

CHORIZO: Changing practices and Habits through Open, Responsible, and social Innovation towards ZerO food waste

CHORIZO Key Highlights: Results & Final Conference overview

- After **three years** of collaborative research, the CHORIZO project (Changing practices and Habits through Open, Responsible, and social Innovation towards ZerO food waste) comes to an end. Funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme, CHORIZO has advanced our understanding of how social norms influence food loss and waste (FLW) behaviours across multiple contexts. All partners gathered in Brussels for the Final Conference and the project's closing meeting, where they discussed the conclusions and results of CHORIZO and explored new ways to generate impact in the future.



Food loss and waste (FLW) remains one of the most pressing sustainability challenges of our time. Globally, nearly one-third of all food produced is never consumed, while millions of people face food insecurity. Addressing FLW is therefore not only an environmental priority but also a social and ethical imperative.

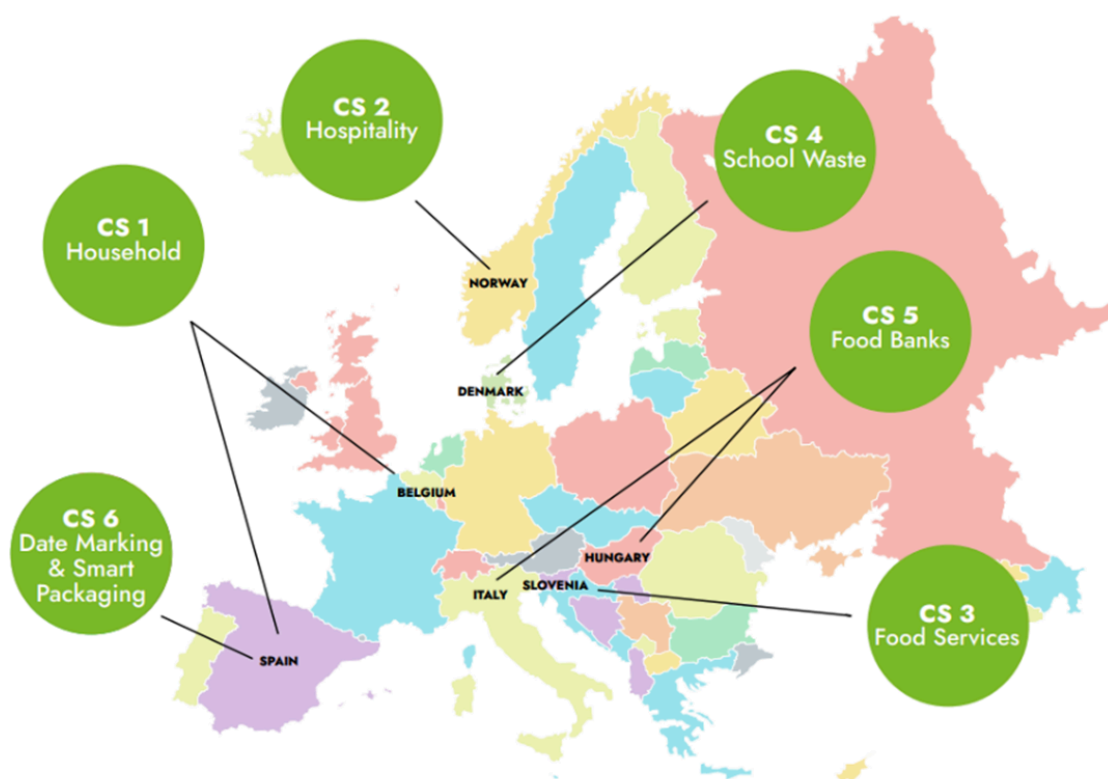
CHORIZO has approached this challenge by focusing on behaviours, cultural practices, and the social rules that guide everyday decisions in households, restaurants, schools, supply chains, and the food industry. Over its 36 months of activity, the project has combined scientific research with practical tools, stakeholder engagement, and educational resources, providing both **knowledge and actionable solutions** for a more sustainable food system.

Key Objectives and Results from the CHORIZO Project

The main objectives of CHORIZO were to carry out a comprehensive evidence-based analysis of past and ongoing FLW prevention actions, to build a FLW DataHub as a central knowledge resource, to develop modelling and predictive analytics from the Case Studies, to foster changes in social norms and behaviours through targeted communication, education and capacity-building activities, to ensure effective innovation upscaling and exploitation of results, and to engage with European and global initiatives in order to maximize impact and contribute to achieving near-zero food loss and waste.

The project's research was structured around six case studies, each shedding light on food waste dynamics in specific contexts:

1. **Households** – exploring consumption patterns, purchasing habits, and household decision-making in and off crisis periods.
2. **Hospitality sector** – studying hotels and food services, identifying where food waste arises and how it can be reduced during food storage, preparation of meals, serving and consumption.
3. **Food Services** – analysing both operational practices and consumer behaviours that lead to plate waste.
4. **Schools** – linking food waste with nutrition, obesity, and awareness among young generations.
5. **Food banks mediated supply chain** – investigating how redistribution networks can avoid waste while ensuring food reaches those in need.
6. **Date marking and sustainable and smart food packaging** – understanding consumer behaviour and industry dynamics for date marking and sustainable packaging innovation.



