



# Addressing Food Waste in Times of Crisis

## Brussels Development Briefing no. 28

Brussels, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012

On 26 June 2012, CTA organized the 28th Brussels Development Briefing – part of a series of bimonthly Development Briefings on ACP-EU rural development issues. More than 150 participants gathered in Brussels to discuss the causes and extent of food losses and the strategies to prevent and reduce food waste.

**Addressing Food Waste in Times of Crisis.** This Briefing examined the causes and extent of food losses, and the impact they have on food security, food quality and safety, economic development and the environment. Strategies to prevent and reduce food waste and the necessary policy frameworks that need to be put in place were discussed. Different perspectives and experiences were shared from academia, and successful initiatives and programmes..

This Briefing was a joint initiative of CTA, European Commission (DG DEVCO), the ACP Secretariat and ACP Group of Ambassadors, CONCORD and various media.

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Delegates at the Food Waste Development Briefing no. 28

**It is important to increase awareness of the economic, social and environmental challenges related to food losses and waste, and to emphasize the importance of respecting food through responsible consumer behavior and changes in attitudes to food.**

It is also important to bring the issue of food loss and waste to the attention of the highest policy levels in both developed and developing countries. In this regard, it is good to note that the G20 Summit reaffirmed its commitment to agriculture and food security. The G20 Leaders' Declaration specifically noted the need "to launch pilot projects focused on innovations in nutrient-fortified crops, post-harvest waste-reducing storage solutions and crop quality technologies in Sub-Saharan Africa".

## Panel 1: Causes and extent of food losses

In the first panel, which was chaired by Ishmael Sunga, Chief Executive of the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions, Robert Van

Otterdijk, Agro-Industry Officer in the Rural Infrastructure & Agro-Industries Division at FAO, began by providing an overview of the extent of food losses and waste in different regions. Recent studies commissioned by FAO estimate yearly global food losses and waste at roughly 30% for cereals, 40-50% for root crops, fruit and vegetables, 20% for oilseeds, meat and dairy, and 30% for fish. Total food losses globally have been estimated at 1.3 billion tonnes per year, which is roughly one-third of the world food production for human consumption.

In industrialized countries, the quantity of food thrown away is of the same magnitude of the total food production in Sub-Saharan Africa. Food is lost when production exceeds demand, something that could be prevented through better communication and cooperation between farmers and buyers. High appearance quality standards and consumer expectations are also a significant factor for generating food waste. Generally, there is a lack of 'healthy' consumer attitudes when it comes to food in industrialized countries.



Tristram Stuart



Andy Dawe



John Orchard



Denis Salord; Michael Hailu



Robert Van Otterdijk

In developing countries, food is lost or wasted due to poor production planning, premature harvesting, poor storage and packaging facilities, and a lack of infrastructure. By improving these areas and, thus, the overall efficiency of food supply chains, less food would be lost. Other measures should be to develop knowledge and capacity of food chain operations, in order to apply safe food handling practices and to develop contract farming linkages between processors and farmers.

There is a need for increased partnership and to fill the knowledge gap relating to the extent of food losses, causes, and impact in the food supply chain (FSC), and the feasibility of solutions. FAO has launched the initiative [SAVE FOOD](#), a global initiative on food losses and waste reduction, covering such areas as the effect of food waste and losses on food prices, the relationship between date marking and food waste, along with general awareness-raising on food losses and waste.

## Why do we throw away food and what to do about it?

Tristram Stuart, Consultant and Campaigner from the United Kingdom and prize-winning Author of [Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal](#), provided data

relating to food losses and waste, demonstrating, for instance the food supply of each country as a percentage of the nutritional requirements versus GDP or the amount of food fit for human consumption that is given to livestock – in the United States, four times that of what is needed for human consumption. He also showed photos of food losses and waste occurring both at the beginning of the FSC – photos of fields of wasted fruit and vegetables – as well as in the retail sector – photos of food that is still edible, but has been thrown away having passed its sell-by date. Although many supermarkets in the UK are increasingly redistributing food, there is still a considerable need to increase efficiency in supermarkets. At the same time, the food thrown away by supermarkets is a small percentage of the food wasted by suppliers. Mr. Stuart suggested an increase in feeding wasted food to livestock (after cooking it, in order to prevent disease), instead of anaerobic digestion. Furthermore, for consumers, it is possible to relearn the methods to reduce food waste.

