

Food waste reduction in Norway 2020

2020 was a different and challenging year for all of us, and not least for the food and hospitality industry. Parts of the value chain for food experienced a large decline in turnover, especially the hospitality industry and those who supply food and drink to this market. Yet, we are impressed by the efforts of businesses in the area of food waste, both to continue with monitoring and implementation of measures, and to save food. Below is a summary of some of the most important activities from the past year.

Food waste continues to decrease

In 2020, the latest food waste results were published and show that it was reduced with 16.400 tonnes in the retail, wholesale and manufacturers (excl. the seafood industry) from 2015 to 2019. This corresponds to a reduction of 12 percent, equivalent to 4.2 kg per habitant. This is in addition to the 14 percent reduction that the industry achieved between 2010 and 2015 in the ForMat project. This indicates that the food sector as a whole is on a good path to reach the first sub-goal in the negotiated agreement of a 15 percent reduction of food waste by 2020.

The survey report from *Matvett*, prepared by *NORSUS* and also published in 2020, shows that a minimum of 417,000 tonnes of edible food were thrown away in Norway in 2019. This corresponds to approx. 78 kg per inhabitant per year, a financial loss of about NOK 20.7 billion and 1.26 million tonnes of CO2 equivalents. The household sector accounts for more than half of the mapped food waste (55%), followed by the manufacturers (22%), the retail sector (15%), the hospitality industry (7%) and the wholesale sector (1%). Food waste from the hospitality industry is included as a result of the four-year *KuttMatsvinn2020* project that was recently terminated.

In the annual consumer survey conducted in May 2020, we asked whether the *COVID-19* pandemic had resulted in changes in consumer behaviour. The results show that:

- 50 percent of the respondents shop less often than before
- About 20 percent buy more packaged fruit and vegetables, spend more time cooking and take better care of their leftovers
- One third report that in the future they will throw away much less/a little less food than before
- 60 percent will throw away the same as before
- One third have not experienced any changes

As the results show, the pandemic means that consumers shop less often than before, and make more food from scratch. This means that food waste might have been reduced at household level, which will be revealed in the future waste composition analysis.

Although the food industry as a whole is well placed to achieve the first sub-goal in the negotiated agreement (-15% by 2020), the report also shows that the food industry must continue to work purposefully, as the goals increases from a 15 % reduction by 2020 to a 30 % reduction by 2025 and a 50 % reduction by 2030. Read more about the results and further recommendations in the "Annual report with key figures for 2015-2019" [here](#).

Positive final results from the *KM2020* project

The historic collaborative project in the hospitality industry, KuttMatsvinn2020, was ended in 2020, after four years. Together, the participants represented over 2,500 eating places and achieved a food waste reduction of 15 percent or 390 tonnes, which corresponds to 2,4 million Euro and 1400 tonnes of CO2 eq.

The results from the survey in *KuttMatsvinn2020*, which was carried out by *NORSUS*, show that the estimated food waste in the hospitality industry in 2019 was 27,700 tonnes and includes hotels, canteens, restaurants, convenience stores, nursing homes, kindergartens and after-school programmes. The food waste amounts to a value of 160 million Euro and a greenhouse gas emission of 96 520 tons of CO2 eq.

Impact from the project

KuttMatsvinn2020 succeeded in recruiting 36 percent of the hospitality industry (measured in turnover). The project acted as a driving force for the actors in the hospitality industry in Norway to work according to specific reduction targets, and to be ahead of potential fees or regulations from the authorities. Before *KuttMatsvinn2020*, there were no statistics on the extent of food waste in this industry and the importance of reducing it. We now have a good overview of the scope and causes of food waste. Furthermore, more and more companies have gained increased insight and awareness among their employees. Read the final report from the project [here](#).

NORSUS also led a research project on behalf of Matvett. The project was called *KuttMatsvinn2020 Research* and ended in 2019. Thanks to the research project, it was possible to develop a system and a methodology for measurement and reporting of food waste for the participants, as well as develop statistics on food waste from this sector. Read the final report from the research project [here](#).

The importance of the negotiated agreement

It is three and a half years since the "Negotiated Agreement on food waste reduction" was signed between the entire food supply chain and the Norwegian Government, to halve food waste in Norway by 2030. During these first three years, the negotiated agreement have contributed to the recruitment of many new businesses across the industry's sectors.

