



FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN MEDITERRANEAN CITIES

WEBINAR OUTCOMES

KEY MESSAGES

- **Food waste management and circular economy can be levers for sustainable food systems:** food security in the Mediterranean region is threatened by natural resource scarcity, food import dependency, and current trade market instability to global crises. A circular economy approach to food waste would enable to recognize and maintain the value and utility of food products, nutrients and resources for as long as possible, minimizing resource use and upcycling food waste and by-products.¹
- In the Mediterranean region, over 70 percent^{2,3} of the population lives in urban areas. Urbanization trends across the Mediterranean have a major role in shaping food demand and consumption; instead of being the final destination of food and main producer of waste, **cities can act as hubs of innovation and connectivity transforming food by-products into more valuable materials.**⁴ Food waste management and circularity are key entry points for local governments to integrate food systems into local plans and actions.
- **Fostering multi-stakeholder approaches is paramount to synergize and establish a collaborative ecosystem among a multiplicity of local stakeholders.** Synergies between local governments, civil society, research centres, private sector, international organizations, and investors are key in the implementation of effective actions for a transition from a "take-make-waste" approach to a circular economy.
- **Promoting education, information and knowledge sharing at the local level enables to train, raise awareness and change the perspective/mind-set of local stakeholders.** City-to-city exchanges and twinning are proving effective to enable the transfer of knowledge, experiences and best practices at different levels to promote their replication. Several networks and international organizations are already leading initiatives to foster this type of cross-city exchanges.
- **There is a need to increase investments and leverage innovation** in infrastructures and waste upcycling, coupled with the valorisation of traditional practices for food preservation.

SPEAKERS



Mercè Boy Roura

Coordinator of [Interreg MED Green Growth](#) and [ENI CBC MED Med4Waste](#)



Mohamed Higazy

Director of [North Africa Regional Office](#), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Advisor to Egyptian Minister of Local Development



Eugénia Carrara

Secretary General, World Union of Wholesale Markets ([WUWM](#))



Elisa Porreca

Food policy officer, [Food Policy Department](#), [Municipality of Milan](#), Italy



Süleyman Üçel

Lawyer, [Union of Municipalities of Türkiye \(TBB\)](#)



Michael Scoullos

Chairman, [Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development \(MIO-ECSDE\)](#)



Ilirian Gjoni

Executive Director, [Food Bank Albania](#)



Peter Defranceschi

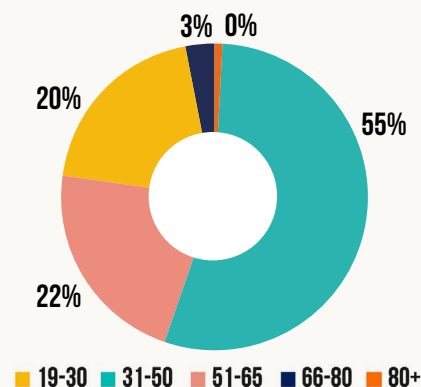
Head Global Food Program, Head of Brussels Office, [ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability](#)

Participation statistics | 243 participants from 50 countries. Of which, 186 participants from 18 Mediterranean countries.

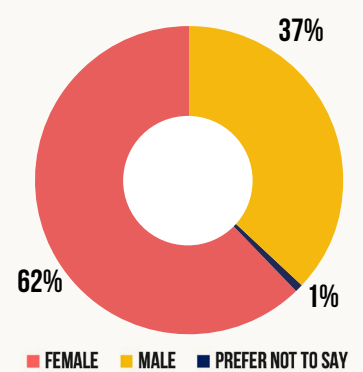
Number of participants by stakeholder group



Participants by age range



Participants by gender



THE CONTEXT: RELEVANCE OF FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Opening remarks and technical background to the panel discussion were provided by:



[Interreg MED Green Growth community](#)
represented by Ms Mercè Boy Roura, Coordinator.



[United Cities and Local Governments](#)
[North Africa Regional Office \(UCLG-NARO\)](#)

represented by Mr Mohamed Higazy, Director.

Within the framework of the Interreg MED Programme, Green Growth is a thematic community promoting green and circular economy in the Euro-Mediterranean region, based on the sound management of natural resources through an integrated and territorially based cooperation approach. Labelled by the Union for the Mediterranean in 2019, the community consists of 17 projects connecting more than 165 partners from 13 countries in the Mediterranean, with a total budget of around EUR 30 million. These projects tackle topics such as food systems, eco-innovation, smart cities, and waste management.

