

Inaugural event 1st International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste

Stakeholders dialogues, 29 September 2020

Speech of Ms Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the occasion of the first International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, I am delighted to welcome you to this stakeholder dialogue. The daily work of the European Food Banks Federation and its members is crucial in preventing food waste while people are hungry. As European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, I can not thank you enough for your dedication.

As you know, the Commission has adopted Guidelines in order to support food donation. By redistributing saved food, we can fight hunger and save valuable resources, which otherwise might have gone to waste. I would like to thank the European Federation of Food Banks for their important contribution in this. The most recent estimates show that 20% of food produced in the EU is lost or wasted. And at the same time 33 million people can not afford a quality meal every second day. Wasting food is quite simply inexcusable. From a human perspective, as well as considering the pressure on our eco system and climate.

During the months of the coronavirus pandemic, we have seen many examples of powerful collaboration. I am grateful for the efforts of farmers, food business, food banks and other organisations who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to ensure food is available to citizens across the EU. There is an urgent need to redesign our food system, made even clearer by the ongoing pandemic.

The Farm to Fork Strategy, which is a key part of the European Green Deal, puts forward a series of actions to enable the transition to a sustainable food system. We must safeguard food security and ensure access to healthy diets sourced from a healthy planet. Reducing food losses and food waste is an integral part of the strategy. And that is why we will be proposing legally binding targets to reduce food waste in the EU by 2023. Importantly, Member States are already obliged to measure and report on food waste levels and we have already made it easier to donate unsold food and to use food, where appropriate, as animal feed.

The EU Food Donation Guidelines aim to facilitate compliance of providers and recipients of surplus food with relevant EU legal requirements and promote a common interpretation by Member States of the EU rules on the redistribution of surplus food. We have already launched a two-year pilot project to assess food donation practices in Member States and to promote the uptake of the EU Food Donation Guidelines.

The stakeholder dialogues happening today are so important. They allow you to become more familiar with these guidelines and exchange best practices. And they should help you to challenge any remaining barriers to food redistribution at national level. I call upon all food operators, from farm to fork and public authorities to work closely with you to make sustainable food systems a reality.

Surplus food should feed people, not go in the bin. There is no time to waste.

Thank you.