/or the basic material assistance on the basis of objective criteria related to the needs of the most deprived persons. The selection criteria for the food products, and where appropriate for goods, shall also take into consideration climatic and environmental aspects, in particular with a view to reduction of food waste. Where appropriate, the choice of the type of food products to be distributed shall be made having considered their contribution to the balanced diet of the most deprived persons” – Article 5 (13) of the FEAD Regulation, 2014¹⁹.

In dealing with these issues, it is important to acknowledge the developments around food and nutrition in the wider EU policy arena. For instance, since 2005, there has been a **European Platform**

¹⁵ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion ([COM/2010/0758 final](#)).

¹⁶ The key actions to be implemented at EU level to meet the poverty target are explained in the staff working document: Commission staff working paper. List of key initiatives. Accompanying document to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions. The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion COM(2010) 758 final ([SEC/2010/1564 final](#)).

¹⁷ Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1290/2005 on the financing of the common agricultural policy and Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (Single CMO Regulation) as regards food distribution to the most deprived persons in the Community ([COM/2008/563 final](#)).

¹⁸ Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, OJ L 72, 12.3.2014, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32014R0223>

¹⁹ Idem.

for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health²⁰ through which the Commission is fostering coordinated action around key issues. Building on the activities of the Platform, in 2007 the European Commission adopted a **White Paper on a Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related Health Issues**²¹. This White Paper outlined the actions that can be taken at various levels to reduce the risks of poor nutrition and limited physical exercise and correspondingly led to the setting up of a **High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity**²².

One of the key outputs of the High Level Group was the **EU Framework for National Initiatives on Selected Nutrients**²³. The purpose of this framework was to present a common vision on the European actions to be undertaken to influence the population intakes of selected nutrients. The goal was to ensure that population intake levels and dietary patterns were in line with the recommendations of the European Food Safety Authority and the World Health Organisation. It was endorsed by the Council of the European Union in 2010 and set the precedent for the development of further initiatives and actions. A particularly noteworthy document includes the foresight analysis on **Delivering on EU Food Safety and Nutrition in 2050 - Scenarios of future change and policy responses**²⁴ of the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers in which scenarios of future policy responses are explored. There was also a range of initiatives exploring food security in school settings, including a study on the **Mapping of national school food policies across the EU-28 plus Norway and Switzerland**²⁵ and a report on the **Public Procurement of Food for Health: technical report on the school setting**²⁶.

3. Summary of relevant research

The intricacies of providing food assistance have been elaborately explored by academics both in international and EU settings with issues such as nutrition and food waste at the heart of the discussions. A correlation between poverty and poor health has been witnessed in myriad studies²⁷. Correspondingly, a call is made for improved nutrition in emergency food assistance as the provision of healthy, balanced food parcels can have a positive impact both on the mental and physical well-being of end recipients²⁸.

Despite evidence relaying the benefits of balanced food parcels, there are ample examples of food banks that do not meet nutritional requirements. A recent study of food parcels distributed by food banks in the Netherlands, for instance, concluded that the parcels did not meet the national nutritional guidelines and noted an imbalance in the parcels as they predominantly included items with high levels of fat, sugar and salt²⁹. Similar conclusions were reached in a French study of food bank usage,

²⁰ European Commission (2016). EU Platform for action on diet, physical activity and health, http://ec.europa.eu/health/nutrition_physical_activity/platform_en

²¹ European Commission White Paper on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related health issues ([COM\(2007\) 279 final](#))

²² European Commission (2016). High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity, http://ec.europa.eu/health/nutrition_physical_activity/high_level_group_en

²³ European Commission (2010). EU Framework for National Initiatives on Selected Nutrients. http://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/nutrition_physical_activity/docs/euframework_national_nutrients_en.pdf

²⁴ European Commission (2013) Scoping study Delivering on EU food safety and nutrition in 2050 – Scenarios of future change and policy responses, https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/final_report_scoping_study_en.pdf

²⁵ European Commission, JRC (2014). Mapping of national school food policies across the EU28 plus Norway and Switzerland, <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/mapping-of-national-school-food-policies-across-the-eu28-plus-norway-and-switzerland-pbLBNA26651/?CatalogCategoryID=NOKKABstToYAAAEjcpEY4e5L>

²⁶ This report will be launched in February 2017

²⁷ E.g. (1) Lombe, M., Von Nebbitt, E., Sinha, A. & Reynolds, A. (2016). Examining effects of food insecurity and food choices on health outcomes in households in poverty. *Social Work in Health Care*, 55(6), pp. 440-460; (2) Bhattacharya, J., Currie, J., & Haider, S. (2004). Poverty, food insecurity, and nutritional outcomes in children and adults. *Journal of Health Economics*, 23(4), pp. 839-862; and (3) Campbell, E.C., Ross, M., & Webb, K.L. (2013). Food Improving the Nutritional Quality of Emergency Food: A Study of Food Bank Organizational Culture, Capacity, and Practices. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition*, 8(3), pp. 261-280.

