

Food Waste Knowledge Sharing Series 2024: Learning Report

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KEY TAKEAWAYS



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01

INTRODUCTION



The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF)'s Food Waste Coalition of Action brings together 19 of the world's largest retailers and manufacturers at the CEO level with a shared goal to halve food loss and waste (FLW) in their supply chains, aligned with meeting Sustainable Development Goal 12.3

The scale of the problem of food loss and waste to our society, economy and planet can be difficult to comprehend. According to the World Resources Institute (WRI), FLW accounts for 8-10% percent of annual global greenhouse gas emissions. It wastes 1/4 of fresh water used in agriculture every year. This loss represents a huge cost to the global economy of \$940 billion.

The stark reality of these figures calls for a united front in combating the issue of food waste, a critical lever in addressing the intertwined challenges of hunger, environmental degradation and climate change. Coalition members are working hard to create solutions to the FLW challenges in our own operations, and our supply chains both upstream and downstream.

To catalyse this change, the Coalition seeks to promote a culture of knowledge-sharing by offering guidance and fostering collaboration. A prime example of this is the Knowledge Sharing Series, now in its second year. This series provides members with opportunities to share case studies, stay up-to-date on the latest advancements on the issue, and benefit from each other's expertise.

Why is this important / Food loss and waste

CONTEXT: Global impact of food loss and waste is only getting worse, requiring urgent whole-chain action



40% or 2.5 billion tonnes of all food grown is wasted



1 in 10 people around the world are undernourished



10% of greenhouse gas emissions



> \$1 trillion economic losses per year



\$14-fold return on investment ratio for businesses

(sources: Champions 12.3 Progress Report 2021, FAO Global Food Loss Index 2018, UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2021, WWF Driven to Waste report 2021)

THE CGF FOOD WASTE COALITION OF ACTION

Leading a Global Commitment to Halve Food Loss and Waste by 2030

When our Coalition was launched in 2020, its members set out to achieve an ambitious yet practical strategy that will have real, lasting impacts on our global food systems and ensure more food makes it from producers, to grocery stores and finally on to consumers' tables. Thanks to its CEO leadership, our Coalition is able to drive swift action to address the important issue of Food Loss and Waste (FLW) within the industry.

CGF Food Waste Coalition of Action Membership



The Food Waste Coalition is already working to reduce waste by focusing on four priority actions:

- 1. Measurement and Reporting:** Public reporting drives internal action and builds consumer trust. The Coalition partnered with WRAP to create a baseline report to track progress in halving food waste in its operations from 2021 to 2030.
- 2. Scaling up the 10x20x30 Initiative:** The Coalition collaborates with Champions 12.3 to meet UN SDG 12.3 through the 10x20x30 Initiative, which mobilizes the entire supply chain to reduce food loss and waste.
- 3. Upstream Losses:** Approximately 30% of food loss happens post-harvest, but more data is needed. The Coalition and WWF are working with growers and buyers to measure post-harvest losses and improve system efficiency.
- 4. Consumer Engagement:** Around 60% of food waste occurs in homes. The Coalition's #TooGoodToWaste campaign educates consumers and partners with retailers to reduce household food waste. In 2024, the Sustainable Kitchen online hub was launched to inspire corporate-level campaigns that promote reducing waste and healthier eating.

We invite CGF members and interested stakeholders to see how they can get involved in the Food Waste Coalition and help support our work to drive positive change.



KNOWLEDGE SHARING SERIES



Building on the success of the [2023 Knowledge Sharing Series](#), the 2024 edition continues to provide a platform for Coalition members to engage in focused discussions on key topics related to the Coalition's work. Last year's series consisted of six online sessions covering a range of issues such as measurement methodologies, internal engagement strategies, the greenhouse gas impacts of food loss and waste (FLW), and fighting hunger through food donation. These sessions not only delivered valuable insights but also fostered open dialogue among global sustainability leaders.

Feedback from members underscored the value of these sessions, leading us to retain some topics while introducing fresh, innovative areas. The 2024 series features five sessions:

Session 1: Valorising Waste

Session 2: Innovation and Solutions

Session 3: Measuring and Managing Food Waste in Effluent

Session 4: Food Waste and Climate

Session 5: Getting Food to People in Need

Session 6: Consumer Education on Date labelling

These sessions reflect both the evolving challenges in FLW management and the Coalition's commitment to addressing them with cutting-edge solutions and shared expertise.

Each session includes presentations by Coalition leaders and guest speakers, followed by open discussions. As in previous years, these interactive segments often yield the most illuminating insights, allowing participants to learn from one another's experiences and strategies.