CHORIZO uses these **real-life Case Studies (CSs)** to achieve three interconnected goals:

1. To gather data and insights on the context and outcomes of past food loss and waste (FLW) prevention and reduction initiatives carried out by the Case Study participants, thereby strengthening the project's evidence base.
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2. To generate knowledge on how social norms and behaviours interact with food waste, providing input for CHORIZO's modelling work and innovative tools.
3. To test and validate the project's communication and science education packages in practical, real-world settings.

The resulting innovative knowledge from this project real-life case studies was collected and produced in the form of a number of summaries called Practice Abstracts for broad dissemination to practitioners. Through these summaries, end-users find guidance on selecting effective actions to achieve reduction on food loss and waste generation in different contexts: Urban Settings; Food Services; Households and Schools; Primary Production, Processing or Manufacturing and Retail; Redistribution of Surplus food.

This knowledge was also fundamental to develop tools that support the innovation within FLW prevention and reduction activities: (I) A FLW prevention/reduction index that can guide food actors in prioritizing alternative actions based on previous results; (II) The FLW rapid appraisal tool that provides actors with knowledge on the key social norms that drive FLW in their contextual environment; (III) The CHORIZO 'Insighter' datahub that serves as database of empirical evidence to actors pursuing FLW prevention initiatives; (IV) A sector-based guidance to support different types of actors from the food system; and (V) Communication and science education packages; (VI) A City Food Waste Guide tailored recommendations to support municipalities in designing local actions against FLW; and (VII) Capacity Building actions, which will contribute in changing social norms towards zero FLW at the consumer, corporate and policy level.

Together, these outputs provide a **comprehensive toolkit for systemic change**, addressing food waste from multiple perspectives: individual, organisational, and policy.

These outputs are available through the project website and will remain accessible for 5 more years for policymakers, businesses, educators and civil society organizations to build upon.

Final Conference – ZeroW & CHORIZO Joint Multi-stakeholder event

On 16 September 2025, CHORIZO and ZeroW celebrated their joint Multi-stakeholder Conference in Brussels. The event brought together experts, innovators, policymakers, and practitioners to showcase results, exchange knowledge, and explore future pathways for tackling food loss and waste across Europe.



The conference agenda included keynote presentations, interactive breakout sessions, and innovation demos, covering a wide range of topics such as: Communication for change, education and engagement tools, food banks and redistribution strategies, simulation tools for designing FLW interventions, household behaviours and myths, and packaging & date marking innovations.



The event was a successful gathering that brought together stakeholders, researchers, and practitioners to reflect on solutions to Europe’s food waste challenge. After a warm introduction and welcome, the opening speech set the stage with inspiring remarks that framed the day’s discussions, delivered by Klaus Berend, Director of Food Safety and Sustainability, DG Sante. Participants gained valuable insights from the coordinators of both projects, who presented joint results, highlighted their policy relevance and commercial potential, and introduced the key themes of the event.

Throughout the conference, speakers from both projects shared their most relevant findings and explored **actionable pathways to reduce food loss and waste (FLW)** across the food system. The morning continued with four parallel breakout sessions, each delving deeper into specialized areas of FLW, offering participants the opportunity to engage with concrete project results and exchange ideas for future action.

Session 1 “Communicating change: Education and engagement tools for scaling FLW solutions”, where participants explored how scaling food loss and waste (FLW) solutions goes far beyond numbers. It's about shifting perceptions, values, and behaviors—scaling deep. To make real change, we must integrate social norm insights into communication strategies that inspire action and joy. Cities play a key role by combining their regulatory tools—like procurement and waste management—with behavior-based approaches. We are already making progress, but to scale effectively, we need supportive legislation, multi-level governance, and dedicated funding.



Session 2 “Food banks reimagined: Effective redistribution strategies for impact”, focused on innovative approaches within food banks, featuring contributions from the ZeroW and the CHOROZO projects. The three presentations highlighted how social norms influence companies’ decisions on food donations, presented prediction tools for supply and demand at food banks and explored practical methods to process seasonal surplus fruit and vegetables into longer-lasting products. The session concluded with an engaging panel discussion, including project representatives and a guest from the European Commission, which also addressed potential policy changes needed to further facilitate effective food surplus donations across Europe. The workshop attracted great interest, and the active participation of the audience underlined the relevance and success of the session.

Session 3 “From Data to Action: Simulation Tools for Food Loss and Waste Intervention Design”, showcased how data and modelling approaches can inform public and private decision-makers at different levels and individuals, eventually driving smarter decisions. First, we saw how ZeroW is building a digital backbone for food waste reduction — from smart labels and AI-based meal planners to a digital twin of the food supply chain. These innovations have already led to four patents, strengthening Europe’s competitiveness in tackling food waste. Second, we explored the CHORIZO Visualizer — a simple yet powerful tool that transforms complex simulation results into actionable insights. With a user-friendly approach, the Visualizer allows policymakers, businesses, and even households to rapidly test scenarios and identify leverage points for reducing waste, integrating science-based results coming from computer simulations. Finally, economic modelling reminded us that top-down policies as a disposal tax alone will not deliver food loss and waste targets. Such measures risk reducing food accessibility. Instead, voluntary investments and technological advances — like ZeroW’s system-integrated living labs — are essential for real, sustainable impact. In short: data, simulation, and innovation together should be leveraged to make food waste reduction possible.

