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Trade event on food redistribution

Summary report prepared by Social & Local CIC for the FSA, July 2016

Event purpose and attendance

- The purpose of the event was to explore the barriers to food redistribution, to share learnings and ideas to address those barriers and to understand how and where the FSA can initiate action, in particular in relation to date marking
- The event focussed on redistribution by retailers to charities and community organisations preparing food for service users
- It was attended by representatives from major supermarkets, high street chains, charities, representative and government bodies and hosted jointly by the FSA and Neighbourly
 - A full list of attendees can be provided on request as well as copies of the presentations given and detailed notes from the day

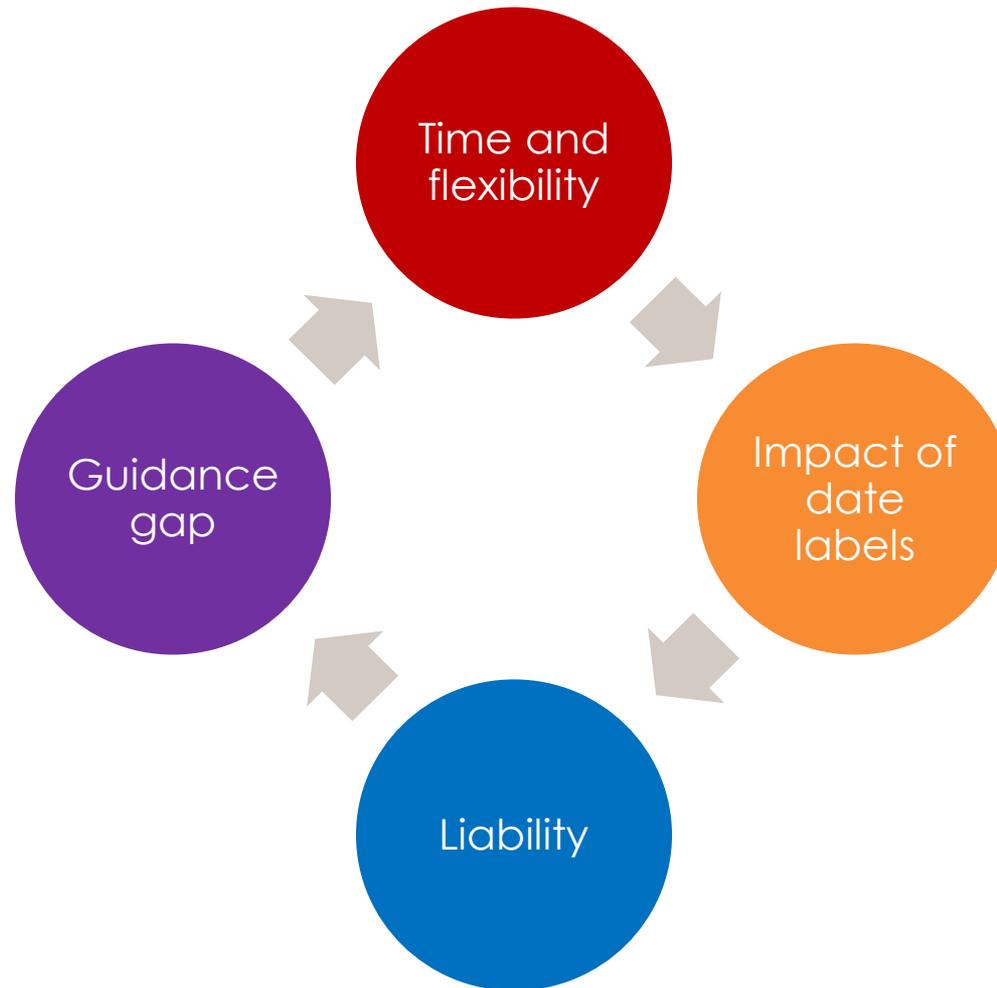


Key theme of the day: Positive partnerships

- **Food redistribution is a collective challenge** requiring **multi-partner** deliberation and action
- **Consistent and simple processes** supported by **technology**, underpinned by **transparency** and **good use of data and research**, have increased redistribution and made it more manageable and smarter
- **But it's relationships that drive success** – between the distributors and recipients, between brands, with government departments and trade bodies, and with staff and volunteers
- In food waste there is a strong sense of **sharing learnings** – cross-sector and even among competitors – **which will continue to drive good work forward**



