



SAVING

Educating youth on sustainable lifestyle

PR1 – A5

National Report –
Italy



Co-funded by the
European Union



Center for Social
Innovation



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With the support of the Erasmus+ program of the European Union. This document and its contents reflect solely the views of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

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Introduction

a. Aims/Objectives of Report

The objective of this national report, which is part of the first project result of the SAVING project, is to understand what the Italian situation is concerning current legislation as well as perception at civil society's level of food waste, food sustainability, promotion of sustainable lifestyles and involvement of groups at risk of marginalization within these macro issues.

Through field and desk-based research, we conducted an analysis to identify the key learning needs of both those working in the sector such as agronomists, nutritionists, and agricultural entrepreneurs/entrepreneurs, but also educators and social workers as well as youth at risk of social exclusion. Then, we focused on the needs and demands of the target groups with the aim of understanding what good practices exist at national level in the social and food sector and what is the reason for the absence or paucity of information accessible to anyone in this field. This report aims to return the research findings, supplementing them with an overview of available statistical data and current policies.

b. Scope of Research

The scope of the research was broad but specific: information and opinions/personal knowledge were sought about food waste, food security and its intersection with youth poverty, what kind of institutional support exists to engage youth and raise awareness about food waste, what is the level of general knowledge on these issues. Desk-based research was mainly aimed to find statistical data, regarding the laws in force in Italy

and the actual level of knowledge and involvement of target groups in the macro area of food waste and sustainability.

c. Method

Field research: The procedures used to gather information regarding the areas of the research were mainly the delivery of a focus group involving - in the case of Italy - a journalist interested in the project topics, an architect and university professor involved in research on the relationship between interior, urban spaces and food, a vegan visual designer and a nutritionist. For the delivery of questionnaires - structured with specific questions pertaining to food waste, sustainability, and youth involvement - people belonging to the target groups as well as interested in the project topics, both English and Italian speakers, were involved.

Desk research: Concerning desk-based research, we focused on statistical data, policy review, existing practices and the legal framework, taking information from institutional websites such as Waste Watcher, Coldiretti and the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea.

d. Contribution to existing Literature

The contribution this report aims to give to the existing national and international scientific and sociological literature is to lay the groundwork and offering insights to fill the information gap regarding the difficulties of involving young people in issues such as food waste and sustainability, paying particular attention to young people at risk of poverty and economic and social exclusion who could benefit from such involvement.

Key findings from Desk Review

a. Literature Review/National Context

The value of food waste in Italy is worth almost 16 billion euros a year, about 1% of the country's GDP. Unlike what many people think, the waste of food does not happen almost exclusively in large supermarket chains but at home, between 60% and 70% of the total.

However, even if the rates for food waste at national level are high, about half of Italians reduced their percentage of food waste during the years 2020 and 2021 (the worst phases of COVID19 pandemic and lockdowns), a period during which Italians continued to save and consume/create recipes with leftovers. The trend between 2021 and 2022 appears to be up again in terms of household waste: the new data tell us that we throw away an average of 595.3 grams per capita per week, or 30.956 kg annually: about 15% more than in 2021 (529 grams weekly). Information coming from the same research (Waste Watcher International, 2022) also tells us that people from lower-middle class and working-class waste more, in terms of difference % amount wasted in 7 days vs. national average.

To reduce food waste, from 14th September 2016, the law 166/2016 came into effect, the so called 'antisprechi' rule (Legge Gadda, named after the first petitioner). A regulatory intervention that just during the first year of the law's enactment (2016-2017), brought a +21% increase in food donations to nonprofit organizations.

The purpose of the law 166/2016 is to reduce waste through the entire agribusiness supply chain by encouraging the recovery and donation of surplus products.

Among the most important issues of the law there are:

» Clear definition of all the words used to talk about 'food waste':

waste, surplus, donation, distinction between minimum shelf life and expiration date;

- » Simplification of procedures for recovery and donation of food surpluses;
- » Introduction of teaching on nutrition education and combating waste in schools;
- » Communication campaigns on food education and waste reduction issues to encourage surplus donations by companies and raise consumer awareness;
- » Funding for developers of research projects in the field.

Moreover, Italy has implemented the European Parliament's May 2017 resolution to improve food safety, also approving national laws and a National Food Waste Prevention Plan (PINPAS) to reduce waste and promote more sustainable lifestyles and mindset. This legislative *corpus* is complementary to actions promoted by civil society, from small bakeries that decide to give away unsold products to transnational-scale movements.

