



ACCESS

Achieving Circularity in Cities through
Environmental Sustainability of Sports

DONATION OF LEFTOVER PROCESSED AND PREPARED FOOD

Fill bellies and not bins



The food & beverage sector of sport venues moves large quantities of food resources during each sporting event. This operational practice aims to reduce the environmental impact linked to food waste. By donating unused prepared food from the event canteens, sporting events can help people in need while at the same time preventing good food from ending up in landfills at the end of the event.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Sport organisations are increasingly sensitive to this issue and are adopting practices of food donation to prevent surplus food from their match-days from going to waste and support people in need.

Below we describe three good initiatives of food donation implemented in the sport sector:

During the last FIFA World Cup held in Qatar in November 2022, the tournament organizing committee has devised an auspicious solution, partnering with local charity Hifz Alnaema to ensure that unused and surplus food was donated for redistribution to workers and other beneficiaries as part of the wider Food Waste Minimisation effort.

The Food Waste Minimisation programme was established in the wake of learnings from the FIFA Arab Cup 2021 where it was observed that organics, including food, comprised a significant portion of total waste. To prevent the disposal of otherwise safe, consumable food, it was agreed to work with the local experts at Hifz Alnaema—the first and oldest food bank and food recovery program in Qatar—who were responsible for recovering surplus food from 12 venues, including stadiums and fan zones, to be redistributed to recipients in need.

In addition to food donation, the Food Waste Minimisation programme also encompasses meal planning and order adaptation to minimise unconsumed meals. Moreover, food from the tournament that was no longer safe for consumption was composted at stadiums and other venues. This compost was processed together with pitch grass and other organic materials to create fertilizer that was used across farms in Qatar.

Starting from the 2010–2011 season, the National Hockey League (NHL) established a league-wide initiative to work with “Rock and Wrap It Up!” to donate unused prepared food. All 30 NHL teams committed to pack up all such concession food on game nights for redistribution to local shelters and other places that serve people in need. Over the course of the first full season, through this initiative NHL clubs provided 163,000 meals to people in need and diverted 105 tons of food from landfill and incinerators across north America. Since 2010, the league-wide food recovery program has diverted more than 300 tons of waste from landfills and incinerators and provided local shelters with more than 400,000 meals. For example, since October 2010, the Edmonton oilers have provided over 20,600 pounds of food to the Edmonton foodbank program, generating almost 16,000 meals for their various agency programs.

The Food Recovery Network (FRN) movement is coordinating volunteers to collect and donate a portion of the estimated 140,000 pounds of food and beverages fit for donation that are expected to become available at various Super Bowl events.

Using refrigerated trucks equipped with lift gates, FRN and other groups help move some of the surplus food; it is the third time that this grassroots group has taken such action to address food waste at the football championship.

The food rescue effort began in 2020, when FRN organized its first food collection drive following the Super Bowl game in southern Florida. The project was partly born out of increasing levels of food insecurity across the country, only exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Last year, the group collected almost 2,000 pounds of food from the game at California’s SoFi stadium, reported the Los Angeles Times.

CHALLENGE

According to the WWF, today one-third of all the food produced in the world goes to waste. That's equal to about 1.3 billion tons of fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, seafood, and grains that either never leave the farm, get lost or spoiled during distribution, or are thrown away in hotels, grocery stores, restaurants, schools, or home kitchens. It could be enough calories to feed every undernourished person on the planet.

The fact that substantial amounts of food are produced but not eaten by humans has huge environmental, social, and economic negative impacts. Estimates suggest that 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions are associated with food that is not consumed.

Food donation is one of the practices that should be implemented to fight food waste while also generating positive social benefits.



RESULTS

Donating prepared and unused food after sporting events helps combat the pressing global issue of food waste: by redirecting surplus food, sports organisations can minimize waste and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Donating food also addressed food insecurity in local communities. By sharing nourishing meals with those in need, sports organisations can foster social responsibility and compassion.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the NHL reduced greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of 79 metric tons of carbon dioxide through this initiative.

An interesting example comes from France, where from 2014 to 2016, after each event at the Stade de France, the redistribution to charity associations of unsold products from the refreshment areas of the event venue made it possible to redistribute 23.000 products to associations contributing to 7,522 meals and avoiding 3.6 tonnes.

REPLICABILITY POTENTIAL

The replicability potential of this practice depends on the foresight of the event organiser to collaborate with local communities and charities to redistribute unused food to people in need. Some of these setups require various logistical solutions and financing models in order to cover the pickup and distribution costs, storage etc. In some cases that could also require additional staff and/or working hours for the event organiser.

Apart from that, the laws need to be consulted prior to setting up such a practice. Certain countries do not allow redistributing food or certain types of food (prepared, processed, cooked or other).



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This factsheet is a part of a larger collection of good practices available on the project's website

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The **ACCESS project** is one of the latest European projects which explores and challenges environmental sustainability and environmental management in sports. Co-funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ programme, ACCESS is looking at narrowing the gaps between the current environmental performances of sport organisations, their strategies, and practices on one side and strategies and targets of their respective cities or regions with the overall objective – making these sport organisations a reference point for sustainability in sports in their countries and turning them into replicators of solutions for achieving it.



Sant'Anna
School of Advanced Studies - Pisa



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