

In action

Joining forces to shape a resilient,
sustainable, safe & healthy food system!



December 2021

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In a foreword

Dear readers,

An important and challenging year for our sector is drawing to a close. 2021 shed light on the weakness of global food supply chains and raise food systems transition into sustainability and resilience as one of the foremost pressing challenges for humanity in the forthcoming decades. Our organisation has been at the forefront of major discussions on this topic (UNFSS, COP26, G20, Milano Pact) sharing actively knowledge and building pathways and coalitions to transition towards sustainable and climate-resilient food systems.

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After being forced to cancel the 2020 edition, WUWM was able to host a successful and cutting-edge Global Conference in Florence, Italy about the future of food in the post-Covid world that counted upon a high number of important participants. Later in the year, we were invited to participate in the first-ever UN Food Systems Summit in New York, the Milan Pact's 7th Global Forum on Urban Food Policy in Barcelona, the IFURL conference in China and we successfully launched "Love Your Local Market" campaign. WUWM was involved in all these important events, representing the core role that modern wholesale markets can play to ensure healthier diets for everyone.

During the last month, WUWM was again very active in our mission to make the fresh food sector greener and reduce global food waste. We believe that reducing food waste should be among the top priorities of our sector. As of today, almost one-third of the food we produce is lost or wasted what is both socially and environmentally unacceptable considering the number of people around the world that suffers from hunger and the effect of food



in climate change. WUWM is fully engaged to help our members reduce the amount of food waste in their markets and to take part in high-level platforms to foster actions towards this goal. That's why we want to dedicate this edition of "In Action" to the work that our organisation and our members are doing to reduce food waste while encompassing various aspects surrounding sustainability, social responsibility and innovation.

This month we are happy to celebrate several important events for our organization related to this topic: our organisation was selected by the European Commission as a permanent member of the European Union Platform on Food Loss and Waste for the next five years; only a few days later, WUWM signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Global Food Banking Network. WUWM was also invited to participate in the 2nd Food Loss and Waste Reduction Summit for Latin America and the Caribbean organized by the BID and the FAO. You will find detailed articles about each collaboration on the forthcoming pages.

I would like to wish you all the best for the end of the year celebration!

Yours sincerely,

Stephane Layani,
WUWM Acting Chairman

In Focus:

The European Commission chooses WUWM to become a permanent member of the “European Union Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste”

We are glad to announce that the World Union of Wholesale Markets was chosen by the European Commission to become a permanent member of the European Union (EU) Platform on Food Losses and Waste, starting from 2022. The Platform arose from the EU's and EU member countries' commitment to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include halving per capita food waste at retail and consumer levels by 2030 while additionally reducing food losses along production and supply chains.

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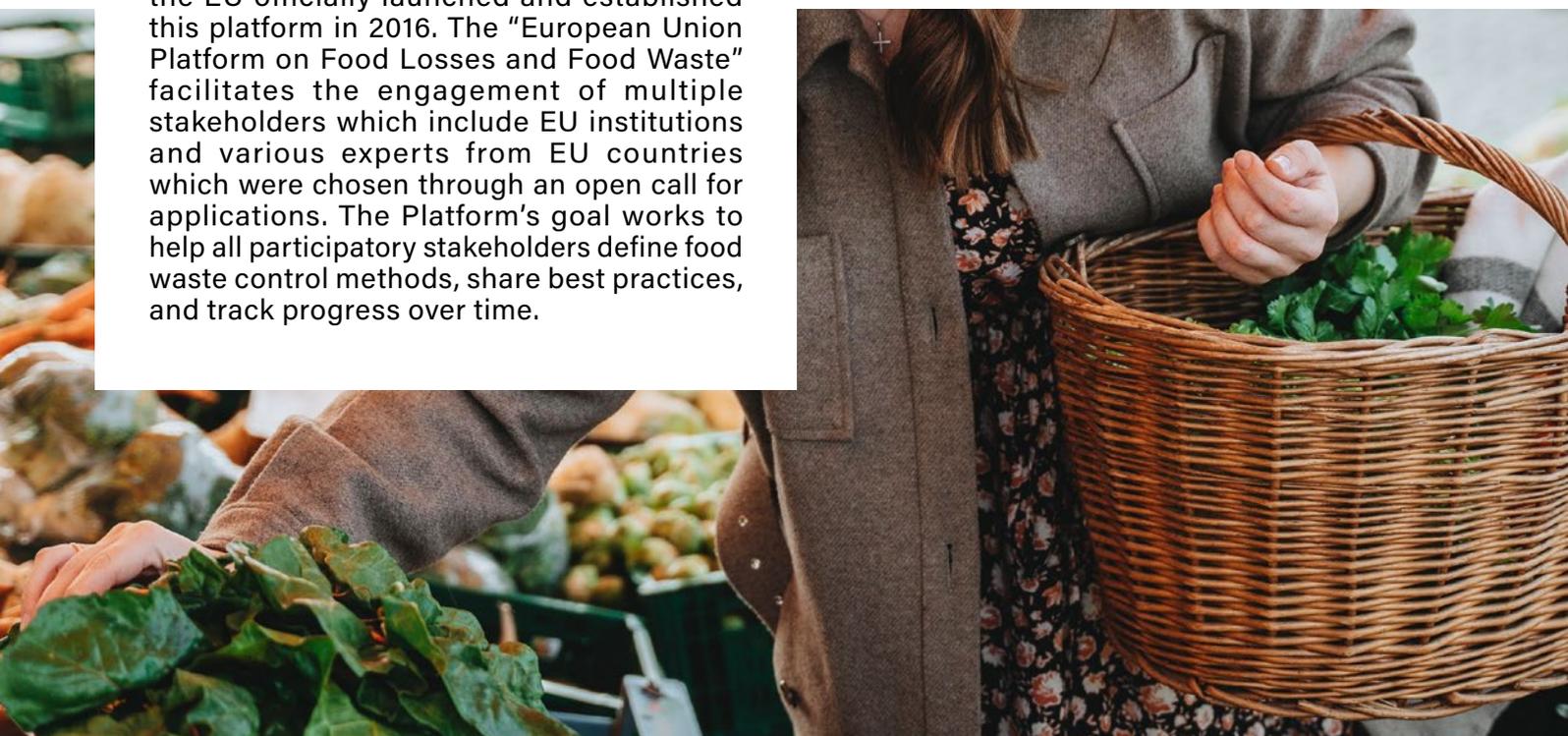


