



Inaugural event 1st International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste Stakeholders dialogues, 29 September 2020 **Opening remarks of Mr Jacques Vandenschrik,** **President of the European Food Banks Federation**

Distinguished Guests,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you here today, on behalf of the European Food Banks Federation.

We are honoured to celebrate the first International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste with a virtual event "Food, no waste! European Food Banks: concrete answers for the people, for the planet".

A big thank you to our members and all the Food Bankers, public authorities, and stakeholders who are present here today for having accepted our invitation.

I am delighted that in the context of this virtual event we are organizing 5 online meetings in collaboration with Food Banks in Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Malta, Norway, and Sweden to disseminate the EU guidelines on food donation, to better analyse the main opportunities and challenges to foster food donation both at European and national level.

John van Hengel had been volunteering at a local soup kitchen in Phoenix (USA) when a young mother told him that she was feeding her children with good food thrown away from grocery stores. His conversation with the young woman gave John the idea of a "Food Bank," where food companies with excess food could "deposit" it, and charities could "withdraw" it for people in need.

These were the simple beginnings of the world's first Food Bank in 1967.

Today, the European Food Banks Federation brings together 430 Food Banks in 29 European countries. Every day they rescue food from the food supply chain and redistribute it to charities helping people in need.

Food donation is a beneficial solution: it increases access to food, protects and fosters the resilience of the food supply chain, and reduces the environmental impact of food waste on our planet.

In the first half of 2020 the majority of European Food Banks are experiencing not only an increased food demand up to 50% compared to the pre-COVID period, but also a 50% increase of the amount of food redistributed, in comparison with 2019 levels.

Food Banks have shown evidence that, even during an unexpected and unprecedented crisis, they are a reliable partner and they have provided a concrete response not only to feed those in need but first of all to support the food supply chain. Food Banks quickly adapted to an increasingly complex environment and are keeping the chain of solidarity alive.



In the last few years we have come a long way: the publication of “Every Meal Matters” in 2016, the establishment of the EU Platform of Food Losses and Food Waste in 2016, the drafting of the EU guidelines on food donation in 2017, and the release of the Key Recommendations for Action in Food Waste Prevention in 2019. Today we are at a turning point. The support of Food Banks is more and more essential to ensure that no good food goes to waste. Moreover, with the new European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy we have the great opportunity to strengthen already existing collaborations and recognize food donation and the activity of Food Banks not as a philanthropic option but as an integral part of the food system.

I would like to conclude with a wish quoting the address of His Holiness Pope Francis on the occasion of our Annual Convention 2019 in Rome: “What can we do? Faced with an economic situation that is ailing, - his words are as true today with the COVID-19 pandemic as they were last year - we cannot intervene with brute force and risk causing death. [...] We must come together to relaunch what is good, [...].”

We can be successful only if we have the desire to build and rebuild places of hope together, even in this uncertain and challenging period. For the people, for the planet.

I wish you a fruitful dialogue and I am looking forward to listening and contributing to your discussions.