However, despite the existence of a substantial legislative background, food waste continues to grow partly due to the absence of the topic from the political agenda of Italian government and a cultural change that is slow in coming.

b. Issues/Problems

Young people involved in national researches and surveys, agreed on the fact that one of the main obstacles concerning sustainability and food waste is the lack of reliable information and sources of information. Moreover, they perceived a limited commitment/involvement of the Italian

Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (MELS) and Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies: the issue of food waste is mainly seen as an option to feed the needy instead of being contextualized within the framework of resource efficiency and waste prevention strategies. At the same time, the Italian law mainly focuses on the issue of food donation for charitable purpose, while other options are weakly taken into account.

Among the main weaknesses of the Italian policies in terms of food waste, sustainability and involvement of youth are the following: lack of national food waste prevention targets, lack of integration with the local and regional waste prevention planning, lack of appropriate resources for the definition and implementation of food waste prevention measures/strategies at local and regional level, lack of incentives addressed to the “voluntary/non-for-profit” sector.

Research results I: Good Practices

a. Good Practice 1: VEG DONALD’S - URBAN GARDEN

Silvana is almost 30 years old, she is a social worker in Palermo and manager of Veg Donald's.

Veg Donald’s is one of the urban gardens in Palermo promoted by the association *Il Triangolo delle Verdure*. In one of the city's least-resourced neighborhoods, she manages a 240-square-meter urban garden and carries out projects with schools, housing communities for minors and the Palermo court's external criminal execution office.

Her experience as a social worker, allowed her to pay due attention to people at risk of marginalization and, working firsthand in the garden, she realized the strong educational and re-educational power this activity has.

From all these considerations and lived experiences, and also from a personal interest that Silvana has in the world of environmental and food sustainability, the idea was born to carry out projects with the Palermo Courthouse to work on re-education, with housing communities to create a different environment in which learning is stimulated, and with schools for workshops on self-production and basic cultivation techniques.

According to Silvana and the experience of groups involved, the results obtained have always been positive and satisfying, but most importantly, they have a real impact on people's lives and the environment around them.

b. Good Practice 2: Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and Italian network of Local Food Policies Practices

A food strategy was developed with the creation of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact¹, which was signed by cities as of November 2019. By signing the pact, local authorities commit to developing 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' by investing in cross-sectoral policy design and implementation.

Furthermore, local food policy has been an experimental ground for collaborative governance approaches and democratic innovation, e.g. through the creation of 'food policy councils' in which different groups of stakeholders engage in deliberations about the local food system. These

¹ For an assessment of the factors that underlie the success of the Milan Urban Food Pact, including their incentivising impact, see <http://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/2019/10/10/food-policy-thekey-factor-for-the-sustainability-agenda-of-cities-and-mayors/>

collaborative governance approaches have the potential to improve policy design and implementation by drawing on different sources of knowledge and involving relevant stakeholders from the start. At the same time, the conditions under which these approaches prove more effective or legitimate compared to traditional top-down or private modes of governance remain an open question. The Italian Network for Local Food Policies², founded on 15 January 2018 in Rome, is promoted by a group of university and non-university researchers from various Italian cities, variously engaged in research activities related to 'local food policies'.

The Network recognizes the central role of food-related practices within the transition processes towards sustainable and resilient cities. Promoting a sustainable food system at the local level means providing healthy and wholesome food, more liveable urban environments, adequate remuneration for all actors in the food chain, while developing a local economy based on new relationships between city and countryside and between farmers and consumers.

c. Good Practice 3: GEOfood³: Geoparks, People, Nature and Food

The GEOfood initiative, led by Magma UNESCO Global Geopark since 2013, has its route within the values of UNESCO Global Geoparks.

Global Geoparks mission is based on local communities engagement and sustainable development actions in education, business and research. GEOfood mission is also focused on supporting local enterprises,

² Italian Network for Local Food Policies Practices and projects, territories, new economies, cultures and societies in transition towards sustainable food systems <https://www.politichelocalicibo.it/>

³ <https://geofood.no/>



educating Geopark's visitors and inhabitants and running researches for developing innovative tools for sustainable development.

The adoption of the GEOfood brand within the UNESCO Geoparks could in fact support the achievement of several UNSDG'S targets detected within the Sustainable Development AGENDA, especially the targets related with 'Climate change' adaptation, 'Education' and 'Hunger'.

The GEOfood certified 'quality' do not derive from any chemical composition but it is built up through stories, traditions, heritage of the local communities crossed with the geological peculiarity of each Geopark areas. It aims at empowering local communities in increasing the awareness of the importance of local resources both biotic and abiotic, strongly emphasizing the deep connection and intercorrelation between biodiversity and geodiversity.

The GEOfood is an innovative way to connect all targets of the population with the geological history and research running in the territory, in fact food is an international language that anyone can understand: through the food, we like to connect people with soil and nature, and strengthen the food education towards zero km food and responsible use of the resources.

GEOfood brand is only for UNESCO Global Geopark territories, as Rocca di Cerere Geopark is. GEOfood was born from the same bottom up, holistic approach and sustainable principles which characterized the Geopark concept.