## Grain postharvest losses in Sub-Saharan Africa

John Orchard, Director of Research at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, United Kingdom, highlighted that one of

the main approaches to alleviating the lack of resources for African farmers is by reducing the amount of post harvest losses (PHL), which would increase the food supply without a further increase in the use of vital resources, such as land, labor, water and agricultural inputs. A reduction would also improve the livelihoods of producers who would be able to access markets better and operate in higher value market chains. This would in turn give incentives to producers to adopt improved approaches and technologies and provide a more stable and improved food supply for consumers. The [African Postharvest Losses Information System](#) (APHLIS), an initiative of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, FAO, ASARECA and SADC, was created to provide weight loss estimates of cereal grains in Sub-Saharan Africa, in order to fill the gap of data relating to the size and location of losses. The system is based on a network of local African experts who supply relevant data and verify loss estimations, and provide a loss calculate to estimate cumulative weight losses. In April 2012, APHLIS expanded its operations from East and Southern Africa to include West and Central Africa and will initiate further developments to provide a standardized way of collecting loss data in the field, offer a system for local experts to generate a narrative to accompany and explain the loss estimates and provide basic information on the approaches that should be taken by smallholders to



Toine Timmermans



Dr. Silvia Gaiani



Onya Akonopeesa



Stephen Mbithi

reduce both losses of quantity and quality of their cereal grains. The loss estimates from APHLIS will be used to influence policy makers, identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of value chains, identify further opportunities and improve food security.

## Building business partnerships to reduce waste

Andy Dawe, Head of Food and Drink, Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP), United Kingdom, emphasized the importance of tackling food waste, which could deliver significant economic benefits, in terms of landfill avoidance and the mitigation of climate change. WRAP's strategy to reduce food waste includes raising awareness and prioritizing household food waste reductions, in order to change their behavior and recognize the simple ways to reduce waste, such as by planning meals correctly. At the consumer level, large emphasis is put on the retail environment, for instance by encouraging the provision of a wider range of package sizes. WRAP has developed comprehensive evidence based on levels of food waste in the UK (see [Love Food Hate Waste](#)), in order to raise awareness of the issue, develop a strong incentive for change and give focus to the areas where consumers need the

most help, businesses and local authorities can benefit and the biggest impacts can be made.

The [Courtauld Commitment](#), an agreement with the major UK retailers and many of the major food and drink manufacturers over three years, has three targets: a) to reduce the carbon impact of packaging by 10% b) to reduce household food and drink waste by 4% c) to reduce the traditional grocery product waste in the grocery supply chain by 5%. It has proved to be successful with businesses having reduced food waste by 13% and avoiding CO<sub>2</sub> (equivalent) emissions and water wastage.

Following the first panel, the **debate** involved issues surrounding which sectors to target – WRAP mainly targets households because the most substantial amount of waste occurs in households; emphasis on looking at other causes of PHL, such as carnivorous birds that can destroy 100% of crops or losses due to difficulties in accessing markets and poor infrastructure; the importance of knowledge sharing among scientists with more advanced research and technology (the example of Germany was used here); the importance of institutions that are key to assure that new innovations are used and investments are made. It was highlighted that problems in the FSC have to be tackled by those who are most affected, that is, farmers and stakeholders, and that it is the role of national governments, development organizations and other partners

to support them in creating an environment to implement the much-needed solutions to reducing losses and waste.

