



# FOOD DONATION TO PREVENT FOOD WASTE

**FEBA's position on the proposal for  
EU-level food waste reduction targets**





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## About FEBA

The European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) is a European non-profit organisation and works in collaboration with 24 Full Members and 6 Associate Members in 30 European countries. Since 1986, FEBA's mission has consisted in representing its membership at European and international level; supporting and strengthening Food Banks in Europe by providing training, sharing best practices and knowledge, establishing partnerships; and fostering the creation and development of new Food Banks. FEBA brings together a network of Food Banks which are committed to prevent food waste and to reduce food insecurity.

In 2021, the 341 Food Banks belonging to our membership redistributed 907,280 tonnes of food to 45,810 charitable organisations providing food assistance to 11.8 million most deprived people thanks to the professionalism of 39,781 co-workers (83% volunteers). In addition to surplus food from the food supply chain, FEBA Members also redistribute food from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and the EU Fruits and Vegetables withdrawal scheme, as well as from individual and corporate food collections.



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# 1 Foreword

This document is aimed at communicating the position of FEBA and its members on the European Commission's proposal for EU-level food waste reduction targets. Besides reflecting on the policy options in question, **it highlights the relevance of changing the perspective: moving from the notion of reducing food waste towards the idea of increasing Food Donation as an effective and efficient measure to both prevent the waste of precious resources and raise the food quantities redistributed to people in need.**





# 2

## Introduction

Food Banks<sup>1</sup> are an integral part of our food system as they provide a tangible contribution to food waste prevention and food insecurity reduction.

Since their establishment they have addressed the systemic inefficiencies and misfunctions of the market providing a tangible solution with spillover effects on food business operators, the planet, and the people. In addition, times of crises such as those provoked through the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine with its repercussions on the global food system, have proven the indispensability of Food Banks.

We have seen food insecurity worsen and expand across Europe, as overnight people's ability to access reliable sources of food is affected, either through severe economic insecurity or market failure triggered by the impaired provision of goods and services.

In 2021, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, 90% of the FEBA Members involved in a comprehensive survey reported a continuing increase in food demand resulting from growing numbers of people in need compared to pre-COVID levels.<sup>2</sup> Food Banks reacted to this surge in vulnerability with reinforced food recovery and redistribution activities. On top of the ongoing health crisis and its ramifications, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine has aggravated the ability of many to afford food, with the people of Ukraine being hit the hardest. Since the beginning of the military conflict, in an act of solidarity, FEBA Members in Western countries are providing aid and food support to their colleagues in Eastern Europe, especially in Ukraine, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

*Since start of the war, the Kyiv City Charity Foundation "Food Bank" (KCCF) redistributed over 1,180 tonnes of humanitarian aid, of which 340 tonnes came from abroad and more than 870 tonnes were donated by local stores and producers. Beneficiaries are mostly fled people, medical institutions, military people, and territorial defence for a total amount of around 3,000 people daily. Moreover, according to data provided by FEBA Members in April 2022, the increasing demand for food in those countries adjacent to Ukraine is clearly evident.*

<sup>1</sup> In this document the use of 'Food Bank(s)' refers to the members of the European Food Banks Federation. In particular to non-profit organisations, with a legal status, recovering surplus food from actors in the food supply chain and transport, store, and redistribute it to a network of affiliated and qualified charitable organisations including charities, social restaurants, social enterprises, etc. Food Banks may also redistribute produce withdrawn from the market, food coming from the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, and food from food collections. Furthermore, Food Banks can process and prepare food and/or meals which are provided to the charitable organisations. In some countries (Estonia, Germany, and Netherlands) Food Banks redistribute food not only to other charitable organisations but also provide food directly to end beneficiaries.

<sup>2</sup> European Food Banks Federation (2021). ["COVID-19: a real unique opportunity for a real change"](#).



In Moldova, Banca de Alimente is providing food aid to more than 10,256 refugees. To date, the Food Banks belonging to the Federacja Polskich Banków Żywności are providing food to 881 charities that are assisting around 300,000 refugees of whom many are staying in the country. Česká Federace Potravinových Bank, FEBA Member in Czech Republic, supported more than 280,000 refugees since the outbreak of the war. In Romania, the Federația Băncilor pentru Alimente din România with its network of 9 regional Food Banks is helping 109 charities taking care of 7,351 refugees.