PURPOSE AND ACCESSIBILITY

This report offers a comprehensive overview of the 2024 series, distilling key takeaways and overarching themes to serve as a resource for Coalition members. Whether you're seeking inspiration for internal initiatives or aiming to deepen your understanding of FLW, the report provides actionable insights and practical examples.

In keeping with the CGF's commitment to transparency and cross-sector collaboration, the report is also accessible to prospective members and other stakeholders. We hope it will encourage broader engagement and foster new partnerships in the fight against FLW.

GET INVOLVED

The Knowledge Sharing Series continues to evolve, and we are always looking for ways to tailor it to member needs. If you would like to participate in the 2024 sessions, suggest topics, or learn more, please reach out to the project management team at

hs@theconsumergoodsforum.com

SESSION ONE



VALORISING WASTE

The first session of the year opened with an exchange on general food waste solutions, and the participants dove into other potential options to derive value from would-be waste.

SOLUTION EXCHANGE

Asked to note what they were most excited about, the food industry leaders on the call mentioned a range of solutions such as increasing upcycled products in retail assortments, changing mindsets at factories to not accept food waste, working with consumers on date labelling education, and addressing de-packaging of wasted food. Valorising waste in more creative ways also made the list. One of the “buzziest” topics was, insects — a main topic on the day’s agenda.

INSECT-BASED PROCESSING

Sustainability Advisor Kai Robertson introduced the topic of insect-based processing by showing a blog post she wrote more than a decade ago about a then-trending topic: insects as a sustainable source of protein for human consumption. Though that trend has lost some steam, a thriving industry is developing around farming insects such as black soldier flies, crickets and yellow mealworms for animal feed. Black soldier flies show the most promise in the food waste context because their larvae consume the widest range of foods, allowing the best opportunity for valorising waste.

Dr. Richard Swannell, Director of Impact Growth at WRAP, then shared a presentation on the intricacies of the black soldier fly market. He explained that both the larvae and the adult flies can be processed into animal feed, and they also produce an oil that is valuable in pet food as well as a natural fertiliser called frass. When used to dispose of food waste, black soldier fly processing emits less greenhouse gases than incineration or even composting and uses a negligible amount of water. This combination of benefits creates major growth potential, Swannell said.

Regulation, however, is putting some friction on that growth. For example, though black soldier flies can consume meat, food safety regulations in several countries do not allow meat to be used to produce animal feed. There are also valid food safety concerns with some substrates used to rear insects. Swannell nevertheless concluded that black soldier fly processing is a solution worth considering, especially for companies working to build a more circular future.

OTHER HIGH-VALUE DESTINATIONS

After the insect processing presentation, the participants divided into manufacturing- and retail-focused small groups to discuss this and other waste valorisation options, including solutions from the retail sphere and non-food options for waste upcycling.

Food waste-based non-food materials generated considerable interest in the manufacturing-focused small group. Participants shared thoughts on ventures such as Allégorie, a company that makes



handbags using a fruit pomace-based leather substitute, as well as biodegradable, bioplastic-based packaging. Bioplastics can offer a circular solution to tackling both food waste and plastic waste. Trials are ongoing to test the suitability of bioplastics for food use and to understand the percentage of material that can come from waste rather than virgin materials.

The retailer-focused small group discussed store-brand or co-branded upcycled food products - noting the options they are pursuing (e.g., working with their central kitchens) as well as some of the issues (e.g., pooling of available material, economies of scale affecting price points).

TAKEAWAYS

1. Black soldier fly processing is a growing field that, when combined with other waste valorisation strategies, has the potential to reduce the food industry's greenhouse gas footprint and make the food system more circular.
2. Creative upcycling concepts are popular with consumers, but logistical, transportation and food safety complexities are important to keep in mind in implementation and scaling.
3. Non-food upcycled products, such as bioplastics, may offer a viable route to divert food waste and promote circularity without running into food safety concerns.



“ (Black soldier fly processing) is a real opportunity to convert a lot more food that's not suitable for human consumption into something that then can go back into the food system as a high quality animal feed. This can reduce the impact of the food system more generally by reducing our reliance on other ingredients used for animal feed, like soy.”

Richard Swannell, Director of Impact Growth, WRAP



“ So it's not an easy exercise, but that's something that we continuously try to look at: to drive the process of valorisation, and divert upwards guided by our waste disposal pyramid.”

