



# Malta's Ministry for the Environment replication activities and experiences of participating in the TRiFOCAL replication programme

## Closure Report

### BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

The Directorate for the Environment and Climate Change (DECC), within the Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning (MECP) (formerly The Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, MESDC) is responsible for researching, evaluating and overseeing environment and climate change policies in Malta. The Directorate also monitors the implementation of environment and climate related strategies and action plans, including EU, international and national obligations on waste.

Wasteserv is a Maltese government waste operator of last resort, taking on waste contracts where there is no provision by private companies. Established in November 2002, Wasteserv is responsible for organizing, managing and operating integrated systems for waste management including collection, transport, recycling and disposal of solid and hazardous waste.

### THE CHALLENGE



Malta has an area of 316 km<sup>2</sup> with a population density of 1260 people per km<sup>2</sup>, the highest of all EU member states. In addition, Malta's population is growing and currently has 475,500 inhabitants. Tourism – being an integral part of Malta's economy – reached a record number of 2.6 million visitors in 2019. Consequently, more waste is also being generated and there is an evident lack of space to dispose of waste. In the latest Eurostat reports, Malta was the second highest waste generator per capita, with 648 kg per person, per year. Nearly half of this waste is food waste.

### WHY PARTICIPATE IN THE TRIFOCAL REPLICATION PROGRAMME?

In October 2018 following a successful pilot project, The Ministry and Wasteserv rolled out a nationwide collection of food waste from households covering every locality in Malta and Gozo. In the first month, the project saw over 2,000 tonnes of organic waste collected from households for conversion into renewable energy. But introducing a food waste collection itself was not enough to tackle the food waste challenge since citizens are still wasting a considerable amount of food. After launching a nationwide campaign to sensitise Maltese residents to the issue of food waste, Malta decided to participate in the TRiFOCAL replication programme as it provided an opportunity to build upon previous messages on food waste prevention and recycling in order to change citizens behaviour and reduce food waste and its impact.

Please see the [Malta dissemination case study](#) to read more about how TRiFOCAL recruited Malta as a replication city, through delivering upon the networking and dissemination plan.

## OBJECTIVES

TRIFOCAI offered the opportunity to utilise tried and tested campaign messaging and materials to communicate with Maltese citizens in a fun and engaging way for a relatively low cost. By delivering a localised campaign, Malta aimed to reinforce the importance of reducing food waste. Through the three key campaign messages, citizens were encouraged to reduce food waste and place any unavoidable waste in an organic waste bag for recycling. This enabled the food waste to be turned into renewable energy instead of being disposed of in landfill.

Beyond communicating the key messages to citizens and tourists in Malta, the Maltese government wanted to engage further with the business and catering sector using the [Your Business Is Food, don't throw it away](#) materials.

## CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS AND RESULTS

The campaign in Malta focused on all three Small Change Big Difference messages – healthy sustainable eating, food waste prevention and food waste recycling – with residents and tourists the main target audience. The campaign featured three delivery elements aimed at citizens, business engagement and a dissemination seminar.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

A social media campaign was delivered using mainly Facebook and Instagram, adapting content used in TRIFOCAI's delivery in London. Using their 'Don't Waste Waste' social media accounts focused on reducing food waste, Malta shared the key campaign messages across five themes:

- Sustainable foods (meat-less) Monday
- Waste-less Wednesday (food waste prevention)
- Throwback Thursday (to the Don't Waste Waste campaign)
- Food waste Friday (food waste recycling)
- Small Change Saturday (SCBD messages)



The social media campaign ran from 17<sup>th</sup> July until 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019. During this time, 41 Facebook posts and to 15 Instagram posts were published. Overall engagement varied widely, however the top performing post (vegetarian message) reached almost 47,000 people without any paid advertising, generating 3.1K post clicks and 1.9K reactions, comments & shares.

The post also received several positive comments, including comments from people committing to reduce their meat consumption.

The most efficient social media platform for this campaign was Facebook. This is potentially due to the fact that the 'Don't Waste Waste' Facebook page has 6,848 followers compared to 647 Instagram followers.

The overwhelming engagement experienced via social media has provided food-for-thought into the types of topics citizens take interest in, as well as which communication channels are most effective.

