

Food Losses and Waste in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS), 41st Session, 2014, endorsed the following recommendations on Food Losses and Waste in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems.¹



The Committee:

Welcomed the HLPE report and recognized that Food Losses and Waste (FLW) impact the sustainability and resilience of agricultural and food systems and their ability to ensure food security and nutrition for all for this generation and for future generations. Reduction in FLW also supports better use of natural resources. The Committee acknowledged that FLW is a consequence of how food systems function. It calls for all stakeholders – States, including other relevant levels of governance, international organizations, the private sector and civil society – to recognize food security and nutrition as central objectives of sustainable food systems and to individually and collectively address FLW to improve their sustainability, food security and nutrition potential. Underlying causes of and solutions to FLW can be defined at various levels (defined in the HLPE report as “micro”, “meso” and “macro”). These three levels are useful in identifying the potential roles of various stakeholders.

Recommended that all concerned stakeholders, according to their priorities and means, undertake cost-effective, practicable and environmentally sensitive actions under the following four mutually supportive tracks, in an inclusive, integrated and participatory manner:

1) Improve data collection and knowledge sharing on FLW

a) All Stakeholders:

- Promote a common understanding on the nature and scope of FLW, which may lead to a common definition of FLW.

- Improve the collection, transparency and sharing of data, disaggregated when appropriate, on FLW at all stages of the food chain as well as sharing of experiences, and best practices relating to reducing FLW in food systems.

b) FAO, as well as other relevant organisations:

- Consider developing common protocols and methodologies, and improve coherence amongst existing ones, for measuring FLW and analyse the underlying causes. This should be done through an inclusive and participatory process, taking into account product, country, and stakeholder specificities and initiatives, and building upon the experiences of FAO, IFAD, WFP and other organizations as appropriate.

2) Develop effective strategies to reduce FLW

a) States:

- Convene an inclusive process, as appropriate, that enables broad stakeholder participation, such as by private sector, civil society, local and subnational authorities, to enable stakeholders to identify causes of FLW, potential solutions, key actors, and priorities for individual and collective action. This requires identifying the stakeholders who would need to be engaged in the identification and implementation of solutions, including at subnational and local levels and throughout the food systems, costs implications and who will bear them, as well



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Food Losses and Waste in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition

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¹ Excerpt from the CFS 41 Final Report

as potential benefits. It also requires identifying constraints and challenges and designing strategies to address them.

b) FAO, as well as other relevant organisations:

- Support these national processes in collaboration with partners by promoting methodological approaches adapted to country specificities and based on systematic and intersectoral approaches to take into account potential complementarity between food chains.

3) Take effective steps to reduce FLW

a) Based on the priorities and strategies identified, States and, as appropriate, subnational and local authorities, are encouraged to create an enabling environment for the reduction of FLW through gender responsive policies, investments, sharing experiences, and incentives in compliance with relevant international obligations, including by encouraging sustainable patterns of consumption and production, in accordance with national and international human and animal health regulations, with particular emphasis on:

- Promoting investment and innovations based on traditional and scientific knowledge to reduce FLW, considering various sustainable agriculture approaches recalling the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems and in particular principle 6.vi.²
- Investing in infrastructure and other public goods and services to reduce FLW and promote sustainable food systems (e.g. storage and processing facilities, reliable energy supply, transport, appropriate technologies) and improved access by food producers and consumers to markets (e.g. improved market information and product knowledge).
- Implementing an appropriate policy and regulatory framework to encourage the private sector and the consumers to take steps towards reducing FLW, for instance by designing and implementing appropriate instruments and by promoting diversity of food chains.
- Supporting small-scale food producers and processors and their organizations for better access to knowledge and innovation, markets, financial services, logistics (e.g. storage, processing, packaging, and transport) and other services which are important to reduce FLW.