Julio Quintana, ESG North America Manufacturing Lead, Kraft-Heinz

SESSION
TWO



INNOVATION AND SOLUTIONS

This session gave participants a behind-the-scenes look at innovative solutions to prevent food waste being pursued by leading retailers in the UK, the US and continental Europe.

MEMBER PROFILE: A TESCO PERSPECTIVE

Tesco has been a trailblazer in food waste solutions for more than a decade. Since 2009, it has sent no food to landfill across the UK and Ireland. The company has common-sense solutions that have contributed to its success in preventing food waste, including partnerships with charities, markdowns for consumers and free “colleague shops”. Any remaining food may be processed into animal feed, fertiliser or energy.

UPCYCLING DEEP DIVE

An increasingly popular option for generating revenue and engaging with consumers on food waste is through creative upcycled products. But what does it take to turn carrot pulp into crackers and produce

ugly-fruit smoothies? Member companies provided insight into that question by sharing learnings from their own value chains.

In grocery retail, there are five main opportunity areas for upcycling in the US value chain: stocking more upcycled products on shelves, creating products in store, finding new ways to sell “imperfect” food, collaborating on private label or co-branded products, and supplying leftover or byproduct ingredients to manufacturers.

These initiatives require coordination across many groups in a retailer’s value chain including category managers, operations, suppliers, and store managers. Some challenges to implementation include limited shelf space, low consumer awareness and uncertainty around food standards. Consumer and employee education are key to successfully implementing upcycling in a retail context.

Across the grocery retail industry, upcycling remains an area of interest. According to FMI, the upcycled food industry was valued at \$53 billion in 2021, and it’s projected to be worth over \$83 billion in 2032.

Hofer KG (a member of the Aldi South Group) is the first retailer in Europe to introduce a private label brand specifically designed to rescue surplus food from the supply chain. Under the “Rettenswert” brand, HOFER gives surplus food a second chance by transforming it into high-quality, delicious products, all while addressing excess at earlier stages of the supply chain.

Product development for its exclusive private label product line, Rettenswert (Save-worthy) takes place between HOFER buying (who are



knowledgeable about consumer demand), Rettenswert (who identify and purchase the surpluses and distribute it to food producers), and HOFERs well-known Producers (who have the capabilities for processing of the surplus). The upcycled products have proved to be popular with shoppers in Austria, with products like mushroom pesto and apple barbecue sauce selling out whenever they hit shelves.

Challenges have included consumers expecting a lower price (noting that the product would otherwise have been discarded), and securing a consistent stream of surplus ingredients (e.g., some products are regularly available while others are more episodic).

PREVENTION PEER EXCHANGE

The participants then separated into retailer and manufacturer breakout groups to share actions being taken or under consideration across a range of solutions that prevent food waste in operations. The discussion helped participants make connections with peers interested in similar solutions.

The manufacturer group discussed solutions identified by ReFED for enhancing product distribution, refining product management and maximising product utilisation. The participants noted the important role that packaging plays in preventing waste, both in terms of labelling and packaging design. Modified atmosphere and oxygen absorbers, for example, can help extend the shelf life of fresh products. Manufacturer clearance stores, food banks and online sales also offer venues for connecting surplus food with consumers.

The retailer group shared which solutions they are implementing or their company is considering. This included dynamic pricing, and markdown alert applications (both internal and third-party programs) that facilitate selling at a discounted price products near the end of their best-before date. Some companies are speeding up these changes with electronic price tags that can be updated from a computer in a central office. But more analog solutions, such as discount stickers and flash sales, still show good results. The retailers discussed the benefits of partnering with apps like Flashfood or Too Good to Go, which notify users of opportunities to buy surplus food at a steep discount. Other solutions discussed included enhanced demand planning (e.g., using historic data that also takes weather into account) and active & intelligent packaging.

Chris Franke, Senior Manager of Global Sustainability at Walmart, emphasised that standardised date labels would facilitate all of the solutions discussed in the session. “All hinge on having that data embedded in some fashion that the associates and the customers can understand,” he said.



TAKEAWAYS

1. Clear messaging helps consumers and colleagues understand and take part in the fight against food waste.

2. Retailers can generate revenue and engage with customers through private-label or co-branded upcycled products that make use of their own would-otherwise-be wasted food.

3. Price reductions on surplus products, via flash sales, third-party apps and end-of-day markdowns, can help reduce in-store waste.



“ With expanded education and awareness, upcycling could prove successful for both retailers and customers,”

Rachel Faulkenberry, Sustainable Operations Coordinator for Ahold Delhaize USA.”



