

More than a Village

Fighting Food Waste in Slovenia: Insights, Solutions, and Opportunities



Executive Summary

Every year, nearly one-third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted, amounting to 1.3 billion tons. In Europe alone, over 59 million tonnes of food are wasted annually, with an estimated cost of €130 billion. Slovenia is not immune: Slovenia generated 164,803 tons of food waste in 2023, with residents discarding on average 78 kg of food per person. This represents a 9% increase from 2022, primarily due to doubled food production waste from discarded materials unsuitable for consumption.

164,803

Tons of food waste in 2023

78kg

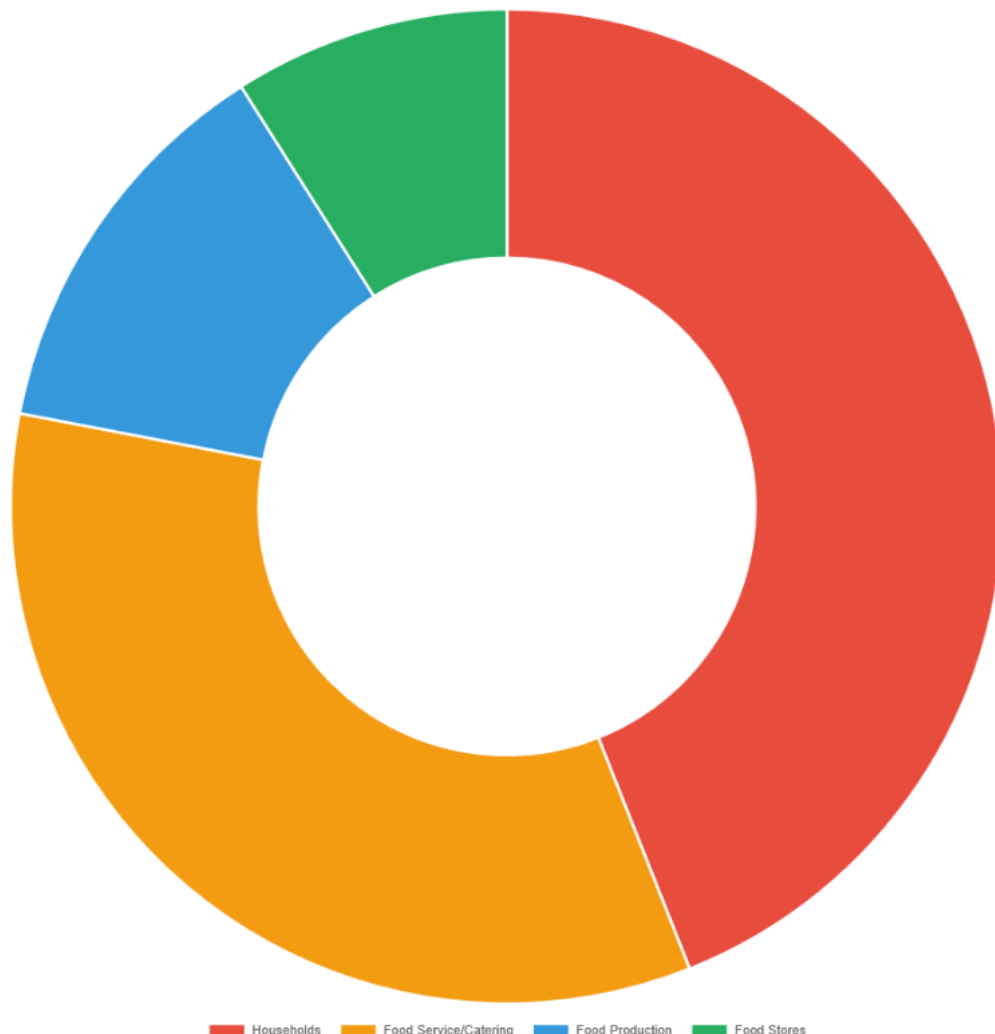
Per person in 2023 (+9% from 2022)

37%

Edible food waste (preventable)

Food waste distribution shows: households (44%), food service/catering (34%), food production (13%), and food stores (9%). SURS estimates that 37% of generated food waste was edible and preventable, while 63% consisted of unavoidable inedible parts like bones, peels, and shells.

Food Waste Distribution by Sector (2023 SURS Data)



FLW LANDSCAPE IN SLOVENIA

Slovenia's food waste occurs across four supply chain stages, with 2023 SURS data revealing significant changes:

Households (44%): Largest waste generator, with 2% increase from 2022. Urban areas produce more per capita than rural regions.

Food Service (34%): Restaurants, schools, hospitals, and care facilities represent the second-largest source.

Food Production (13%): Waste doubled in 2023 due to materials unsuitable for consumption or processing.

Food Stores (9%): 7% increase from 2022, mainly from transport damage, storage issues, and expired products.



