



Roundtable on sustainable food systems - digitalization and food loss and waste reduction

14 November 2023, 15:00-18:00 (CET)

Room VIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva and online (Webex, English only)

Background and context

To realize SDGs and deliver healthy and nutritious diets for all, the global food system needs to become more productive, inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and resilient.

The Secretary-General's Call to Action for accelerated Food Systems Transformation, issued ahead of the Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) in July 2023, called on leaders to prioritize "incorporating food systems strategies into all national policies for sustainable development, for people's livelihoods, nutrition and health, for economic growth, climate action and nature, and to address post-harvest losses, leaving no one behind".¹

The 70th session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), held in April 2023 under the theme "***Digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region***" requested the relevant Sectoral Committees and their subsidiaries to "consider how to enhance the impact of relevant existing ECE instruments, in order to foster digital and green transformations". It invited subsidiary bodies to consider developing proposals in their respective programmes of work, including possible collaboration across subprogrammes, for impactful and measurable solutions that promote digital and green transformations and that can facilitate attaining the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.²

The UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards has over the past few years focused on the prevention and reduction of food loss and waste, in support of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 Target 12.3 on halving food loss by 2030. The work has included the development tools and guidance documents, including the UNECE Code of Good Practice and the UNECE Food Loss and Waste Measuring Methodology for Fresh Produce Supply Chains, as well as awareness-raising events.

In response to the 70th Commission session and the UNFSS+2, this roundtable will discuss two aspects related to sustainable food systems: **(i) food loss and waste prevention and reduction**, and **(ii) the role of digitalization in ensuring efficient agricultural trade**, with a focus on the needs and solutions for national inspection bodies.

The discussions aim to inform Working Party deliberations on its future work.

¹ [UN Secretary-General Call to Action \(unfoodsystemshub.org\)](https://unfoodsystemshub.org)

² Decision B (70) "Digital and green transformations in support of the sustainable development in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe". Economic Commission for Europe, Biennial Report, E/2023/37 E/ECE/1503.

15.00 – 15.10	Opening remarks Agnieszka Sudol, Chair, UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards Elisabeth Türk, Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE
15.10 – 16.30	Part I: Circularity in agriculture - food loss and waste prevention and reduction
	<p>A third of all food that is produced ends up lost or wasted - around 14 % between harvest and retail, and another 17 % in households, food service and retail. This means that around 25% of the world's freshwater supply, and 8-10% of greenhouse gas emissions are used to grow food that ends up not being eaten. Reducing food loss and waste will thus be critical for increasing the sustainability and circularity of food systems, including for combating climate change, water scarcity and soil degradation. The Working Party has over the past few years developed several tools for food loss and waste reduction, including the UNECE Code of Good Practice to provide guidance to industry actors on reduce food loss and ensuring optimum handling of fresh fruit and vegetables along the value chain.³ This panel will share experiences about ongoing efforts on food loss and waste prevention and reduction.</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asad Naqvi, Head of the Economic and Trade Policy Unit, UNEP• Beatriz Fernandez, Associate Programme Management Officer, Trade and Markets Division, UNEP• Robert van Otterdijk, Agro-Industry Officer, FAO*• Céline Giner, Agricultural Policy Analyst, Agro-Food Trade and Markets Division, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, OECD*• Snežana Savčić-Petrić, Senior Advisor, Head of the Group for International Cooperation and risk analysis in the field of food and feed safety, Plant Protection Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Serbia*• Olivier Valet, Directeur Certification et Directeur France, Cemafroid, and Vice Chair, UNECE Working Party on the Transport of Perishable Foodstuffs*• Anne-Laure Gassin, Team Leader/Policy Officer, Health and Food Safety Directorate General, European Commission <p>Q&A and discussion</p> <p>Moderator: Elisabeth Türk, Director, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE</p>

³ [ECE TRADE 470 E web.pdf \(unece.org\)](#)

16.30 – 17.50	<p>Part II: Digitalization of agricultural trade – needs and solutions for national inspection bodies</p>
	<p>Digitalization and facilitation of trade procedures are critical for increasing the efficiency of trade and ensuring produce reaches its destination quicker. This is especially important for trade in fresh produce, to enable it to arrive at its destination in a marketable condition, thus reducing food loss and waste. This panel will discuss the role of digitalization in ensuring efficient agricultural trade, with a focus on the needs and current solutions for national inspection bodies.</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Capell, UN/CEFACT Vice-Chair (Agri) * • Agnieszka Sudol, Deputy Chief Inspector, Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection (IJHARS), Poland, and Chair of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards • Cyril Julius, Chief Operations Officer, Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB), South Africa, and Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables • Sebastian Winkel, Head of Division, Marketing Standards and Conformity Controls, Federal Office for Agriculture and Food, Germany, and Vice Chair of the Specialized Section on Standardization of Dry and Dried Produce • Paula de la Cruz Rodríguez, Head of Division, Deputy Directorate for Foreign Trade Inspection, Certification and Technical Assistance, State Secretariat for Trade, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Spain * • Constantin Ciuta, Programme Management Officer, UNCTAD <p>Q&A and discussion</p> <p>Moderator: Bucky Gwartney, International Marketing Specialist, Standards and Specifications Division, United States Department of Agriculture, and Vice-Chair of the UNECE Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards</p>
17.50 – 18.00	<p>Summary and closing</p>

To register for **online participation** in the roundtable (English only), see: [Roundtable on sustainable food systems - digitalization and food loss and waste reduction | UNECE](#)

For more information, please contact Ms. Roksolana Shelest, Economic Affairs Officer, Market Access Section, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE: roksolana.shelst@un.org