UCLG Africa is the umbrella organization and the united voice and representative of local governments in Africa, counting a membership of 44 national associations of local governments from all over the continent, as well as 2 000 cities that have more than 100 000 inhabitants. UCLG North Africa Regional Office (NARO) covers Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia.

The opening remarks presented the technical background for this webinar, which built on a previous training webinar on “*Food losses, food waste reduction and organic waste management in the Mediterranean region*”, held by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Interreg MED Green Growth community in October 2021. The training focused on reducing food losses and food waste and enhancing organic waste management, as part of the solution to accelerate the transition of the Mediterranean region towards a green and circular economy. In that occasion, participants highlighted the importance of better consumer knowledge and sustainable behaviours and they also demonstrated interest in cooperation among stakeholders, since the causes of food losses and waste mainly relate to consumer behaviour as well as to a lack of coordination between different actors in the supply chain. Moreover, they showed interest in becoming part of a Mediterranean food system network of collaboration to raise awareness and increase education among food industries, retailers and consumers and tackle the social, economic and environmental impacts of food waste, through an integrated multi-disciplinary approach towards circularity of food systems.

Production of food is increasingly associated with significant environmental impacts such as GHG emissions, increased pressure on land use, and water and energy consumption. These impacts are further amplified by high levels of food losses and waste across supply chains all the way to the consumption stage. Nowadays, about **14 percent of the food produced globally is estimated to be lost**,⁵ while another **17 percent is wasted**,⁶ undermining food security, causing severe environmental impacts (especially on climate change), negatively impacting on food availability, and leading to an increase in food cost. Given the severe environmental implications of food waste and given that food waste management plays an important role in the re-

duction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it is important to highlight that food is very high on the agenda of the upcoming [27th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties \(COP 27\)](#) (6-18 November 2022, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt). There is a need to promote the implementation of food and agriculture priorities in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), as a strategic opportunity to integrate a food systems approach across climate policies and programs.⁷

Reducing food loss and waste can be a lever for sustainable food systems transformation, given its critical role in improving the food security situation of vulnerable groups and decreasing the environmental footprint of food production activities.

Food loss and waste reduction has the potential to contribute to several dimensions of the 2030 Agenda as well as reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 12.3 to, by 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains. Various circular economy practices have been emerging and applied in the agri-food sector with the objective to improve the use of resources across supply chains, including practices based on improved and efficient production models as well as utilising side streams from food processing.

REDUCING FOOD LOSS AND WASTE CAN BE A LEVER FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Food loss and waste management is of particular relevance for the Mediterranean area, given the food security and resource scarcity issues. **Preventing and reducing food waste could have a positive impact on the trade balance and increase efficiency of significant trade investments**, especially from the net food importing countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. This is particularly relevant at a time when global crises and conflicts have disrupted commodity markets and are threatening food security in the region. At the same time, **preventing and reducing food waste would help easing pressure on natural resources required for food production across Mediterranean countries**, who are already in severe water stress.⁸

The role of cities

In the Mediterranean region, over 70 percent^{9,10} of the population lives in urban areas, and this proportion will continue to grow in the next decades.¹¹ Urbanization trends across the Mediterranean are leading to extended food chains, expansion of the food offer and changes in consumption behaviors that tend to amplify food waste and increase pressure on scarce land, water and energy resources. Urban areas have a major role in food demand and consumption; however, instead of being the final destination of food, **cities can act as hubs of innovation and connectivity transforming food by-products into more valuable materials.**¹² Moreover, cities are in a unique position to spark a transformation of our food systems since they have a great potential to engage several actors across multiple sectors to influence the way in which food is grown and consumed, and potential waste is valorized. At the same time, cities can influence food demand in a way that promotes local sourcing and regenerative agriculture, reducing the need for excess packaging, reconnecting consumers with surrounding peri-urban and rural areas, and alleviating the burden on the natural environment. Technological advancements, conscious and informed consumers, and networks of skilled workers equip cities with unique assets to drive the transformation towards regenerative and circular food systems.

Local governments and local food system actors are adopting new approaches and strategies to address food-related issues,

including the establishment of governance mechanisms, the development of education campaigns and local purchasing schemes for school meals, promoting urban agriculture and circular economy innovations, which are contributing to develop an innovative systemic approach to food policy by reconnecting production and consumption processes.¹³

Food waste management and circularity are key entry points for local governments to engage in the urban food systems agenda and for integrating food systems into local plans and actions.