The situation is also similar for Maisto Bankas, the Lithuanian Food Bank, which supports around 50,000 refugees in Lithuania and Toidupank, the Estonian Food Bank, with 4,000 refugees weekly, and many of them are staying in the Baltic countries. Additionally, FEBA Members in Hungary, Moldova, and Slovakia, are actively supporting large numbers of refugees in addition to the people in need already helped by their affiliated charities.

*These examples reiterate that historically, Food Banks are acting as a buffer for food supply chain disruptions through surplus food recovery and are essential actors contributing to the reduction of food poverty through the redistribution of food. Hence, they are crucial building blocks of the food system. It is likely that there will always be surplus food due to the variety of factors coming into play over the course of food production and distribution. However, the activities of Food Banks play a crucial role in recovering these valuable quantities, ensuring the highest value use of edible food resources for human consumption, and preventing the resources used for the production of food from being used in vain.*

According to the last available findings dated 2016, annually an estimated volume of 88 million tonnes of food, equalling up to 20% of the entire production, is wasted in the European Union.<sup>3</sup> Food loss and waste occurs along the whole food supply chain: 13% is lost on the farm and during processing and manufacturing; of the remaining quantities, 13% is wasted in the retail sector, 26% from food service and 61% from households. Simultaneously, 22 million people are not able to afford meals of good quality every other day.<sup>4</sup>

This abundance-scarcity paradox underlines the critical importance of the recovery of surplus food and its redistribution to charities helping people in need as an effective and sustainable instrument to reduce the financial and environmental costs related to food losses and food waste and, at the same time, reduce food insecurity to ensure that all citizens in Europe have access to safe, sufficient, nutritious, and affordable food.

As stipulated in the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, by the end of 2023, the European Commission is set to present legally binding targets to reduce food waste across the EU to define clear baselines to measure against.

In the following section, FEBA will outline its position on the European Commission's proposed policy options for the scope, measurement, expression, and establishment of these targets. However, it is urged to reframe how this issue is approached at a broader level – from thinking about basic food waste reduction, to defining targets for increasing food recovery. The latter encompasses a broader set of actions that more effectively intervene to reduce food losses and waste at all stages of the food supply chain and focuses more on the key goal of reducing food insecurity.

<sup>3</sup> Stenmarch, Asa et al. (2016). "Estimates of European Food Waste Levels". FUSIONS

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat (2018). "Inability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day".



# 3

## FEBA's position on the proposal for legally binding EU-level food waste reduction targets for 2023

EU Member States are expected to report data on food waste for the reference year 2020 by 30 June 2022, with a proposal for legally binding food targets to reduce food waste to be presented by the end of 2023. The European Commission has outlined different policy options for the scope, measurement, expression, and establishment of these targets.<sup>5</sup>

### Scope

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- Option S1 - target covering the whole food supply chain, from farm gate to final consumer
- Option S2 - target covering only selected stages of the food supply chain (for example SDG Target 12.3 sets targets at retail and consumer levels)

### Expression

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- Option E1 - target expressed as % of food waste reduction from the amount of food waste in the baseline year (2020) to target year (2030)
- Option E2 - targets expressed as absolute amounts, i.e. in kilograms per capita per year to be achieved by 2030 (per country)

### The way the targets are set for Member States:

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- Option T1 - the same target level for all Member States
- Option T2 – target level differentiated by Member State
- Option T3 – collective target on EU level – based on MS contributions

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<sup>5</sup> European Commission (2021). [Inception Impact Assessment Food waste- reduction targets.](#)



## Scope

**FEBA strongly supports Scope Option 1 (S1): a target covering the whole food supply chain, from farm gate to final consumer.** Although various trade associations representing the manufacturing sector of the food system have argued in favour of an approach looking at only selected stages of the supply chain, noting that most food waste occurs at the consumer stage, FEBA is supportive of an approach capturing the entire supply chain.