## INTERNATIONAL FOOD FESTIVAL



From the 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of July, the Maltese Ministry of the environment manned a stand next to Wasteserv Malta at the International Food Festival 2019. This free festival is a celebration of local and international culinary traditions, dining culture, innovation and artistry. Over the years, Malta's International Food Festival attracted locals and international visitors and gained huge popularity with an average of 33,000 people attending.

This event was therefore the perfect way to share the TRiFOCAL campaign messaging and engage with a wide audience over 5 days. A nutritionist supported on the stand, showing visitors how to utilise surplus ingredients e.g. citrus rinds were used to make infused water and energy balls. A locally well-renowned chef conducted live demonstrations on how to cook with leftovers. Finally, people were encouraged to pledge to one or more key commitments to reduce their environmental impact (such as asking for a take-away box for leftovers in a restaurant or trying a vegetarian recipe at least once a week). More than 200 pledges were collected over the 5 days. Throughout the week, approximately 350 citizens engaged with the activities and left the event with food for thought.

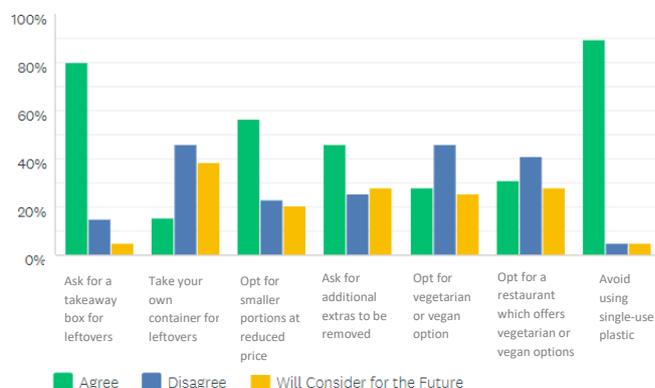


**“To reduce my environmental impact I pledge to source more local and seasonal products and to freeze surplus food for a later date.”**

## FOOD HABITS SURVEY

A survey was published on Malta's 'Don't Waste Waste' social media channels to gain an understanding of Maltese inhabitants' eating habits at home and when eating out in order to evaluate the impact these habits may have on food waste. Below are some key results from the citizen survey:

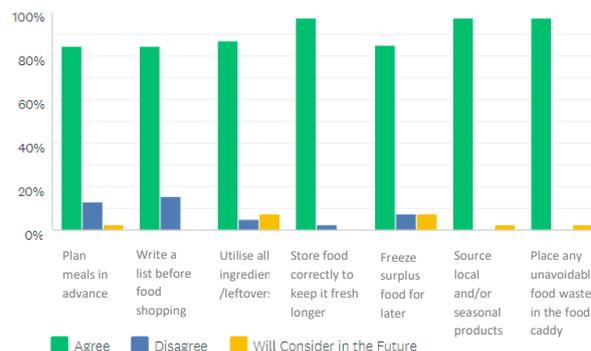
### When eating out:



- 85% of respondents already do, or would consider, asking for a takeaway box for leftovers.
- 75% of respondents already do, or would consider, opting for a smaller portion at a reduced price.
- 53% of respondents already do, or would consider, choosing a restaurant that offered vegetarian and/or seasonal items.
- 95% of respondents do, or would consider, avoiding single-use plastics.

### At home:

- 85% of respondents already do, or would consider, making a list before grocery shopping and planning meals ahead of time.
- 98% of respondents already do, or would consider, ensuring they store food correctly to reduce waste.
- 94% of respondents already do, or would consider, freezing surplus food for later.
- 98% of respondents already do, or would consider, utilising their organic bag for unavoidable food waste.



Although the results of this social media survey are not representative of the whole of Malta and its population, this insight will help shape future citizen campaigns and support Malta's continuous effort to encourage citizens' behaviour change and help tackle food waste.

## BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Businesses and particularly catering establishments play a large role in food waste reduction and recycling in Malta and there is great opportunity for improvement. Therefore, a pilot was conducted to collect organic waste from selected catering establishments in order to:



1. Increase awareness on sustainable eating, and the prevention and recycling of food waste.
2. Undertake pilot collections of food waste from catering establishments.
3. Improve understanding of challenges and opportunities in commercial food waste prevention and recycling.

