CULTiVATE

CULTIVATE PROJECT - EIP AGRI PRACTICE ABSTRACTS

FOOD SHARING STORIES WEBINAR SERIES

The CULTIVATE **Food Sharing Stories webinar series** provided a platform for 10 Food Sharing Initiatives (FSIs) to exchange experiences, challenges, and strategies for sustainable food sharing. The series fostered a **Community of Practice**, and highlighted innovative approaches to food saving and redistribution.
The CULTIVATE webinar series was structured into three thematic blocks, each addressing critical aspects of food sharing and saving. It was discussed amongst FSIs that food sharing and food saving are often interconnected but conceptually distinct. While **food sharing is rooted in community-based practices** that seek to bring people together, food saving is primarily concerned with **reducing waste and optimizing resource use**. The distinction was highlighted throughout the webinar series as FSIs shared their approaches and best practices. Key discussions explored the intersection of food sharing and saving, emphasizing community-building, sustainability, and logistics. FSIs addressed **challenges** such as legal barriers, financial sustainability, volunteer retention, and regulatory complexities while showcasing solutions like digital platforms, alternative funding models, and policy advocacy. One core theme was the systemic failure of global food distribution and how FSIs combat food waste, CO_2 emissions, and social inequality. **Technical solutions were key**, with FSIs integrating food rescue apps, automated tracking systems, and digital logistics tools. Discussions also focused on scaling initiatives, ensuring financial stability through social enterprises, cooperative memberships, crowdfunding, leveraging storytelling and media outreach for public engagement. FSIs also emphasized education and volunteer engagement, particularly involving schools and youth, through food education activties. Advocacy for clearer legal frameworks was a recurring theme, highlighting the **need for policies that support food sharing** rather than hinder through regulations.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Common **obstacles FSIs noted** were logistics, regulation, and fundraising as well as legal frameworks both on local and national level that hinder sharing and saving of food from being wasted. For example, a major concern voiced was **how to balance financial stability** when collaborating with corporate sector while maintaining grassroots values and accessibility to avoid greenwashing. It was suggested that future research should focus on measuring the long-term impact of FSIs on food waste reduction, community resilience, and social inclusion. Comparative studies on different food-sharing models and their effectiveness in various socio-economic and regulatory environments would provide valuable insights on the challenges and good practices to overcome them. Research on **policy frameworks that best support FSIs**, including liability protection, tax incentives, and streamlined food safety regulations, has also been crucial for creating an enabling environment for food sharing iniatives. Additionally, examining the role of digital tools in enhancing operational efficiency, tracking food redistribution, and engaging volunteers would support further innovation and help to upscale activties. Future actions should prioritize strengthening collaborations between FSIs, policymakers, and businesses to create **sustainable funding models** and secure infrastructure, such as storage facilities and distribution networks since FSIs have proven to be resilient food instrastructures during times of crises such as COVID-19. Efforts should also focus on **advocacy and public awareness** to drive regulatory changes and improve food-sharing acceptance and inclusion in the policies on food waste reduction. Expanding **education initiatives** in schools and universities can instill a culture of sustainability from an early age. Lastly, creating a centralized knowledge hub where FSIs can share best practices and legal guidance would foster ongoing innovation and a stronger Community of Practice.additional materials

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Food Sharing Stories - YouTube playlist

Food Sharing Stories - webinar take-aways

Funded by the European Union

UK Research and Innovation