We firmly believe that the introduction of legally binding food waste reduction targets at EU level targeting all segments of the food system, from farm to fork, can be a promising tool to foster not just the achievement of the SDG Target 12.3 but also incentivise all food business operators to donate their surplus food for a social purpose. This opens up increased opportunities for FEBA and its members to recover larger volumes of nutritious food, to provide them to those who are deprived with the help of charitable organisations, and to support the trajectory towards circular and sustainable food systems.

Although the entire food supply chain should be targeted, from the perspective of FEBA and its members, the earlier stages entail more potential for food waste prevention through food recovery and redistribution.

- At the **farm stage**, there are opportunities for greater recovery of fresh produce to be redistributed as such or transformed into products with a longer shelf-life (e.g. soups or juices and dehydrated fruits).
- At **retail level** (especially supermarkets) the products reached a later point within their shelf lives compared to production stage. Here, the opportunities for transformation are more limited.

- The **consumer stage** presents a greater challenge for food recovery and redistribution, and as such would benefit from educational campaigns encouraging more focused shopping to reduce over-purchasing and raising awareness on the value of food and the economic, environmental, and social costs of its disposal.



## Expression

**FEBA strongly supports Expression Option 1 (E1): target expressed as % of food waste reduction from the amount of food waste in a baseline year (2020) to a target year (2030).** The use of percentages as supposed to absolute amounts offers the possibility of positive competition between different Member States as well as allowing for easy comparison.

Furthermore, FEBA proposes that recovery targets could be defined using a reiteration of social impact in addition to environmental benefits, for example as a percentage of increased food going to human consumption, especially to assist vulnerable people rather than a percentage decrease of food ending up in landfill.



## Target

**FEBA strongly supports target option 2 (T2): the target level should be differentiated by Member States.** Whilst FEBA and its members believe that the introduction of legally binding food waste reduction targets at EU level can be a promising tool for achieving the SDG Target 12.3 and incentivising all food business operators to donate their surplus food to a social purpose, food waste targets need also to be in line with the Member States' national legislative frameworks. This will facilitate for instance the donation of surplus food while ensuring that food safety and hygiene standards are not compromised for the benefit of the end recipients.

Furthermore, FEBA proposes that food waste reduction targets need to be accompanied by accelerated efforts to improve the understanding of date marking across all Member States as well as encouraging food producers to guarantee proper storage conditions and the integrity of packaging so that food that exceeds its 'best before' date can still be provided to people in need instead of going to landfill.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2018). [Food Donation](#).



## Beyond the targets

**FEBA strongly supports the use of the EU Food Use Hierarchy as the base concept of food waste prevention.** As it stands, the EU Food Use Hierarchy is not mentioned in the Inception Impact Assessment published by the European Commission. According to the EU guidelines on food donation, the best destination for surplus food is the redistribution for human consumption. Therefore, in the line with the Food Use Hierarchy, FEBA proposes that the donation of edible and safe food resources should be prioritised over any other kind of usage (e.g. animal feed, compost, or energy generation).

Furthermore, there is currently a lack of investment and funding regarding possibilities to scale up Food Donation. At a national level, there are often subsidies for biofuel production, amongst others, but not to foster the recovery and redistribution of surplus food, which is not in line with the EU Food Use Hierarchy.

**By the same token, FEBA proposes that specific support and funding should be given to Food Banks and other non-profit organisations to strengthen their ability and capacity to conduct additional food recovery and redistribution activities.**

If Food Donation is to be considered as a key measure to reduce food waste, as the entities involved in it, such as FEBA Members, must be supported. Working on a non-profit basis, Food Banks and charities operate with limited financial, logistical, and human resources and therefore, should be assisted in the task to ensure, develop, and scale up their efforts to cope with increased amounts of donated food.