Key barriers



Time and flexibility

Trade pressure

- Time to sell products before they become surplus
- Staffing late night collections – paying and motivating staff
- Finding destinations for the surplus, esp. charities that can cook fresh, and transport

Freezing down

- Currently largely the responsibility of the charity which removes the ability for the distributor to pause or extend the redistribution process through freezing down
- Issues with charities knowing how to freeze down safely, and what to freeze
- Lack of FSA guidance on freezing and date marking

Date marking

- Staff need simple (and ideally visual) guidance on what and when to take product off shelf for redistribution where there is no date (e.g. fresh, loose produce)
- Short Use By dates waste food which is still edible beyond its sell by

Giving greater authority to the Distributor to freeze down, and making it a more accessible option for all, was seen as a good solution to tackling safety and logistical barriers



Impact of date labelling

Purpose

- Is BBE an internal label for trade – should it be coded so that consumers don't see it?
- Do we need BBE and Use By? Should we have a universal label of 'Safe Until' for all products? Is the language used a barrier?
- Why can't distributors re-label goods past their Use By that cannot be sold but could be redistributed if they can prove it is still safe to eat?

Perception

- Does BBE create a sense of 2nd class food that prevents redistribution?
- Does the focus on quality prevent charities and individuals receiving the food from seeing its nutritional value? How long past BBE is quality really an issue?
- Or is it just an assumption that BBE contributes to food waste? Does it protect from waste? Where is the research?

Understanding

- Do consumers and charities understand Use By and BBE?
- Compounded by the complexity of labelling, e.g. differences between packaged, loose, chilled and RTE fruits, and its impact on creating surplus
- Do charities understand the risks of Use By? Can they be better signposted to guidance and tools?

Research and careful consideration of the issues raised in relation to BBE was considered a priority by all



Liability

Fear

- Fear of liability is holding potential distributors back – especially small businesses
- Is good internal practice by the Distributor enough to protect them from liability?
- Should the UK adopt the US 'Good Samaritan' law which protects the distributor?
- Can assured advice be made accessible (without cost) to all distributors to ease fears?

Differentiation

- Is it right to class charities as FBOs and apply the same rules to them as the distributor?
- EHOs need to agree and adhere to a more consistent and universal approach to inspecting charities
- The FSA needs to recognize that professional food businesses are much more capable in understanding and taking responsibility for date labelling than charities

Responsibility

- Who has responsibility for the safety of the food once the charity has taken receipt?
- Is it the responsibility of the distributor to audit the recipient charities? Or is a signed agreement sufficient?
- Who should educate and support recipient charities?
- FSA needs to write guidance specifically covering the redistribution of food – not just the sale of food



The difference between professional and charity FBOs and their respective abilities and responsibilities is not sufficiently recognised or managed



Guidance gap

What action is wanted

- The Date Marking Guidance needs to be reviewed and extended to include foods to be redistributed (rather than sold)
 - Including reviewing how to manage foods that are past Use By but still safe to eat
 - Once created, it needs to be shared and applied consistently by EHOs
- A simplified and shortened version of the guidance for charities needs to be created, with easier language, visuals, food lists and signposting (education)
- A review of and research into BBE's purpose, expression and application is required – and in the interim, Government should actively endorse redistribution of foods past their BBE
- More universal and accessible authorisation for the distributor to freeze down surplus for redistribution needs to be made possible
- The question of liability between the distributor and recipient needs to be addressed and communicated