

Preparatory Workshop on Food Loss and Waste Prevention in Sub-Saharan Africa – Summary Report

Nairobi, Kenya 17-18 April 2024

Day 1, Wednesday 17 April 2024

“Food loss and waste is a messy problem requiring collaboration across multiple disciplines, agencies, and countries to develop innovative solutions and create improved food supply chains” - Prof. Stephen Kiama, Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Kenya

This was Professor Stephen Kiama’s opening statement for the Preparatory Workshop on Food Loss and Waste Prevention in Sub-Saharan Africa held at the University of Nairobi in Kenya during 17-18 April 2024.

The workshop was jointly organized by the Thünen Institute, Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA), The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the University of Nairobi. Funding was provided by the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) and the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) through a bilateral Alliance for the Climate. These organizations worked closely to bring around 40 participants from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to:

- (i) discuss relevant regional context and circumstances for action on Food Loss and Waste (FLW) prevention, and understand the challenges and strategies for action at policy level and in practice;
- (ii) facilitate exchange of experiences on selected topics; and
- (iii) support regional networking of already active actors, the integration of new actors into these networks.

Scene setting session

The workshop started with scene-setting presentations from the African Union, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Dr Laila Lokosang (African Union) discussed FLW in the context of African Post Harvest Loss (PHL) management and food safety strategies being developed at continental level, while Winnie Yegon (FAO) and David Rubia (UNEP) provided an overview of the Scope and key challenges in addressing FLW in SSA. These presentations led to an in-depth discussion about the regional trends, challenges and opportunities related to FLW. The discussion involved a selected panel of experts from Ghana, Mauritius, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, moderated by Kenya.

The participants emphasised the need for addressing existing data gaps as this could underpin the development of efficient policy and farm-level technologies that will contribute towards FLW prevention. It was further stressed that FLW should not be viewed as a “rich country” issue but a socio-economic, environmental, and cultural issue that affects all countries. The outcome of the discussion was a convergence of three overarching challenges and priorities across the region:

- (i) quantifying and tracking of FLW at all stages of the food supply chain;
- (ii) commitment to report FLW and coordination across all actors in the food chain, addressing existing data gaps; and
- (iii) awareness and education of the population on FLW prevention.

Field trips

The workshop included two field trips to: (i) Food Banking Kenya; and (ii) Upper Kabete campus FLW aligned research facilities at the University of Nairobi.

(i) Food Banking Kenya (FBK)

One group of participants visited this facility which is a non-government organisation established to combat FLW and promote sustainable practices in Kenya. The organisation salvages and redistributes edible food that might otherwise go to waste. To achieve this, FBK has established a network of food donors and beneficiary organisations which help channel the salvaged food to vulnerable communities. By establishing partnerships with large farms, small-scale producers, and pack houses, FBK efficiently gathers and redistributes surplus produce at reduced rates. An accurate tracking of the collected surplus food by mass allows a detailed monitoring of all streams. Perishable products such as mushrooms and herbs are made to last longer using preservation processes such as drying to enable their use at a later date. A new software for directly connecting donors and recipients is in test operation and is intended to further improve logistics.

FBK also directly feeds vulnerable communities, responds to emergencies and train partnering small-scale farmers, ensuring they are equipped and self-reliant. Participants of the field trip had the opportunity to visit and distribute food in one community. More information is available [here](#).

(ii) Upper Kabete campus FLW aligned research facilities

Another group of participants visited the campus of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Nairobi to observe trials and activities on reducing food waste. The group visited a station for processing and preserving fruit and vegetables grown by small farmers, where mangoes, tomatoes and lettuce are dried or processed into juices and fruit spreads. The integrated system was well appreciated, which not only focused on solving technical challenges, but also considered the marketing and sustainability of these activities.

At a second station, the group learned about the production of 'seeds' for the production of the black soldier fly. These flies are kept on a nutrient cake made from animal manure and fermentation residues until they lay their eggs. The special feature here was that in the multilateral research project, the different qualities of different strains of the black soldier fly were to be preserved and bred for the respective protein requirements with the necessary amino acid composition. Finally, the fly seed produced is marketed to large companies to produce animal feed components.

The third station demonstrated the successes in the technical implementation of 'electricity-free' cooling technology. Here, examples ranging from water-cooled brick containers or double-walled containers filled with charcoal to a refrigerated truck with a solar system were presented and discussed with the participants. The great advantage of a cooling system that is independent of the electricity grid lies in the short-term storage (max. 2 days) of highly perishable products such as salad or fruit.