“ We’ve come to realize that a significant amount of education is needed for our customers to fully understand that the issue extends beyond just stores and households—it’s a problem throughout the entire supply chain.”

Nicole Gaar, Sustainability Manager, Aldi South



“ (Markdowns are) really popular with customers. It’s an opportunity to engage customers around value, which for some customers is much more compelling than the environment.”

Tony McElroy, Corporate Communications and Sustainability Leader, Tesco

SESSION
THREE

MEASURING AND MANAGING FOOD WASTE IN EFFLUENT

This manufacturer-focused session honed in on food waste in effluent, an often-overlooked but essential variable in the overall FLW equation. Without the right monitoring and capture systems in place, it's easy to let food literally go down the drain, especially for liquid products and processes that require frequent cleaning and changeovers. Participants discussed ways to slow the flow, to encourage more of industry to look at effluent as well since the conventional focus is often only what's physically destroyed, and to consider the possible value of sludge for feeding insects.

MEMBER PROFILE: BEL GROUP

Annabelle Souchon, CSR Manager at Bel Group, kicked off the conversation with an introduction to Bel Group's effluent waste strategy, centered around the ambition to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030. With a portfolio focused on dairy and fruit products, Bel sees much of its food loss going into wastewater — 60% of overall FLW, according to Annabelle. She identified three key priorities: getting more reliable data and monitoring it at all levels; integrating FLW monitoring in governance and all processes; and building and animating action plans to provide visibility on ongoing actions and their impact. FLW is a priority for Bel, with a vision and action plan that

delivers on both sustainability and productivity, aligning with the growth model of the group.

David Jaunatre, Industrial Performance Director, then explained the specific steps Bel is taking to measure and tackle effluent FLW. All Bel factories integrate daily chemical oxygen demand (COD)/wastewater monitoring to determine how much FLW enters the effluent, and rely on optical sensors to generate an alarm when a problem occurs. This data helps inform real-time decisions on the factory floor. However, David noted that the wide range of product types, from milk to cheese and whey, makes it challenging to consolidate data and calculate mass balance.

Bel estimates that 90% of its COD load comes from food losses, so monitoring this load is necessary both for wastewater treatment management and to track losses. The Environment team emphasises the importance of monitoring COD and takes action to reinforce both sampling and analysis of results.

OTHER DESTINATIONS: INSECT PROCESSING AND BIODIGESTERS

A question from Danone brought a familiar topic — insect waste processing — to the effluent waste discussion. As one example, in the UK a company is exploring using insect bioconversion to manage sewage sludge. Though the method may be an effective way to bring FLW back into the food system, there is currently a lack of regulatory clarity around using effluent and/or sludge to feed insects. A 2021 global legislative landscape suggests that plant, dairy and egg-based



MEASURING AND MANAGING FOOD WASTE IN EFFLUENT

SESSION THREE



KNOWLEDGE SHARING SERIES

materials may be acceptable substrates for insects raised to feed certain animals. The speakers agreed that further discussion should involve feedback from both food producers and insect farmers.

The session closed with a debate on biodigesters and their role in FLW and carbon reporting. Biodigesters can produce biogas, a renewable alternative to natural gas, from organic material, thereby reducing landfill load, methane emissions and fossil fuel usage. However, food scraps sent for anaerobic digestion are categorised as waste according to the interpretation used to support achievement of SDG 12.3. Some speakers argued that this reduces the incentive for investing in biodigesters, specifically those where all the outputs are fully valorised (e.g., used as biogas, soil amendment etc.). Others said that scraps disposed of this way never reach human consumption and therefore should still be considered FLW. The group discussed that the full GHG impact of such choices should be determined to assess the environmental trade offs.



TAKEAWAYS

1. Monitoring and minimising FLW in effluent is not only important for sustainability purposes; it also drives productivity and assists wastewater treatment maintenance.
2. The food industry needs to agree on standards for quantifying, consolidating and reporting effluent FLW data.
3. Clarity is needed on regulations regarding effluent FLW being used for insect feed, a promising way to bring this material back into the food system.



“ We’ve developed a roadmap of projects aimed at enhancing both productivity and sustainability, with clear objectives to reduce FLW in our plants.”

David Jaunatre,
Industrial Performance
Director, Bel Group



“ One thing we are striving to do is not just focus on the past performance, it’s also about engaging in discussions about our future plans, the projects we have in the pipeline, and how these initiatives will help us achieve our ambition.”

Annabelle Souchon, CSR
Manager at Bel Group

SESSION FOUR



FOOD WASTE AND CLIMATE

This session served as an introduction to the complex connection between food waste and climate change. Participants discussed ways to streamline work on this multifaceted topic, including setting feasible goals, standardising data collection methods, and educating suppliers and consumers.

