



Multi-actor design of low-waste food value chains through the demonstration of innovative solutions to reduce food loss and waste

LOWINFOOD

PRACTICE ABSTRACT No: 6

Marketable products from surplus fruit and vegetables

"The crooked cucumber" is one of the better-known examples of food that is not very marketable. Fruit and vegetables may not end up on the usual consumer shelves for a variety of reasons: produce that measures a few grams or millimetres too much or too little, produce with damaged peel or skin. Pretty or not, these foods are still perfectly edible and valuable. Finding suitable buyers for them, however, often comes up against logistical and economic limits.

The company "Unverschwendet GmbH" (UNV) from Vienna (Austria) has developed a business concept to close the gap between supplier and buyer of surplus food. UNV exclusively buys surplus food, i.e. food that cannot be marketed or is produced in excess for various reasons (e.g. due to overproduction, due to errors in the ordering system). They created acceptance criteria that need to be stated by the supplier, e.g. reasons for surplus food as well as information on allergens and hygienic requirements. Suppliers also have to sign a contract that the surplus is sold for less than the current market value. This is important to prevent incentives for further surplus production. Furthermore, they have classified surplus food into different grades to support price negotiations.

Generating trust and willingness to cooperate are essential in this business segment and these are the key competences of UNV. Farmers, wholesalers, deep-freeze warehouse are suitable partners on the supply side. Direct distribution to food service and retail sector is not feasible on the demand side due to inefficiency (high time efforts) or too strict requirements (from retailers). Instead, large companies were acquired and supplied with fresh or semi-finished products from surplus food. UNV has continuously managed to create a sustainable network between supply and demand of surplus food and increased the distributed amount of surplus food per transaction from a few tons in 2021 to between 10 and 30 tons in 2022.

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Additional information

Up to 25% of losses of fruit and vegetables are recorded in Austrian agriculture. At the same time up to 80% of the goods that do not end up in supermarkets would have been perfectly edible.

The lack of contact and logistical challenges between suppliers of surplus food and demanding industry hinders distribution.

An innovative business concept is created by Unverschwendet GmbH (<https://www.unverschwendet.at/>) to bridge the gap between supply of surplus food and demand. This concept saves tons of fruit and vegetables and is an additional source of turnover for local farmers.

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[lowinfood.eu](https://www.lowinfood.eu)



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ABOUT LOWINFOOD

The LOWINFOOD project, launched in 2020 and coordinated by the University of Tuscia, Italy, is working to deploy and improve a set of 14 innovative solutions to the food waste problem, by demonstrating their effectiveness and market potential. The core activities of the project are all focused on the evaluation of the efficacy of these innovations in reducing food losses and waste, in terms of the amount of food waste avoided as well as their environmental and socio-economic impact.

CONSORTIUM



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Marktfähige Produkte aus überschüssigem Obst und Gemüse

„Die krumme Gurke“ ist eines der bekannteren Beispiele für Lebensmittel, die nicht oder wenig marktfähig sind. Obst und Gemüse kann aus verschiedensten Gründen nicht in den üblichen Regalen für Konsumenten landen: Produkte, die einige Gramm oder Millimeter zu viel oder zu wenig messen, Produkte mit schadhafter Schale oder Haut. Ob hübsch oder nicht, diese Lebensmittel sind immer noch einwandfrei genießbar und wertvoll. Geeignete Abnehmer dafür zu finden, stößt allerdings oft auf logistische und wirtschaftliche Grenzen.

Das Unternehmen "Unverschwendet GmbH" (UNV) aus Wien (Österreich) hat ein Geschäftskonzept entwickelt, um die Lücke zwischen Anbieter und Abnehmer von Überschussware zu schließen. UNV kauft ausschließlich überschüssige Lebensmittel, das heißt Lebensmittel, die aus verschiedenen Gründen nicht vermarktet werden können oder zu viel produziert werden (z. B. durch Überproduktion, durch Fehler im Bestellsystem). Es wurden Annahmekriterien entwickelt, die vom Lieferanten angegeben werden müssen, z. B. Gründe für überschüssige Lebensmittel sowie Informationen über Allergene und hygienische Anforderungen. Die Lieferanten müssen auch eine Klausel unterschreiben, dass die Überschüsse unter dem aktuellen Marktwert verkauft werden. Dies ist wichtig, um Anreize für eine weitere Überschussproduktion zu verhindern. Außerdem werden die überschüssigen Lebensmittel in verschiedene Güteklassen eingeteilt, um Preisverhandlungen zu erleichtern.

Vertrauen und Kooperationsbereitschaft sind in diesem Geschäftsfeld unerlässlich und Schlüsselkompetenzen von UNV. Landwirte, Großhändler, Tiefkühlager sind geeignete Partner auf der Angebotsseite. Auf der Nachfrageseite ist der Direktvertrieb an die Gastronomie und an den Einzelhandel aufgrund von Ineffizienz (hoher Zeitaufwand) oder zu strengen Anforderungen (seitens des Einzelhandels) nicht machbar. Stattdessen wurden Großbetriebe als Geschäftspartner gewonnen und mit frischen oder halbfertigen Produkten aus Lebensmittelüberschüssen beliefert. UNV ist es mit einem nachhaltigen Netzwerk gelungen, die vermittelte Menge an überschüssigen Lebensmitteln pro Transaktion von einigen Tonnen im Jahr 2021 auf 10 bis 30 Tonnen im Jahr 2022 zu erhöhen.

This Practice abstract reflects only the author's view. The LOWINFOOD project is not responsible for any use that might be made of the information it contains.



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