²⁸ Healthwatch Wokingham Borough (2014). What impact does the nutritional value of Food Banks have on client's health and wellbeing? Wokingham Trussell Trust Food Bank, pp. 1-15.

²⁹ Neter, J.E., Dijkstra, S.C., Visser, M., & Brouwer, I.A. (2016). Dutch food bank parcels do not meet nutritional guidelines for a healthy diet. *British Journal of Nutrition* (116), 526-533.

as it was stated that only 1.2% of the participants of the study met the requirements for fruits and vegetables and only 9.2% met the national dairy requirements³⁰.

A UK study on the nutritional quality of charitable meals for homeless and vulnerable adults correspondingly concluded that food aid parcels contained high levels of fat and sugar energy, while the levels of potassium, calcium, vitamin C, vitamin A, zinc and magnesium were below the Dietary Reference Value for 20% of the breakfasts and lunches. The key barriers hindering food banks from providing healthy, balanced meals are a lack of finances, the types of food donations received and the acceptance of particular meals by end recipients³¹.

Studies have shown, however, a willingness of end recipients to consume food of higher nutritional value. A recent American study has shown that food bank users preferred to receive items such as meat, poultry, fish, vegetables and fruit rather than snack foods, candy and carbonated drinks³². While this suggests that more initiatives need to be taken to, for instance, include fresh produce in food parcels, food banks face various challenges in bringing about this paradigm shift. A 2013 study on the food banks of the Feeding America Network explored initiatives such as nutritional profiling, particular nutrition policies and the inclusion of fresh produce in food parcels. They noted several obstacles to pursuing nutrition policies including a concern on the potential reduction of the volume of food distributed, an uncertainty as to which foods should be included or removed from the parcels and, lastly, hesitance due to the risk of losing donations from key donors and community partners³³.

Despite these challenges, there are examples of food banks that have opted to provide food with a higher nutritional value. A German study illustrates the potential for an initiative such as 'Die Tafel' in Berlin. This project redistributes food from supermarkets and farmer's markets to Berlin's most deprived, particularly fruits or vegetables with minor damages or surplus fruits, vegetables and bread left over as a result of overproduction. Another German study concluded that end recipients reported a higher health status following the consumption of the foods received at the various distribution points, suggesting potential for the transferability of such a model³⁴. By adopting such an approach, food assistance providers not only support end recipients in healthier living, but notably also contribute to decreasing the amount of food wasted by food providers.

Through the creation of partnerships with commercial food providers, food assistance providers are able to redistribute surplus foods and consequently decrease the amount of food wasted. Food assistance providers are subsequently able to contribute to decreasing food waste in alternative ways as well. While studies show that it is important that food parcels comprise a balanced selection of food products, it was also noted that it was imperative that end recipients have the knowledge on how to best make use of all the different products. It is important that end recipients not only have access to healthy foods, but also have the know-how and skills on how to best prepare healthy and balanced meals.

A recent study examining the effects of food insecurity and food choices on health outcomes in households in poverty concluded that while nutrition knowledge protects individuals from health risks in houses with food security, the same cannot be said about food insecure households³⁵. This suggests that food assistance providers should go beyond the simple provision of information on

³⁰ Castetbon, K., Méjean, C., Deschamps, V., Bellin-Lestienne, C., Oleko, A., Darmon, N. & Hercberg, S. (2011) Dietary behaviour and nutritional status in underprivileged people using food aid (ABENA study, 2004-2005). *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, 24(6), pp. 560-71.

³¹ Pelham-Burn, S., Frost, C.J., Russell, J.M. & Barker, M.E. (2014). Improving the nutritional quality of charitable meals for homeless and vulnerable adults. A case study of food provision by a food aid organisation in the UK. *Appetite* (82), pp. 131-137.

³² Campbell, E.C., Hudson, H., Webb, K., & Crawford, P.B. (2011). Food preferences of users of the emergency food system. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition*, 6(2), pp. 179-187.

³³ Handforth, B., Hennink, M., & Schwartz, M.B. (2013). A qualitative study of nutrition-based initiatives at selected food banks in the feeding America network. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 113(3), 411-5.

³⁴ Tinnemann, P., Pastätter, R., Willich, S.N., & Stroebele, N. (2012). Healthy action against poverty: a descriptive analysis of food redistribution charity clients in Berlin, Germany. *European Journal of Public Health*, 22(5), pp. 721-6.

³⁵ Lombe, M., Von Nebbitt, E., Sinha, A. & Reynolds, A. (2016). Examining effects of food insecurity and food choices on health outcomes in households in poverty. *Social Work in Health Care*, 55(6), pp. 440-460.

nutrition, but rather take a more comprehensive, culturally-aware approach to the selection and preparation of healthy foods. This will ensure that end recipients prepare healthier meals, but also that they do not dispose of the items that they are unable or unsure how to use. An example of a successful initiative is the Canadian Food Bank Recipe Tasting Programme, which offered a combination of healthy recipe-tasting and an education programme that promotes healthy eating knowledge and skills to food bank end recipients³⁶.