One of the obligations for the companies when joining the agreement, is to provide food waste data and the number of companies that shared food waste data has more than quintupled since the negotiated agreement was signed in 2017. In addition, the agreement has contributed to starting the work of mapping and preventing food waste in several industry segments (hospitality industry, seafood industry and agriculture) with good results. This shows that the negotiated agreement is important for both recruiting actors and increasing the knowledge-base for the work with food waste reduction in Norway. Read more about the negotiated agreement [here](#).

The first report from The Negotiated agreement will be launched this autumn

All actors who signed the negotiated agreement are now ready for the first reporting round in 2021. This will include both data on food waste and implemented measures. In that regard, *Matvett* conducted an industry survey among manufacturers, the retail sector and the hospitality industry. The insights will be used to develop sector-specific descriptions of challenges and opportunities in the main report from the negotiated agreement. Preliminary results show that profitability, together with reputation and sustainability, are the most important drivers for reducing food waste. More than 85 percent of businesses state that they have the potential to cut food waste even further. To succeed in halving food waste by 2030, areas such as optimization of production, order and forecasting, employee training, better product durability, tighter cooperation in the supply chain and the facilitating of arenas for skill-sharing, are reported as important focus areas. The first main reporting will be completed during the autumn of 2021. See all the companies involved in the negotiated agreement and examples of good measures [here](#).

New Year's resolution to cut food waste

Matvett carried out a campaign in January 2020 to visualize the businesses that have joined the negotiated agreement, and to make a commitment on behalf of all the 103 companies - a New Year's resolution to cut food waste by 4,500,000 kilos during a year. The goal was achieved by a good margin, and celebrated with a new campaign to show how it went (food waste was cut by 10,600,000 kg) and by making a new commitment to further reduce food waste by 5,500,000 kg in 2021, which is in line with what it takes to reach the first sub-goal of the negotiated agreement. Read more about the campaign [here](#).

Cut Food Waste Week

Together with the food industry, the authorities and a network of committed companies and individuals, we work towards halving food waste by 2030. In that respect it is important to dedicate days and campaign-weeks for this purpose, in order to get attention in social media and among industry actors. In the beginning of June, we conducted a *Cut Food Waste Week* campaign to mobilize actors in the food and hospitality industry to make their efforts to reduce food waste, visible to their customers and guests.

The campaign gained attention in social media through examples of how industry actors are working to cut food waste, both in their own businesses, but also by making it easier for consumers to throw away less food. Other examples included how more and more companies introduce additional date labeling for "best before"-labelled products, by adding "*often good after*", see examples of products with additional labelling below:



International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste

The world's first *Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste* was launched on September 29th by FAO (*World Food Program/UN*). The goal is to raise awareness of the importance of reducing food waste locally and globally. *Matvett* used the opportunity to visualize the actors who signed the negotiated agreement, by sharing good examples of corporate action in social media. See example of the visuals below;



Educational programs on sustainable development and food waste

In the autumn of 2020, "Sustainable development" was introduced as one of three interdisciplinary themes in primary and secondary school in Norway. *Matvett* and Inlandet University for applied sciences, in collaboration with the environmental program *LOOP* and *NRK* school, developed a teaching program with various tasks about food waste, in line with this subject renewal. For more info about the programs, see [here](#).

Research project on food waste and responsible innovation (BREAD)

BREAD is a three-year research project that will help design more effective and ambitious strategies to achieve the goal of halving food waste, by exploring how to work with food waste politically, in the food industry and in interaction with consumers.

The goal is to uncover innovation potential, and define good practices across companies and countries. *Matvett* is responsible for one of four work packages, which includes mapping of how companies in the food industry are working with sustainability through workshops, surveys and interviews. *Future thinking* is one of the tools within Responsible Research innovation (RRI) that *Matvett*, in collaboration with *Opinion*, used to develop four future scenarios that were used in workshops with different actors of the food system. Read more about BREAD here. Below you can see the most important points to succeed in halving food waste by 2030, according to the preliminary results of the project:

1. We must involve consumers
2. We must respect the value of food
3. Technology development must be adapted to the needs of the industry
4. We need to cooperate more in the food supply chain
5. We must facilitate openness and sharing in the food supply chain
6. We must consider the climate and environment, as much as the price
7. We should consider food waste issues in product and market innovation
8. Other actors must also join the efforts
9. We must think holistically, across topics such as health, environment, food safety but also across the different actors in the food supply chain
10. *Matvett* must implement ambitious projects in the future

Collaboration to include expiration date in the barcode

GS1 Norway and *Matvett* entered into a collaboration to explore the opportunities that lie in using barcodes that include expiration dates to, among other things, reduce food waste.

