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Food Loss and Waste Reduction in Europe and Central Asia: Programme overview and approach to implementation



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SAVE FOOD initiative in Europe and Central Asia

Food loss and waste (FLW) constitutes a complex problem for global food security and sustainable food systems, because the losses are difficult to measure, the causes are multiple, and solutions have varying economic, environmental and social impacts, including on health, income and food security. Due to the magnitude and intricacy of the problem, a global, multi-disciplinary response is required that involves all actors and stakeholders affected by FLW.

As a custodian agency of SDG 12, FAO spearheads the fight against food loss and waste, working with a broad spectrum of stakeholders and partners to tackle the problem.

With the objective of decreasing the overall impact of FLW through joint planning and implementation and efficient use of resources, FAO designed the Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction – [SAVE FOOD](#) – to guide and facilitate collaboration among all actors involved in addressing the problem. SAVE FOOD takes a multi-disciplinary holistic, integrated food supply chain and food systems approach, in order to ensure that FLW reduction is technically, economically, environmentally and socially acceptable, feasible and cost-effective.

Under the umbrella of the Global SAVE FOOD Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction, FAO is implementing a comprehensive FLW reduction programme in Europe and Central Asia.

To this end, the Organization supports countries in non-EU Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, the Caucasus, Turkey and Central Asia in the development of national strategies for FLW prevention and reduction and the implementation of associated strategies, in close collaboration with national authorities, non-governmental organizations, private sector actors and other interested partners.

FAO's Food Loss and Waste Reduction Programme incorporates the following areas of action:

1) Development of national strategies and actions plan for FLW prevention and reduction

Field work (surveys) is conducted in selected value chains to collect data and information on FLW (drivers, causes and impacts). Existing national legislation and policies related to FLW prevention and management are also analysed. This analysis will determine the existence of any legal basis for food disposal and secondary use of FLW, the presence of gaps in legislation, and if the current framework favours or, on the contrary, prevents innovative action in the management of FLW.

The development of subsequent national FLW reduction strategies is based on the data collected from field surveys and the analysis of legislation and policies.

The national strategies on FLW prevention and reduction favour an approach that closes the loop on FLW during the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food, and supports the shift to a circular value chain. Under this approach, the priority is to prevent FLW, then to rescue and recover food before it gets wasted, and finally to recycle it for non-food uses, in order to minimize any waste of resources invested in food production.





2) Strengthening of national capacities and FLW measurement systems

Training national statistical offices and value chain actors in the use of various existing tools for FLW measurement is a main focus of the programme designed to strengthen the capacity of countries to monitor FLW levels at different stages of food value chains.

3) Promotion and enhancement of food recovery and redistribution systems

After prevention at the source, the recovery and redistribution of safe and nutritious food for direct human consumption is the preferred option for reducing FLW at the level of food businesses.

FAO has developed guidelines for food recovery and redistribution (food R&R) based on ongoing work in the region (Europe and Central Asia). The document offers guiding principles and recommendations to policy-makers regarding the implementation of enabling regulatory and legal frameworks that facilitate food R&R activities – including food donations – in their countries.

The guidelines compile examples of policy measures and legislative adjustments introduced in different countries, in particular in the European Union.

Based on these guidelines, which have been shared with all countries in the region as well as relevant networks and partners, FAO helps legislators to create legal and policy environments conducive to food R&R, and supports food sector operators implementing food R&R systems and activities.



4) Knowledge management and capacity development

The programme further envisages the development of guidelines on good practices for the prevention and reduction of FLW at different stages of the value chain and training for the benefit of value chain actors to strengthen their knowledge and capacities in this area.

5) Raising awareness and behaviour change

Creating awareness and improving understanding of the causes and impacts of food loss and waste, as well as the benefits that reducing FLW brings in terms of improving food security and nutrition, promoting sustainable environmental practices and natural resource use, is essential to drive behaviour change and encourage individuals and communities to sustain such behaviours.

In line with regional communication strategies, media and public information campaigns are carried out across the region, including the dissemination and promotion of messages, and the organization of webinars, conferences and other outreach activities.

In addition, FAO focuses on the education of children to create a culture of change, in order to ensure that efforts to address the food waste and loss problem are sustained. Accordingly, FAO has worked in close collaboration with the International Food Waste Coalition, a group of educational specialists and sociologists, to develop a set of teaching manuals, "[Do Good: Save Food!](#)", which are being used in primary and secondary schools in Albania, Croatia, Hungary and Lithuania, and will be distributed in Central Asia, North Macedonia, Portugal, Turkey and Ukraine to promote food waste reduction among children.





6) Collaboration and partnership development

As with other complex, multifaceted problems, the fight against FLW calls for broad collaboration between the public and private sectors, civil society, academia and financial institutions – in order to better identify, measure and understand solutions. Partnership and collaboration are one of the most effective ways to meet the challenges posed by FLW.

FAO's [SAVE FOOD Community of Practice on Food Loss and Waste Reduction](#) aims to promote and facilitate multi-disciplinary, solution-driven collaboration among public, private and civil society actors, enabling them to identify and create synergies and work together in a more effective and better-coordinated manner.

Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Turkey

Food loss and waste represents a severe problem in Central Asian countries, however no unified or comprehensive approach exists to address the issue at the sub-regional level. The project “Reduction of Food Loss and Waste in the SEC Countries” has thus been designed to initiate regional dialogue, mobilize actors both public and private, and facilitate action to tackle FLW.

Funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Turkey through the FAO-Turkey Partnership Programme on Food and Agriculture (FTPP II), the project aims to assist Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to develop and implement national strategies and action plans to reduce FLW, incorporating policy and technical aspects and targeting all subsectors of the food system from farmers to consumers.

In Turkey, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and FAO have developed a National Strategy on Prevention, Reduction and Monitoring of Food Loss and Waste and an Action Plan, in accordance with objectives set out in the Government's 11th Development Plan (2019-2023). The FAO-Turkey partnership has also launched a national [movement](#), uniting public authorities, social impact groups, major national players in the food production, retail and hospitality sectors, media agencies, and public figures in the fight against food loss and waste.

In order to implement the Strategy, MAF with the support of FAO and national food business operators, developed sectoral guidelines, training and informational materials. These included guidelines for the food service and hospitality sector, with recommendations to prevent food waste, as well as information on how to use unavoidable food surpluses (e.g. donations to people in need), and the re-use of leftovers and/or non-edible food waste for other purposes. The partnership also prepared guidelines for retail actors, training materials on the reduction of FLW for major food manufacturers and retailers in Turkey, and training materials for agricultural cooperatives on the prevention and reduction of FLW.

FAO is also assisting MAF in the drafting of regulations conducive to the development of a food banking system by sharing the expertise and relevant experience of other countries in the region.

The application of a regional approach to designing national strategies requires a thorough analysis of the country-specific context, including existing policy and legislative



frameworks, and relevant national strategies (e.g. agricultural development, environmental, etc.), as well as the identification and evaluation of the causes and impacts of FLW based on the assessment of key value chains.

This analysis and related fieldwork are ongoing in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The first results are being compiled into technical reports and will be discussed during national stakeholder workshops where, based on the data collected, national strategic priorities for the prevention and reduction of FLW will be identified and defined.

Successful development and implementation of national strategies will rely on the close collaboration and contribution of all stakeholders.



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