According to the European Commission (EC), combating food waste entails collaborating with all key stakeholders from the public and private sectors to better identify, monitor, understand, and create solutions to reduce food losses and waste. Therefore, the EU officially launched and established this platform in 2016. The “European Union Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste” facilitates the engagement of multiple stakeholders which include EU institutions and various experts from EU countries which were chosen through an open call for applications. The Platform's goal works to help all participatory stakeholders define food waste control methods, share best practices, and track progress over time.

WUWM is extremely excited to participate in this platform, as the transition of food systems toward sustainability, resilience, and inclusion will only be possible through multi-stakeholder collaboration and integrated action. Wholesale markets, located in the «hidden-middle» of the food supply chain, are actively involved in decreasing food waste and food loss. As effective food centres, European wholesale markets enable improved logistics, a guarantee of cold chain compliance, proper traceability and packaging measures. These are important stages along the food supply chain, all of which are critical stages that expand the life of fresh produce thus reducing food losses and food waste.

“According to the European Commission combating food waste entails collaborating with all key stakeholders from the public and private sectors.”

Furthermore, combining all of the fresh-food supply in one location aids in the scaling up of circular economy initiatives to prevent food waste (many of our markets work with food banks to donate unsold produce that is still edible or to make biogas when the product can no longer be used as food).





In the loop

Find the major Outcomes of the COP26 for food systems



Today, European wholesale markets are responsible for about 12% of the average of all the food waste in the EU; nevertheless, this percentage varies between markets. In modern wholesale markets, which possess the infrastructure and finances to invest in innovative solutions, they have the ability to transform and build specific platforms to restock unsold produce and reduce food waste by 1% (Mercabarna, Centro Agroalimentare de Roma, or Rungis Market for instance). This clearly shows that today, sustainable practices can be shared and scale-up into other markets that would have an immediate effect on the reduction of food waste.

Furthermore, we believe that modern wholesale markets can have a positive ripple effect on all agri-food chain actors by facilitating trading times for perishable goods, logistics, cold chain, and pushing up standards that can lead to a longer life span of fresh produce.

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“The Platform’s goals are to help all stakeholders define food waste control methods, share best practices, and track progress in food waste reduction.”

In this sense, WUWM is committed to actively participate in the EU platform and sharing with all stakeholders’ cutting-edge strategies to reduce food losses and waste while working hand in hand with all the institutional actors, NGOS, companies and universities pursuing this goal. We are sure that WUWM’s participation in the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste will be of large meaningfulness and we are eager to strengthen forces with the EU food sector to achieve the goal of zero waste together!

The UN Climate Change Conference, or COP26, took place in Glasgow from October 31 to November 12, 2021. Encouraging a collective effort across the globe, discussions and commitments declare a movement to well-financed, sustainable, and resilient infrastructures. Alongside a focus to convert to greener energy sources worldwide, adaptation of food systems to address climate change was a prominent topic among the discussions and commitments from the Summit. For the first time, governments around the world recognized the need to foster sustainable food systems that seek to ensure global food security and achieve climate objectives.

Statements and declarations were made by various organizations at the beginning of COP26. The Policy Action Agenda for the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture rounded out the first week of the Conference with its announcement. Prefaced by a statement addressing the pressing need for widespread access to nutritious food, while at the same time accounting for the effects of food production to the environment.

Broken into four sections, the Action Agenda begins with defining “sustainable agriculture” as a system of food production that provides enough to support producers and consumers in an affordable manner while maintaining environmental integrity for the future. Building on the definition, the agenda calls for specific and immediate action from governments and stakeholders. WUWM members are directly involved as they are major actors to ensure accessibility to nutritious fresh food and particularly accessible prices of healthier diets for the poorest. During this year’s Climate Conference COP26, actors shared the need to streamline direct cooperation and communication during every stage of the food system. Thus, emphasizing the infrastructural support needed to strengthen supply chains from farm to fork.

