

## **Opening speech The Nordic Food Waste Prevention Conference**

**27 April 2017 by Acting State Secretary Terje Halleland**

- It is great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the Nordic food waste prevention conference 2017. Unfortunately, the Minister could not be present due to other obligations, but he sends his regards to the Conference.
- The conference is marking the end of a three-year project on food waste, which was initiated under the Prime Ministers Green Growth Initiative.
- The project has been chaired by Sweden and four Nordic countries has participated; Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. You will hear more about the project later today.
- The importance of this project is apparent to everybody. A lot of edible food is thrown away in the Nordic countries, causing significant environmental impact.
- The good news is that this can be avoided through common effort along the whole food chain. The aim of the Nordic project is to contribute to reduce food waste while securing food safety.

- As the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers this year, we decided to take on the task of arranging this Conference. We were also inspired by the programme of the Norwegian Presidency, which has three pillars;
  - The first pillar is "*the Nordic Region in Transition*". The Presidency would like to promote competitiveness during the transition to a green, low-emission economy. Reducing food waste could be a key element here.
  - The next pillar is "*The Nordic Region in Europe*". This is designed to facilitate closer co-operation on European policy. Food waste is an important element of the EU Circular Economy, and we would like to contribute from the Nordic region towards developing this policy.
  - The third pillar is "*the Nordic Region in the World*" which will further develop our foreign policy partnership in order to meet the big global challenges. Many global organisations has put food waste on the agenda. The Nordic region could give input to the global discussions on food waste, based on the common findings in the project.
- By continuing the Nordic collaboration on food waste, we think that our region can take a leading role and present a strong common vision in the EU. The results of the projects are already part of the

European collaboration, and the project group has presented Nordic experiences, models and tools to avoid food waste at the EU level.

- According to the UN around a third of all food produced in the world is thrown away. Less food waste will make food more accessible to the world's growing population.
- With an anticipated world population growth to 9 billion people in 2050, scientists suggest a need for doubling the global food production<sup>1</sup>. This future scenario underlines the importance of reducing food waste, also to achieve less pressure on the environment and less greenhouse gas emissions.
- In addition to the food waste initiative of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Norway also participates in processes through the UN and the EU to reduce food waste.
- UN's sustainable development goal 12.3 on halving food waste by 2030 has been an important guide for many processes, also in this country. Our Prime Minister Erna Solberg is also one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals Advocates, who are assisting the UN Secretary-General in the campaign to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://forskning.no/demografi/2011/02/hvordan-takle-ni-milliarder-mennesker>

- When cooperating on a Nordic level, we see that there are both similarities and differences in the way we approach the common goal of reducing food waste. I hope that we can learn from each other, and get some good ideas on what to do.
- In Norway, the good collaboration with the stakeholders in the food chain has been a key element in the approach towards reducing food waste. We have taken the liberty of putting this on the agenda later on today.
- Currently five Ministries in Norway are working towards strengthening the cooperation between the authorities and stakeholders in the food chain to further reduce food waste.
- The five ministers and the food industry signed an agreement of intent on food waste in May 2015. The next step, hopefully within this summer, is that the intentional agreement will be replaced by a negotiated agreement.
- As this agreement includes new stakeholders and industries not previously involved in the ForMat-project, it opens new opportunities for cooperation, as actions at one end of the food chain can have impact on food waste in other parts of the food chain.
- Matvett is the Norwegian food industry's organization committed to prevent and reduce food waste and the owner of the former ForMat-

project. The Government has supported their work financially and politically from the beginning.

- Matvett was responsible for the completion of the ForMat-project's 5 years of work, last year. Matvett will continue with parts of the ForMat-projects work on food waste in Norway.
- The ForMat-project showed us that food industry stands for one third of the total amount of food waste. The consumers stand for two thirds of the waste, or one out of five shopping bags.
- Fresh bakery goods, fruit and vegetables, and fresh fish and meat represents the major parts of waste. Expired shelf life is the main reason for food waste across the food chain.
- There is also one Food Bank in Norway, the "Matsentralen", which distributes food surplus from grocery stores, wholesalers and manufacturers to disadvantaged people throughout the Oslofjord area. The project has the support of the retailers, food industry and non-profit organizations.
- Last year our Government made an exemption from value added tax on surplus food, which is delivered free of charge to charities. The exemption will contribute to reducing food waste and make it cheaper for the food industry to give surplus food to people who are having difficulties.

- Probably far more work like this can be done to further prevent and reduce the food waste.
- The remaining question is, however, what is next within the Nordic cooperation on food waste? We will not be able to find the necessary funding for another three years project like the one we will present today. At the same time, the experts tell me that they do want to continue the good collaboration that we have established!
- The Norwegian presidency will look into the possibilities of preparing a declaration from the meeting of the Nordic ministers of Fisheries, Agriculture, Food and Forestry 28 June 2017 in Ålesund on the future collaboration on food waste. We also challenge the Swedish Presidency of 2018 to cooperate on the follow-up of a possible declaration.
- Finally, I wish you all a pleasant and informative day, and I would like to encourage you to build networks in our Nordic community. Enjoy the conference!