Key Challenges Identified

Worsening Trends: The 9% increase in food waste generation in 2023 compared to 2022 indicates Slovenia is moving away from sustainability goals rather than toward them. The doubling of food production waste is particularly concerning and requires immediate attention.

Preventable Waste: SURS estimates that 37% of generated food waste was edible and preventable, representing approximately 61,000 tons of unnecessary waste that could feed thousands of people or be redirected to more productive uses.

Infrastructure Gaps: Inadequate processing capacity for the growing waste volumes, particularly given the recent increases. Food banks continue operating at over-capacity while food waste grows, indicating structural mismatches between waste generation and redistribution capabilities.

Sectoral Imbalances: The dramatic increase in food production waste suggests systematic problems in production planning, quality control, or market access that require targeted interventions.

Regulatory Framework & Challenges

Current Regulatory Environment

EU Framework: Waste Framework Directive mandates 50% food waste reduction by 2030. Slovenia must align national policies with EU Circular Economy Package requirements.

National Legislation: Environmental Protection Act (2004) and Food Safety Act (2006) provide framework. Recent 2023 amendments introduced tax incentives for food donation, representing progress toward waste reduction.

Key Regulatory Challenges

Policy Fragmentation: Responsibility spans multiple ministries without coordination. Ministry of Agriculture focuses on production, Ministry of Environment on waste management, Ministry of Health on food safety—creating gaps and conflicts.

Liability Concerns: Despite 2023 Good Samaritan protections, businesses remain reluctant to donate food due to perceived liability risks and unclear legal protections.

Implementation Gaps: Municipal variations in organic waste collection create unequal service access. Rural areas particularly lack infrastructure available in urban centers.

Missing Requirements: Slovenia lacks mandatory food waste reporting for businesses, hindering progress assessment and accountability.

Reform Opportunities

Streamlined Coordination: Establish National Food Waste Coordinator position to improve inter-ministerial collaboration and policy coherence.

Enhanced Incentives: Expand tax deductions for food donation, implement variable waste fees based on generation, and provide technology subsidies.

Strengthened Legal Framework: Clarify Good Samaritan protections and establish standardized donation procedures to reduce liability concerns.

Mandatory Reporting: Require large food businesses to measure and report waste generation, following successful French and Dutch models.



BEST PRACTICES FROM THE REGION

Austria - "Lebensmittel sind kostbar" Campaign: National consumer education program achieved 15% household food waste reduction through retail partnerships, mobile apps for meal planning, and school curriculum integration. Key success: collaboration with major retail chains for consumer education.

Czech Republic - "Zachraň jídlo" Digital Platform: App-based solution connecting restaurants, retailers, and consumers to redistribute surplus food at reduced prices. Results: 2,400 tons diverted in first two years, €4.8 million consumer savings. Adaptable model for Slovenia's urban areas.

Hungary - Agricultural Loss Reduction Program: Farm-level technical assistance and equipment subsidies for improved storage and handling. Achieved 20% reduction in post-harvest losses while improving farmer incomes. Relevant for Slovenia's small farm structure.

Croatia - Tourism Sector Initiative: Specialized programs for coastal regions including staff training, portion optimization, and surplus food donation networks. Addresses seasonal waste spikes similar to Slovenia's tourism patterns.

Slovenia's Leading Practice

Slovenia is building a resilient food ecosystem to combat FLW. Zelena Točka (Green Point) strengthens local supply chains, fostering transparency and cooperation. In 2024, it recovered over 10% of regional surplus food. Partnering with Hudo Dobro, the co-brand HUDO ZELEN0 was launched—transforming surplus food into premium local products.

The digital CircEco platform further supports these efforts by enabling stakeholders to share and repurpose surplus food. This integrated model merges local action, branding, and digital innovation to cut food waste and build circularity.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