Cities need to be recognized as a crucial player of the overall food systems transformation agenda. That is why, in the context of the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), the [Urban Food Systems Coalition](#) was established with the aim of raising the voice of cities and local governments in global fora and fostering linkages between national and sub-national governments.

Initiatives such as FAO's Urban Food Agenda engage with sub-national and local governments and a plethora of stakeholders to promote sustainable food-system thinking, through policy and governance support, capacity building (including through city-to-city collaboration), and attraction of investments to make urban environments and their surrounding areas more resilient and sustainable.

URBAN FOOD AGENDA

COLLABORATION /  GLOBAL

The [Urban Food Agenda](#) aims at enhancing sustainable development, food security and nutrition in urban and peri-urban areas, and nearby rural spaces. It consists of a vast range of policies, programmes and initiatives developed and implemented in partnership with different stakeholders: civil society, academia, UN & International agencies, city networks and relevant public and private bodies and entities. FAO 2030 Vision for the Urban Food Agenda is an integral part of the Organization's vision of resilient, integrated, sustainable and inclusive food systems, which ensure that all people in all places are free from hunger and all forms of malnutrition. The [FAO Framework for the Urban Food Agenda](#) was launched in 2019 and it constitutes the overall framework for FAO and its partners to support cities in integrating agri-food systems in their policy, plans and actions.

AFRICITIES

COLLABORATION /  AFRICA

The [Africities](#) summit held in Kisumu, Kenya from 17 to 21 May 2022, reaffirmed how food security and food waste management are amongst the main challenges North Africa is facing, along with water security and climate change. There is a growing belief that all these challenges must be tackled at the local level, with cities, localities and governorates at the front line. The North Africa region includes several countries in the Southern Mediterranean area and percentages of food waste are among the highest in Africa. The crisis due to the war in Ukraine is causing several countries to rely on their own production. This is leading them to improve policies and introduce innovations to increase efficiency and productivity of agriculture and of irrigation systems, including in urban and sub-urban areas, despite the scarce natural resources and climate change. Management of food waste through consumption education and awareness raising also emerged as a key driver.

OUTCOMES OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION

The webinar aimed to address the following key question: **how can Mediterranean cities and local actors ensure multi-stakeholder engagement in food waste management and applied circular economy practices?** The panel discussion allowed to provide elements from the experience of several groups of stakeholders.

EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE ON CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRACTICES FOR FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT

The perspectives of local governance were provided first-hand by:



Municipality of Milan, Italy

represented by Ms Elisa Porreca, Food policy officer.

The Municipality of Milan (Comune di Milano) spans over 181.76 km² and is home to about 1.4 million people*. The nine administrative boroughs are responsible for running most local services, such as schools, social services, waste collection, roads, parks, libraries and local commerce. As of 2015, the Municipality has adopted a food policy aiming at making Milan's food system more equitable and sustainable.



Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (TBB)

represented by Mr Süleyman Üçel, Lawyer.

TBB encompasses all the municipalities in Türkiye (1391 members) and is self-funded by the municipalities themselves. The Union's main structure is a council composed of all the heads of Turkish municipalities that is independent from the central government, and 25 working commissions that meet regularly to debate about specific areas of work. TBB represents municipalities within the country and internationally, promoting cooperation and their participation in several national and international fora to share their experiences.

*As of December 2019. Source: Resident population by age, nationality and borough, Comune di Milano, <https://bit.ly/3xvSLVP>

Local governance mechanisms are important to facilitate coordinated efforts in the fight against food waste. The Municipality of Milan's engagement in developing and implementing a food policy started in 2015 with the momentum generated by the EXPO, which triggered a reflection on local food systems. The Municipality's **political will** to integrate such reflection into its policies and strategies was a strong enabler of the implementation of the food policy. Themes such as food waste management had never been covered

by traditional competencies of local authorities before: the establishment of an innovative dedicated office, which has now evolved into a fully-fledged **Food Policy Department**, was indeed a game-changer, enabling the Municipality to allocate dedicated staff and resources to the issues of waste and circularity, while also coordinating and mobilizing the efforts of different stakeholders. Concrete examples are the collection of surplus food from school canteens and wholesale markets, as well as the experience of the Food Waste Hubs.

MILAN FOOD WASTE HUBS

Milan's [Food Waste Hubs](#) are the translation into practice of the cross-sectoral systemic approach adopted in the food policy. Food surplus is recovered daily from supermarkets and canteens and stored in the nine hubs made available by the Municipality free of charge; it is then redistributed to local non-profit organizations. The Municipality effectively facilitates, coordinates and catalyses the engagement of several stakeholders by providing a shared vision, while other actors contribute to the logistical organization according to their capacities. For example, universities monitor the initiative's impact and results; NGOs and charities redistribute food to people in need, thus generating social and environmental benefits; private sector entities provide their own perspective.