## Panel 2: Strategies to prevent and reduce food waste

### Optimizing the use of agrofood materials

The second panel was chaired by H.E. Brave Ndisale, Ambassador of the Embassy of Malawi. Toine Timmermans, Programme Manager of Sustainable Food Chains at Wageningen UR, the Netherlands, began by sharing the successes of FUSIONS, a European multi-stakeholder platform with the aim to encourage, engage and support key actors to deliver a 50% reduction in food waste and a 20% reduction in the food chain resource inputs by 2020, contribute to the harmonization of food waste monitoring and to the development of a 'Common Food Waste Policy' for the 27 EU Member States, extend the shelf life of food products through innovative packaging and/or mild conservation technology and to share best practices in catering, in order to identify the largest avoidable food wastage and find solutions to avoid them. Next steps will include building consensus between stakeholders on the goals, targets and definition, developing



a consistent approach to acquire reliable data for the different parts of the food chain, and coordinating actions by an independent and respected party with focus on the total supply chain.

### Transforming food waste into a resource: Las Minute Market – a win-win case study

Dr. Silvia Gaiani, Research Fellow at the University of Bologna, Italy, demonstrated the different options to recycle and recover food, and prevent food waste in Italy, based on the example of *Last Minute Market*, a project which links retailers that can distribute surplus food to charities in need of food. It is considered to be a win-win model as all of the stakeholders involved have benefitted. Their strategy is based on the '4 R's' – *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover* – for the prevention of food waste. A *Joint Declaration against Food Waste* was created, made up of 10 goals to reduce the global amount of food, water and energy waste by 50% and to make food waste one of the priorities on the European agenda. It was presented to the European Parliament in October 2010 and a [Resolution](#) was elaborated by the Agriculture and Rural Commission, which was subsequently presented to

the European Parliament in November 2011, and approved in January 2012. Dr. Gaiani concluded by stating that more accurate data relating to food waste at the national and global level is still lacking, and the need for comprehensive, integrated, multisectoral and multi-level action that focuses on efficiency and transparency to reduce food waste.

### Addressing post-harvest losses: perspectives from the farmers

Onya Akonopeesa, Farmer leader and Board Member of the Uganda National Farmers Federation, which is a member organization of the Eastern African Farmer's Federation (EAFF), stated the threat of PHL and food waste to the food and nutrition situation of farmers in Africa. Up to 30% and 50% of fruit and vegetables are lost at the postharvest stage due to logistical challenges, including storage and transportation, as well as losses from insects and pests, and weather-related damage. There is, thus, a need to invest in market development and organization by restructuring trade and investing heavily in rural infrastructure, such as storage, roads, ICTs. At the farmer level, there is a need to encourage entrepreneurship and to

promote co-operatives and farmer enterprises to conduct business. The EAFF has developed a new strategic plan and seeks to address policy processes, investments in knowledge systems to enhance sharing experiences and lessons, and institutional development through capacity strengthening.

### What solutions are there for losses in the horticulture sector?

Stephen Mbithi, Chief Executive Officer of the Fresh Produce Exporters Association of Kenya (FPEAK) and Coordinating CEO of the Horticulture Council of Africa (HCA), highlighted the great concern of fresh produce waste in Africa. Mr. Mbithi gave examples of fresh produce that is susceptible to high losses, such as tomatoes. He described the move towards more export-oriented fresh produce, such as beans, which can be easily bulked and sold for alternative markets, or prolonging the shelf life of fresh produce, such as onions that naturally have a long shelf life, and by processing mangoes into juice. Indeed, the losses of mangoes has decreased, showing the sustainable role of value addition and technology on PHL.

In the **final debate**, the audience raised the importance of including smaller regions, especially the Caribbean and Pacific, in studies and solutions to tackle food losses and waste. Solutions that make a real difference to food availability, farmers' income and reduction of food waste are necessary. The

importance of the use of technology in the preparation of food was highlighted as well as the necessity to act at the national, regional and international level. Inflated degrees of wastage, particularly in industrialized countries, create an artificial scarcity in low-income countries. Institutions that would be most effective in

tackling this problem need to be identified. The emphasis will remain on how to encourage studies on data and the importance of exchanging lessons, capacity-building and the involvement of different key players, both government institutions and from the private sector, to continue the dialogue.

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