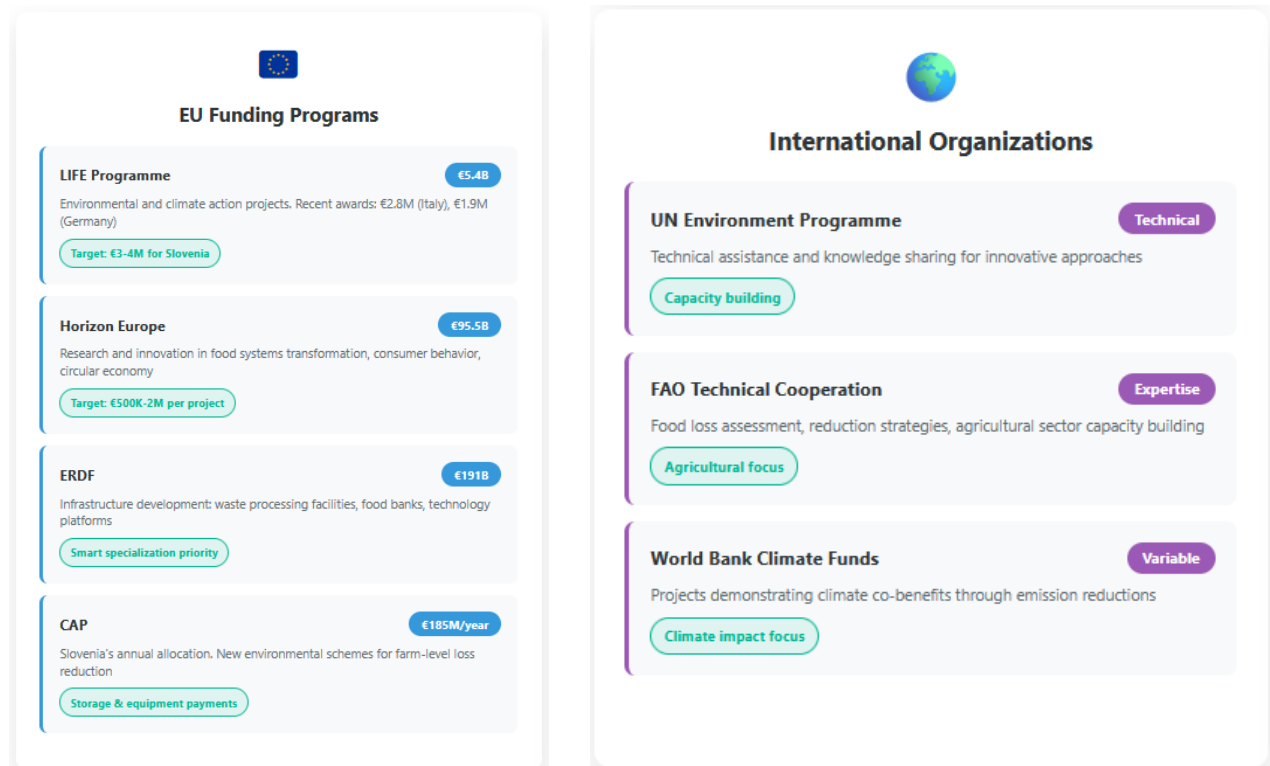
EU Funding Programs

LIFE Programme: €5.4 billion available for 2021-2027 period supporting environmental and climate action projects. Food waste reduction projects qualify under environmental priorities. Recent successful awards include €2.8 million for Italy's prevention project and €1.9 million for Germany's retail initiative.

Horizon Europe: €95.5 billion for research and innovation, including food systems transformation calls. Specific opportunities address food waste reduction technologies, consumer behavior research, and circular economy solutions.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): €191 billion supporting infrastructure development. Slovenia can access funds for waste processing facilities, food bank infrastructure, and technology platform development under smart specialization and circular economy priorities.

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): Slovenia receives approximately €185 million annually. New environmental schemes specifically support farm-level food loss reduction, providing payments for improved storage, handling equipment, and sustainable practices.



International Organizations

UN Environment Programme: Provides technical assistance and knowledge sharing for countries implementing innovative food waste reduction approaches.

FAO Technical Cooperation Programme: Offers expertise in food loss assessment, reduction strategies, and capacity building, particularly valuable for agricultural sector interventions.

World Bank Climate Investment Funds: Support projects demonstrating climate co-benefits through methane emission reductions and resource efficiency improvements from food waste reduction.

Conclusion & Call to Action

Slovenia's food waste has increased 9% in just one year (2022-2023), reaching 78 kg per person annually. With 164,803 tons of food waste generated in 2023—37% of which was preventable—the country is moving away from EU sustainability targets rather than toward them. The doubling of food production waste signals a crisis requiring immediate action.

The Opportunity is Substantial

Economic Impact: €6-8 million in available EU funding, plus national and private resources, can generate significant returns through reduced waste management costs and improved resource efficiency.

Environmental Benefits: Achieving the EU's 50% reduction target by 2030 would eliminate approximately 82,000 tons of preventable food waste annually, substantially reducing greenhouse gas emissions and resource consumption.

Social Value: Redirecting edible food waste could address food insecurity while creating jobs in the circular economy sector.

Slovenia's Competitive Advantages

Innovation Foundation: The Green Point short food supply chain demonstrates Slovenia's capacity for innovative food system solutions and provides a proven model for scaling.

Regional Position: Slovenia can leverage successful approaches from neighboring countries while positioning itself as a Central European leader in food waste reduction.

EU Membership: Access to substantial funding opportunities and policy frameworks supporting comprehensive waste reduction strategies.

Call to Action

Slovenia stands at a critical juncture. The concerning upward trend in food waste demands immediate, coordinated action. With proven regional models, substantial funding opportunities, and existing innovation capacity through Green Point, Slovenia has all the tools needed to become a Central European leader in food waste reduction.

The question is not whether Slovenia can achieve the EU's 50% reduction target—it's whether decision-makers will act with the urgency this crisis demands.