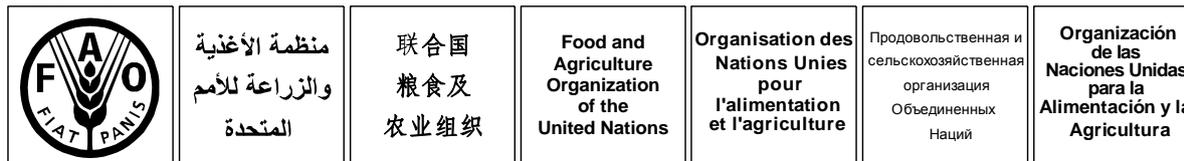


March 2012



COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Twenty-third Session

Rome, 21 - 25 May 2012

Status of FAO's Work on Post-Harvest Losses

I. Adopting a new approach to reduce food losses and waste

1. A substantial proportion of the food produced in the world is never consumed and is lost or wasted. There is heightened concern about these losses because of the recent food price and financial crises, rapid population growth and the realization that needed increases in food supplies will not be met by boosting production alone.
2. Global agro-food systems are undergoing rapid changes caused by growing influence of private sector led enterprise, global market integration, urbanization, growing south-south food trade, and the associated 'lengthening' of food chains. In view of these changes, FAO and its partners have re-aligned their strategies aiming to reduce food losses and waste. The new approach focuses on systemic improvements of the efficiency and sustainability of food chains, and is embedded within the broader concept of promoting sustainable food systems.

II. Recent activities

3. FAO's recent activities for promoting action on reducing food losses and waste comprise the following complementary initiatives:

Information dissemination and awareness raising

4. In May 2011, the international Save Food congress was held during Interpack 2011 in Düsseldorf to raise awareness of the extent and causes of global food losses and waste, share experiences and highlight the role of the private sector. This event kicked off the Save Food initiative which was conceived by FAO and Messe Düsseldorf and has the objective to promote networking of stakeholders in industry, politics and research, foster dialogue and facilitate the development of country-driven solutions throughout the world to combat losses and waste along the food chain, and to enhance the well-being of producers and consumers.
5. To support the Save Food congress, FAO commissioned a desk study and published the report *Global Food Losses and Food Waste: Extent, Causes and Prevention*¹ which revealed that roughly

¹ FAO. 2011. *Global food losses and food waste: Extent, Causes and Prevention*, by J. Gustavsson, C. Cederberg, U. Sonesson, R. van Otterdijk and A. Meybeck. Available at: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ags/publications/GFL_web.pdf

one-third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally. The study also revealed major data gaps especially with regard to the quantification of food losses by individual cause and the costs of food loss reduction interventions.

6. During the 2011 World Food Week, a seminar and an exhibition were held at FAO headquarters to bring FAO's inter-divisional work on prevention of food losses and waste, the Save Food initiative and the collaboration with Interpack/Messe Düsseldorf to the attention of FAO staff and visitors to the Committee on Food Security and World Food Week. Further details of the Save Food initiative are at <http://www.save-food.org>.

Support to national and regional programmes

7. FAO is providing assistance for formulating and implementing national and regional food loss reduction projects and investment programmes in Asia-Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa Regions.

8. For example, in the Asia-Pacific Region, FAO is supporting the project *TCP/RAS/3310 - Capacity development to reduce post-harvest losses in horticultural chains in GMS² Countries* which was initiated in 2011 in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam, Thailand and Myanmar. The project involves regional training and networking activities, as well as nationally focused activities that target the introduction of technologies, systems and practices designed to improve safety and quality while reducing post-harvest losses in supply chains of priority crops.

9. In sub-Saharan Africa, the regional project *TCP/RAF/3311- Support to regional capacity building to reduce post harvest losses* was signed with the African Union Commission in July 2011 and aims to train regional institutions, government officials and development agencies in the design of policies, strategies and investment programmes targeting food loss reduction. The project will also prepare proposals for national investment projects to be funded by the African Development Bank under a framework programme developed with the assistance of FAO.

Analytical studies and appraisals

10. In 2009, FAO collaborated with the World Bank and the Natural Resources Institute in the United Kingdom to undertake an analysis of approaches, technologies and support interventions to reduce post-harvest losses in staple food grain supply chains in Africa. This led to publication of the report *Missing Food: The Case of Postharvest Grain Losses in Sub-Saharan Africa*³.

11. A series of workshops were held across Africa in 2011 to address the significance of food losses, past experiences, and strategies, priority actions and approaches to tackle food losses in the grains, roots and tubers, and fruits and vegetables sub-sectors. The workshops also explored information exchange and coordination mechanisms for spearheading food loss reduction activities.

12. In the Middle East and North Africa Region, FAO conducted an appraisal of the role of agro-industries in reducing food losses and improving food security in the region, as an input into the Regional Agro-industries Forum which was held in Beirut in November 2011.

III. Planned activities for the 2012/13 biennium

13. In the framework of the Save Food initiative, it is proposed to undertake work in partnership with a consortium of food industry, packaging industry and research partners. The first thrust on food waste is focused on the disposal of good food products by retailers and consumers in mainly, but not exclusively, industrialized countries. Part of the work will be undertaken in collaboration with the European Consortium on Food Waste Prevention as part of the European Union (EU) project 'Optimising Food Use for Social Innovation' (as proposed under the EU programme FP7). It will

² GMS: Greater Mekong Subregion

³ World Bank. 2011. *Missing Food: The Case of Postharvest Grain Losses in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Available at: http://www.fao.org/ag/ags/ags-division/publications/publication/en/?dyna_fef%5Buid%5D=81559

assess the extent of food waste due to 'best-before dates' and also develop a better approach to date claims on food labels.

14. The second thrust on food losses will be implemented in partnership with Interpack/Messe Düsseldorf and will focus on the production-to-retail and table segments of the food supply chains in developing countries. It will involve detailed studies on a regional basis to ascertain the magnitude of food losses per cause and the effectiveness and costs (in economic, energy needs and environmental terms) of food loss reduction measures. These regional studies will be the basis for national assessments of losses which would enable countries plan their food loss reduction strategies.

15. In line with the two thrusts under the Save Food initiative, a study will be conducted on the effect of food waste and food losses on food prices world-wide. In addition, the following information dissemination and awareness raising activities will be carried out: a world-wide media campaign on food losses and waste and two regional Save Food congresses.

16. Within the framework of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, FAO will carry out research for developing methodological guidelines for estimating losses.

17. Financing for the work of FAO on food losses and waste will come from FAO assessed contributions of and extra-budget funds through FAO. Delivery of the total programme envisaged is subject to securing extra-budget funds.