The final two sections of the agenda tell of the policy options and channels of implementation. Using these effective policy options and channels, countries and private

“Members of WUWM are key contributors in achieving COP26 “food goals”, as wholesale markets represent unique food hubs to ensure the daily availability of diversified nutritious fresh food in a highly urbanized world.”

corporations alike announced programs and funding for research and encouragement in the journey to more sustainable food systems. One of the largest is the ‘Global Action Plan for Innovation in Agriculture’, backed by over 160 NGOs, IGOs, and nation-states and consisting of four key commitments centered on funding and research. Pioneering the inspiration and support for the action plan includes the #climateshot campaign, with broader aims to:

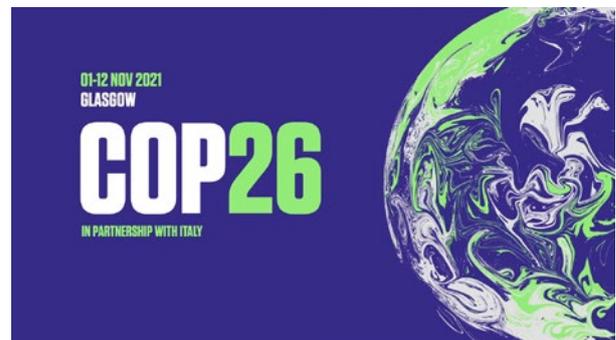
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- Increase investment in agricultural research and innovation to create more climate-resilient, low-emission technologies and practices;
- Ensure at least a third of agricultural research and innovation investments deliver demand-driven solutions across food systems, to protect nature and limit climate change;
- Showcase successful business models and promote public-private partnerships that deploy these innovations on the scale needed to meet the climate and food security challenge;
- Forge consensus on the evidence of what works and facilitate inclusive dialogue among food and climate champions around the world.

Members of WUWM are key contributors to achieving these goals. Our infrastructures represent unique food hubs to ensure the daily availability of diversified nutritious fresh food in a highly urbanized world.

Prior to the announcement of the action plan and agenda, several organizations shared their commitments for change on November 2, 2021. These include The Glasgow Declaration, the Agricultural Commodity Companies Corporate Statement of Purpose, and the Forests, Agriculture, and Commodity Trade Roadmap for Action. All these declarations have a resounding commitment to goals that encourage the support of ongoing development of sustainable production and distribution, being advocates for policies that create the opportunity to facilitate the needed changes in the food systems, and the provision of necessary funds for those who cannot afford to make those moves on their own.

WUWM firmly supports COP26 outcomes and believes that now is time to start translating knowledge into action: what means to count upon investments in food systems transformation.





Involved

WUWM signs Memorandum of Understanding with the Global Food Banking Network

WUWM is pleased to announce that our organisation and the Global Food Banking Network have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the 18 November 2021 aiming to strengthen and promote future collaboration and cooperation to reduce food waste.

The Global Food Bank Network's (GFN) purpose is to feed the world's hungry by bolstering food banks and food bank networks. GFN achieves its global objective of feeding people in need by forming effective public-private partnerships, providing ecologically friendly alternatives to food loss and waste, and promoting best practices in humanitarian food distribution and community development. GFN is the only global non-profit organisation dedicated to establishing, sustaining, and strengthening food banks and food bank networks in order to alleviate hunger and ensure environmental sustainability. GFN works with over 900 food banks and national food bank networks in over 40 countries,

“The Global Food Banking Network works with over 900 food banks and national food bank networks in over 40 countries.”

“FBN provides food assistance to an estimated 27.6 million food-insecure people and distributes more than 1.1 billion kilograms of food from January to September 2020.”

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The main purpose of the partnership that WUWM just signed with the GFN is to strengthen actions to reduce food waste in wholesale markets, exchange good practices that could be replicated or scaled-up, establish local collaborations among our mutual members and the pursue of SDGs – in particular SDG 2 – Zero Hunger and SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production.

WUWM is pleased to join forces with the GFN to reduce food waste. This MoU offers a great opportunity to all our members to share innovations and exchanges with the biggest global network of food banks.





Interview with Tara Shyam

From Global Food Banking Network on the importance of food banks, climate change, and collaborating with fresh food markets.

In the frame of the signature of an MoU with the Global Food Banking (GFN) network, we are happy to have an interview with Tara Shyam, Associate Director of the GFN in this edition of the newsletter and to start working closely with this important organization.

Could you introduce your organization in short?

7 The Global FoodBanking Network supports community-driven solutions to alleviate hunger in more than 40 countries. While millions struggle to access enough safe and nutritious food, nearly a third of all food produced is lost or wasted. We're changing that. We believe food banks directed by local leaders are key to achieving Zero Hunger and building resilient food systems.

Why can it be important for wholesale markets to work together with the Global Food Banking Network?

