



FoodCloud's Pre-Budget Manifesto 2025

A call for investment
and policy to
promote food loss
and waste reduction
in Ireland



FoodCloud

1. Introduction

Globally, while 783 million people are hungry¹, one billion meals a day are wasted². In Ireland we waste 750,000 tonnes of food annually, 146kg for every household³, even as 1 in 11 people are food insecure⁴. 70% of the community groups that FoodCloud works with have experienced increased demand for food services in the last year and 23% of those groups struggle to meet that increased demand.

Food loss and waste (FLW) amounts to 8-10% of total human made greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). According to Project Drawdown, a global non-governmental organisation advancing science-based solutions to climate change, achieving a 50% food waste reduction is one of the top three actions we can employ to stay within a 1.5°C temperature increase by century's end.

Ireland has a rich heritage in food and agriculture and a deep understanding of hunger given our national story, history and experience. With strategic investment of resources and political will in support of domestic policy, Ireland can be a leader in FLW reduction, minimising the environmental damage of needless food waste and fully realising the social and hunger reduction benefits of redistributing surplus food.

2. Policy context

The twin issues of food waste and hunger are framed by the sustainable development challenges set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), in particular SDG 12.3 and SDG 2.

Food waste

UN SDG 12.3 aims to “...by 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses”.

¹ United Nations 2023 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report, FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2023. [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023](#).

² The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Food Waste Index Report 2024 finds that food waste globally in 2022 amounted to 1.05 billion tonnes, or 132 kilograms (kg) per person. The European Union (EU) estimates that 58.4 million tonnes of food are wasted in the European Union, that is 131 kg per person per year. The UNEP states that food that is wasted amounts to almost one-fifth (19 per cent) of food available to consumers, at the retail, food service, and household level[#], in addition to the 13 percent of the world's food lost in the supply chain, as estimated by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, from post-harvest up to and excluding retail. A 2021 report by the World Wildlife Fund and Tesco estimates that when farm level losses are included, up to 40% of all food produced worldwide is wasted each year.

³ Ireland generated 750,000 tonnes of food waste in 2022, EPA waste data release, 27/06/24, [EPA website](#).

⁴ Department of Social Protection Working Group on Food Poverty Report 2021.

At COP 28, Ireland committed by 2025 to including food waste in its climate action plans and to ‘revisit or orient policies and public support related to agriculture and food systems to promote activities which increase incomes, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and bolster resilience, productivity, livelihoods, nutrition, water efficiency and human, animal and ecosystem health **while reducing food loss and waste**, and ecosystem loss and degradation’⁵.

In Europe, a proposed amendment to the EU Waste Framework Directive (WFD) is likely to set a reduction target of 10% reduction of food waste for processing and manufacturing and a 30% for retail and consumption stage. FoodCloud welcomes the proposal for binding targets, which will give Ireland a greater chance of meeting its sustainable development obligations while improving food security and creating economic savings. The targets are necessary but not sufficient. Critically they do not cover primary production. The targets won’t be implemented quickly enough to achieve our UN SDG 12.3 commitment by 2030.

This is why it is so important for the government to continue to drive the key priorities listed in Ireland’s National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap (the Roadmap). The Roadmap identifies 38 key priority actions to achieve a 50% reduction in food waste by 2030. Food Vision 2030 identifies Ireland’s ambition to become a world leader in sustainable food systems over the next decade.

Hunger and food insecurity

The aim of UN SDG 2 is to “...end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”.

Those who have the least are most at risk of acute hunger which is why Irish Aid and the UN SDGs enact the principle of focusing on those furthest behind first. A Better World, Ireland’s Policy for International Development⁶ reaffirms Ireland’s commitment under UN Agenda 2030 to allocate 0.7 percent of Gross National Income (GNI) to Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2030 and identifies food as one of the three key intervention areas. The policy notes, ‘agriculture and food systems are central to a sustainable future. Increasingly complex human and environmental health challenges posed by food systems demand systemic responses. Sustainable agri-food systems must properly nourish, provide energy, damage neither health nor environment, and support equitable access to resources.’

⁵ [COP28 Leaders Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action](#), the ‘Emirates Declaration’.

⁶ [A Better World, Ireland's Policy for International Development, 2019](#)

At an EU level Ireland is subject to the Paris Agreement joint goal for developed countries to mobilise \$100 billion per year in support of climate action in developing countries until, and including, 2025. Ireland's International Climate Finance Roadmap sets out the Government's plan for achieving the target announced by the Taoiseach at COP26 to provide at least €225 million in climate finance per year by 2025. This roadmap identifies that Ireland will, 'use opportunities through sustainable food systems fora to mobilise domestic technical expertise and private sector capital for climate resilient development.' In 2022 Ireland contributed just over €120 million in climate finance, so there is still some way to go to meet our commitments on an annual basis.

In an Irish context, the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 published by the Department of Social Protection includes a specific commitment to 'develop a comprehensive programme of work to further explore the drivers of food poverty and to identify mitigating actions'.

3. Who we are

FoodCloud is an Irish non-profit⁷ that redistributes surplus food⁸ in order to alleviate food insecurity, increase social inclusion and reduce the environmental and climate impacts of food loss and waste, in support of the UN SDGs, most particularly 12.3 and 2.

To date, FoodCloud has facilitated the redistribution of 300 million meals, that's over 126 tonnes of food. We have three Hubs, located in Cork, Dublin and Galway, from where we can redistribute large volumes of donated food, and our food rescue technology, Foodiverse, directly connects retailers and other food businesses and producers with surplus food to local community groups that can use that food. As well as in every county in Ireland, that technology is being used to rescue food in the UK, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Kenya and Indonesia.