Rosemary Brotchie began by introducing relevant resources available through the CGF, including fact sheets developed by the Food Waste Coalition of Action and the recent report [“Driving Emissions Down and Profit Up by Reducing Food Waste.”](#) She also pointed to external resources including the IFC’s [Food Loss Climate Impact Tool](#), WRAP’s [Scope 3 Measurement & Reporting Protocols for Food & Drink Businesses](#), the [Global FoodBanking Network’s FRAME methodology](#) and work done by the [Science Based Targets initiative](#).

WALMART AND PROJECT GIGATON

After the resource rundown, Chris Franke led a presentation on Project Gigaton™, Walmart’s initiative to engage its suppliers to reduce, avoid or sequester 1 gigaton of greenhouse gas emissions in product value chains by 2030 — a goal the company achieved earlier in 2024, six years ahead of schedule.

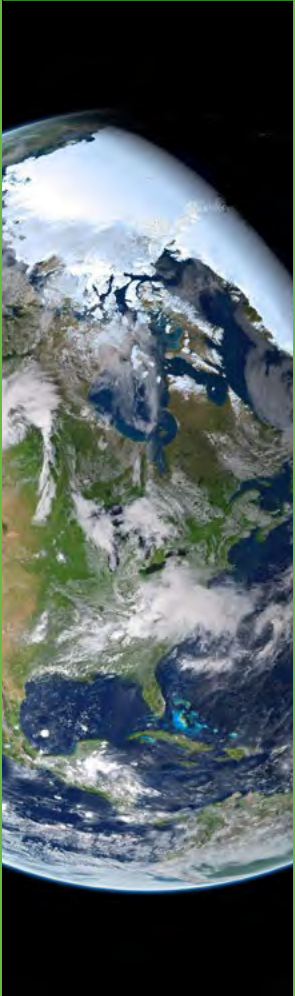
To measure this impact, Walmart created Project Gigaton™ one of the largest private sector consortiums for climate action, involving an annual survey with questions divided into six key pillars: energy, nature, waste, packaging, transportation, and project use. The company is now working to improve and expand Project Gigaton™ for the benefit of its customers, suppliers and the planet by enhancing estimates of its Scope 3 footprint to inform key actions and priorities for emissions mitigation.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

Participants then split into retail and manufacturing-focused breakout groups to address sector-specific challenges related to GHG and FLW metrics and reporting. Retailers discussed the food waste metrics they ask their suppliers to report, how they use them, and whether they see good engagement. Meanwhile, manufacturers discussed what they’re being asked to report and the challenges involved in doing so.

In the manufacturer breakout, participants said that FLW reporting feels about 10 years behind carbon reporting, in part because there is little regulation in this area and most current action is voluntary. They also noted that companies may be wary of reporting FLW data at the level of specificity required due to commercial sensitivities.

In the retailer breakout, participants noted good overall engagement with GHG and FLW reporting, but agreed that it can be challenging to encourage smaller suppliers to report FLW. Standardised data collection and calculation methods may reduce the friction on both sides of the reporting process.



CLIMATE ACCOUNTING AND TOWARDS NET ZERO

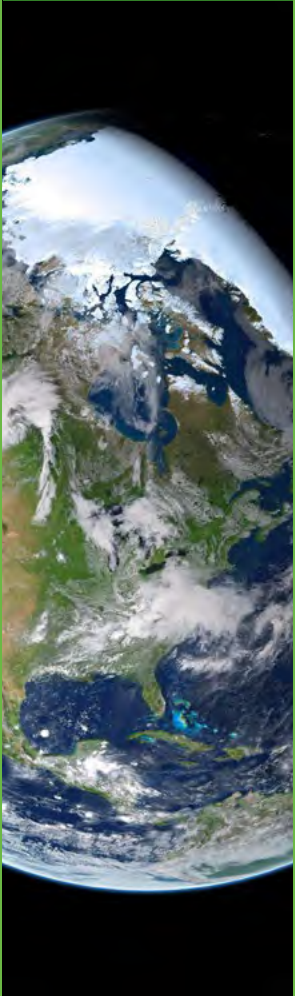
The second half of the session gave the floor to Vice President of Climate & Environment, Grant Sprick of Ahold Delhaize (who is co-chair of the Towards Net Zero Coalition (TNZ) Coalition). Ahold Delhaize has in its Climate Plan called out reducing food waste as one of the levers for combatting climate change. Grant said that food waste is a compelling subject for consumers and company leadership alike, as food waste shows up as wasted emissions within multiple scope 3 categories.