Wholesale markets around the world are an invaluable source of fresh and healthy foods. Invariably, these markets are faced with shifting demand and supply trends resulting in a surplus, an issue most recently highlighted through the multiple challenges of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Furthermore, some safe and edible foods with mere cosmetic defects may not be selected for purchase due to consumer preferences or discarded

by local markets. Therefore, markets need to find ways to redistribute this surplus. A hallmark of the food banking model is the recovery of wholesome and edible surplus food while redirecting it to those in need. Additionally, food banking provides a tested solution to wholesale markets seeking a business partner to manage surplus fit-for-consumption produce. Together, wholesale markets and food banks can support access to healthy diets for all people.

In line with the COP26 conference on climate change, how do food banks fight climate change?

A key goal of COP26 is net zero emissions by 2050. To get to net zero, one of the things we must do is reduce food loss and waste. Food loss and waste undermine the sustainability and resilience of our food systems. When food is lost or wasted, all the resources that were used to produce this food – including resource inputs such as water, land, energy, labour and capital - are wasted. Additionally, the disposal of food into landfills generates 8-10% of greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change.

“Tax law and policy are commonly identified as areas of missed opportunities”

Losses can take place throughout the supply chain. Food banks partner with farmers, distributors, grocers, and the food service industry to redirect wholesome, safe, surplus food that would otherwise go uneaten to people experiencing hunger. FAO reports that globally, around 14% of food produced is lost between harvest and retail. A further 17% is wasted at the consumer level, according to UNEP. By working with industry partners, Global Food Banking Network members redistributed over 882 million kilograms of valuable products to more than 40 million people in 2020.



The **Global**
FoodBanking
Network®

Alongside the Global FoodBanking Network's partners Feeding America and European Food Banks Federation, our food bank members recovered more than 3.75 million metric tons of food in 2019. This mitigated more than 10.5 billion kgs of greenhouse gas emissions by redirecting surplus food. This is equivalent to 2.2 million passenger vehicles being removed from the road, or to supply 1.8 million homes with electricity.

How much influence does government legislation have on the impact of food donations to food banks?

Redirecting safe, surplus food to those who need it most both decreases food losses and waste and increases food security. However, scaling food donation requires aligned incentives that motivate individuals and companies to donate rather than discard surplus food. Across the globe, tax law and policy are commonly identified as areas of missed opportunities. Many tax structures fail to adequately encourage donors or, at the very least, enable them to recoup the costs associated with food donation. In the worst cases, tax legislation actively deters donation by placing additional fiscal burdens on donors or food rescue organizations. As a result, the least costly option in many cases is to discard safe, surplus food.

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Removing such fiscal barriers and strategically leveraging tax law to motivate potential donors to encourage greater food donation and minimize the myriad costs associated with Food Loss and Waste (FLW). Yet many countries have not designed, implemented, and enforced taxation schemes that advance these goals and position donation as an economical alternative to discarding food. In a legislative environment, where product donations are promoted within a social and environmental framework, companies are encouraged to strengthen relationships with food banks through fostering efficient donation programs rather than discarding their food. We have done an in-depth study and publication about this topic for "The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas project" in partnership with the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic (FLPC). The title of the publication is "Issue Brief: Promoting Food Donation: Tax Law and Policy".

“Redirecting safe, surplus food to those who need it most both decreases food losses and waste and increases food security.”

Can you share a few examples of good practices in successful legislation to reduce food waste so far?

At least seven European Union member states allow tax deductions for food donations, allowing donors to deduct at least part of the value from their tax base to reduce their tax liability. In Canada, charitable donations are eligible for a tax deduction (or tax credit) capped at 75% of the donor's total net income, generally ranging from 26% to 31% of the fair market value of these donations, depending on the province. Other countries, including Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Peru, the United States, and South Africa, also provide a charitable deduction for in-kind food donations made to food banks and other food recovery organizations. Colombia offers tax deductions and credits equivalent to 25% of the value of donations in the taxable year with no cap.

Are you working on or promoting any international projects that could be of interest to wholesale markets?

GFN has partnered with different international organizations and companies to implement not only food donation alliances but also for the analysis and quantification of food losses and waste with organizations such as the World Bank, WWF, CGF, IDB with the "Sin Desperdicio initiative" in Latin America and with WRAP for the implementation of voluntary agreements that allow the development of baselines and actions for food prevention and recovery in Countries like Mexico, South Africa and Indonesia.





Interview with Emily Broad Leib, Harvard Professor.

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How can food donation be a game-changer to reduce food waste and what can countries and markets do to foster it?

WUWM is delighted to feature an interview with Harvard Professor Emily Broad Leib, member of Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic (FLPC) working in the “The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas project”. Ms Broad Leib spoke to us about the importance of food donation, food banks, and how can different types of legislation enhance food donation thus reducing food waste.

Could you briefly introduce your expertise and work?

The Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic (FLPC) is the first law school clinic in the U.S. devoted to advancing legal and policy solutions to address health, economic, and environmental challenges within the food system. My scholarship, teaching, and practice focus on finding solutions to some of today’s

biggest food law issues, aiming to increase access to nutritious foods, eliminate food waste, support sustainable food production, and promote community-led food system change. At FLPC, we achieve our mission by serving partner organizations and communities in the U.S. and around the world. We advance cross-sector, multi-disciplinary, and inclusive approaches to our work by building partnerships with academic institutions, government agencies, non-profit organizations, private sector actors, and civil society with expertise in public health, the environment, and the economy. For our clients and partners, we provide legal and policy research, technical assistance, and training and education on cutting-edge food system issues.