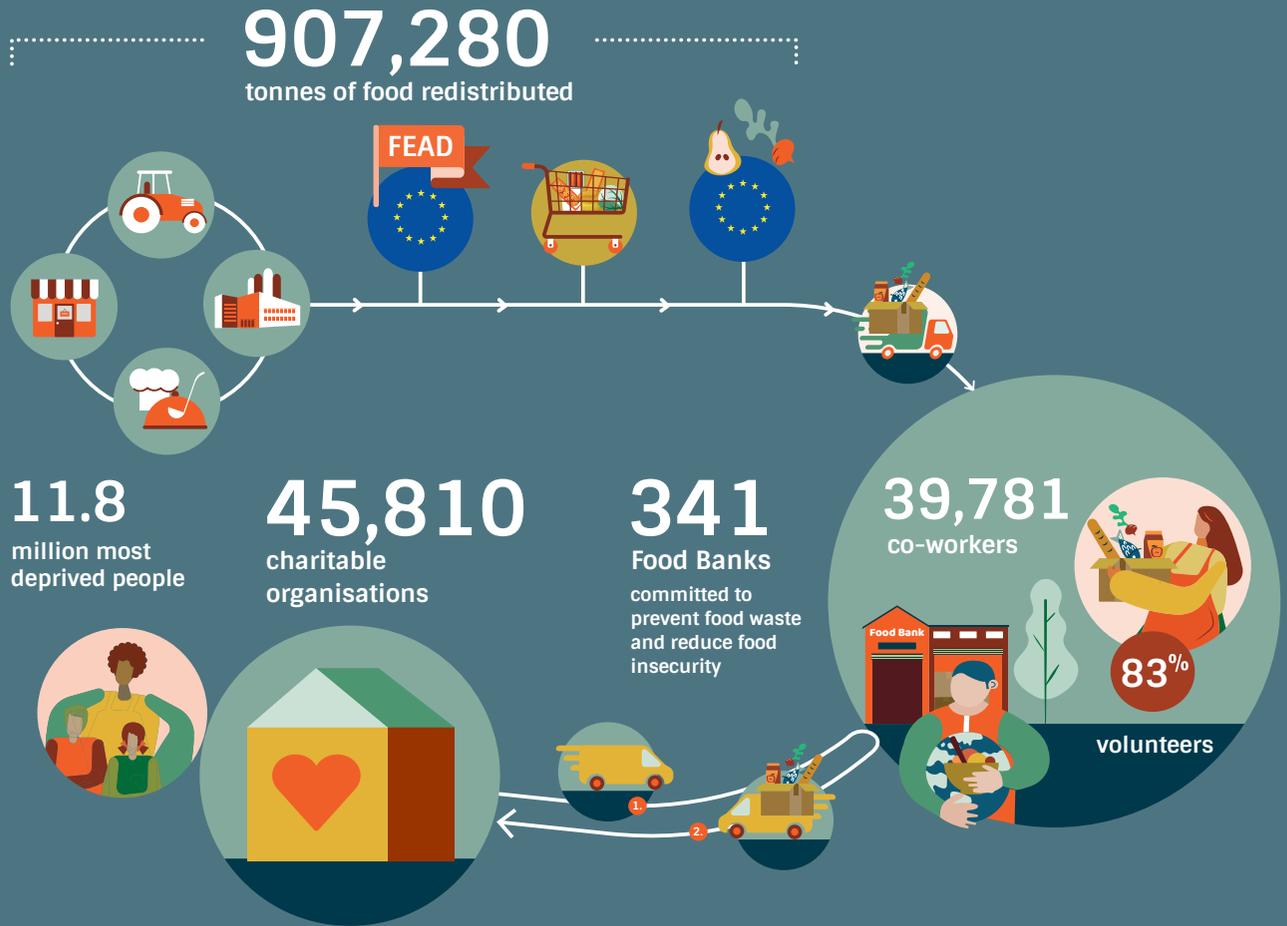


# 4

## Contribution of FEBA membership to our circular food system

In 2021, the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) worked in collaboration with 24 Full Members and 5 Associate Members in 29 European countries.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> In some countries such as Estonia, Germany and the Netherlands, FEBA Members redistribute food not only to other charitable organisations but also provide food directly to end beneficiaries. This is the aggregation of data provided by FEBA Full Members and Associate Members at European level. In the case of Tafel Deutschland e.V., the data for food quantities is based on an estimation.