His presentation included an overview of the research that Ahold Delhaize undertook to set targets for GHG reduction. The target-setting process took into account Ahold Delhaize data, internal assessment and external research, industry benchmarks, existing supplier targets, and analyst reports. He pointed to some of the challenges of gathering data, and the importance of avoiding overestimating the benefit of climate-positive actions.

Grant used the final minutes of the session to discuss the TNZ Coalition of Action, which he co-chairs with Rebecca Marmot of Unilever and Archana Jagannathan of PepsiCo. Having recently aligned on language for its charter, the CoA's goal is to bring together as many companies as possible to identify areas of collaboration, as well as to work closely with the other CoAs. "This is a mega-opportunity to help amplify or even accelerate the work of some other Coalitions within the CGF," he said.

TAKEAWAYS

1. The CGF offers many resources that can help companies understand and calculate their climate impact, such as the Towards Net Zero Coalition's upcoming [Commodity Masterclasses](#).
2. The retailers involved in [10x20x30](#), an initiative of Champions 12.3, have shown good progress in engaging suppliers in the goal to halve food waste by 2030, but they could collaborate more on data collection and engagement tactics. Ultimately, the initiative could serve as a proof of concept for something more universally applicable across the industry.
3. In addition to being an achievable lever towards GHG goals, reducing FLW serves as a concrete example that can help the industry share the story of its net-zero journey.



“ Frans (Muller, CEO of Ahold Delhaize) attended a CGF-led training program, and afterwards, he said, ‘Did you know the majority food waste is in the home? We have to do something about this!’ So getting your leadership to participate in these sorts of learning sessions is very helpful.”

Grant Sprick, Vice President Climate and Environment, Ahold Delhaize



“ If you really look across the lanes at how different retailers, suppliers, national brands, agency coalitions, etc, how they’re all tracking, there’s a lack of standardisation, which prevents actionable insights and leads to reporting fatigue.”

Chris Franke, Senior Manager Global Sustainability, Walmart

SESSION
FIVE



GETTING FOOD TO PEOPLE IN NEED

Donation is perhaps the most logical destination for surplus edible food, but a highly localised patchwork of legislative and logistic hurdles can make it difficult to get surplus to the people who need it most. However, evolving regulations and technologies are smoothing the pathways between food businesses and food banks.



TAKEAWAYS

1. Partnerships with food banking and food rescue organisations are invaluable resources for businesses looking to navigate the regulatory landscape of food donation.
2. Both manufacturers and retailers list pickup inconsistency and a lack of transportation and infrastructure among the biggest challenges they face in donating food.
3. In addition to donating products, businesses can partner with food rescue organisations in other ways, such as through collaborative branding or through selling products at a discount.

DEFINITIONS, TARGETS AND RESOURCES

At the top of the session, following the guidance in the global [Data Capture Sheet](#), Kai Robertson highlighted for the group what the FLW programs consider in scope when companies report on the amount of surplus defined donation as “redistribution for human consumption.” This,” which refers only to food given to another organisation (in the form of donation, or in receipt of payment) that would have otherwise ended up as waste. Based on prior input from Coalition members, she summarised that would have otherwise ended up as waste. She listed different ways of setting donation targets, such as by number of meals donated or by percentage of edible surplus redistributed.

A number of resources are available to help companies understand the legal complexities of food donation. Perhaps the most comprehensive is the [Global Food Donation Policy Atlas](#), a visual guide to the legislative landscape on topics including food safety for donations, liability protection for donations and food waste deterrence policies. The team behind this resource also produces issue briefs and a webinar series.

For more regional granularity, Kai pointed to the [Food Waste Legislative Tracker](#), a guide to in-progress policy information in the US. In the EU, the European Commission manages a [Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub](#) as a “one stop shop” for staying up to date on regional and national FLW laws.

A new report that asked store associates for input on how to improve donations was also cited as providing compelling insights, led by the US retailer Albertsons ([Fresh Rescue Champions Project: Final Report](#)).



SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES SPEED SHARE

After the introduction, the participants took part in a roundtable discussion of their companies' food rescue and donation programmes. Each shared a key challenge and at least one element that is working well.

The retailers in the roundtable included ADUSA, Aldi Sud, MAF Carrefour, Loblaw, Tesco, Esselunga and Walmart. Grocery stores, even when part of large chains, are deeply embedded in their local communities, so their donation successes naturally arise from relationships with local food banks and shelters. Aldi Sud and Esselunga said that they have partnerships with food banks and food rescue organizations which also work locally, operating according to the specific needs of each store.

