



The Neighbourhood Food Hub project in Milan

**Good practice for Sustainable Food
Systems in a circular economy
perspective**

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febea EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF ETHICAL AND
ALTERNATIVE BANKS AND FINANCERS



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 Milan, Italy

 Public administration-led

febea KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTION OF ETHICAL AND ALTERNATIVE FOODS AND TRADING

THE CHALLENGE

The reduction of food waste is one of the priorities of the Food Policy and it is developed through the engagement of various local actors such as institutions, research centres, the private sector, foundations and social actors.

THE CONCEPT

The action comes from the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, an international agreement of Mayors agreed upon in October 2015 and signed by over 113 cities across the globe. It is a concrete working tool for cities, composed of a preamble and a Framework for Action listing 37 recommended actions, clustered in 6 categories, one of which related to food waste. For each recommended action, there are specific indicators to monitor progress of the implementation of the Pact. The Milan Pact Awards offer concrete examples of the food policies that cities are implementing in each of the 6 Pact categories.

One of their most important projects concerns the Neighbourhood Food Hubs around the city of Milan. The Hubs redistribute food surplus in coordination with five logistics centres. This project won the Award Earthshot Prize 2021 promoted by the Royal Foundation of Prince William of Wales.

The best practice described here is a pilot Hub following the policy pact described above. More specifically, after identifying the need for the establishment of food redistribution hubs to trade food surpluses generated by commercial activities, the city of Milan identified abandoned urban areas where to establish these Neighbourhood Food Hub. Therefore, the city put in place food waste prevention actions through the collection and distribution of food items discarded but still suitable for human consumption.



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THE PRACTICE - TOOL

The Municipality of Milan identified an unused public space in Municipality district 9 and made it available as a Neighbourhood Food Hub for the project for the storage and distribution of recovered food to local non-profit organisations.

The Politecnico di Milano (Polytechnic University of Milan) developed a feasibility study of the network and monitored the operation of the Hub as well as the impacts generated by the project for 12 months. They built a logistic model that can be extended and replicated in other districts of the city. The actions started in 2018/2019 with the launch of a first pilot project in Municipality 9 (which is the object of this analysis).

The Hubs are set up with a cold room for the management of fresh food, with shelves for dry and packaged food and with an administrative station for managing the archive and procedures. The use of a van equipped with a cold room, supplied by the logistics operator Number1 Logistics Group for the purposes of the project, makes it possible to recover surpluses from supermarkets on a daily basis and store them in the Hubs for redistribution to non-profit organisations. Added to this is another vehicle used for the recovery of surpluses from company canteens, distributed directly to non-profit organisations.

The Neighbourhood Food Hub model allows actors to deal with all types of food collected: fresh, cooked and dried food, fruit and vegetables, bread. Direct contact between the supermarket and the non-profit organisation risks generating single-product peaks that are difficult to manage. The Hubs, on the other hand, make it possible to mix the recovered food, therefore allowing to offer a varied, nutritious and balanced food to people in need while still being in direct contact with the supermarket and the non-profit organisation.

Logistic model of recovery

The logistic model provides for two daily recovery paths:

- **Supermarkets – Morning.** Recovery of unsold fresh and dry packaged food, loose and/or packaged fruit, surplus bread from supermarkets. The entities dedicated to the management of the Hubs recover directly from the points of sale participating in the network, using the insulated van. The recovered food is stored at the Collection and Sorting Hubs.
- **Company canteens – Afternoon.** Recovery of unserved cooked food, loose and/or packaged fruit and surplus bread from company canteens which is directly delivered to non-profit organisations equipped with canteen service for people in need. Where possible, it is carried out simultaneously with the withdrawal from the supermarkets. Non-profit organisations that offer canteen services or parcel distribution to people in need can go to the Hubs to collect the food they need in an assorted way by their own means.

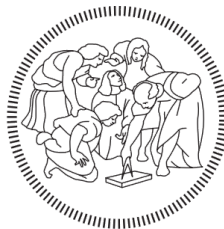
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ACTORS

The Neighbourhood Food Hub project was born within the actions defined in the "Zero Waste" protocol[1] promoted by the Municipality of Milan, Assolombarda, Milan Polytechnic, carried out in collaboration with Banco Alimentare della Lombardia and supported by the QuBi programme[2] - the recipe against child poverty promoted by the Cariplo Foundation with the support of the Vismara Foundation, Intesa Sanpaolo, the Romeo and Enrica Invernizzi Foundation, the Fiera Milano Foundation and the Snam Foundation. Below are the main actors involved:

- The **Municipality of Milan** identified an unused public space in Municipality 9 and made it available as a hub for the project for the storage and distribution of recovered food to local non-profit organisations.
- The **Politecnico di Milano** has developed a feasibility study of the network and monitored the operation of the Hub and the impacts generated by the project for 12 months, building a logistic model that can be extended and replicated in other districts of the city.
- **Assolombarda** involved some local companies and promoted and shared the "Zero Sprechi" (Zero Waste) label created by the Armando Testa Group with the other partners.
- **Banco Alimentare della Lombardia**, winner of the Hub tender, guaranteed the operational and daily management of the model developed by the Polytechnic, recovering food surpluses and distributing them to partner charitable structures in the area.
- The **QuBi** programme - the recipe against child poverty - which has already launched a similar Hub, has joined the project by financing the setting up and management of the Isola Hub and promoting connections with local networks supported and involved by the QuBi programme.

In terms of the neighbourhood that hosted the pilot, Municipality 9 in 2015 had a population of 184,000 people, the largest neighbourhood of the City of Milan.



POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863



ASSOLOMBARDA



Figure 2: Logos of the main actors involved

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REGULATORY ASPECTS



The main policy framework that originated the Neighbourhood Food Hub is the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, which includes a set of Actions and Indicators that signatory mayors commit to achieving, grouped into the following:

- ensuring an enabling environment for effective action (governance)
- sustainable diets and nutrition
- social and economic equity
- food production
- food supply and distribution

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE



Neighbourhood Food Hubs are continuously developing in different municipalities of Milan, therefore expanding the geographic coverage of these Neighbourhood Food Hubs:

In the **Isola Hub** launched in 2019 in **Municipality 9**, the Polytechnic University and Assolombarda have identified and involved 11 supermarkets, 5 company canteens and through the Banco Alimentare della Lombardia and QuBi programme, over 20 non-profit organisations join the collection and redistribution network. These numbers have grown over time

In the **Lambrate Hub** inaugurated in 2020 in **Municipality 3**, Avis Comunale of Milan has made the premises available, BCC of Milan has financed the adaptation interventions of the Hub and Banco Alimentare della Lombardia manages the collection and redistribution activities to Onlus.

In the **Gallaratese Hub** inaugurated in 2021 in **Municipality 8**, the Municipality has made the premises available, the Milan Foundation has financed the adaptation interventions of the Hub and the Terre Des Hommes association manages the collection and redistribution activities to the non-profit organisations coordinating a large partnership made up of IBVA Solidando, Croce Rossa Italiana – Milan Committee, RimaFlow Fuorimercato, STAG, QuBi Gallaratese.

The most recently inaugurated Hub was the one developed in collaboration with IBVA, officially inaugurated in September 2022. Among the promoters of the Hub are BCC Milano, and SoDe social delivery which guarantees greener deliveries.

A special Hub is the one activated at the **Fruit and Vegetable Market** of Milan through the "Foody Zero Waste" tender developed by the Cariplo Foundation, the Municipality of Milan and the public company SogeMi. The tender selected the University of Milan, Banco Alimentare della Lombardia, RECUP, Croce Rossa Sud Milano to innovate the ways in which to recover and redistribute surplus fruit and vegetables from the Milan fruit and vegetable market.



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VOLUMES / OUTCOME / IMPACT GENERATED/ QUANTIFICATION



In 2019, 77 tons of food were donated to the Hub in Municipality 9, which equaled around 154,000 meals and had an economic value of 308,000 euros. Additionally, the emission of 240 tons of CO₂ was avoided and 77,000 cubic metres of water were saved. Around 1,300 families were directly reached by the action which translates into 3,950 people, of which 2,470 adults and 1,480 minors[1]. In addition, the number of social actors who used the service also increased during the year: non-profit organisations increased from 14 to 21.

BARRIERS TO PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION

In order to make these Neighbourhood Food Hubs more efficient and effective, the implementing organisations highlighted the following key factors to improve:

- Continuous monitoring and improvement of the measurement system / further reduction of waste
- Process optimization and expansion of the recovery network
- Economic sustainability and scalability of the model (opening of new hubs)

WINNING ASPECTS OF THE PRACTICE



The Neighbourhood Food Hubs manage to capture a large amount of food surplus that would otherwise be thrown away. This is because the Hubs work together with both supermarkets and canteens. In addition, the fact that the Hubs act as an intermediary between the supermarkets and the NGO allows them to mix the recovered food, which in turn allows them to offer a varied, nutritious and balanced food to people in need while still being in direct contact with the supermarket and the non-profit organisation.