Why are food banks an important part of the solution to climate change?

Food waste is a significant contributor to climate change. Every year, around 1.3 billion tons^[1] of food worldwide goes uneaten or unsold—about a third of the global food supply. In addition to the resources wasted producing this food, most of it is transported to landfills where it rots and produces methane, a greenhouse gas.

At the same time, 820 million people suffer from hunger, and acute hunger was expected to affect 270 million^[2] people worldwide in 2020—an 82% increase since the pandemic began. While the pandemic has exacerbated hunger it’s a standing concern—severe food insecurity rose 70% in the four years leading up to the pandemic. Ensuring safe, healthy surplus food does not go to the landfill but instead stays in the food supply and finds its way to those in need can help people experiencing hunger and can help mitigate climate change.

“Food banks have experienced massive increases in demand during the pandemic, while historic supply chain disruptions continue to drive food system inefficiencies.”

In which countries are food banks operating the best and does that have to do with government legislation?

Our Global Food Donation Policy Atlas looks into this question. The Atlas project, which FLPC conducts in partnership with The Global Food Banking Network, analyzes and compares food donation laws and policies in countries around the world and identifies actionable best practices for policies that support food banks by encouraging food donation. In many cases, uncertainty surrounding food donation laws and policies hinders the expansion of food banks and food recovery organizations. Our findings highlight several laws and policies that support optimal food bank operations.

Argentina provides a good example of a strong policy on liability protection for food donation. National law provides for comprehensive liability protection for both food donors and food recovery organizations, such as food banks. Providing liability protection for food donors and the non-profits that distribute surplus food can encourage this beneficial social practice by ensuring food donors who follow all food safety rules do not have to worry that they will be held liable if a recipient of donated food inadvertently falls ill.

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“In many cases, uncertainty surrounding food donation laws and policies hinders the expansion of food banks and food recovery organizations.”

Several countries have also used tax law and policy to encourage food donation, to make it more affordable to donate surplus food to food banks and food recovery organizations than to send it to the landfill. For example, taxpayers in the United States are eligible to claim both a general tax deduction of the basic value of the food, which is available for any in-kind charitable contributions (capped at 10% of income for most corporate donors), as well as an “enhanced tax deduction” for food donations that values the food at nearly twice the amount of the general deduction (capped at 15% of income for most corporate donors).

How big of an impact can government legislation have? Can you give some examples of innovative legislation for a successful food waste reduction system?

Governmental laws and policies can have a significant impact on food waste. For example, food date labels, such as “sell by” and “use by” are often confusing to consumers and can cause them to toss healthy, edible food; they also may lead businesses to waste rather than donate food that is still safe and edible past the date, as most dates are intended to indicate freshness and not safety.

One policy model is the United Kingdom. The UK has a mandatory, national policy that standardizes date labels, requiring foods to use only one of two labels: a “use by” date, which indicates food that increases in safety, and a “best before” date, which indicates food that is labelled purely as a quality indicator. This policy expressly permits the sale or donation of food after its “best before” date. The UK and its devolved countries also launched consumer education campaigns to improve general understanding of food recovery strategies including the meaning of date labels. This effort contributed to an 11% decrease in household food waste in three years.^[3]

In terms of innovative policies, many national governments, as well as local governments, are beginning to experiment with creative ways to galvanize more businesses to donate safe surplus food, or to ensure that food does not end up in a landfill by penalizing the wasting of food. Peru recently passed new legislation to require certain businesses to donate surplus food. While the law has not gone into effect (as it is awaiting implementation regulations), this is an example of the type of innovative thinking that some governments are using to ensure food goes to its highest and best use.

Have you seen changes in food donation during the Covid-19 crisis?

Food banks have experienced massive increases in demand during the pandemic, while historic supply chain disruptions continue to drive food system inefficiencies. In 2020, we published an issue brief describing challenges identified by food banks in 39 countries and highlighting governmental solutions to strengthen food donation operations in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Our research showed that food banks and food recovery organizations emerged as their own class of first responders during the pandemic, but that the level of government support varied greatly across countries.





Recognizing that the food donation landscape has evolved rapidly over the last year, we recently published a 2021 update issue brief that reflects on the pandemic's impact on food systems, food access, and food recovery, and identifies positive steps taken by governments to address challenges.

One issue that we highlighted in our research is that food banks and food recovery organizations are encountering a host of new barriers to food rescue and delivery. Some countries have addressed this challenge by creating exceptions to emergency response measures to ensure that food donation and distribution continue uninterrupted. The Food Bank of Singapore, for example, was elevated to a primary essential partner amid the pandemic, allowing it to participate meaningfully in the government crisis response.

Why can wholesale markets be important actors in working together with food banks?

Wholesale markets are hubs to distribute fresh, high-quality foods. The produce that passes through wholesale markets is a valuable nutritious food that can support healthy diets among communities. However, because wholesale markets generally handle perishable products, this food often goes to waste. In Peru, for example, close to 120 million tons of solid organic waste is generated daily in the Lima wholesale market. In fact, in many countries in Latin America, fresh produce is one of the top categories of food loss and waste.