# 5

## Best practices of Food Donation: case studies of FEBA Members



**Food Bank Greece / Recovery of fresh produce from the manufacturing and distribution sector** —————>

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**Fédération Française des Banques Alimentaires / Strengthening collaboration with the manufacturing sector** —————>

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**Česká Federace Potravinových Bank / Transformation of fresh products in local Food Banks** —————>

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**Fondazione Banco Alimentare Onlus / Siticibo: recovering food from the distribution, catering, and HORECA sector** —————>

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**FoodCloud / Virtual Food Banking - Innovation to Achieve SDG 12.3** —————>



## Food Bank Greece / Recovery of fresh produce from the manufacturing and distribution sector

Food Bank Greece (FBG) recovers surplus fruits and vegetables from both the manufacturing and the distribution sector. The project especially focuses on redistributing fresh potatoes donated by a local Greek company. In 2021, a new pilot partnership with the Central Athens Grocery Market was launched to donate unsold fresh products twice a week to the Food Bank.

**172,715 kg**  
Surplus fruits and vegetables recovered from the manufacturing (2021)

**69,036 kg**  
Surplus fruits and vegetables recovered from the redistribution sector (2021)



### Lessons learned

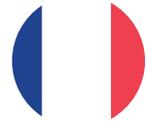
Saving fresh products needs firm and sustainable logistics, dedicated volunteers, and charities ready to handle perishable and delicate products. It is also vital to improve the awareness on the value of food recovery and redistribution targeting especially farmers and wholesalers.

### Existing challenges

The food market remains unstable with the war causing disruptions to supply chains and raising up energy costs, resulting in a greater concern of the corporate sector regarding financial repercussions. As a result, environmental and social problems are not being treated as priorities. Furthermore, such food saving programmes require special logistics, with additional expenses that need to be covered.

### Recommendations

1. Awareness must be risen among actors of the food supply chain and within the society at large.
2. So far, the private sector has been supporting Food Banks to cover their expenses. Additional EU or national funds should be provided in order to support and ensure the scaling up of Food Banks' activities.



## Fédération Française des Banques Alimentaires / Strengthening collaboration with the manufacturing sector

The Fédération Française des Banques Alimentaires (French Federation of Food Banks) has a national-level framework agreement with food manufacturers (both factories and storage sides), which allows for local branches and Food Banks to engage in a partnership to prevent food waste. An example of this is the collaboration with the dairy producer Candia: as a means for process optimisation, they identify surplus quantities and inform the local Food Banks that pick up the products on a weekly basis.

**69,036 gross tonnes**

**Surplus food recovered from manufacturing sector (2021)**

### Lessons learned

Food Banks' investment in equipment and logistics is extremely important because it enables the efficient management and processing of donations. We have to be able to redistribute these quantities quickly across the territory, using 491 vehicles, 135,655 m<sup>2</sup> of warehouse space, a CLICKDON which is an online donation management tool, among others. Additionally, human skills and therefore, the investment in training are crucial to guarantee quality and food safety requirements. As regards operability and logistical organisation, we follow the same standards as manufacturers, making us a reliable actor.

### Existing challenges

Navigating decreases in surplus from food production processes leads to a reduction in donations. Simultaneously, there is a surge in the number of and demand from end beneficiaries. Supporting a nutritious diet while facing a decline in surplus quantities and the variety of products offered can be a challenge.

### Recommendation

Encourage and incentivise voluntary donations from manufacturers in addition to anti-food waste donations to counteract a decline in food quantities available for recovery and allow Food Banks redistributing food with a longer shelf-life.





## Česká Federace Potravinových Bank / Transformation of fresh products in local Food Banks

In 2020, the first transformation kitchen was established by the Food Bank of Prague, with an additional three being founded over the past two years. These work in partnership with the supermarket Albert to transform and preserve fresh fruits, vegetables, and bakery products in order to extend their shelf life.

**200 kg**

**Transformation of recovered surplus food items, e.g. fruits and vegetables (2021)**

### Lessons learned

Every Food Bank should incorporate transformation practices which allow more than 70% of fresh products that would otherwise be wasted to have their shelf lives extended. This not only reduces food waste but increases the quantities of nutritious food supporting people in need.

### Existing challenges

Disseminating “good practice” to all regions of Czech Republic remains challenging, as does securing donors of the food in the first place.

### Recommendation

Processes such as the drying and conservation of fresh produce before they perish should be a practice expanded to Food Banks across the country to prevent food waste and mitigate food insecurity.