The grocery retail company *NorgesGruppen* is the first actor in Norway to test a data bar where they have included the expiry date in the barcode on selected fresh meat products. To anchor the work and ensure a common approach and implementation of future codes, two working groups have been established with participants from the food industry, retail and equipment suppliers. During 2020, several meetings have been conducted in the working groups, and so far, the industry has agreed on what kind of information a future barcode should contain, in addition to the expiration date. To implement the new bar code, there is a need to change both the equipment at the manufacturers and the cash register systems in the grocery stores. It is expected that the implementation of digital codes will be possible from 2021. For more information, see [here](#).

Roadmap to 2030, including the consumers

The past year has shown that it is impossible to predict the future, and that unforeseen circumstances can have a major impact on both food supply and the amount of food waste. In order to better equip companies towards 2030, Matvett and a research agency, Opinion, looked into the trends and driving forces that will help shape how we will produce, prepare and sell food in the future, and the possible scenarios that may apply.

These scenarios will be part of a roadmap with recommendations for the industry, which will also include experiments in shops and in hotels to map customers' expectations. For example, expectations about total supply through the whole opening hours and whether expectations change if customers understand that reducing these expectations could contribute to reducing food waste. The roadmap will be shared with the industry during 2021.

Some important preliminary findings from the road map show that:

- 7 out of 10 are concerned about climate and sustainability in everyday life.
- 9 out of 10 believe that reducing food waste is an important climate and sustainability measure.
- Most people accept that there is only a la carte serving at the hotel, or that the buffet selection is reduced, when they receive information that the buffet is the largest source of food waste.
- Less import of goods in season and additional date labeling are people's favorite measures against food waste at grocery stores.
- 83 percent accept that the bread selection is reduced towards the end of the opening hours.
- 77 percent choose another bread if their favorite bread is sold out, 30 percent go to another store and 30 percent answered that they would select a frozen option.
- High acceptance for reduced bread selection when they learn that bread is the category that accounts for the most food waste grocery stores (over 90%)

The network of Norwegian food banks

It was a hectic year for the country's 7 food banks. A lot of food had to be saved when the country closed down on March 12th, and then partly again in the autumn. At the same time, there was great pressure from the increased demand for food assistance.

In total, the food banks redistributed over 3400 tonnes of food in 2020. This is 13.6 tonnes of food per day, which are equivalent to 27,200 meals. This means that food equivalent to about 6.7 million meals was redistributed to people in need in 2020, an increase of 31 % compared with 2019. Even though half of the actors who signed the negotiated agreement have a collaboration with the food banks, there is still a need for more food to meet the demand for food assistance. In 2021 the plan is to reach out to the rest of the actors in order to discuss possibilities for collaboration with the food banks.

There were many exciting developments in Food Banks Norway, the umbrella organization of all the Norwegian food banks, in 2020. For example, the launching of *Matsentralen kitchen* in collaboration with the organization *Unikum*, which turns surplus food originally destined to commercial kitchens into ready-made meals, and the project of internal transport, which allows the food banks to receive bigger volumes of surplus food from the food industry. In 2021 the work will continue with the development of the concepts “Food station”, which are smaller units that can redistribute surplus food from local grocery stores and “Matsentralen Primary”, which aims at rescuing surplus raw materials from the agricultural sector.

Expectations for 2021

This decade started differently than expected, and the work on sustainability was pushed aside a bit to deal with the ongoing pandemic. While there is growth in turnover among manufacturers and the retail sector, there is uncertainty about when the hospitality industry will be back on track. Nevertheless, we have received positive signals from this sector to continue on working with reducing food waste also this year.

2021 started with the Norwegian Government presenting their new climate plan, where reducing food waste is highlighted as an important focus area towards the green shift. The consumer survey also shows that we are more ready for sustainable actions in the future. We hope more companies will join the efforts to reduce food waste in 2021, and that consumers join in these efforts also.

Matvett's contribution will be to share more knowledge, more tools and facilitate more activities to inspire new initiatives and make companies' important work visible. We will also invite the industry to exchange experiences and initiate new collaborative projects.

Several ambitious preventive measures must also be developed to keep the course towards the halving target in 2030. Some of these measures have already been defined, and the common denominator is that they have consumer acceptance. We look forward to testing and implementing the measures together with the industry during the year and to a continued good collaboration with the industry, authorities and other organizations that support the fight against food waste. Feel free to visit us at matvett.no and read more about our activities.