However, a bespoke approach has its own challenges. Several speakers noted a lack of infrastructure, transportation and equipment for pickups and deliveries, especially critical for perishable items such as meat and dairy. The manufacturing sector was represented by Bel, Danone, and McCain Foods. Like the retailers, these companies found success in partnerships with food banking and food rescue organisations that know how to get their products to people in need. While retailers were primarily concerned with donating ready-for-consumer food, manufacturers also have donation opportunities at other stages in production. Bel, for example, in addition to donating near-expiry fished goods from their warehouses, is considering donating unused raw materials or semi-finished products from plants, with some products suitable for human consumption and others for animal feed.

While food bank users may never realise that a donation came from a local supermarket, manufacturers had concerns about the perception of their brands in a donated context, especially if food is donated

because of a visible quality issue (that does not affect the product's safety or taste). If food bank users don't accept a product, it will end up as waste even after donation.

The participants discussed other ways to support food banks and food rescue organisations, especially if improvements to their operations reduce the amount of food they have to donate. They also raised the need to review whether processes linked to supplier credits inhibit the donation of edible surplus.



“

Esselunga works together with a non-profit partner whose volunteers operate throughout the national territory. The main challenge is the difference in local infrastructures, especially for stocking and keeping produce refrigerated, on site as well as during transport. In an effort to standardize procedures, employees from Esselunga's quality assurance department provide training for volunteers and regularly visit the facilities.

Astrid Palmieri, Chief Sustainability Officer, Esselunga



“

Partnerships like the ones we have with the Global FoodBanking Network and FoodRecovery.org help us reach more communities, build stronger networks, and donate surplus food where it's needed most.”

Gokce Gultekin, Global Zero Waste Lead, Danone

SESSION
SIX

DATE LABELS: SUPPORTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

The final Knowledge Sharing Session of the year turned the focus to date labels, an often-overlooked tool that can be harnessed to prevent food waste. After an overview of current and emerging regulations and education campaigns in the US and Europe, participants discussed their own engagement with labelling innovations. The session also included an overview of an FAO report on food recovery and redistribution.

POLICY UPDATE FROM THE US

Emily Broad Leib, Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Food Law and Policy Clinic at Harvard Law School, began the session with an overview on current US legislation. She shared a few color-coded maps that illustrated the patchwork state of policy: The US is one of few countries in the world with no federal policy for date labeling, and regulations vary widely among states.

But both the federal government and some states are showing signs of moving forward, encouraged by the climate change impact of wasted food and the rising cost of living. California, often ahead on environmental policy, adopted a law in September that standardises

“BEST if Used by” as a quality date and “USE by” as a discard date. A draft bill in Congress proposes similar rules, supported by consumer education on reading the dates.

The country’s two agencies overseeing food safety, the USDA and the FDA, have requested information from industry on best practices and barriers to standardising date labelling, with [comments due 3 February 2025](#). Emily encouraged companies to submit comments to some or all of the 13 questions. “It’s a great moment to share whatever knowledge you have about how this practice works at your group, and to show that this is an important topic that needs action” she said.

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE NETHERLANDS

Karin Roosen, Program Manager for Food Waste Free United, then spun the globe to the Netherlands, which has already standardised “use by” and “best before” labels in keeping with EU regulations. Noting that 50% of Dutch consumers do not know the difference between these dates and that 30% of food waste still takes place in the home, Karin’s organisation believes that more can be done.

Food Waste Free United (FWFU) has partnered with several branch organizations and Too Good to Go (TGTG) to initiate a government-endorsed Date Labelling Coalition that agreed, among other things, to adopt clarifying icons on packaging, actively inform consumers about the difference between date labels and not indicate a “best before” date on products that don’t require it. Some of the largest food companies and retailers active in the Netherlands joined this



coalition and now work together to encourages consumers to “look, smell, taste” to determine whether ‘Best Before’ food is still edible rather than relying on the date. Karin encouraged companies to join the coalition to make a “big societal and climate impact for relatively small effort.”

LESSONS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR FOOD RECOVERY AND REDISTRIBUTION

The session’s final presenter was Myriam Annette, International Consultant for FAO’s Initiative for Food Loss and Waste Reduction in Europe and Central Asia. Together with the Global FoodBanking Network and Danone, FAO published a report on food recovery and redistribution that explores and documents innovative strategies to reduce food waste. The report identifies food donation apps and other digital tools among the most powerful recent additions to the waste-prevention arsenal. Predictive analytics and real-time tracking systems help companies to predict surpluses, protect food safety and provide transparency to donors and recipients, preventing food from getting lost between the cracks in the system.