## Fondazione Banco Alimentare Onlus / Siticibo: recovering food from the distribution, catering, and HORECA sector

Siticibo is a programme created by Fondazione Banco Alimentare Onlus in 2003 to recover cooked and fresh surplus food from the catering and HORECA sector. Surplus food is daily recovered by volunteers of local Food Banks and then it is redistributed to people in need. Charities themselves often carry out the recovery (after being trained), in this case they have to send a copy of the transport document to the local Food Bank. Siticibo is an example of micro-logistics, not involving a centralised warehouse and focusing on urban areas. Since 2009, Siticibo volunteers recover also dry, fresh, and frozen surplus food from the distribution sector.

**318 tonnes**  
Surplus food recovered from  
catering and HORECA sector (2021)

**16,324 tonnes**  
Surplus food recovered from  
distribution sector (2021)



### Lessons learned

As Banco Alimentare Network, we have learned that a favourable regulatory framework is essential, and the national Law No 166/2016 has encouraged the donation of surplus food – in parallel with an increase in the demand for food aid, especially in the last two years. Different additional aspects are important, on the one hand, a close relationship with the donors and, on the other hand, to consistently monitor the surplus recovery activity carried out by charities to ensure the compliance with hygiene and food safety standards. To this end, it is essential to have a Manual of Good Practices, which we drew up in 2015, in accordance with Art. 8 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.

### Existing challenges

1. Establishing a close relationship with the donor companies to promote the donation of all types of perishable food products and guarantee high quality standards.
2. Facilitating non-profit organisations access to equip themselves with tools for transport, storage, and digitalisation of processes.
3. Digitalising administrative and data management processes to improve the monitoring of the recovery activity and the documentation of donations.

### Recommendations

1. Promoting and encouraging the donation of all types of perishable food products through information and training in companies and incentives for companies to donate
2. At the same time, supporting non-profit organisations to equip themselves with tools facilitating transportation, storage, and the digitalisation of processes.



## FoodCloud / Virtual Food Banking - Innovation to Achieve SDG 12.3

FoodCloud has developed innovative technology to redistribute surplus food from businesses directly to charities. The solution connects local communities through shared food, reducing food waste and associated GHGs and increasing social inclusion. This innovation enables Food Banks to create “virtual” redistribution networks beyond their physical footprint and infrastructure.

### 14,693 tonnes

**Food from retail and food service sector redistributed using the technology (Ireland & international, with partners, 2021)**

#### Lessons learned

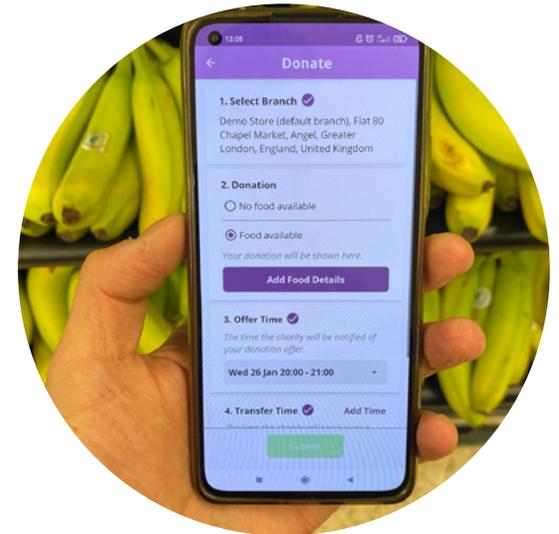
Technology is an enabler, but a successful redistribution programme needs engaged businesses and charities, as well as sufficient resourcing. The technology further provides opportunities to access hard-to-reach and short-dated food, that Food Banks struggle to recover.

#### Existing challenges

Food Banks have low digital maturity and need a lot of support and training on implementing the system. They need to pick up very short-dated food or very small volumes to redistribute 100% of the donated food, which can be challenging. Moreover, there are costs associated with redistribution which are not recognised or funded by governments despite this being a win-win solution for people and the planet.

#### Recommendation

With the right funding, resources, and training we could share the technology with a global community and make a huge step forward to the global achievement of SDG 12.3.





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