



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

## Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition • FSN Forum

### Template for submissions

24.02.2021 – 31.03.2021

[http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/SOFI transforming food systems](http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/SOFI_transforming_food_systems)

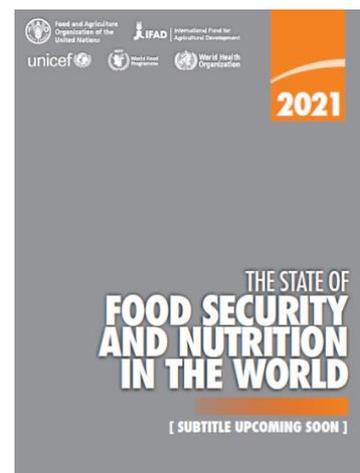
## Call for best practices in transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets and addressing key drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition

### Template for submissions (maximum 2000 words in total)

The inter-Agency writing team<sup>1</sup> of the 2021 edition of The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) invites you to share illustrative examples of best practices and lessons learned in what it takes – in very practical and innovative ways – to transform food systems<sup>2</sup> for better access to nutritious foods and affordable healthy diets.

When describing your example (case study) of a best practice and/or lessons learned, we invite you to demonstrate the following:

- A description of the **food systems context** (which food system component, rural versus urban, etc.).
- A **multi-disciplinary approach** guided by complementary policies, investments or interventions
- How the policies, investments or interventions address two or more **key drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition** (including: conflict, climate variability and extremes, economic slow-downs and downturns, poverty and inequality, economic and health implications of COVID-19).
- A clear description of how the best practices (and lessons learned) have led (or are expected to lead) to the **transformation of food systems**.
- **How** the transformative changes introduced helped **raise the affordability of healthy diets** (e.g. in raising people's purchasing power and/or reducing the cost of nutritious foods).



<sup>1</sup> The inter-Agency SOFI writing team consists of technical experts from FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WHO and WFP.

<sup>2</sup> Food systems are made up of everything, and everybody involved in producing, storing, packing, processing, distributing, consuming, and disposing of food, including the social, political, economic, and environmental systems which influence and are influenced by those activities (Parsons, K. & Hawkes, C., 2018). See also the food systems diagram in: CFS High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), 2020. "Food Security and Nutrition: Building A Global Narrative Towards 2030", HLPE Report 15.

The fields provided below will guide you through these key points. Please use this submission form to share your example of **best practices and lessons learned in food systems transformation**. You can upload the completed submission form to: [www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/SOFI transforming food systems](http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/SOFI_transforming_food_systems) or send it via email to [fsn-moderator@fao.org](mailto:fsn-moderator@fao.org).

Submissions are welcome in all six UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese). The call is open until **31 March 2021**.

**Proponent** (name/institution)

[European Food Banks Federation \(FEBA\)](#)

**Title for the example (case study) presented**

European Food Banks Federation: competences, adaptation and creativity to feed the future

**Country context/location** (national/sub-national; urban/rural)

**Europe** (Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, North Macedonia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom)

**Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) context and underlying drivers affecting FSN**

(i.e. conflict, climate variability and extremes, economic slowdowns and downturns, COVID-19 or measures to contain it, and/or persistent poverty and inequality)

COVID-19, food loss and waste prevention, food donation, food redistribution, food security, circular economy, food system

**Type of food system / key characteristics of the food system component considered** (please describe the challenges, inter-linkages and complementarities among the food system's components)

Food waste is a huge environmental problem and food insecurity is a reality in Europe. Preventing food waste improves the resilience of the food business operators, helps our planet, and contributes to food security. This is where FEBA members come in. Food business donate their surplus food to FEBA members, which in turn will get that perfectly good food to charities helping deprived people who can enjoy it. Every day FEBA members recover safe and edible surplus food from the agri-food business operators – agriculture, food and drink manufacturers, distribution and food services. The food is stored, sorted and re-packaged in the warehouses. Then the food is redistributed to charitable organizations such as food pantries, soup kitchens, social restaurants, and shelters helping people in need. Since March 2020, the COVID-19 has presented an unprecedented challenge across Europe, disrupting the food system and with severe impacts on our economy and society. On 13 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared Europe as the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some countries, such as Italy and Spain, were the first to be hit hard and soon after the coronavirus spread all over the

continent with immediate evident socio-economic consequences. The pandemic has thrown many people into insecurity overnight, highlighting the importance of food security in Europe. In this context, the access to food has proved to be a priority, underlining the importance of an easily accessible, affordable, healthy and balanced diet for all. In each corner of Europe, many images are testimonials of this evidence, such as long lines at the entrance of supermarkets or volunteers working every day to bring food to elderly, disabled, and deprived people as well as families facing unexpected difficulties in this period.