In Türkiye, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry formulated **policies to avoid and reduce food waste** through the promotion of food waste recovery and transformation of foodstuff into energy; municipalities are in charge of applying them at the local level through their own legislations. Therefore, the Turkish Union of Municipalities has developed an action plan for reducing food waste in line

with the SDGs and in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change. TBB encourages the adoption of good practices among the citizens of its 1391 members, **supporting municipalities in developing, funding and monitoring projects aimed at reducing food waste** and foster food recovery in line with circular economy practices.

EXPERIENCE / ITALY

SAVE YOUR FOOD

Among the programmes supported by TBB is the [Save Your Food](#) campaign led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and FAO, involving the public sector, the private sector (farmers, retailers, food business and HoReCa[†]), the civil society, and household consumers (including consumers organizations). The campaign aims to widen consumer knowledge of the benefits of reducing food waste and to encourage the development of waste prevention behaviours, so as to achieve profound and lasting changes in the way that people consume food. The Save Your Food campaign resulted from the formulation of Türkiye's National Strategy Document on Prevention, Reduction and Monitoring of Food Loss and Waste and its Action Plan, as a means to support the strategy implementation. Other objectives of the initiative include: the implementation of food loss and waste data collection for measurement and monitoring; the improvement of knowledge management and capacities; awareness raising on the causes and impacts of food losses and waste, encouraging the adoption of good practices and behaviour change; enhancement of regional cooperation on food loss and waste reduction.

EXPERIENCE / TÜRKİYE

† Hotel/Restaurant/Café

SAVE FOOD IDEA COMPETITION

EXPERIENCE / TÜRKIYE

TBB launched a [competition](#) to collect ideas for raising awareness on how to reduce food waste and recover foodstuffs. The aims of the competition were reducing food waste, improving the management of food and organic waste, and producing sustainable solutions at the local level for the reduction of food loss and waste and for the reutilization of organic waste. Monetary awards were given to the municipalities whose ideas were qualified.

One of the most successful projects implemented in different municipalities consists of transforming foodstuffs about to expire and unfit for human consumption into food for stray animals.

Another example of success is the processing of food waste to produce biogas. This enables the reutilization of organic waste with the efficiency rate of 99 percent – a car can travel 3.567 km with the biogas obtained from one ton of bread. The establishment of bio-gas facilities could contribute significantly to the achievement of the zero-emission goal, getting rid of the usage of fossil fuels altogether.

The virtuous examples provided by the cases of Milan and TBB have great potential for replicability. To this effect, **city-to-city exchanges emerged as fundamental to sharing such successful experiences and lessons, as well as learning from each other**, highlighting the importance of education not only to manage food waste, but also to prevent it. The City of Milan is leading the work of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, which engages over 200 cities worldwide, and is also promoting a series of city-network

projects and initiatives. Similarly, TBB aims to foster exchange across the diverse and numerous cities in its network through the organization of seminars and workshops, a twinning programme to provide guidance and advice to member municipalities about specific issues, and the publication of white papers to disseminate information about successful projects implemented by selected cities.

MILAN URBAN FOOD POLICY PACT (MUFPP)

COLLABORATION / GLOBAL

The City of Milan promotes the [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact \(MUFPP\)](#), a pact among over 200 cities committed to develop sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, that provide healthy and affordable food to all people in a human rights-based framework, that minimize waste and conserve biodiversity while adapting to and mitigating impacts of climate change. This commitment to implement better urban food policies led to the creation of a worldwide network of cities, functional to share good practices but also common challenges, and learn from the experiences of a wide community. The Pact's website includes a repository of signatory cities' experiences on thematic issues, as well as several resources including tools, policy briefs, declarations, etc. About 30 cities in the Mediterranean area have taken concrete action by implementing initiatives on themes such as food supply and distribution (such as [Cremona](#), [Montpellier](#), [Tirana](#), [Trento](#), etc.), governance (such as [Barcelona](#), [Montpellier](#), [Valencia](#), etc.), social inclusion (such as [Mezitli](#)), etc.

To stimulate the exchange of practices and learning between signatory cities, the City of Milan and the Cariplo Foundation launched the [Milan Pact Awards \(MPA\)](#) in 2016 with the aim of recognizing the most creative efforts and monitoring which cities were implementing the commitments they had made when they joined the pact.