We are always looking for more ways to ensure food goes to people, and not to waste. FoodCloud Kitchen, launched in 2022⁹, prepares meals on wheels for community partners, as well as for use in FoodCloud's food truck at markets, festivals and corporate events, and at a café at Richmond Barracks, Inchicore in Dublin. As well as using surplus food, the kitchen offers opportunities for community building and education. In 2023 FoodCloud launched

⁷ Registered charity number 531537.

⁸ Food redistribution is a key part of the creation of a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient food system, and a recognised circular economy solution ([World Wildlife Fund](#), [UNEP](#)). It ensures that food and the resources required to make that food (land, water, energy) are not wasted, avoids emissions, delivers environmental and economic benefits and addresses social issues like food insecurity, and aligns with broader policy goals for sustainable development and waste reduction.

⁹ The launch of FoodCloud Kitchen was funded by the EPA.

Thrive Together¹⁰, an education programme that provides support, resources, and guidance that can build capacity in communities for food surplus redistribution and food waste reduction.

With funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, FoodCloud is currently also working with farmers to redistribute farm level surplus to rural communities in Ireland.

Funded by Irish Aid and in partnership with the Global Foodbanking Network, FoodCloud has introduced its technology-led model for surplus food redistribution in Africa and Southeast Asia, with ‘virtual food banking’ projects underway in Kenya and Indonesia.

Finally, FoodCloud has submitted a proposal to the Department of the Environment, Climate Change and Communications to undertake the deliverables on redistribution and donation in the Roadmap, at a cost of €400,000 over two years.

FoodCloud is the Department of Social Protection partner organisation for nationwide management of the ESF+ Food Support Programme¹¹. FoodCloud employs 92 staff, 20 TUS and Community Employment Scheme colleagues and relies on help from 50 community volunteers.

4. Recommendations

In order to achieve UN SDG 12.3 and 2, there needs to be a greater allocation of resources for investment in the mechanics and logistics of food redistribution and technology, reporting, collaboration and insights for FLW reduction. There are four key areas where the government can make a difference:

A. Agricultural Recovery - supporting Irish growers and rural economies

By making provision for a national programme for multi-annual incentives to support agricultural recovery - farm level surplus redistribution - as is available in other countries (available in the EU through producer organisation, in the UK through FareShare’s Surplus to Purpose Programme, and in the United States via tax deductions for surplus donation).

¹⁰ Funded by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, through the [Community Climate Action Programme](#).

¹¹ ESF+ is run by the DSP and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The focus of the programme is on those who are on the margins of society in need of essential food support, and is designed to ensure a reliable supply of food to the charity sector.

Benefit: agricultural recovery is a public good and the provision would remove a financial barrier that generally prevents growers from donating nutritionally beneficial surplus and supports Food Vision 2030's mission to create viable and resilient primary producers with enhanced well being, and helps the rural economy.

B. Virtual food banking as development aid - meeting Ireland's international commitments

Virtual food banking means directly connecting those with surplus food to those that need it through technology. Support for virtual food banking in low- and middle-income countries is aligned with Ireland's obligation under Agenda 2030 and A Better World, to support lower and middle income countries and Food Vision 2030's aim to be a leader in sustainable food systems, with an innovative, competitive and resilient agrifood sector, driven by technology and talent. Provision for investment in virtual food banking in countries that Ireland supports should be provided for in Ireland's development aid budget.

Benefits: virtual food banking significantly reduces the time and cost of collecting surplus food, enabling more frequent collections, rescuing more food, feeding more people and allowing beneficiary agencies to create direct relationships with food donors. It can have a transformational impact on food systems resilience and food insecurity in low- or middle-income countries that are on the front line of climate breakdown and suffer much greater levels of food insecurity than here in Ireland.

C. Investing in prevention, reduction and redistribution

Investing in measures that will support FLW reduction and food redistribution such as:

- Meaningful resourcing of the 38 key priority actions set out in the Roadmap, particularly those that support a significant increase in the capacity and scale of the surplus food redistribution sector, for example through grants to charities and community groups for transport and cold storage.
- Resourcing that can drive meaningful activity by industry under the EPA's voluntary agreement, the Food Waste Charter.
- Support for the creation of a coalition of food businesses, researchers, solution providers and other food systems stakeholders for concerted action, with a platform that can harness the power of collaboration, knowledge sharing, technology and data to create efficiencies, synergies and solutions for FLW reduction.

Benefit: these measures will maximise access to opportunities to reduce food waste and facilitate synergies and an amplification effect, enabling Ireland to deliver on its core obligation under UN SDG 12.3 and those obligations which will be contained in the WFD.

D. Policy

Creating a policy environment that encourages FLW reduction and supports redistribution:

- Drive amendments to EU and Irish tax law to permit VAT relief and tax relief on food donations. Recognise the social value of surplus food redistribution by allowing businesses to offset the cost of food donations and the associated logistics in a similar manner to how cash donations are treated.
- Support faster reform of EU date labelling law and support an Irish campaign to clarify for households the meaning of best before dates ahead of that reform.
- Support amendments to the EU Waste Framework Directive around mandatory food waste reduction targets, and transpose that directive into Irish law as quickly as possible.
- Provide for the Good Samaritan food donor, in addition to our existing food safety guidelines, produce clear legal guidance to support businesses wishing to donate food they cannot sell.
- Amend procurement systems to mainstream the use of nutritious surplus food in poverty prevention and healthy eating programmes like school meals, early learning and care services, and meals on wheels.

Benefit: these measures will create a favourable fiscal and regulatory environment for FLW reduction and food redistribution.

Contact details

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