Reducing Food Loss and Waste Along the Food Value Chain: Practical Actions from Production to Consumption

Key recommendations from the EU-funded projects FOLOU, ROSETTA and COMBINE

Food loss and waste is a system-wide challenge. Decisions made at one stage of the food system can influence what happens at the next - from what is produced and sold to what is served, chosen and ultimately eaten. These connections work in both directions: consumer expectations can shape business practices, while purchasing requirements can influence production.

Effective coordination and communication among stakeholders are essential for reducing food loss and waste. Involving relevant actors from the outset, sharing information and clarifying roles can help identify shared challenges, develop practical solutions and support coordinated action.

This factsheet brings together practical recommendations from **FOLOU**, **ROSETTA** and **COMBINE**, three EU-funded projects addressing food loss and waste at complementary points of the food system. Together, they highlight where food actors can act and provide practical resources to support food loss and waste prevention from production to consumption.

Food does not become waste at a single point.



The benefits go beyond reducing waste!

- **Retain the value of food and the resources invested in it.**
- **Support redistribution and new revenue streams.**
- **Avoid unnecessary disposal and resource costs.**
- **Contribute to social and environmental objectives.**

Explore the recommendations and discover the practical resources behind them.

FOLOU

ROSETTA
Reducing food waste due to marketing standards through alternative market access

COMBINE

PRODUCTION

Preventing Food Loss at the Production Stage

Who is this for?

Agricultural and food loss and waste policymakers

1. Measure and report primary production food losses

"We need consistent measurement to generate reliable data on where and how much food is lost at primary production level."

What you can do:

- Use harmonised methods based on actual measurements to quantify food losses at regular intervals over time.
- Co-create reporting systems and clear reduction targets with specific timelines for primary production.

2. Promote fair trading practices between producers and retailers

"We need fair and predictable trading conditions to avoid food loss caused by practices such as take-back agreements."

What you can do:

- Effectively enforce rules against unfair trading practices and protect producers from retaliation.
- Promote fair trading agreements through better information, guidance and capacity building.

3. Diversify market channels

"We need alternative ways to market products when demand is unpredictable, or market prices are too low to make harvesting worthwhile."

What you can do:

- Support diverse market channels, as well as the infrastructure and cooperation networks needed to use them.
- Explore opportunities like public food procurement of products not accepted by standard markets.

Want to know more? Explore FOLOU's guidelines and resources

Funded by the European Union

MARKET & CONSUMER INTERFACE

ROSETTA
Reducing food waste due to marketing standards through alternative market access

Preventing Food Waste at the Market and Consumer Interface

Who is this for?

Food businesses, retailers and other market actors interacting with consumers

1. Coordinate shelf life before products become surplus

"My products are still good, but they are getting too close to their date. What can I do before they become surplus?"

What you can do:

- Monitor remaining shelf life and set an early action trigger for products approaching their date.
- Act early by redirecting products to alternative sales channels or to social redistribution, and use recurring surplus to improve future planning.

2. Turn food at risk of waste into products people want

"I have edible products or ingredients that have little or no market value because they don't meet marketing standards. Could they be something customers want?"

What you can do:

- Develop new products or uses for food at risk of waste, based on what consumers value; use the sustainability aspect as an additional benefit.
- Make them attractive and easy to choose, with familiar formats, clear information and practical ways to use them.

3. Pair the right incentive with the right message

"I already discount imperfect or close-to-date food, but customers still pass it by. How can I make it more attractive?"

What you can do:

- Pair price incentives with a clear reason to choose the product, such as quality, taste, value, convenience or food-waste reduction.
- Test different messages and approaches and use those that improve consumer uptake.

Want to know more? Explore ROSETTA's guidelines and resources

Funded by the European Union

FOOD SERVICE

COMBINE

Preventing Food Waste in Food Service Settings

Who is this for?

Catering companies, canteen managers, canteen staff, workplaces, schools and local authorities

1. Diagnose food waste drivers and tailor interventions

"We don't know what is driving food waste in our canteen. How can we identify the key issues?"

What you can do:

- Use COMBINE's survey tool to conduct a simple diagnosis.
- Complement this with waste tracking and observation to identify which foods are most wasted and why.

2. Combine different types of interventions to engage customers

"We already share information about food waste, but how can we encourage customers to engage and change their behaviour?"

What you can do:

- Combine actions on awareness-raising with behavioural interventions such as nudges (e.g., serving smaller portions by default) and prompts.
- Involve customers in activities such as food waste tracking, workshops and portion selection initiatives.

3. Make interventions practical and feasible

"We are already busy serving customers. How can we introduce new measures without disrupting daily operations?"

What you can do:

- Involve staff early to ensure interventions are realistic and compatible with available resources.
- Adapt interventions to existing workflows and prioritise simple, low-effort solutions (e.g., clearly displaying meal sizes at the serving point).

Want to know more?
Explore COMBINE's guidelines and resources

Co-funded by the European Union

AT HOME

Preventing Food Waste at Home

Who is this for?

Consumers

1. Make food-saving behaviours part of everyday routines

"How can I fit food-saving habits into my routine without making everyday life more complicated?"

What you can do:

- Focus on simple and easy to remember behaviours, for example by marking foods that need to be used soon.
- Build them into existing routines, such as freezing surplus food after a meal or checking the fridge before shopping.

2. Give imperfect, short-dated and upcycled food a fair chance

"Imperfect or upcycled food may seem lower quality. Why should I choose it?"

What you can do:

- Judge food by taste, condition, intended use and relevant food-safety information, rather than appearance alone.
- Choose imperfect, upcycled or discounted short-dated products when they suit your needs, and you can use them in time.

3. Buy seasonal and local products

"How can I make choices that help avoid food loss earlier in the food system?"

What you can do:

- Demand clear information about the products' origin and production from retailers.
- Engage with local food networks, such as farmers' markets, farm shops and food cooperatives.