The pandemic has revealed our strengths and weaknesses, highlighting the importance of local communities, ready to cooperate for the good of all with a strong synergy between public authorities, civil society organisations and all the actors involved. It is evident that the pandemic has had a huge impact on our daily lives and has affected the entire food system. COVID-19 has been a wake-up call for the European Food Banks Federation and its members.

Since its outbreak, FEBA members have daily worked facing the challenge not just to get food from the food supply chain but also to ensure its safe delivery to charities. FEBA members have relentlessly recovered surplus food to assist charitable organizations that feed people in need. The health emergency and the consequent socio-economic crisis, especially during the first wave of COVID-19, varied from country to country but it is evident everywhere that the COVID-19 crisis has brought a new food emergency with an increased demand for food.

**Combined goals of the policies, investments and/or interventions described (a, b and/or c)**

- (a) Strengthened resilience to external shocks and stresses (e.g. climate, conflict, economic, COVID-19)
- (b) Address underlying structural causes of hunger and malnutrition (e.g. poverty, inequality)
- (c) Sustainably transforming food systems to lower the cost of nutritious foods and/or improve affordability of healthy diets

FEBA members have faced similar challenges and have provided responses that can be key aspects when coping with the second wave and the prolonged crisis generated by the pandemic. While the contexts may differ and tailored solutions may be unique, the challenges are commonly felt, and the responses rely on motivation, innovation and adaptation. FEBA latest report released in September 2020 highlights a 30% increase in food demand, with a range from 6% up to 90% in the different countries, coming from new targets of poverty: jobless people, families with children and elderly people living alone. Our COVID-19 reports are available [here](#).

**Key characteristics of supporting policies, investments and/or interventions**

From early March the European Food Banks Federation has tracked the responses of its membership to the crisis, collecting a wide range of stories showing solidarity. When it seemed that we had failed to protect our people, in many ways, Europeans, whether they are volunteers and employees of the Food Banks and their affiliated charities, policy makers, businesses or private citizens, have proven that, in the face of this crisis, they stand ready to lift each other up.

In order to meet immediate needs and provide a concrete response to the emergency, on 21 March, the European Food Banks Federation launched an open call for solidarity and established a COVID-19 Social Emergency Fund to secure the activity of FEBA members and ensure no good food is going to waste while helping charities to feed people in need.

**Key actors and stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the example provided (please also describe to what extent a multi-stakeholder and participatory approach has been adopted)**

The response to the FEBA COVID-19 Social Emergency Fund has gone beyond any expectations. In 2020 many companies offered their support with economic donations to sustain the daily activity of Food Banks. Thanks to this concrete engagement between March and November 2020, the European Food

Banks Federation supported the members with over €4.2 million for COVID-19 related actions in 27 countries. The funds were used for concrete needs: increased costs of the daily activity (rent, utilities, etc.), additional staff for handling the increased volumes of food, new vehicles to ensure food redistribution, digital tools to facilitate communication, new equipment for the warehouses, PPE to protect volunteers and employees, new warehouse IT systems, and much more. Moreover, in line with their core business, many companies also donated food or other goods such as PPE, transports, carton boxes. Finally, many companies decided to extend their commitment to their employees proposing and involving them in fundraising campaigns to support European Food Banks.

**Are there important linkages of interventions in the food system with other systems?** (e.g. the health systems, environmental systems and/or social protection systems)

Since the beginning of the pandemic up to date, the support of FEBA members continues to be more and more essential so that no good food goes to waste and can acquire a new precious value for all those charities helping the most deprived. The daily action has an impact on the environment as well as on the social system.

**Highlight key innovative and/or transformative changes in the specific food system as a result of the policies, investments and/or actions leading to improved FSN** (please note that “transformative change” refers to innovative, pro-active changes away from “business as usual”)

With an agile determination, a continuous process of innovation, and a widespread coverage of the territory, FEBA members are demonstrating the strength to adapt to the new challenging context ensuring a safe food redistribution to charities. They are also experimenting new operating models and processes. For instance, when the COVID-19 led to the closure of all nonessential businesses, such as cafés and restaurants, many of them contacted FEBA members not to throw out their surplus stocks. Food was recovered from the canteens of the European institutions in Brussels when homeworking became the new normal. In some countries, FEBA members prepared meals or made food parcels for frontline organisations, so they just had to do the last 100m deliveries into targeted at-risk individuals in isolation.

