

Our dream for a better planet without food loss and waste: it is possible

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Speech of Ms Angela Frigo Secretary General, European Food Banks Federation

Angela, do you expect the role of the European Food Banks to change in the months to come, in a post-COVID context, having in mind that the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion might keep growing? What measures should be taken by Food Banks to adapt to the new situation?

The role of European Food Banks – preventing food waste through the daily recovery and redistribution of good food to charities helping the most deprived – is not going to change in the months to come. We will not change our activity but rather we will innovate the way we do it.

Since the beginning of the activity in 1984, European Food Banks have always adapted their activity to the evolution of the food supply chain and to financial and political crises. We will **keep looking for new collaborations**, with public and private support, **we will reorganize our activity** (homeworking, digital tools, etc.), **we will digitize some traditional activities** (e.g. optimization of food management), and **we will ask young generations** to help us.

Food Banks will express their full **creativity and professionalism** in this new and increasingly complex environment: **an increased demand for food, a shortage of volunteers, and a drop in financial resources**.

Food Banks are constantly looking for **new supplies, a better cost-efficient model, and innovations**. Whether the gleaning in the fields and the recovery of surplus food from cruise ships or the freezing of meat and fish from the distribution sector, the use of technology to optimise operations or the preparation of healthy and nutritious ready-made meals, the processing of fruit and vegetables for an extended shelf-life or the recovery of unconsumed meals from schools, hotels, canteens and conferences.

We know that **we cannot achieve all this by ourselves**. It's a **chain of solidarity** that starts upstream from the food supply chain, passing through the Food Banks and then to the tens of thousands of charities that every day help more and more people in need. First of all, we will have to collaborate more and more with the network of charities which daily receive food from the Food Banks. Then, to innovate we will need to collaborate with the academic world and food businesses: without them we won't be able to fulfil our role.

We will need young people: their ideas, their enthusiasm and their desire to turn this dramatic situation into a great positive opportunity.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak Food Banks suffered a **fluctuation of the supply** – the traditional donors, such as food and drink manufacturers and the distribution sectors had to reorganize their internal procedures and were affected by panic buying of consumers, while the food service sector and restaurants were forced to close with huge quantities of surplus food available.

This was a tremendous challenge for our logistics: many pick-up points, mainly with chilled and frozen food, in a period when restrictions to mobility were in place in all countries.

We also highlight a shortage of volunteers, but also an immediate response from young generations to support the daily activity.

From March to date

- European Food Banks **are up and running**: they are carrying out their daily activity while ensuring social distancing and respecting the strict hygienic requirements imposed by national authorities without lowering the guard to ensure safety and avoid the risk of spreading the pandemic.
- European Food Banks are experiencing a **growing food demand of 30%** at European level, with a range going from 6% to 80%. This is a new poverty: **people who have lost the job due to the COVID-19, families with children who relied mainly on school meals, and elderly people living alone**. The outlook for the coming months and years is certainly not better.
- European Food Banks are meeting about **50-70% of the needs of charitable organizations** despite the redistribution of **doubled quantities** of food compared to 2019 levels.

The world's first Food Bank was founded in 1967 in Phoenix (USA) while the first European Food Bank was established in 1984 in Paris, France. Today the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) brings together more than **430 Food Banks in 29 countries** of differing socio-economic and cultural contexts in Europe. They are the frontlines of preventing food waste and reducing food insecurity in our communities, assisting **45,283 charities** that help more than **9.5 millions of people in search of food security**.

Food Banks have shown evidence to be a **reliable partner to help feeding those in need and to foster the resilience of the food supply chain**. The invitation to take part in this high-level meeting confirms the key role of Food Banks.

Today Food Banks are dreamers because first they are doers. They are an integral part of the food system because they promote the transition from a linear to a circular economy: no good food goes to waste but gains a new value for the people, for the planet.

With the help of all our volunteers and employees, with the help of all those who want to support us, and with your help, this has been and will be our role: **a concrete and daily contribution to food waste prevention** towards challenging objectives such as the SDG Target 12.3.