

Food charity vs. social cash benefits

Prof. dr. Vesna Leskošek

University of Ljubljana

Faculty of social work

Food waste

- There is no doubt that we throw away too much food. Quite a lot of wasted food is still edible.
- Corporate campaigns (hundreds of them on-line):
 - **SPAR** is aiming to reduce food waste by 270 tons a year. How does it hope to achieve this? By offering a 50 percent discount on all freshly baked bread one hour before closing time.
 - **LIDL**: Reduce food waste from our stores by 25% per sq ft by 2020 and 50% by 2030, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.3 target; Connect 100% of our stores with local projects to donate food surplus by summer 2018.
 - **TESCO**: <https://sustainability.tescopl.com/sustainability/food-waste/>

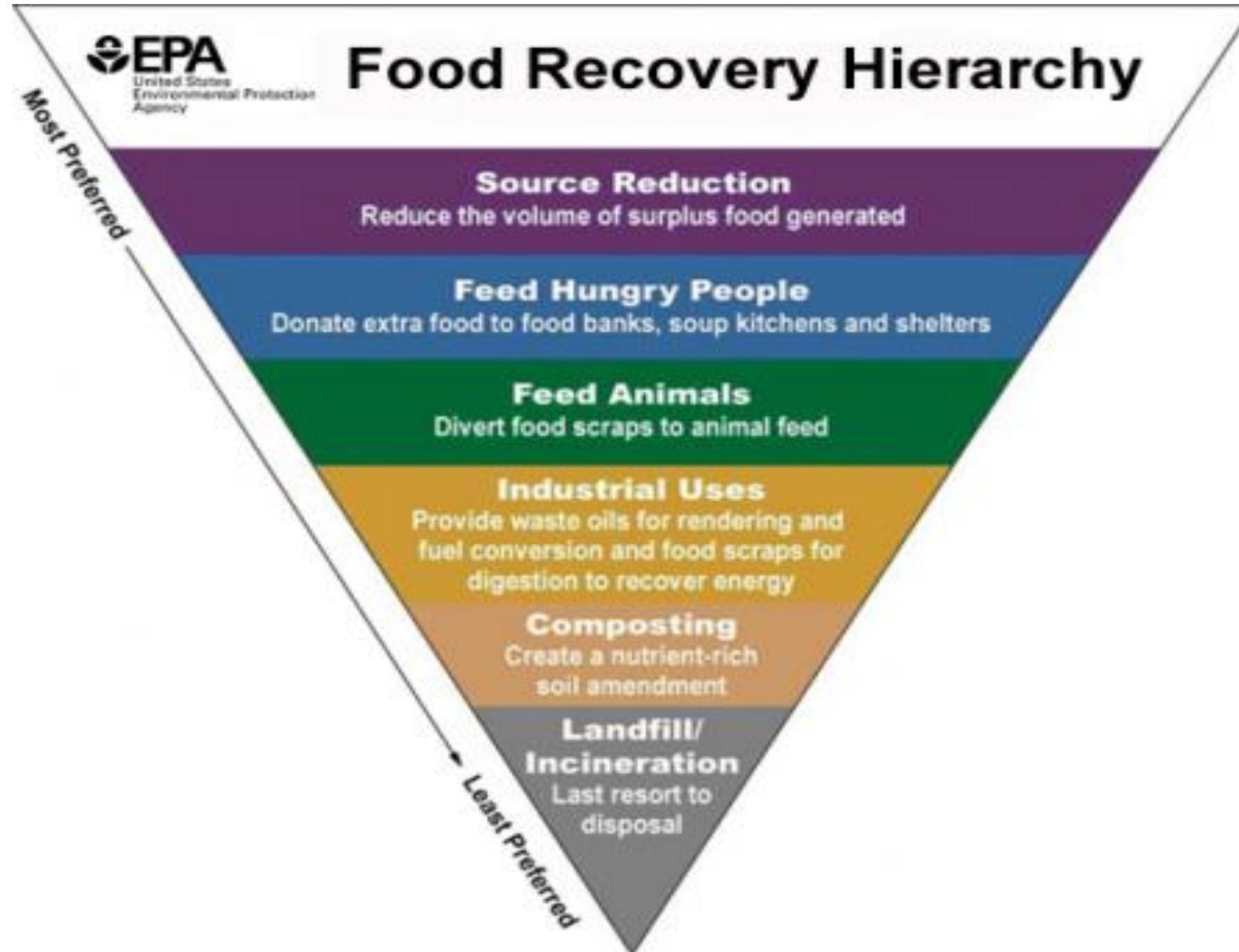
Recipes food waste

- How to Reduce Food Waste + Best Zero-Waste Recipes: <https://www.culinarynutrition.com/how-to-reduce-food-waste-best-zero-waste-recipes/>
- 23 Ingenious Recipes That Reduce Food Waste and Use Up Fruit and Vegetable Scraps: <https://twohealthykitchens.com/23-recipes-reduce-food-waste-use-up-fruit-and-vegetable-scraps/>
- Discover the nation's best leftover food recipes: <https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/recipes>
- 50 recipes to use food scraps, repurpose leftovers, and reduce food waste: <http://www.gibbs-lab.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Cookbook050516.pdf>