FOOD TRAILS

EXPERIENCE / EUROPE

The Municipality of Milan participates in [Food Trails](#), a project funded by the European Union (EU) Horizon 2020 Programme aiming at translating the worldwide Milan Urban Food Policy Pact's shared vision and collective commitment to integrated urban food policies into measurable and long-term progress towards sustainable food systems in Europe. Tirana, Albania and Thessaloniki, Greece are among the 11 cities participating in this project that will co-design and co-implement pilot actions to create synergies and co-benefits across four priority areas: nutrition and healthy diets, climate and environment, circularity and resource efficiency, innovation and empowerment of communities.

EUROCITIES WORKING GROUP ON FOOD

COLLABORATION / EUROPE

The City of Milan chairs the [Working Group Food](#) in the framework of [Eurocities](#), a network of over 200 cities working together to ensure a good quality of life for all. The main goal of the working group is to position as a "creative hub" for sharing information, ideas, best practices and experimenting innovative solutions related to urban food.

With the support of FAO, ACRA Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Milan, facilitated a triangular [city-to-city exchange between Milan, Nairobi and Kigali](#) to share the experience on food waste issues (such as prevention actions, recovery and redistribution, recycling practices). A two-day workshop allowed direct contacts between the three cities and their experts, corroborated by the development of an e-platform with several training resources provided by the municipality of Milan to foster technical cooperation between cities. The initiative helped Nairobi and Kigali's city councils to perform a rapid assessment on food waste, identifying root causes (poor infrastructure and food handling practices, lack of guidelines and awareness) and possible solutions (prevention, reduction and management actions through food waste measurement and monitoring, consumers' awareness raising, capacity building for businesses and targeted policymaking), as well as the relevant stakeholders to involve.

EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL ENGAGEMENT OF PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY FOR INNOVATION IN CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRACTICES FOR FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT

Representatives of stakeholders from the private sector and the civil society were invited to present their engagement in practices for food waste management at the local level.



World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM)

represented by Ms Eugénia Carrara, Secretary General.

The World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM) is a network of 220 markets in 43 different countries that share their expertise, innovation and services while connecting new ideas with food actors to achieve food accessibility and security for all, ultimately contributing to a transition towards sustainable, healthy, and resilient food systems worldwide.



Food Bank Albania represented by Mr Ilirian Gjoni, Executive Director.

Food Bank Albania (FBA) has been committed to fight poverty and food waste since 2013, through its mission to educate the next generations on food, food safety and how to combat food waste, which is more and more urgent as the conflict in Ukraine unfolds, and which is at the core of SDG 12 (Sustainable consumption and production). FBA's activities mainly consist in education and awareness raising, particularly in schools, and collection and redistribution of food to poorer communities.

The experiences shared by representatives of local governments showed how the involvement of several other stakeholders was paramount to develop and implement effective policies and actions relevant to food waste management. The panel discussion highlighted that challenges such as food waste management must be addressed and tackled at the local level, where they are happening, and, for effective results, it is necessary for all stakeholders to work together, overcoming silos and adopting a holistic approach.

Accounting for about 50% of fresh food trade and distribution in Europe¹⁴ and being these products the most wasted due to their perishability, wholesale markets members of WUWM have a crucial role in the food system and have great leverage to reduce food waste. To this effect, **WUWM fosters partnerships with many different stakeholders**, including the European Commission, networks such as Eurocities and the MUFPP, UN-Habitat, FAO, the Global FoodBanking Network (GFN), and other private sector entities.

COLLABORATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND PRIVATE SECTOR, ESPECIALLY WITH START-UPS, CAN HELP FINDING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS

Similarly, Food Bank Albania collaborates with a variegated network of stakeholders, including local administrations (including the Municipality of Tirana), local civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the national government (Ministry of Education and Sports) and local schools. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food Bank has received growing requests for support from municipalities to help tackling poverty by collecting fresh food and distributing it to people in need, in partnership with "social kitchens" established at municipal level. **Synergies between food banks and municipalities are, indeed, manifold:** some municipalities provided volunteers and free-of-charge public space to help conducting awareness campaigns and public meetings; the Municipality of Shkodër offered a warehouse free-of-charge, enabling FBA to collect more food and process it in collaboration with other NGOs; other municipalities contributed to logistics allowing the circulation of food trucks.