Day 2, Thursday, 18 April 2024

Working group 1: Food loss and waste policy implementation

Facilitator: Guido Geissler, Team Leader, African Union (AU)

A working group comprising government representatives, academics, farmer group representatives, and AU staff of five different countries discussed the issue of implementation challenges of FLW policies.

The main challenge for policy implementation is not strategy, guidelines or frameworks. The real challenge is that implementation is at a too small scale to be of importance or have an impact.

Most countries have good policies, strategies, and guidelines in place for 'food losses', but 'food wastes' in many countries is still a major challenge.

The following table summarises challenges and approaches to address FLW policy implementation issues:

Food loss and waste	Policies/strategies	Capacity issues	Institutional/organisational issues
Challenges	There is little government ownership/buy-in	Data quality and quantity – difficult to manage without data	Intergovernmental coordination/mainstreaming of food loss and waste: cross-cutting responsibilities
	Countries' priority is post-harvest loss but not food waste	Budgetary allocation for 'waste' and 'loss' is an issue	Governments have a hard time addressing issues which cut across several sectors
	Policy development takes long time/lengthy process		
	Changing government – changing priorities		
	Policies do not include targets		
Approaches	Setting targets for PPP ¹ could address 'waste'	ToRs ² / performance contracts of government officials (e.g., extension service) should include food loss and waste KPI	Bringing people together: government, private sector, private households to create awareness and encourage action at local/community level
	Low-hanging fruits approach: Guidelines and policy briefs to create awareness	Create awareness and educate private sector, private households	Mainstreaming food loss and waste in agrifood systems
	Action can be taken – there is no need to wait for a policy	Training should focus on post-harvest	Champions: identify and support agents of change for FLW at all levels

¹ PPP: public-private partnership

² ToR: Terms of References

		management and waste management	
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Working group 2: Food Loss and Waste prevention, circular economy and data tracking – business cases, redistribution and their opportunities and challenges along food supply chain

Facilitators: Felicitas Schneider & Sharon Mada (Thünen Institute)

The discussions related to data and further information were led by two main questions: (i) what is already available; and (ii) what is still missing?

It clearly turned out that the list of already available information or data is limited but that some countries have made significant progress lately. In Ghana and Kenya, the government measures losses for important commodities such as cacao, coffee and tea as those products make significant contribution to the national economy. Further data on food losses is mainly focused on cereals and roots but data and information are limited for other commodities.

Related to capacity building, it was reported that there are a lot of activities available for farmers but not for other stakeholders. Participants called for FLW topics to be included in curricula and research strategies to support the implementation of more efficient behaviour of future professionals or to enable lifelong training.

An opportunity for improvement was identified in the projects and interventions that have already been implemented, which mostly take place without monitoring or impact assessment. Results should clearly indicate the value added through such monitoring activities to convince stakeholders to participate and also to obtain funding for such monitoring practices. In addition, most studies are carried out by international consultants, while the active involvement of local or regional actors is neglected.

Another challenge noted was the lack of strategy at supra-regional and national levels, the missing coordination of authorities and the linking of the problem with other challenges. This would support the involvement of different stakeholders across the supply chain and allow to join forces related to both, food loss and food waste prevention interventions.

Positive examples for broader stakeholder involvement were presented by Ghana and Mauritius although in the latter case governmental commitment is still limited.

Closing session

At the end of the workshop, the results of all sessions were summarised and ideas for the upcoming FLW workshop in South Africa in autumn 2025 were collected which will be used to underpin the workshop structure and contents. There was an agreement that the workshop should also offer very practical sessions from which participants can return to their daily work with insights and new skills.

The results of the present workshop will also be used for further cooperation within the participants and as input for the “Agricultural policy dialogue between the African Union and Germany to strengthen the resilience of food systems in Africa”.

Acknowledgement

We thank all the motivated participants for their valuable input and the University of Nairobi for hosting the event. A big thanks to all colleagues who were involved in the administrative matters and made it possible to organise the workshop in a very short notice (within just six weeks).

Context

The present summary is provided at the [Website](#) of the Collaboration Initiative Food Loss and Waste together with selected photos and the presentations of the setting the scene session (please scroll down on the page to the Preparatory Workshop).