Generated food waste in Slovenia (2015)

- All together 133.000t:
 - Private households: 66.141 t - 73 kg of food waste generated per person in 2015 (Croatia 79kg; Austria 43 kg; Malta 129 kg)
 - In Distribution: 12.933 t
 - Food service (in tonnes): 44.824 t
 - Production sector (in tonnes): 10.000 t

Food surplus use hierarchy



Used-by, best before

- A use-by date on food is about safety. This is the most important date to remember. Foods can be eaten until the use-by date but not after. You will see use-by dates on food that goes off quickly, such as meat products or ready-to-eat salads.
- The best before date, sometimes shown as BBE (best before end), is about quality and not safety. The food will be safe to eat after this date but may not be at its best. Its flavour and texture might not be as good. Best before dates appear on a wide range of foods including: frozen foods, dried foods, tinned foods.

Reducing food waste



Food waste and food surplus

- Food waste refers to food being discarded, whether or not after it is kept beyond its expiry date or left to spoil. It is not ready for human consumption.
- Food surplus is defined as food that it is still edible and ready for human consumption but might be wasted (it can be a loss or opportunity). The oposite term is food deficit.
- Food surplus is edible food that othetwise be wasted 😊

Food poverty

- Riches and Silvasti edited a book on *First world hunger* where they state that food hunger is a matter of access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food, what is actually a human right.
- Table: at risk-of-poverty rate Slovenia

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total	12.3	11.3	12.7	13.6	13.5	14.5	14.5	14.3	13.9	13.3
Men	11	9.8	11.3	12.2	12.5	13.5	13.7	13	12.5	12.0
Women	13.6	12.8	14.1	15	14.6	15.4	15.2	15.6	15.2	14.5

Food donations

[1]

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
No. of recipients		144,863	156,442	154,981	132,000	129,035
Supply of food from EU inter. Stocks + (FEAD)	3,755 t	2,203 t	2,125 t	1,055 t		2,550 t (incl. Dec 2015)
Food packages from FIHO + It is nice to share	51,904	52,830	33,517	44,108	53,066 531 t	43,815 438 t (excl. It is nice to sh.)
Support for those in bankruptcy	393 packages	2.039 packages				
Food packages on local level (donations)	275 t	242 t	251 t	507 t	430 t	425 t
Apples, pears and tomatoes				533 t	571 t	700 t
Food surpluses					No data	174 t

EU Politics: Food Donation Guidelines

- The Guidelines reflect EU policy views on utilising the edible food waste (read food surpluses) generated by the food industry as part of overall poverty relief measures, stating that “[...] the best destination for food surplus, which ensures the highest value use of edible food resources, is to redistribute this food for human consumption where safe to do so [...] to those in need”.
- The Guidelines introduced the term *food redistribution* as the process in which surplus food is “recovered, collected and provided to people, in particular to those in need”.

European Parliament resolution on initiative on resource efficiency: reducing food waste, improving food safety

- The EP considers food donations by businesses as an “act of social solidarity” (see EP Resolution 2017: p. 8), yet the food industry stands to obtain clear financial benefits from making such donations through tax reliefs, a reduction of indirect costs, like the cost of biological waste management and disposal, and the chance to capitalise on donations by way of positive promotion and an act of environmental and social responsibility, giving the company an advantage in the highly competitive food industry sector.

Table: The attitude to social cash benefits recipients

Source: European Social Survey, 2016

	Statements	Agree	Disagree
Social rights	Social security benefits in Slovenia make people lazy	51.6	25.4
	Expenditure on social security in Slovenia makes people less willing to help each other	45.6	30.1
	Most of the unemployed are not really looking for a job	44.0	30.4
	Many people manage to obtain cash benefits they are not entitled to	64.5	14.6

Methodology

- We created an on-line questionnaire for donors and for distributing organisations.
- For the distributing organisations, we shortlisted organisations from the database of all organisations providing programmes and services to vulnerable groups, that are co-financed by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and work in the areas of homelessness, illicit drug addiction, violence prevention and mental health outreach programmes, assuming that they distribute surplus food and food waste.
- In addition, we included the two largest humanitarian organisations in the country – the Red Cross and Caritas – authorised by the state to distribute food packages to the poor.
- The survey included several topics, such as the types of food donations they receive, from whom, the frequency and amount of donations, logistics, donors' special requirements, situational questions (e.g. protocols in the case of spoiled food), reasons to participate in the food surplus and food waste recovery and donation sphere, and opinions on how donations contribute to the position and well-being of recipients.
- The invitations were sent to 50 social welfare organisations. A total of 26 organisations completed the survey, of which 20 distribute donations of surplus food to their service users.

