



Just like home

Overview

The need

The levels of per capita food waste are often significantly higher in event catering than in hotels, restaurants or cafes. It is estimated that on average 20-30% of food is wasted at catering events in Hungary. The special circumstances connected with planning and executing events often make food saving difficult as the consumer is typically not the “paying client”.

The solution

An Event Catering Food Waste Reduction Guideline was developed by the REFRESH Hungarian Pilot Working Platform and implemented at 11 business catering events in Hungary. Events were branded as “Food Saving Events” and organisers were given a “Food Saving Event” logo to use as a trademark.

The benefit

Food Saving Events were highly appreciated by event organisers and guests. In addition, average food waste was measured at 9% across these events. Due to positive results, it is expected that more “Food Saving Events” will be run across Hungary in the future.

The Event Catering Food Waste Reduction Guideline issued by the Food Value Forum provides practical advice for event organisers on how to organise and execute a “Food Saving Event”.

The Food Value Forum (FVF) is a Pilot Working Platform of the REFRESH project that works to reduce food loss and food waste in Hungary. The FVF welcomes many organisations including: companies, non-profit organisations, administrative bodies, production chain operators and their industrial/professional organisations, as well as organisations from both research & development and education sectors.

Background

When considering food waste within the hospitality and food service sector people can often overlook food waste associated with catering events. Event catering is a special segment of the HORECA (HOTel, REstaurant, CAFé) sector with a special supply chain where the “eating guest” typically does not order catering services, and the “paying client” is usually a company or organisation organising the event. In event catering there are also logistical factors which can increase food waste. For example, open-air locations and unpredictable weather can often lead to high no-show rates at events, which in turn leads to pre-prepared food being discarded. Redistribution from event catering also requires extra effort and logistical capabilities. In addition, many locations do not house fully-equipped kitchens, and food storage facilities can be limited. It is because of these circumstances that oversupply in event catering is very common and causes significant levels of food waste.

What was the solution?

A project was developed and managed by the [Hungarian Food Bank Association](#) (HFBA) in collaboration with the [Business Council for Sustainable Development in Hungary](#) (BCSDH), [HORECA Marketing Klub](#), and the [Hungarian Food Chain Safety Office](#). The aim of the project was to create a common understanding about the issue of food



“Saving food in event catering is fully in line with the Action 2020 program of the Business Council for Sustainable Development. We were therefore happily participating in the project and we have also successfully used the Guideline and decreased food waste when organising our biggest event in Hungary, the BCSDH Business Lunch”

— Irén Márta, Director of BCSDH.

waste amongst people across the whole catering supply chain (from caterer to consumer) with a strong focus on over-ordering and oversupply.

It involved the creation of an “Event Catering Food Waste Reduction Guideline”, using evaluation of industry best practices. Event organisers who followed the Food Waste Reduction Guideline would be able to brand their event as a “Food Saving Event” and use the specially designed event logo (Figure 1). The guideline and logo are the first steps to creating a “market standard” for food waste awareness events in event catering across Hungary. It is anticipated that the guideline and accompanying logo will be adopted in other countries.



Figure 1 - The logo for "Food Saving Events"

Implementation

At the beginning of the project, international industry best practices were reviewed; concentrating on existing guidance documents for sustainable event organisation, food waste aware catering and redistribution practices. Following this, event organisers and caterers were consulted through interviews to discuss existing food saving practices and any barriers associated with further reductions in food waste.

Information was then collated to produce an [“Event Catering Food Waste Reduction Guideline”](#) (Figure 2). The guideline includes chapters on Planning and Preparation, Execution, Involvement of guests, Redistribution, Measurement and Evaluation. A checklist



“I am always very angry when I participate at various conferences and I see the amount of food not eaten and being wasted at the end of the event. I was already thinking myself that I will bring boxes with me and take away all leftovers. I am very happy to see this event is not wasting food and I am of course happy to cooperate by not producing any plate waste!”

— Testimonial of an event guest

of the most important tasks to undertake was included in the guideline and a “Food Saving Event logo” was designed by the authors in both Hungarian and English.