Wholesale markets can serve as an important and reliable partner to food banks by donating safe, surplus foods. Banco de Alimentos del Perú (BAP), a food bank in Peru, launched a program to promote the recovery of surplus fruits and vegetables at the wholesale produce market in Lima. Without these rescue efforts, surplus food is tossed in the garbage and sent to landfills to make room for the next day's offerings.

What could be an ideal setup for a collaboration between food banks and fresh food wholesale markets?

Wholesale markets can help to develop direct relationships with food banks and food recovery organizations to centralize donation practices. This could mean either partnering with the food bank to develop centralized pick-up of donated produce, providing education to market vendors as to why they should donate and information about any incentives (such as tax incentives or liability protections) they

“Ensuring safe, healthy surplus food does not go to the landfill but instead stays in the food supply and finds its way to those in need can help people experiencing hunger and can help mitigate climate change.”

can utilize, or supporting contracting between market vendors and food banks to help facilitate the sale of surplus produce at a reduced price for the benefit of communities facing hunger.

In some cases, wholesale markets have partnered more closely with food banks, making space within the wholesale market for the food bank to do more education, boxing, and light sorting or processing on site at the market. Sound policy is also critical in supporting collaboration between food banks and fresh food wholesale markets. In Peru, vendors in Lima's wholesale market are enthusiastic supporters of BAP's food recovery efforts, often going out of their way to make sure that BAP came to pick up leftover food. Despite the strong collaboration, greater operational and financial support could help scale up to better address the full range of produce available at the market. By developing relationships with food banks and working with governments on policy proposals, wholesale markets can support food banks by allowing them to expand their sourcing, save money, diversify their menus, incorporate more fresh food and build a more resilient local food system.



**FOOD LAW
and POLICY CLINIC**
HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

In facts

“One-quarter of all wasted food could feed all the people around the world suffering from hunger.”

— One quarter of all wasted food could feed the 795 million undernourished people around the world who suffer from hunger.

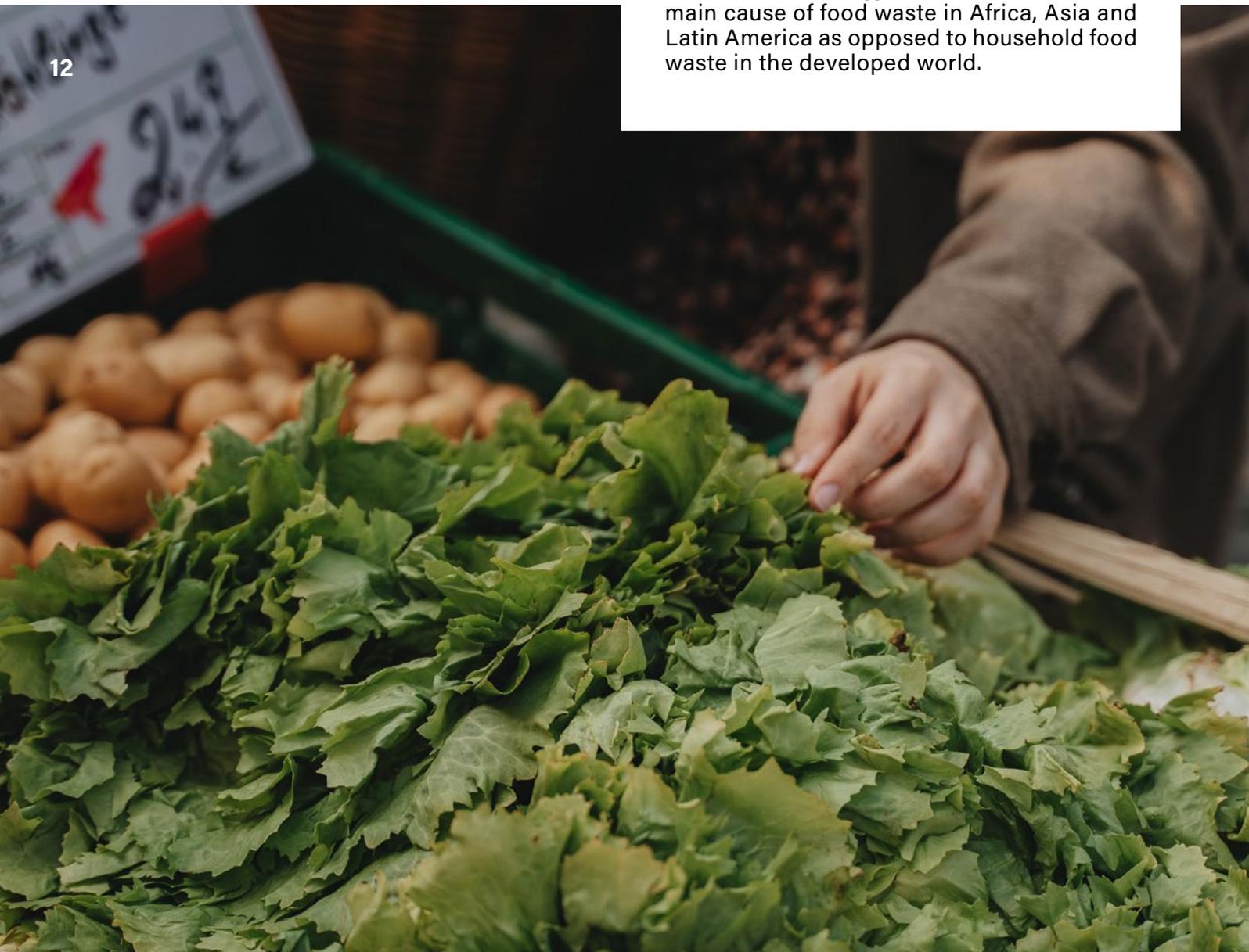
— Food waste generates 3.3 billion tons of carbon dioxide, which accelerates global climate change.