- Supporting and promoting initiatives to minimize fish discard and post-harvest losses and waste at all steps of the fish value chain.
- Assessing and improving, where relevant, public food procurement management and distribution policies and practices to minimize FLW while ensuring food safety and quality, safeguarding the environment, improving economic efficiency and pursuing social benefits, for instance facilitating access for small-scale food producers where appropriate.
- Further exploring the impact of short supply chains, community-supported agriculture and local markets, in the effort to reduce FLW along the whole food chain, especially for perishable products.

b) All stakeholders as appropriate:

- Carry out training and capacity building to promote the use of appropriate practices and technologies and best practices to reduce FLW.
- Promote innovation, the exchange of best practices, knowledge and voluntary technology transfers on mutually-agreed terms in order to reduce FLW.
- Promote the coordination of stakeholders to improve governance and efficiency of the food chain and organize collective understanding and action to reduce FLW.
- Encourage consumers in reducing the level of food waste in households through advice and the dissemination of evidence-based information and scientific and traditional knowledge.
- Encourage engagement of all actors, especially women, in public campaigns, education of youth and awareness raising of consumers on the importance and modalities of reducing FLW.
- Encourage the strengthening of the organisation of the food chain for reducing FLW, recognizing the impacts of actions throughout food systems.

c) The private sector:

- Take a leading role in their sectors in preventing and reducing FLW, through research, development, technological innovations and to reduce FLW, within their production and distribution systems and in accordance with national regulations.
- Collect and share data on FLW and on efforts to reduce it, change practices to promote reducing

² CFS, 2014. Principles for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems.

FLW in business partners and households, integrating these actions in business practices and corporate responsibility policies.

- Develop and improve practices and industry standards related to product sourcing and retail to reduce FLW, in particular standards used to accept or reject food produce (e.g. cosmetic standards for fruit, vegetables, livestock and fish products). This can be done, for example, by introducing differentiated pricing to prevent economic and nutrition value losses.

d) States and National and International research and development organizations:

- Increase investment in research, technological and social innovation, with due attention to small-scale food producers' needs and knowledge, throughout the food chain, for effective reduction of FLW as well as for adding value to agricultural products in the whole food value chain, for example through the extension of shelf life while protecting food safety and nutritional value.
- Contribute to the provision of appropriate extension services and training, especially focused on small-scale transport, storage, processing, packaging and distribution systems to reduce FLW.
- Carry out research in FLW in order to develop a systemic analysis framework or methodology to quantify and reduce FLW, and assess the impact of alternative uses of FLW such as for feed, energy and industrial uses, etc.
- Cooperate, and support actions, to promote participatory research, together with small-scale food producers to reduce FLW.

4) Improve coordination of policies, strategies, and actions to reduce FLW

a) States, and as appropriate, subnational and local authorities as well as intergovernmental mechanisms:

- Integrate FLW concerns and solutions, and a food systems' approach, as appropriate, into agricultural, food and other relevant policies and development programmes.
- Utilize mechanisms for measuring improvement over time, setting targets as appropriate, and introduce an enabling environment through policies and incentives to reduce FLW, in accordance with national priorities, based on a

“food use-not-waste” hierarchy (i.e. prevention, food recovery and redistribution of safe and nutritious food to people).

- Encourage all stakeholders to optimize the use of resources, reduce FLW and seek solutions for sorting of food waste and reducing waste to landfills.
- Support efforts for simplification, coherence, clarification and harmonization of the meaning and use of food dates labelling, while ensuring food safety, at national as well as international level taking into account the principles and the ongoing work of the Codex Alimentarius.
- Support coordination of efforts through multi-stakeholder FLW reduction initiatives at all levels.
- Recognize the important roles and initiatives of national, subnational, relevant local authorities and multistakeholder bodies to reduce FLW.

Finally, the Committee encouraged:

- FAO in partnership with other relevant international organisations to support governments in reducing FLW in the context of sustainable food systems, including by assisting them in assessing their food systems and promoting sharing successful experiences, challenges faced and lessons learned from FLW initiatives.
- CFS members and participants, as well as stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of reducing FLW by disseminating the HLPE report on “Food Losses and Waste in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems” and sharing the present recommendations with international organizations and bodies.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

CFS is the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together in a coordinated way to ensure food security and nutrition for all. CFS endorses policy recommendations on a wide range of food security and nutrition topics.

CFS WEBSITE AND CONTACT

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