

**Side-Event of the European Regional Conference on
“Food Wastage Footprint: the Hidden costs”
Bucharest, Romania, 2 April 2014**

**Introductory Remarks
by
Friedrich Wacker
Director, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Germany**

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Humanity faces great challenges: supplying a growing world population with food to more than 9 billion people by 2050.
- This requires diverse measures: agriculture is the key to ensuring food security worldwide.
- In our fight against global hunger, we are very much focused on the increase of production, but less so on the reduction of food losses and wastage. Studies show that food losses and waste are high and this must be avoided.
- Approximately one third of the food produced in the fields does not reach the plate – in Germany alone, this amounts to 11 million tonnes per year, of which the predominant part (6.7 million tonnes) comes from private households. This is the equivalent of 82 kg food per person and year, of which two thirds are avoidable. On the global scale, losses and waste amount for up to 1.3 billion tonnes of food, most of which is still suitable for human consumption.
- This must be changed. A significant reduction of food losses and wastage is critical:
 - Firstly: the need for a significant reduction of losses and waste is following an economic rationale. The cost of production of food is expected to go up; prices of energy are increasing, water and land are getting more expensive. Therefore, we could save much money by avoiding losses and waste.
 - Secondly: the need for a significant reduction of losses and wastage is a matter of social and environmental responsibility. Production of food is using scarce resources; therefore wastage of food is also a waste of resources.
 - Thirdly: the need for a significant reduction follows an ethical paradigm. The production of food, its preparation and consumption are part of the fabric of our culture and are reflecting ethical values. Therefore, wasting food could be perceived as being unethical.
- We need to differentiate between loss and waste. In most cases, food losses occur on farm level or in the earlier phase of the food chain and are in particular a problem of

less developed countries. Waste of food is mostly a phenomenon of developed countries and rich societies.

- What needs to be done? Information and education play an important role for people and for enterprises. In addition to this, we need knowledge transfer and innovation in order to improve the efficiency of food production on farm level and in the food chain. Finally, we need to invest in awareness raising.
- But of course, there are limitations to our efforts to reduce loss and waste; limitations for technical hygienic, health and veterinary reasons and, last but not least, for economic reasons.
- For economic reasons, it is important to compare the costs of investment to the costs of doing nothing or too little.
- A study conducted by the FAO with financial support from Germany shows that food wastage in the food chain has far reaching consequences – consequences which are not yet or not sufficiently considered in the general debate, such as for example:
 - Impacts for the environment, such as water or climate through greenhouse gases, among others, etc.; and/or
 - Social consequences, including higher food prices, more pollution through pesticides and nitrate, higher health care costs, etc.
- These results are now available and will be presented by Ms. Nadia Scialabba on behalf of the FAO – they are just off the printing press as the last lines were only written a few days ago. Thank you very much for your major contribution to the preparation of this Side Event – I am looking forward to the results – and also to the short videos included in your presentation that will summarize the problem in a nutshell.
- The problem of food wastage has come onto the international agenda – also thanks to the FAO: many member states have adopted their own measures by now (in this respect, thanks to Ms. Alexia Michel from The Hague who will present the national strategy and the experiences with the Dutch measures).
- The government alone will not be able to solve the wastage issue: these problems require a broader approach, a multi-stakeholder approach. It is great to see that numerous NGOs are working to reduce food loss and waste. This is good, as we need private commitment, such as for example efforts in Italy. Here, the “Last Minute Market“ organization is active. Thanks to Mr. Andrea Segré for his readiness to report on his experiences. I have been told that these are valuable experiences as you have been working on this for more than 15 years.
- Thank you also to the hosts of this conference. In Romania, SEMA, the Safe Environment Management Association, is taking care of the issue. Mr. Costin Damasaru will also present the concept and the experiences SEMA made in Romania.

- Afterwards, if time allows, you will have the opportunity to ask questions. I would therefore like to ask the panelists to keep within the agreed time frame.
- The combination of academia, government and NGOs promises an interesting programme for this side event. Ms. Scialabba, you have floor.