Event Catering Food Waste Reduction Guideline



Figure 2 - The front cover of the “Event Catering Food Waste Reduction Guideline”

Food waste was measured before and after implementation of the guideline and logo at 11 events (1,320 participants) with buffet type services (Figure 3) . Feedback from clients helped inform revisions to the guideline and an open registration [web page](#) was created for clients to join an online community of Food Saving Events.



Figure 3 - A photograph taken at one of the “Food saving events” in Hungary



Outcomes

Food waste at the 11 events was 9% on average, ranging from 8% (Figure 4) to 17%, this equates to a 50-70% reduction in food waste when compared to the average food waste produced at catering events in Hungary. Feedback from event guests was positive and overall there was almost zero waste from guests' plates.

USAGE OF FOOD AND DRINKS

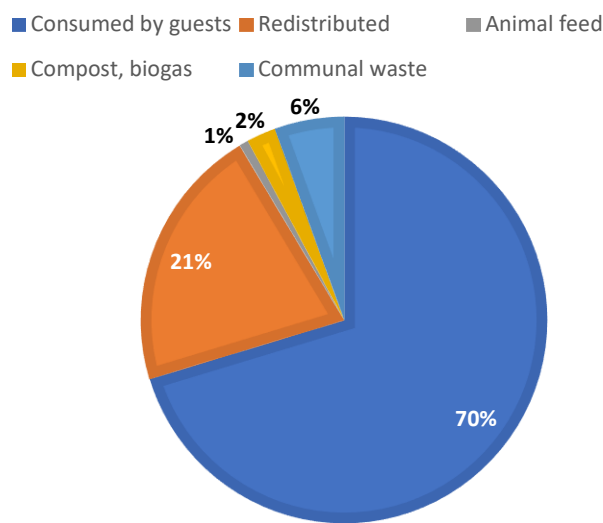


Figure 1 - An example breakdown of the end destinations of food at a "Food Saving Event" in Hungary

Thoughts for the future

The reduction in food waste is a result of both "reduction" and "redistribution"; the top two levels of the food waste pyramid (Figure 5). At the redistribution level, donation was often crucial for reaching optimal results whereas at the reduction level, the choices made by event organisers were key.

During the project, event organisers were habitual in their choice of service, favouring buffet-style catering as opposed to pre-plated meals which generate less food waste. This shows that changing the habits of event organisers is not easy and requires more time. Event organising agencies also played a key role in the process, both commitment and motivation of event organisers proved crucial to the success of each Food Saving Event. Throughout the project, the motivation of caterers was usually secondary to the motivation of the event organiser, though it was very helpful when the caterer was also highly motivated to reduce food waste.

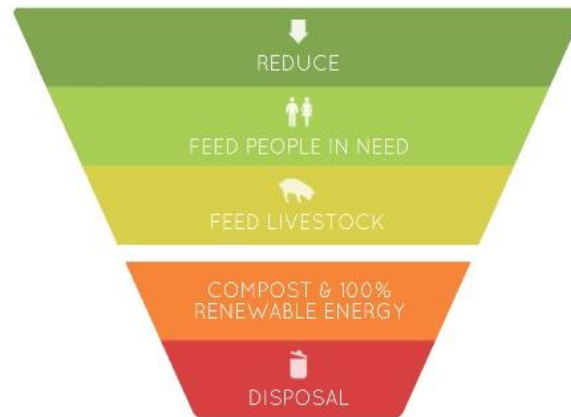


Figure 2 - An illustration of the food waste pyramid

The key difference in event catering, compared to other segments of the HORECA sector, is that the consumer is not the paying customer and so the amount of food ordered is dependent on the choices made by the event organiser and caterer. Nevertheless, informing and involving event guests in food waste reduction efforts was positive and well received.

Overall the project was considered a success and it is anticipated that the concept will be developed further after REFRESH. There are already events planning to operate as Food Saving Events in 2019 with event organisers and agencies showing considerable interest in the application of the guideline.