4. Examples of existing practices of food product selection

Issues of nutrition and food waste have also been discussed by stakeholders involved with the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). FEAD network members employ varying methods in the selection of food products for distribution as well as offering accompanying measures to ensure the optimal use of food parcels. The Belgian managing authority (MA), the **Federal Public Service for Social Integration**, for instance, actively seeks to provide end recipients with balanced and healthy food parcels. The list of foods purchased using FEAD funding is established through extensive consultation with a range of partners, including nutritional experts and partner organisations distributing the parcels to end recipients (e.g. the Red Cross, the Federation of Food Banks, the Federation of Social Services and the associations of cities and municipalities). As a result they amend their food lists to include a larger variety of healthy foods. They also print recipes on the packaging of products with which end recipients are potentially unfamiliar³⁷.

Similarly, in adherence to Article 5 (13) of the FEAD Regulation, the Latvian **Ministry of Welfare** actively seeks to compose its food parcels to be consistent with healthy diet principles. They selected their food products carefully, taking into consideration their nutritional value, as well as logistical considerations regarding product distribution (e.g. the expiry date of products and special storage temperature requirements) and the appropriateness for home cooking. In 2015, for instance, the managing authority carried out a review and a series of consultations regarding potential changes in the food parcel content. Amendments were made to the parcels, and in June 2016 they supplemented the parcels with egg powder, canned beef and instant mashed potatoes and also adjusted the quantities of products supplied. As a result, the new parcels are closer to the national nutritional requirements, as they contain 94.8% of the recommended daily average protein content, 80.1% of the recommended daily average intake of fat and 116.2% of the recommended daily carbohydrate intake³⁸.

An example of a project whereby an organisation seeks to help end recipients make the most out of their food parcels is the **Culinarily Strong** project by the **Federation of Polish Food Banks**. Partner organisations observed that there was a distinct need for additional support to end recipients as they frequently lacked nutritional awareness and the independent skills to prepare the food that they received in the food parcels. The Federation of Polish Food Banks and 32 affiliated food banks subsequently opted to counter this by organising a series of workshops. In these workshops, participants learn to use recipes that include products from the FEAD food parcels. The workshops are run by trained food bank staff as well as celebrity radio and TV chefs³⁹.

A lack of nutritional awareness and knowledge of healthy food preparation was additionally signalled in Finland by the **Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)** who subsequently prepared a ten-page recipe book through which end recipients could learn various methods of preparing the food that they received in the food parcels. Each recipe contains information on the ingredients as well as step-by-step instructions in an easy-to-understand text format. Some of the recipes also contain additional information such as what ingredients can be used as a substitute if something is missing⁴⁰.

³⁶ Keller-Olaman, S.J., Edwards, V., Elliott, S.J. (2005). Evaluating a food bank recipe-tasting programme. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*, 66(3), pp. 183-186.

³⁷ More detail on this practice will be presented in a workshop at the upcoming FEAD Network Meeting.

³⁸ Idem.

³⁹ Idem.

⁴⁰ For more information consult the FEAD case study catalogue via: http://bookshop.europa.eu/is-bin/INTERSHOP.enfinity/WFS/EU-Bookshop-Site/en_GB/-/EUR/ViewPublication-Start?PublicationKey=KE0516038

5. Conclusions

While the right to adequate food has been established as a fundamental human right for many decades, there are still significant numbers of individuals suffering from hunger and undernourishment. This phenomenon is not just limited to developing countries, but can also be signalled across EU Member States. Setting the Europe 2020 goal of reducing the amount of people at risk of poverty by 20 million by 2020 has mobilised EU Member States to actively support initiatives supporting its most deprived individuals in their transition out of poverty. The provision of food assistance is one of the key elements of the EU policy response, as can be seen by the fact that the majority of Member States have opted to designate their funds from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) for this purpose.

The managing authorities and the implementing partner organisations face a variety of challenges in ensuring that the foods selected and distributed have the maximum impact on the end recipients. They need to take into consideration issues including the nutritional value of food items, as well as the ability of end recipients to use the products effectively (thus avoiding food waste). Other challenges include the need to cater to the needs of particular target groups, as there are cultural particularities across social groups. It is also important to consider the 'real needs' of the target group as they may not appreciate certain items as much as they do others. Lastly, logistical issues may hamper the selection of food products. While it is desirable to distribute fresh foods such as meat, vegetables and fruits, these items are generally costly and have imminent expiry dates. It is therefore imperative that Managing Authorities offer a variety of food items, and that there is flexibility in the selection of food products for food parcels.

Both managing authorities and partner organisations additionally need to carefully consider the methods they wish to employ to ensure the optimal use of the FEAD-funded food parcels. The upcoming **FEAD Network Meeting on 22 February 2017** seeks to explore the main challenges of food distribution as well as the potential solutions to overcoming these issues.

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