**Highlight challenges faced** (any sort of trade-offs, and how these were managed) **and/or efficiencies gained as a result of the best practice presented** (e.g. win-win situations)

Challenges:

- Growing demand for food
- 30% increase of food demand, with a range from 6% to 90%
- Unstable food donations
- Disruption in the logistics and transport processes
- Lack of PPE
- Lack of volunteers
- Unexpected costs and drop in financial resources

Responses:

- FEBA members have remained open and running
- Ensuring the mission: prevention of food waste and support to charities
- Engagement of new and young volunteers
- Successful new fundraising activities
- New collaborations with corporations and foundations
- Advocacy activities for public support
- New and innovative operating models for warehouse management and administrative tasks
- Digitalization of traditional activities

### Key lessons that can be learned from your case (both positive and negative) and whether these could be applicable in other contexts with similar characteristics

Thanks to IT and digital tools we continued the activity without any disruptions and supported our members sharing challenges and opportunities, identifying needs and finding common solutions. We learnt that reinforcing the dialogue can reduce the social distancing.

Moreover, these are the key lessons learnt: the importance of adopting an agile approach both in the decision-making process and the daily management of the organization, investing on data collection, fostering digital transformation, collaborating with public and private stakeholders, and, above all, adapting to change.

### Summary of key messages

The European Food Banks Federation represents 430 Food Banks in 29 European countries of differing socio-economic and cultural contexts. FEBA members are the primary non-profit response to food waste prevention and food insecurity reduction. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, FEBA members were on the frontlines of preventing food waste and reducing food insecurity in our communities, saving over 768.000 tonnes of good food from becoming waste and providing it to over 45.000 charities helping 9.5 million deprived people. On the ground FEBA members daily work with stakeholders from the public and private sectors and are an effective solution with positive economic, environmental and societal impacts.

With the spread of COVID-19, FEBA members are now engaged in a massive and urgent food emergency. The economic downturn and likelihood of a global recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic pose a significant risk for increased food insecurity in Europe. At the same time food waste is one of the biggest and most profound challenges of our time.

Today FEBA members are operating in a new and increasingly complex environment. They are experiencing an increased food demand up to 30% at European level compared to the pre-COVID period. This is a new poverty, and it did not exist at the beginning of 2020. We are speaking of people who have lost their job due to the COVID, families who were relying on schools for the meals of their children, and elderly people living alone. FEBA members are also experiencing a new daily routine. The majority of FEBA members have increased the amount of food redistributed, in comparison with 2019 levels, and in some cases, they doubled the amount. At the beginning of the outbreak FEBA members 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 quantities of surplus food available. This was a tremendous challenge for 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. Most FEBA members faced a drop in financial resources due to unexpected expenses and limited fundraising activities.

As the pandemic continues, FEBA is committed to ensuring support to the daily activity to manage through the crisis and build resilience against future shocks. This crisis can be an accelerator of innovation to enhance efficiency and effectiveness and to produce a beneficial effect on the food system as a whole.

Looking at the future, 2021 can be regarded as the foundation stone for a profound renewal of our food system, bringing it at the centre of the political agenda and going beyond the “business as usual” approach. Our food systems can overcome historical criticalities – crises, disruptions, fragmentation, interdependence, national self-sufficiency – by means of a massive digitalisation, by facilitating the dissemination of best practices, innovations and new technologies from farm to fork, and by ensuring that both profit and non-profit food business operators can understand the benefits of such transformation.

Ambitious goals, policies and opportunities such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Food Systems Summit, the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables 2021, the European Green Deal, the

Farm to Fork Strategy, are occasions to rethink the business-as-usual model in the light of the disruptions caused by COVID-19 and move towards a more sustainable food system. By doing so, we can achieve the goal to prevent food waste while reducing emissions and environmental impact, creating business opportunities and alleviating food insecurity in Europe. This transition towards a more sustainable food system should be led by a comprehensive and structured legislative framework, together with a multi-stakeholder collaboration and based on measurement and factual best practices. These are all opportunities that cannot be missed, since they denote the importance of an integrated approach to reduce food loss and waste in our food systems, for the people and for the planet.