— While the pandemic has exacerbated hunger it's a standing concern—severe food insecurity rose 70% in the four years leading up to the pandemic.

— Food waste in rich countries (222 million tons) is approximately equivalent to all of the food produced in Sub-Saharan Africa (230 million tons).

— A European or North American consumer wastes 15 times more food than a typical African consumer.

— Lack of technology and infrastructure is the main cause of food waste in Africa, Asia and Latin America as opposed to household food waste in the developed world.





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In a best practice of the month: Find out how Italmercati is breaking new ground to reduce food waste and foster healthier diets amid the poorest

Can you tell us how the project “Frutta Che Frutta non Spreca” (Fruit that will not be wasted) was born and what are the main objectives of the project?

The project started with a public call for proposals published by the Italian Ministry of agriculture and forestry which granted a maximum contribution of 50% of the entire amount needed for the project. The Government call aimed to finance innovative projects related to research and technological development in the field of shelf life aimed at limiting food waste. More than 350 projects were presented, our project was one of the winners and was ranked among the top 10, earning the 3rd position!

Italmercati's participation was officially launched in July 2017 when the board unanimously voted to present to the call this project to foster the food surplus recovery with an indoors fruit-processing programme. The main objectives of the project are to recover as much surplus as possible in an innovative way, to extend the shelf-life of «surplus» products and thus increase the possibilities of use, to enhance the recovery for social purposes of both fresh and processed products, to experiment with a new transformation model that uses surpluses as raw materials and involves the third sector and to increase the skills of the third sector.

Can you explain why the initiative is a game-changer in reducing food waste in wholesale markets?

In short, the available surplus products are monitored through a digitized system, selected and sent to non-profit organizations that transforms them into purées, jams and sugar-free marmalades at the market. This process is done at Rome wholesale market through a newly designed laboratory. The raw materials (unsold fruit) used for processing is donated by market operators and selected by the staff of the non-profit organization that is in charge of the laboratory.

The finished product is sold at a really low price to non-profit organizations and food banks in the area that are interested in using it and placed on traditional «social markets» (shops where the poorest can go shopping with special discounted prices).

Selling the produce – even at a really low rate – allows us to sustain, in part, the cost of the laboratory and its employees.

In this sense, the project is a game-changer solution that is completely in line with SDGs objectives. It was created not only to reduce waste but also to help the poor to have accessibility to food and ensure healthier and proper diets.

How much did this initiative cost and how much food have you saved since you launched it?

The total cost to Italmercati was one hundred thousand euros, and the Italian government financed half of it. In 2020 the "Centro Agroalimentare di Roma" recovered about 9000 tons of product that would have been wasted. The amount of product transformed into jams, purées, marmalades, etc. comes from the recovered product alone and is equal to about 3%.

What are the next steps?

Our next steps are to get our "recovered" products into the regular market! Thanks to a recent measure of the Italian government which allows the sale of the transformed product coming from recovered material as «fair trade» products. We want to increase the level of production by subtracting from the waste circuit an increasingly important amount of recovered and processed material. While fruits have a shelf life of 1 day, transformed has a shelf life of 12 months! You can grasp all the potential of the project: we can reach a large part of the population, and particularly the poor, allowing them to buy an excellent product at a very low cost.

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What are the key ingredients that have helped this project succeed? Did you have the support of the government?

The support of the Italian Government was certainly fundamental, but so was the desire to achieve at least two of the objectives of the SDG 2030 agenda (2 and 12), and not least the choice of partners, who are of the highest profile. The location chosen, Rome wholesale market, the largest in Italy, where over 1 million tons of fresh and very fresh produce pass through every year, was also fundamental to succeed.

“The project is a game-changer solution that is completely in line with SDGs objectives. It was created not only to reduce waste but also to help the poor to have accessibility to food and ensure healthier and proper diets.”

Do you think that this project can be reproduced in other wholesale markets? are you going to do it in other places in Italy?

We have a meeting with the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) during the celebration of the international year of fruit and vegetables allowed us to verify that our project is the unique example of indoor transformation of unsold fruits not only in Italy but in Europe! That's why we want to urge governments, not just the Italian one, to identify resources - urgently - to ensure that every large market in Europe can be equipped with a laboratory for the transformation of surplus products so as to be able to implement this kind of initiatives! We are going to present this project during the FEBA annual forum on food aid and social inclusion alongside with WUWM. We believe that actions targeting to reduce fruits and vegetables waste that are ones that are the most likely to seize the opportunities of the new sustainable policies around Europe and that are capable to achieve to reduce by 50% food waste as targeted by the SDGs.