- The approach taken to donors was similar. We browsed the webpages of supermarkets, hypermarkets and food manufacturers (e.g. bakeries, restaurants), seeking information on their corporate social responsibility activities and especially if such activities include donations of surplus food. We also browsed online news that mentions food donations in the past few years (2015–2018).
- This approach was necessary because there is no systemic or systematic monitoring of the surplus food and food waste redistribution chain.
- In total, 27 grocery shops, supermarkets, hypermarkets, restaurants, bakeries and other suppliers in the food supply chain were invited to participate in the research. 7 of them completed the questionnaire.
- An adapted questionnaire was used to obtain information on the motivation/ rationale for becoming a donor, the types of food surpluses and waste that are used for donation purposes, to whom they are donating, how contacts and decisions are made, the frequency and amount of donations, logistical issues, special requirements they might impose on front-line organisations, situational questions (e.g. protocols, HCCAP), the benefits and issues of being a donor, and their opinions concerning end-users who consume donated foods.
- Our research plan included an interview with Lions Club Slovenia, a major intermediary and redistribution organisation. Unfortunately, it did not respond to our inquiries, even though we tried different approaches to contact it

Results: donors

- Supermarkets donate only some of food that is labelled as food surplus or food waste.
- Hyper- and super-markets prefer to donate food to the Lions Club that runs a food redistribution project and organises the delivery of food to NGOs. The reason for cooperating with Lions Clubs is that they have capacities to assure smooth logistics and distribution without disturbing supermarkets' regular business activities.
- By participating in food delivery chain supermarkets are preparing themselves for possible measures imposing a ban on food waste which Slovenia might adopt in the future. It is in business owners' interest to deal with food waste effectively and efficiently, without interfering in their core business operations. At the same time, managing food waste and food surpluses through relatively inexpensive charity solutions is considered as part of their corporate social responsibility activities and an opportunity to build a positive brand image, which they try to utilise in all possible ways through various campaigns.

Results: distributing organisations

- Distribution organisations provide different types of food to end users, most often baked goods and frozen foods, followed by hot or cold meals from canteens, cafeterias or supermarket hot bars, to a smaller extent also fresh vegetables, fruit and milk products and lastly canned foods. Some of the distributors hand out dried basic foods such as rice, pasta, flour and cooking oil (Red Cross, Caritas).
- Their sources of donations vary, with hypermarkets and supermarkets (e.g. Mercator, Spar, Lidl) leading the way, followed by primary producers (farmers, dairies, bakeries, meat-processing industry), smaller grocery shops, public institutions (homes for the elderly, schools, kindergartens), small restaurants and large cafeterias (for example Sodexo)

- Donor-distributor relationship is relatively complicated. Main challenges:
 - how to manage the collection and distribution of food surpluses, where issues relate to the lack of funds to cover the transport costs and staff.
 - the inability to refuse a food donation
 - What to do with spoiled food
 - Logistic problems (collecting, sorting, distributing)
 - Distributing organisations have to be fast, well-organised, prompt and as invisible as possible when picking up the food. In order to achieve this, they must have volunteers, vehicles, special food containers and financial resources to cover their expenses.
- Conditioning access to food donation:
 - end users provide proof are receiving in-cash social assistance
 - referral from social services
 - Selectivity principle (food goes only to certain services, like maternity homes, day centers...)

Lions Club

- According to its website, it organises collections of food surpluses from 70 groceries in 27 cities all over the country.
- the Lions Club is the chief organiser of the redistribution process
- Membership in the Lions Club mainly entails members of the business community who understand the needs of supermarkets, have mastered business processes and also understand that the circular economy needs consumers.

Discussion

- *Commodification of food poverty.*
 - Surplus food and food waste recovery is becoming sustainable solutions to 'save the planet' and feed the poor at the same time.
 - Concepts of zero waste are unfortunately tested on populations without any political, economic and cultural capital – poor and socially excluded individuals who are expected to humbly consume donations regardless of their quality.
- *Moral discourses and the tendency to individualise responsibility for experiencing food poverty.*
 - Deserving and undeserving poor
 - individualisation (blaming and shaming) is leading to responsabilisation

- *Increased conditionality and obstacles in claiming cash benefits.*
 - Welfare reform and conditionality
 - As soon as the food chain was created, it was also normalised in the sense of becoming part of policies against poverty in the country. It became an act of solidarity without thinking of the rights of recipients, which affects the understanding of social justice.
- *The place of poor people in the circular economy.*
 - Food donations form part of the circular economy that is promoting zero-waste principles (reuse, repair, recycle, reduce). Currently, poor, low-income and food-insecure people are an indispensable part of this circle since they are the main consumers of food waste and food surplus. There is a serious danger that welfare systems will support the economy in strengthening the role of poor people in the circular economy as, at least in Slovenia, social policy is substantially (if not totally) subordinated to economic policy.