INTERNATIONAL MARKET OF RUNGIS

EXPERIENCE / 📍 FRANCE

This wholesale market is the largest in Europe, expanding over 234 hectares and providing food for 80 million people every day. The market's management [partnered](#) with Association Nationale de Développement des Épiceries Solidaires ([ANDES](#)), a “social company” that was offered a refrigerated space in the market free of charge to collect and store unsold food for redistributing it through a network of “solidarity grocery shops” and other associations distributing meals to people in need. ANDES acts as intermediary between wholesalers and local associations, dealing with the logistics to manage surplus food and waste, thus overcoming common problems such as the lack of time and logistic capacity (transport, refrigeration, storage).

Stakeholders such as Food Bank Albania and wholesale markets in the WUWM network are positioning as **champions for sharing and disseminating good practices**.

Collaboration with the civil society and the private sector, especially with start-ups, is key and can help finding innovative solutions to common problems, such as the dilemma between single-use plastics and best storage and preservation of food products. It emerged from the panel discussion that there is an urgent need for more innovations that can enable food waste reduction. Local (and national) governments shall **foster innovation and enhance investments in infrastructures** (especially in terms of storage facilities and access to cold chain), also involving other stakeholders at local level. Initiatives such as hacka-

thons targeted to start-ups and NGOs are powerful tools to identify more game-changing solutions to the issue of food waste.

Leveraging innovation for circular food practices at the local level is paramount. In this regard, the use of renewable energies in food chains in urban and peri-urban food systems is of key importance, ensuring access to energy at all stages of the chain on one hand, and contributing to reducing food losses (in particular at post-harvest stages, such as in cold chains and storage) on the other. In addition, food waste can be used to produce bioenergy and other bioproducts, including biofertilizers and animal feed, (as shown in the experience shared by TBB), eliminating the need to landfill it, therefore reducing pollution and GHG emissions.

ROME AGRI-FOOD CENTRE (CAR)

EXPERIENCE / 📍 ITALY

CAR, the wholesale market of Rome has implemented the project [Frutta che frutta non spreca](#) (“Fruits that do not waste fruits”), funded by the Ministry of Agriculture. A production lab was created within the wholesale market, where a social company transforms unsold fruit into juices, purees and jams that are then sold at affordable prices in “social supermarkets”. This contributes to reducing food waste, as well as to promoting healthy diets. This practice, which involves several local stakeholders (the national government, the local administration, CSOs, and the private sector) is a virtuous experience that could be upscaled in other markets of Italy and across the Mediterranean with the engagement of other municipalities and stakeholders at the local level.

DO GOOD: SAVE FOOD!

EXPERIENCE / 📍 ALBANIA

Since 2019, Food Bank Albania has been involved in the [Do good: save food!](#) initiative, carried out in 100 schools in Albania to disseminate knowledge and raise awareness on food waste among teachers, school children and their families. This initiative was made possible thanks to the collaboration with the Ministry of Education, which allowed to implement curricula in many public and private schools, and to FAO that provided knowledge materials in the local language (i.e. technical guides targeted to different age groups). The initiative couples education and awareness raising with a concrete call-to-action for schools to actively engage in collecting and redistributing food. Many public and private schools responded positively to the call, with 17 000 students reached and almost ten tons of food collected and redistributed in the first year of implementation. FBA's experience has been a success and, also thanks to a very effective communication campaign on social media, TV and radio, several other stakeholders (about 20 CSOs) joined the initiative to replicate it throughout the country, expanding to a total of 14 cities. More schools (also in remote areas) have invited the Food Bank to bring the programme to their realities.

LEVERAGING NETWORKS FOR EDUCATION AND INFORMATION SHARING TO MAINSTREAM FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULARITY IN MEDITERRANEAN CITIES

Views about education and information sharing were provided by stakeholders representing two important networks:



[Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development \(MIO-ECSDE\)](#)

represented by Prof Michael Scoullas, Chairman.



[ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability](#) represented by Mr Peter Defranceschi, Head of the Global Food Programme.

MIO-ECSDE is a federation of over 130 NGOs from all shores of the Mediterranean working in the fields of environment and development in the Euro-Mediterranean area. MIO also facilitates [other networks](#) of major Mediterranean stakeholders who play a key role in addressing the region's environmental and sustainable development challenges (parliamentarians, media, educators and universities).

ICLEI is a global network linking more than 2500 subnational, national and global actors to strengthen policies, commitments and initiatives at all levels, in support of sustainable urban development. Working alongside local and regional governments to anticipate and respond to complex challenges, ICLEI fosters knowledge sharing and city-to-city exchanges worldwide, to facilitate capacity building and create space for innovation in support of sustainable development at the urban scale.