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Politecnico di Milano: <https://www.osservatori.net/it/ricerche/osservatori-attivi/food-sustainability>

Assolombarda: <https://www.assolombarda.it/governance/gruppi/alimentazione/attivita>

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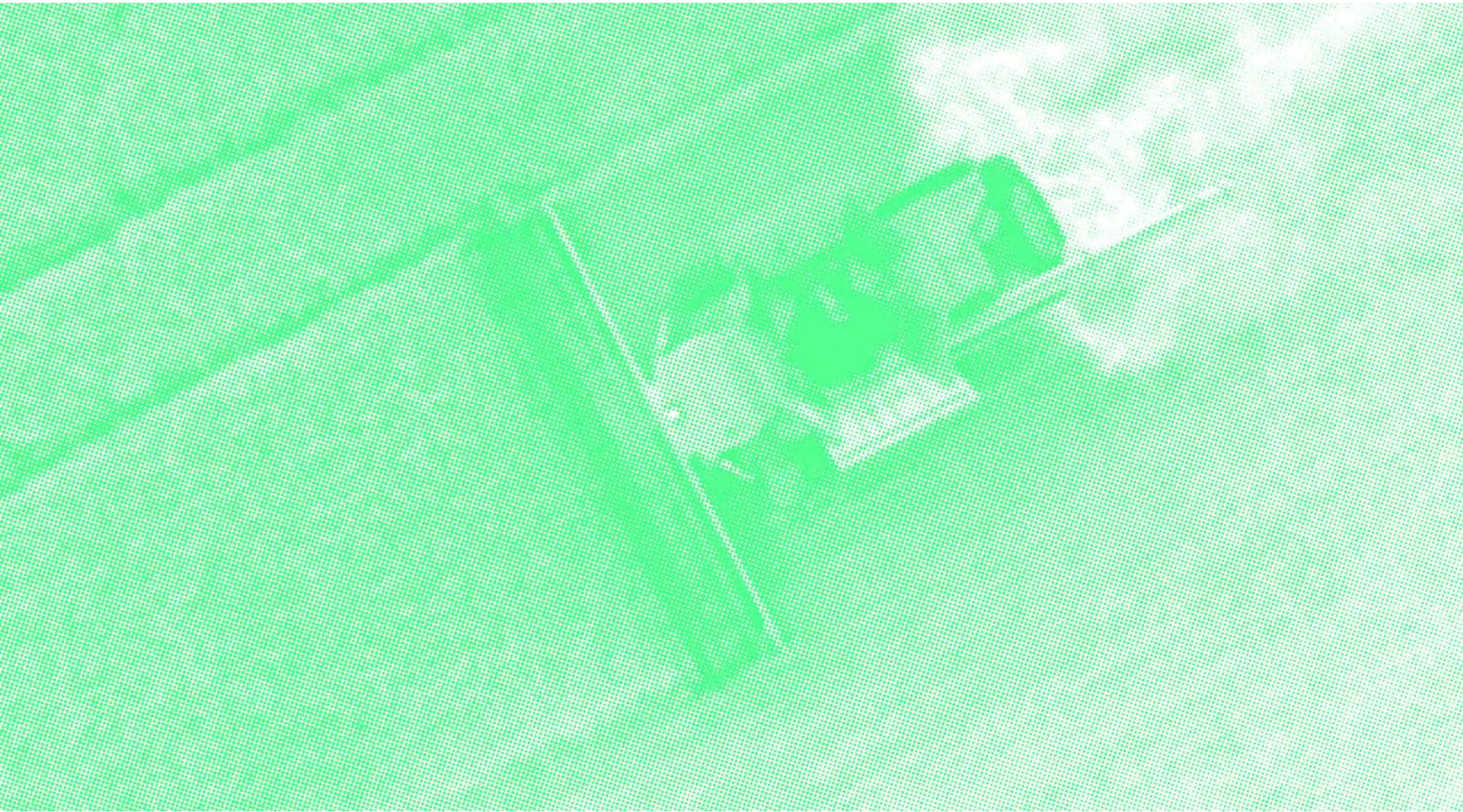
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SIMILAR PRACTICES IN OTHER TERRITORIES

FOODRUS Best Practice 10 - Villa Javier Project and Mejana Gourmet Project

FOODRUS Best Practice 19 - The social grocery of the Municipality of Halandri





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