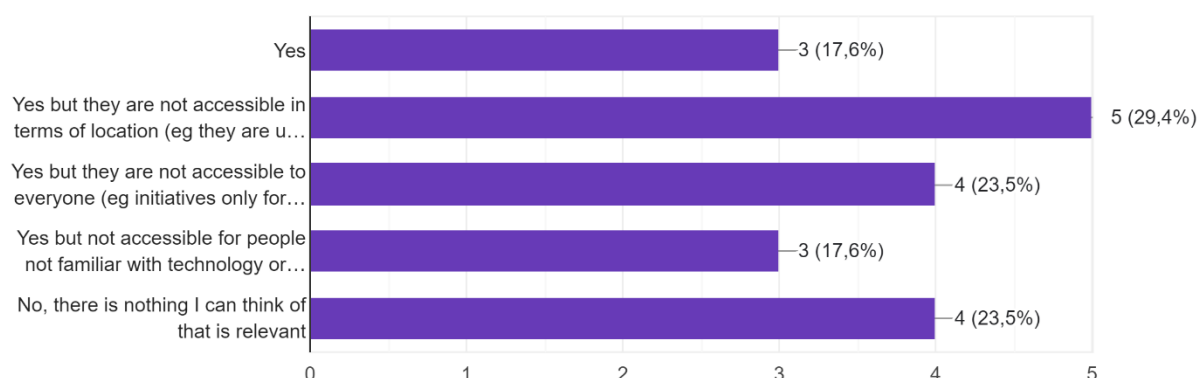
Research Results II: Focus Group/Interview with Stakeholders

The focus group, questionnaires and interviews were conducted locally and nationally with the aim of involving people of different ages who held different roles, but always related to the world of sustainability and education (nutritionists, journalists, social workers working with people at risk of exclusion, vegan people, young people interested in the topic). For what concerns questionnaires, we collected more answers from people between 18 and 25 years old, while for the focus group were involved people over 30 years old.

One of the most significant data among the ones collected through the various researches, concerns the difficulty for people interested to access information regarding food waste and sustainable lifestyles, as well as the likelihood that they will be informed about the existence of events or groups dealing with these issues is low. Specifically, it is low for people who live in rural areas rather than big cities, due to lack of dissemination and public means of transport that connect rural areas with city centers.

Are there any initiatives in your country to fight food waste and to increase food security?

17 risposte



People interviewed are aware, to some extent, of initiatives that could help to engage the youth with the macro issue of food security, but at the

same time they suffer from lack of local initiatives and accessibility to the aforementioned information.

One of the solutions suggested by people involved during the focus group was to promote awareness on food waste, sustainability and climate changes during sporting events. These events, experienced as occasions to foster socializing, even at small local level manage to gather a large audience that is potentially interested in topics such as sustainability and embarking on a sustainable lifestyle. However, the promotion of a lifestyle that fits the environment should not only come from civil society – according to the people involved in the research – but also from institutions that should be closer to people and able to answer doubts and questions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

a. Key results of research (short summary)

In terms of awareness about food waste and the need to adopt lifestyles that are sustainable and environmentally friendly, Italy has made a lot of progress in the past decade. The pandemic has forced people to confront the waste that occurs inside households, and this in many cases has helped them to become more aware and waste less. On the legislative side, new laws have also been passed that put a focus on consumption and the well-being of future generations. However, this is not enough: people perceive that they are distant from the issue of sustainability and waste, they would like to get active and participate but they experience in several cases a lack of support from local and institutional actors operating inside big cities that don't spread the word about initiatives and don't put the climate issue as a priority on the political agenda.

b. Recommendations for future action (always in relation to SAVING's aims)

- » Given the complexity of contemporary food systems, no single actor can achieve a transition towards greater justice and sustainability alone. Experimental methods and collaborative approaches are potentially significant agents of change, as demonstrated by parallel research on other complex systems (such as cities and climate change).
- » Product and process certification and standards, involving a wide range of public and private initiatives, can be influential strategies for food acquisition if they are reliable, transparent and independent. This requires ongoing development and robust methods for ensuring their reliability. Simplified labelling systems (such as traffic lights) have the potential to provide customers with a clear indication of product performance.
- » A focus on 'consumer choice' and individual responsibility is likely to be insufficient, given the fundamental asymmetries of information and power across the food system.
- » Education about the food system is an important part of creating a more sustainable food system. However, fact-based teaching, designed to enhance consumer knowledge and awareness of sustainability issues, is rarely sufficient to induce positive behaviour change unless combined with changes to the 'choice architecture' and other elements of the food system.
- » There are increasing examples of novel approaches to food with sustainability as a key goal, often collectively called 'alternative food networks' (AFNs). The sustainability impacts of these activities need to be



more clearly identified, along with barriers and opportunities for scaling-up and out those with sustainability benefits.

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