Session 4 “From Innovation to Investment: Matchmaking for FLW Innovation Opportunities”, offered a dynamic space for connecting innovators with potential investors and funding opportunities in the field of food loss and waste reduction. Designed as an engaging pitching event, SILL representatives showcased their solutions, highlighting pathways for both private investment aimed at commercialization and public funding to support further research and development. With the participation of partners from the CHORIZO project, the session discussed matchmaking between innovators and stakeholders, fostering dialogue on how to bridge the gap between promising FLW solutions and the financial support needed to scale them. This format not only presented concrete opportunities but also underscored the crucial role of investment in turning innovation into impactful action.

In the afternoon, after the lunch break, where attendees had the chance to connect with peers in a relaxed atmosphere and explore hands-on innovation demos, participants joined the session “From Insight to Impact: How Shared Data Drives Smarter Decisions in Food Waste Reduction”, which featured a showcase of the **CHORIZO Datahub** and the **ZeroW Dataplatform**. This was followed by the afternoon parallel sessions, where attendees continued to explore project results and exchange perspectives on reducing food waste across different areas of the food system.



Session 5 “Household food waste: One size fits all – facts and myths about household FLW behaviours”, discussed 6 common myths about household food waste behaviours, separating fact from fiction to better understand what really drives food waste in consumers’ kitchens. For instance, it’s a misconception that consumers don’t care about food waste. The truth is, while people are motivated to reduce waste, their actions are often hindered by a complex mix of personal and external factors. We tend to rely on our senses, i.e. what food looks and smells like, more than information on product labels. Also, common social norms, like the “good provider” identity leads to overbuying and overserving despite good intentions. On the other hand, simple habits like meal planning can significantly cut down on food waste and save money.

The key takeaway of the session is that reducing food waste isn't just about awareness; it requires a comprehensive approach that addresses our skills, the opportunities we have, and social norms. True behavioural change within the household setting will involve moving beyond the belief that just giving people information will be enough.

Session 6 “Packaging & Date Marking: How innovation in food packaging can be a good ally against food waste”, highlighted the crucial role of packaging and clear date marking in reducing food waste. The session showed how innovative and smart packaging solutions can improve consumer understanding, support product acceptance, and align with both regulatory frameworks and social norms. Key insights included the fact that many consumers still misinterpret date labels, often leading to unnecessary waste—an issue that smarter, clearer packaging can directly address. Real-world examples were presented, such as a compartmentalized tray for fresh fish made with compostable materials and designed to keep exudates away, alongside an integrated colorimetric freshness label and a supporting mobile app that provide real-time information on shelf life. Together, these innovations demonstrated how the food industry is investing in packaging that not only extends product usability but also empowers both retailers and consumers to make smarter decisions and reduce waste.

Session 7 “Out-of-Home Food Waste: Experience the Impact Firsthand”, discussed the CHORIZO project’s scientific results in regards to out-of-home food consumption patterns and their impacts on food waste. The results of three different case studies were given, providing real-life examples of food waste-related behaviour – in the hotel sector in Norway (consortium partner Strawberry), the food services sector in Slovenia (consortium partner ITC), and schools in Denmark (consortium partner UCPH). The results of the project’s modelling efforts (diner model) were also showcased by UNIBO. The presentations all highlighted that out-of-home consumption is the result of complex drivers and interactions, with factors such as ethical reasoning, moral beliefs, social norms, as well as context playing key roles in behaviour. Discussions highlighted that due to this complexity, when communicating about food waste, the message needs to be appropriately framed keeping in mind the target audience and context, with no communication or messaging about food waste being better than a wrongly-framed one.

Session 8 “Looking at the Big Picture: Systemic Barriers and Levers for FLW Reduction”, ZeroW partners presented the updated SIRL tool, explaining the choices made based on feedback from the SILLs and the first experiences with the tool. By assessing the innovation’s Systemic Readiness level with the SIRL Framework & Tool, we no longer have to navigate countless separate readiness ladders, everything is integrated into a single, easy-to-use chart. This holistic approach strengthens innovation risk management by enabling early detection of systemic opportunities and threats across technological, social, and governance dimensions. Most importantly, it allows innovators and stakeholders to track progress collectively, using tailor-made indicators and KPIs that keep everyone aligned on the path toward successful systemic change



As the CHORIZO project reaches its conclusion, a big thank you to all partners for their hard work and commitment throughout these three years, and our readers for their continued interest and support. Together, we have built valuable knowledge, tools, and connections to tackle food loss and waste more effectively.

The journey does not end here—fighting food waste requires the collective effort of all of us, each in our own context, and now we are better equipped than ever to make a real difference.

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