Political will, effective and committed policymaking, and collaboration among different stakeholders are indeed key success factors to tackle the issue of food waste management and mainstream circular economy practices. However, these factors would not be as effective without the paramount contribution of education, knowledge and best practices sharing, as well as networking among stakeholders. Food systems thinking requires integrating many urgent issues, but **communicating complex solutions** to policymakers, citizens and, in particular, youth, is indeed a difficult task. To overcome such challenge, MIO-ECSDE promotes a **synergetic approach** based on state-of-art science and on common-sense solutions. To this effect, MIO promotes the use of the [Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems \(WEFE\) Nexus](#) as a framework for action at the global, urban, peri-urban and local level. Through the Water and Environment Support (WES) mechanism, funded by the EU, and the project “*Mediterranean Dialogue for Waste Management Governance*” ([Med4Waste](#)), funded by the European Neighbourhood Instrument's Cross-Border Cooperation Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme ([ENI CBC MED](#)), MIO-ECSDE collects and shares [best practices](#) promoting waste reduction and circular economy across the waste management chain in the Mediterranean region, and raises awareness to engage policy-makers to take action in this field. The speakers highlighted how **crucial the role of (food) education and youth empowerment** is in saving food and managing food waste, especially for what concerns the Mediterranean context. Youth empowerment has become an important agenda item in MIO-ECSDE's work, which led to the development of youth exchange programmes and summer universities linking cultural heritage with ways to produce, valorise, and avoid waste of food.

ICLEI operates along five pathways towards low-emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development, all designed to create systemic change. As cross-cutting topic, ICLEI also supports the path towards sustainable urban food systems through its Global Food Programme, which notably addresses food waste and circular food man-

agement. ICLEI is also involved in multiple **multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms**, such as the Urban Food Systems Coalition led by FAO and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), which aims to connect cities and national governments to enable integrated action to transform urban food systems. This Coalition was launched during the UN Food Systems Summit, during which the role of cities in tackling food waste was notably recognised as key. ICLEI organized several Summit Dialogues in partnership with FAO and many cities around the globe, including Mediterranean cities such as Tunis and İzmir. Within this framework, ICLEI conducted urban food system surveys that addressed food waste in over 50 cities around the world that hosted Summit Dialogues, where inadequate infrastructure and insufficient cold chain and storage emerged as key triggers of food loss and waste. Against this background, multi-stakeholder collaboration at local level was proposed as part of the solution to this problem and linkages between food banks and warehouses/wholesalers have proven to be key, in line with the experiences presented by WUWM and Food Bank Albania. Substantial efforts need to be made in **coupling innovations and smart technologies for waste prevention and upcycling, with traditional practices** typical of the Mediterranean area (such as using spices to preserve food), finding ways to teach these in schools.

MIO-ECSDE and ICLEI both strive to **overcome silos**, trying to build bridges to harmonize the work of many different stakeholder types, including international organizations, national governments, academic and financial institutions, international bodies with integrated policies (such as the [Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution](#) and UfM), civil society and the private sector. MIO-ECSDE and ICLEI approach and form strategic alliances in order to build robust policies providing a transdisciplinary response to the complex challenges hindering food systems nowadays.

COMMUNICATING COMPLEX SOLUTIONS REQUIRES A SYNERGETIC APPROACH

MIO-ECSDE'S TOOLS FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE ABOUT FOOD

COLLABORATION /  MEDITERRANEAN

With the support of Anna Lindh Foundation, MIO-ECSDE promotes a vision of food production and use as instrumental tools for intercultural dialogue, cooperation and peace (see [SIDUMEF project](#)). Food is indeed a cultural element bringing Mediterranean peoples together (i.e. the role of the Mediterranean diet). This approach is reflected in the several educational materials produced by MIO-ECSDE available in many languages and touching upon several topics related to food (Mediterranean diet, the role of consumers, etc.), including the fight against food waste. These include a [handbook](#), a [MOOC](#) produced with the University of Athens, and training of trainers (over 10 000 educators trained) and aim at providing knowledge as well as best practices on sustainable development, of which food waste is a key component.

MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE (MED4WASTE)

COLLABORATION /  MEDITERRANEAN

[Med4Waste](#) is a capitalisation project funded by the ENI CBC MED programme and supported by UfM. It facilitates new governance models for integrated and efficient urban waste management policies across the Mediterranean region by: 1) building on and improving existing knowledge to foster capitalisation of social innovative, integrated and efficient practices in waste management with a special focus on organic waste and circular economy; 2) offering guidance and training for public administrations and relevant private and social stakeholders through mentoring schemes; 3) supporting dissemination of key results and increase awareness among key stakeholders, promote networking, and foster long-term commitment of decision and policy makers to promote an environmental, socio-economic and institutional transition towards green growth in the Mediterranean Sea Basin. Spain, Italy, Greece, Lebanon, Jordan and Tunisia are involved in this partnership.

MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (MSESD)

COLLABORATION /  MEDITERRANEAN

The [Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development \(MSESD\)](#) was endorsed in 2014 by the Ministers for Environment and Climate Change of UfM, and the related Action Plan was approved by the Ministerial Conference of Ministers of Education in 2016. While food waste was mentioned in this Action Plan, an update of the latter is foreseen to take place in October 2022 during UNECE's 9th Environment for Europe Conference in Cyprus, granting food waste a more prominent position in the strategy.

CITYFOOD NETWORK

COLLABORATION /  GLOBAL

The [CITYFOOD Network](#), created in 2013 by ICLEI and the Resource centre on Urban Agriculture and Food Security ([RUAF](#)), aims to accelerate subnational policies and actions to build resilient city-region food systems. This network builds a strong south-south-north exchange platform for learning among cities and is open to local and regional governments, whether they are engaging with the issue for the first time or working to implement the MUFPP and at the frontier of innovative food systems work.

ZEROW

EXPERIENCE /  GLOBAL

[ZeroW](#) is an EU-Horizon-2020-funded project that aims to reduce Food Loss & Waste (FLW) along the food supply chain, contributing to Green Deal goals of halving FLW by 2030 and reaching near-zero FLW by 2050. The project adopts a systemic innovation approach to address the multidimensional issue of FLW, testing innovative solutions through nine Systemic Innovation Living Labs tackling specific stages of the value chain (e.g.: smart packaging, food banks networks, data-driven production process, ugly food and retail food waste valorisation).

In this project, ICLEI leads on stakeholder engagement and collaboration, joining forces with European and global initiatives and organisations to learn from each other, share ZeroW innovative solutions, and amplify the project's impact.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

- There is a need to **elevate the discourse about the role of cities in food waste management across the Mediterranean**, raising this topic in international fora to promote networking and transnational collaboration. Panellists made reference to the upcoming [COP 27](#) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) [9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference](#) in Nicosia, Cyprus, among others.
- It was proposed to organize a **follow-up seminar** in Cairo hosted by the Ministry of Local Development of Egypt as a platform to share further experiences and initiate cooperation on training and education, as well as on twinning between cities.
- Bringing together many different stakeholders to **collaborate through platforms and networks** has emerged as a pivotal element for food waste management across Mediterranean cities. Generating and sharing knowledge, data, information and best practices, fostering innovations and investments, and building capacities on topics that are functional to food systems transformation, are among the pillars of the [SFS-MED Platform](#). The SFS-MED Platform's Coordination Desk, composed of CIHEAM, FAO, PRIMA and UfM, invited participants to get in touch ([click here](#)) and engage in future exchanges.

SFS-MED PLATFORM

COLLABORATION / MEDITERRANEAN

The [SFS-MED Platform](#) is a multi-stakeholder initiative co-led by FAO, CIHEAM, UfM and PRIMA as an affiliated project of the One Planet Network's SFS Programme. The Platform is a **forum** for multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration, a **network** for strengthening knowledge sharing and capacity building, and a **catalyst** for regional cooperation on priority themes for sustainable food systems transformation in the Mediterranean.

The SFS-MED Platform is open to all food systems stakeholders in the Mediterranean region and aims to create a community to leverage and share the knowledge, experience and skills of food systems actors across the Mediterranean region towards concerted action for the sustainable transformation of food systems.

Contact the [SFS-MED Platform's Coordination Desk](#) for further information about the modalities of engagement.

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The graphic layout is by Simone Mari.

NOTES

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⁷For an analysis of the Near East and North Africa region, see: FAO. 2022. FAO Analysis shows how Nationally Determined Contributions are lighting the way for climate action in the Near East and North Africa region. In *FAO Climate Change*. Rome, FAO. <https://bit.ly/3u8ty3f>. For a global-level analysis, including focused analysis on Egypt (as Mediterranean country), see: Global Alliance for the Future of Food. 2022. *Untapped Opportunities for Climate Action: An Assessment of Food Systems in Nationally Determined Contributions*. Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2022. <https://bit.ly/3bAqUgf>

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RESOURCES

The recording of the webinar is available at this [link](#) and the agenda of the webinar is available at this [link](#)

Events

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