In Events

WUWM participated in the 2nd Food Loss and Waste Reduction Summit for Latin America and the Caribbean organized by the BID and the FAO

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The 2nd Food Loss and Waste Reduction Summit for Latin America and the Caribbean – 2ª Cumbre sobre Reducción de Pérdidas y Desperdicios de Alimentos en América Latina y el Caribe, organised by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) took place on 17 and 18 November in an online format.

Along these two days, numerous actors, experts and stakeholders of the food supply chain were brought together with the aim of sharing good practices, successful public policies and innovative solutions among every step of the food supply chain to reduce food loss and waste in Latin America. In total, eleven-panel sessions have been held, which were attended by governmental officials, international organisations representatives, consultants, researchers, urban administrators and other key actors of the food value chain.

Several WUWM members were invited to participate in the Summit during a session titled: “Reduction of food loss and waste in wholesale markets During her intervention WUWM Secretary-General Eugenia Carrara shared that the FAO Investment Center is carrying out, in collaboration with WUWM, a worldwide unprecedented case study on wholesale markets. This will be the first serious and in-depth study on the key role of wholesale food markets in ensuring global fresh food supply and food safety in every level of the food supply chain, the study demonstrates empirically that markets are the pillar of the transition of food systems.

Ms Carrara pointed out that wholesale markets were for a long time invisible for many actors as they acted in «the hidden middle». Nevertheless, the pandemic has made clear to all major stakeholders and governments their role in ensuring fresh food supply, with shorter value chains, with many more local products and more small and medium-sized producers.

In what concerns food waste, wholesale markets are the best infrastructure to support efficient trade of perishable products, as they participate in the good handling of agricultural products supporting high turnover of quantities.

Mr Carrara pointed out that, although the average of wasted food is relatively low in wholesale markets’ strategic investments to improve food waste reduction are needed. If in average wholesale markets waste 12% this number can drastically decrease in markets with modern infrastructures (like Rungis or Marcabana that account with less than 2% of food waste). In this sense investment is today the missing component to scale-up efficient practices that have demonstrated to have an instant effect to drop food waste quantities (cold chain, better storage facilities.)



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



IDB Inter-American
Development Bank

Ms Carrara also pointed out that wholesale markets can also have a ripple effect in the whole value chain to prevent food losses and waste as they have the power to structure the sector. For instance, wholesalers know demands calendars really well, and they have real-time «pulse of clients trends» in matters of grocery shopping.

In Mexico, some wholesalers work with producers to forecast planting and diversified produce according to clients demands. Investment in innovations (like AI and big data solutions) could be a real tool to anticipate prices/demand evolution for products and have better coordination of food-flows to reduce food waste.

Mr Arturo Fernandez, FLAMA (Latin America Federation of Wholesale Markets) President and WUWM Director, highlighted the multi-dimensional character of the food loss and waste challenge, which has effects not only on the food supply chain, but also towards climate change and social inequalities. He also claimed that there is a need to engage wholesale markets with the food policymakers "so as to undertake new perspectives on responsible consumption and food", which constitutes one of the Latin American governments' main challenges.

In conclusion, WUWM's participation in the Summit was a great opportunity to discuss one of the main challenges that concern Latin America's food systems, to recognise the potential of the continent and to address the future from a multi-level and integrated perspective.

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In WUWM's World

October 28 — WUWM holds Bureau Meeting with Board of Directors.

October 31 — November 12 — WUWM attends various relevant webinars on the role of food systems in reducing global emissions at the COP26.

November 8-12 — WUWM attends a variety of webinars held by—the OECD in light of COP26 on urban food systems and their linkage to GHG emissions reduction.

November 3 — WUWM attends the webinar 'Resilient cities in practice' organised by Nourish Scotland, Rikolto and RUAF on how cities' food systems can become more resilient to external shocks.

November 15 — The European Commission declares WUWM as a permanent member of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Waste.

November 17 & 18 — WUWM takes part in the 2nd Summit on Food Losses and Waste.

November 18 — WUWM signs a Memorandum of Understanding with Global Food Banking Network.

November 24 — WUWM Secretary-General Eugenia Carrara held a meeting with representatives from the World Bank on future collaboration and joint activities of mutual benefit.

November 24 — WUWM participates in a webinar on 'Urban local governments and food systems transformation to realise sustainable, resilient and healthy diets for all: Information and practical considerations', held by the Food for Cities Group, GAIN and the LSE.

November 25 — WUWM and UN-Habitat met for a further meeting regarding the common Action Plan of the two organisations under their Memorandum of Understanding.

November 30 — WUWM hands over 'Gourmand Awards - Best of the Best' prize to chef and world-renewed cook writer Claudia Rodin during the 'Week of World Cuisine' in Paris.



About WUWM:

We aim to facilitate access to healthy diets for everyone in the world by delivering more sustainable, inclusive, and high-quality fresh food supply systems. We exchange ideas, share best practices and cooperate with our partners in international organizations, governments, businesses, and the public.