Myriam noted, however, that these technologies and food redistribution infrastructure in general are in their infancy in many parts of the world. She said that strategic partnerships and multi-stakeholder agreements involving companies, governments and NGOs are key to developing this infrastructure and encouraged companies to participate in policy discussions around food donation. “Much can be learned from each other,” she said.



TAKEAWAYS

1. The US is making progress on standardising date labels to prevent food waste, with California leading the way and federal initiatives in development. Companies in the EU, which has already mandated “use by” and “best before” labels, can offer guidance on this journey.
2. Many EU consumers do not understand the difference between “use by” and “best before” dates. The “look-smell-taste” campaign encourages consumers to use their senses to evaluate food after the “best before” date.
3. Emerging technologies and global partnerships are driving improvements in food recovery and redistribution, but infrastructure gaps in developing regions emphasise the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships.



KNOWLEDGE
SHARING SERIES



“ If you think about it, it’s actually crazy that we in this Western world only look at the date labels to know if our food is still edible. If you look at other parts of the world, everybody knows to use their senses to know if food is still edible.”

Karin Roosen, Program Manager, Food Waste Free United



“ Localized collaboration with community organizations and NGOs plays a crucial role in ensuring surplus food reaches those in need, particularly in areas where inadequate infrastructure, such as storage and transport, poses significant challenges.”

Myriam Annette, International Consultant for the Initiative for Food Loss and Waste Reduction in Europe and Central Asia, FAO

Knowledge Sharing Session speakers introduced a number of resources to help companies implement the FLW topics discussed in the series, including tools for measurement and reporting, internal engagement and action. Below is a summary of some of these resources.

Global Food Donation Policy Atlas

Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic developed this atlas to provide insights into the legislative landscape of food donation policies, including liability protection and safety standards. Explore the interactive tool at atlas.foodbanking.org.

ReFED U.S. Food Waste Policy Finder

This tool tracks in-progress policies at the federal and state level in the United States that impact food waste prevention, rescue and recycling. Access at policyfinder.refed.org.

The European Commission's Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub

The EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub is a one-stop-shop for stakeholders active in the area of food loss and waste prevention and reduction. It provides a database for food loss and waste prevention resources, news on EU-funded projects concerning food loss and waste prevention and information on national initiatives. Available at ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste/eu-food-loss-waste-prevention-hub.

The Food Waste Atlas

Co-founded by the World Resources Institute, the Food Waste Atlas tracks global food waste to help governments and companies understand and help to combat it. Access the platform at thefoodwasteatlas.org.

IFC's Food Loss Climate Impact Tool

This tool, focused on emerging markets, estimates greenhouse gas emissions associated with crop and food loss. Access the tool (as an Excel file) at www.gafspfund.org/ifcs-food-loss-climate-impact-tool.

WRAP's Scope 3 Measurement & Reporting Protocols for Food & Drink Businesses

This methodology helps businesses to measure and track progress in reducing supply chain greenhouse gas emissions. Download the protocols at www.wrap.ngo/resources/guide/scope-3-ghg-measurement-and-reporting-protocols-food-and-drink.

Global FoodBanking Network's FRAME Methodology

This new methodology helps food banks quantify their role in cutting food waste and methane emissions. Explore the methodology at www.foodbanking.org/frame-methane-methodology.

Towards Net Zero Coalition of Action Commodity Masterclasses

The Commodity Masterclasses are one of many CGF resources that can help companies understand and calculate their climate impact. Learn about the masterclasses and watch recorded sessions at www.theconsumergoodsforum.com/environmental-sustainability/net-zero/key-projects/commodity-captain-masterclasses.



ABOUT THE CONSUMER GOODS FORUM

The Consumer Goods Forum (“CGF”) is a global, parity-based industry network that is driven by its members to encourage the global adoption of practices and standards that serves the consumer goods industry worldwide.

It brings together the CEOs and senior management of some 400 retailers, manufacturers, service providers, and other stakeholders across 70 countries, and it reflects the diversity of the industry in geography, size, product category and format. Its member companies have combined sales of EUR 4.6 trillion and directly employ nearly 10 million people, with a further 90 million related jobs estimated along the value chain. It is governed by its Board of Directors, which comprises more than 55 manufacturer and retailer CEOs.

For more information, please visit:

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