



**Roinn Cumarsáide, Gníomhaithe  
ar son na hAeráide & Comhshaoil**  
Department of Communications,  
Climate Action & Environment

## **Retail Sector Action Group on Preventing Wasted Food in the Supply Chain**

### **Final Report**

Food waste is an issue that affects all aspects of society in Ireland, from farm to fork – producers, growers, retail, hospitality, consumers and those who experience food poverty. Everyone contributes to this. In terms of available data and excluding wasted food from agriculture, Ireland generates over 1 million tonnes of food waste per year. Around 40% of this comes from food production, while 60% of it comes from the household and commercial sector.

Through preventing food waste, and becoming more efficient in using what we have, Ireland can reduce the environmental impacts associated with food waste, improve the financial position of businesses and householders alike, and help those who struggle on a daily basis to put food on the table. Retailers play an influential role in the supply chain. Providing a key linkage between producers and consumers, retailers are uniquely placed to share insights into the dynamic of the market for food in Ireland and why food may be wasted.

The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (CCAIE) invited leading retailers to come together to take action against food waste in March 2017. Individually and collectively, retailers were to agree changes in policy and practice that are impactful, measurable and lasting. The priority tasks of the group were to:

- agree and implement a transparent system of measuring wasted food; and
- sign up to the Food Waste Charter and implement specific food waste prevention measures.

The input of members regarding further areas for action was welcomed.

## Operational details

The Minister invited the leading retail companies in Ireland to become members of the Action Group under the chairmanship of Mr. Eamonn Quinn. Representatives from Tesco; Musgraves; Aldi, Lidl; BWG were in attendance at the meetings. The DCCAE provided secretariat for the meetings and curation of the activity of the group. Where required, experts from the EPA, the Clean Technology Centre (CIT) and FoodCloud were also present.

The Action Group has been in operation since March 2017, a total of 4 meetings were convened and the minutes of all these are available through the [DCCAE website](#) in full compliance with the Transparency Code.

## The work of the group

When joining the group each retailer committed to two main actions

1. to sign up to the [Food Waste Charter](#)
2. to gather data to identify areas for improvement and to measure progress.

### Food Waste Charter

On Thursday 25th January 2018 Minister Naughten hosted the Retail Action Group in Adelaide Road where the CEO's from Tesco Ireland, Musgrave, ALDI Ireland, Lidl Ireland and BWG Group convened to sign the Food Waste Charter. This committed them to a common and long-term approach to tackling food waste by pledging to uphold the following objectives;

- Adhere to the food waste hierarchy, prioritising the prevention of food waste.
- Build an awareness and understanding of food waste and its issues.
- Promote innovative food waste prevention solutions.
- Implement technical and behavioural interventions to reduce food waste.
- Gather and share reliable and accurate food waste information to identify areas for improvement and to measure progress.

In addition the retailers all agreed to take the following actions:

- To support the EPA's Stop Food Waste campaign in January 2018; and
- To work towards implementing a common methodology to report data on Food Waste in the retail sector

The group heard from Odile Le Bolloch (EPA), Les Carberry (DCCAE) and Laura Burke (EPA) who all spoke of the scale of the challenge ahead but noted the importance of a collaborative approach to tackling these types of issues. Minister Naughten addressed the group and highlighted how Ireland has the potential to become a world leader in this area, and how this can be achieved by continuing to work together.

The retailers signed the Charter during the EPA's Stop Food Waste Week campaign and actively supported through their own social media accounts; this gathered a significant amount of national and local media attention and helped drive traffic to the [www.STOPFOODWASTE.ie](http://www.STOPFOODWASTE.ie) website.

### **Food Waste Data**

The retailers have agreed to collect data according to the international FLW Standard (Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting) which is in line with emerging best practice at EU and international level.

The retailers have been examining their current in-house food waste reporting arrangements together with the standardised reporting document circulated which is based on the FLW standard. Retailers have been asked to complete the form in respect of 2016 and provide same to the EPA by September 2018. As agreed, data will be treated as commercially-sensitive and collated to ensure individual retailers are not identifiable in any published data.

This data will be used to compile food waste statistics generally and will make an important contribution towards improving the quality of Ireland's food waste data as well as giving retailers themselves an evidential basis for deciding how to tackle food waste in-house. This is particularly important given food waste ambitions within both the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan which demand reliable national data.

### **Additional Outcomes**

Throughout the year, the retailers have been building awareness of food waste amongst customers, employees and suppliers.

By interrogating food waste data in their own organisations, a number of retailers have implemented technical and behavioural interventions to reduce food waste and some case studies

of these actions have been provided to the EPA for wider circulation via the Food Waste Charter website.

It is also noteworthy that all participating retailers are now working with Foodcloud to optimise food donations to the charity sector and are developing food waste reduction targets as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility response to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The work of the group and the data collected will form the basis of a report on food waste in the retail sector which will be celebrated at a launch event at the next Forum on Food Waste in February 2019.

## **The future of the group**

The retail action group has successfully worked in partnership over the past 19 months and achieved its main goals; as such it was agreed to outline the potential avenues for ongoing collaboration.

The group proposed the following;

- The work of the main Retail action group will conclude. Individual retailers continue to work bilaterally with the EPA Food Waste Charter team honouring the commitments made.
- Maintain the group as a network which would meet once a year to report data, provide updates on their action on food waste and learn about any significant developments in food waste policy in Ireland

This network will contribute to a wider food waste advisory group which will be established as part of the Food Waste Charter. It will serve as an exemplar action group and will collaborate with other sectors to advance reductions in food waste across all sectors in Ireland.