



EWR good practices and case studies

Turning imperfect products into opportunities

1. Details of Action:

Coordinators: Catalan Waste Agency

Action Developers: Associació Espigoladors

Name of nominated action: Turning imperfect products into opportunities

Town: Barcelona, Argentona, Polinyà...

Region: Catalonia

Country: Spain

Website: <http://www.espigoladors.cat/la-patata-extraordinaria/que-es/>

Nominee category: Association/NGO

Dates of action: 22-28/11/2014

2. Action's theme:

- Reduce – Strict avoidance and reduction at source
- Reuse – Preparing for reuse and reuse
- Recycle – Waste sorting and Recycling
- Let's Clean Up Europe!

3. Action related to the Prevention Thematic Days 2014: Stop Food Waste:

- Yes
- No

4. Description of the nominated action:

The nominated activity is the "Project for collection in fields and businesses, donation and transformation of recovered surplus food" of the Associació Espigoladors (Gleaners' Association).

Gleaning consists of recovering fruit and vegetables that have been discarded either due to falling sales, for aesthetic reasons, due to surplus production or because the product is already ripe and consumers will no longer buy it. No fruit and vegetables are collected if they are not safe for consumption. The collected fruit goes through two possible channels: some is transformed into other food products (jams, spreads, juices, sauces, pâtés and conserves), marketed under the *es im-perfect* brand, while the rest goes directly to social organisations that manage access to food for groups at risk of social exclusion. People from groups at risk of social exclusion will participate in the entire initiative, carrying out both collection and in production tasks. The aim of this is to foster people's dignity and to generate opportunities from a transformational perspective.

Es im-perfect is the leading Spanish brand of products made from surplus food, combating food wastage. The brand aims to give value to fruit and vegetables that are ugly and imperfect but that are just as good to eat as others. Those products are 100% natural products, artisanal, genuine, high quality, environmentally friendly and in tune with the current social situation. They are endorsed by Ada Parellada, a well-known Catalan chef.

Espigoladors (Gleaners) implements a production model that addresses three problems affecting society today: food wastage, the lack of access to healthy and nutritional food for certain groups at risk of social exclusion, and the lack of opportunities for these groups. We aim to implement a socially, environmentally and



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economically sustainable social business model that directly serves to give dignity to people in a situation of exclusion, while at the same time raising awareness among the general public of the issue of food waste from a transformational, inclusive and participative perspective.

To include this project in the framework of the European Week for Waste Reduction, we have carried out the following actions:

- We formed part of the organising team of the first Big Lunch in Barcelona for 4,000 people, providing some of the surplus food collected from farms that collaborate with the Espigoladors project. (22nd November 2014)
- We had a stand at the Barcelona Big Lunch Fair, where we explained the Espigoladors project, exhibiting ugly and imperfect products and selling *es imperfect* products (22nd November 2014).
- We held a talk for 2nd year students of the higher course in Processes and Quality in the Food Industry at the School of Hotel Management and Tourism in Barcelona (24th November 2014).
- We ran an awareness-raising campaign to combat food waste for the Polinyà Town Council entitled "The extraordinary potato" (from 27th November 2014 to 11th December 2014).
- We carried out 6 gleaning activities in crop fields of producers and companies.

5. Type of evaluation conducted and outcome of the evaluation:

- Number of visitors/participants
- Feedback from visitors/participants (willingness to change their behaviour)
- Quantity of waste avoided/collected
- Amount of CO2 avoided
- Other indicators (please specify):

Recovered economic value

The results of the week's activities in terms of impact were:

Impact in respect of the number of participants: 4,152 people

- Barcelona Big Lunch and Fair of Associations: 4,000 participants.
- Participants at the talk: 11 people
- Groups participating in gleaning activity: 6
- The "Extraordinary potato" campaign: 135 people

Environmental impact of the week's activities.

- Amount of recovered waste: 3,685 kg.
- Equivalent kg of CO2 emissions avoided: 14,003 kg.

Economic impact of the week's activities:

- Recovered economic value: €1,400

The organisation promotes direct actions to raise awareness about the struggle against food waste by carrying out gleaning activities on land owned by businesses and producers, and by promoting social inclusion through work with at-risk groups.

In the case of groups at risk of social exclusion, we aim to foster dignity, self-esteem, happiness and job opportunities (prioritising young people and people over 45 years old).

We also aim to have an indirect impact on consumers through the sale of products made from surplus food.



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6. Reasons why the action has been selected for the EWWR 2014 Awards:

a) Visibility and communicational aspects:

The project is a public interest and media-oriented initiative that addresses three current social needs in an inclusive, transformative and innovative manner.

In terms of visibility: This action is linked to the creation of a network of partner businesses and producers. We give them a certificate in the form of a seal stating that they do not throw food away and are committed to the struggle against food wastage. The aim is for this certificate to become a leading seal in the struggle against food wastage that highlights the commitment of businesses and producers to being part of the solution.

In terms of communication, the association has initiated a communication campaign to promote ugly and imperfect vegetables in an attractive way, using *es im-perfect* products.

Espigoladors has achieved media impact in various newspapers, on TVE (national state-owned public-service television broadcaster), on leading websites (15) (for example: *diari.es*, *Diari Ara*) and in healthy eating magazines (*Ets el que menges*, *vida sana*, *mamaterra*, etc.).

Moreover it is involved in a European project for gleaning in fields of producers funded by Fusions and led by the Feedback organisation, in which different countries are taking part: <http://feedbackglobal.org/gleaning-network-eu-2/>, <http://www.eu-fusions.org/>

b) Quality of content and focus on waste reduction, products reuse or materials recycling:

This initiative fights the wastage of fresh products such as fruit and vegetables. Its environmental impact also includes the reduction of CO₂ emissions, the transformation of food into new products and the reuse of the glass packaging of *es-imperfect* products. As for its social impact, it generates opportunities for groups at risk of social exclusion, fostering their self-esteem and dignity, and increases the supply of fresh products to social entities and canteens.

The initiative offers an alternative or solution for businesses, producers and commercial establishments that throw away food. This alternative is both environmentally friendly and in tune with the current social situation.

c) Originality and exemplarity:

It is an innovative action which marks a departure from the model of food donation with no involvement on the part of the recipient, thus offering a transformational alternative that recovers the value of the food as a resource rather than as a waste, and also generates opportunities for people at risk of social exclusion, since they play a key role. At the same time, it aims to foster healthy eating for all kinds of people. Moreover, it involves the creation of a quality brand made from surplus food, currently the leading brand of products made with surplus food in Catalonia.

The initiative is original since it proposes an original solution: ugly and imperfect fruit and vegetables give opportunities to people at risk of exclusion and these people in turn give opportunities to ugly fruit and vegetables, saving them from being thrown away, thus creating a social, economic and environmentally sustainable project.

Our philosophy is 100% reuse. The packaging of *es im-perfect* products is suitable for reuse, while vegetable and fruit skins and waste that cannot be used are home-composted or used on farms to close the circle of the entire process.



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d) Lasting impact:

This initiative forms part of the day-to-day activity of an organisation that aims to be economically sustainable through the incorporation and marketing of the *es im-perfect* brand achieving a significant social, environmental and economic impact.

e) Motivation:

The initiative motivates the general public by offering solutions to real problems and represents a necessary, transformational solution with delicious products that can be bought and that can be part of the solution in the struggle against food waste.

Gleaning is an open-air activity involving physical exercise through which products are recovered that would otherwise be discarded. People are invited to take part. It is an initiative that motivates people at risk of social exclusion and that raises people's awareness about the struggle against food waste. As such, it fosters a cross-cutting approach and equality among people.

The *es im-perfect* products are not just a product brand; they are a concept aimed at transmitting the message that people can break down barriers and prejudices and make a small contribution to change the world.

The project has also been made to give dignity to groups at risk of social exclusion, motivating them and boosting their confidence.



Gleaning activity of the association in crop fields of producers and companies

Conference for 2nd year students at the School of Hotel Management and Tourism in Barcelona



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Awareness-raising campaign to combat food wastage for the Polinyà Town Council entitled "The extraordinary potato"

Barcelona's Big Lunch against Food Waste