The successful results of this pilot have since contributed towards a new policy on organic waste separation in commercial entities. 12 organisations took part in the business engagement activity using Your Business is Food, don't throw it away, 9 of which completed the pilot where food waste bags were bar-coded and weighed. At the end of the pilot – which lasted 6 weeks – 2.7 tonnes of organic waste were collected, providing valuable insight of the amount of food waste generated from the hospitality sector. As a follow-up, one-to-one food waste prevention and sustainable eating training was provided to two of the establishments, utilising insight from the [Your Business is Food, Don't Throw it Away campaign toolkit](#).

The feedback received from the participants and the logistical challenges faced by all stakeholders, will serve as a learning experience to help shape upcoming policy on commercial waste separation and collection. The findings will also feed into the New Waste Management Plan for the Maltese Islands from 2021-2030.

Please see the [Malta business engagement case study](#) to learn more about the pilot, campaign replication and results.

## DISSEMINATION SEMINAR

To conclude the TRiFOCAL replication project in Malta, a dissemination seminar open to the public was organised to summarise the activities conducted and share the results and findings. The event was held at the Wasteserv Family Park in Marsaskala, a rehabilitated landfill site, and the locality of the pilot food waste project. Approximately 50 professionals and citizens attended and engaged in the discussion.

To follow the theme of food waste prevention, reduction, recycling and sustainability, a meat free and plastic free breakfast was organised. Plant-based breakfast baguettes were served alongside smoothies made from rescued fruits, as well as delicious zero waste coffee.



## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Although the Small Change Big Difference materials provided by TRiFOCAL were valuable, these had to be adapted to fit Maltese culture and citizen motivations. For example, the message 'if everyone went meat free one day a week' was changed to 'if everyone went vegetarian just once a week' to encourage people to be more open to the idea while still getting across the key message that meat consumption generates emissions.

The other challenges Malta came across were:

1. Short timeframe from when Malta joined the project.

The Ministry received final approval to participate in the TRiFOCAL project in March 2019, and the project needed to be closed by the end of September 2019. With good planning and time management, activities were successfully completed within the timeframe, however more time would have been beneficial to deliver additional campaign activities and further raise awareness.

2. Peak season for hospitality in Malta, therefore engaging with restaurants was more difficult.

Malta's original strategy was to begin engaging with restaurants in early July and conduct food waste prevention training prior to the collection pilot. However, upon discussion with industry representatives, it was advised that establishments would be more likely to participate and engage fully outside the peak summer season. Therefore, the pilot collections and the one-to-one food waste training began in the first week of September.

3. Logistical challenges with waste collection.

The organic waste collections were conducted by Malta's project partner, Wasteserv. This collection took place at 7am and habits of waste collectors and the procedures at the waste processing facility needed to be amended. The Ministry therefore collaborated with the waste collectors, local council, enforcement agencies and participating establishments to discuss and find a solution that worked for everyone.

## BENEFITS/RESULTS

TRiFOCAL was a chance to engage with the business community on food waste issues and gain a better understanding of food waste prevention and recycling in hospitality and food service.

The main benefit of replicating this campaign in Malta was an improved understanding of the logistical challenges and environmental opportunities to implementing separate waste collections from hospitality and food service businesses in Malta.



The campaign has initiated several new discussions and connections with various stakeholders around issues of food waste which might lead to future project and campaign work. Catering establishments who participated in the pilot collections discussed setting up an association to streamline waste management and other local issues. Meanwhile education leaders who engaged with TRiFOCAL wish to utilise key messages in schools and educational visits.

## LEARNINGS

The Ministry strengthened engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, discussing and sharing experiences, which proved extremely valuable and the positive ripple effect into other areas provided new opportunities as referenced above. The Ministry was also approached by the press to further promote the project and invited by a Corporate Social Responsibility agency to speak at a series of conferences in 2020 'Business Against Food Waste'.

Social media is a great communication tool and when using social media, having themes contributed to keeping the weeks somewhat consistent (e.g. waste-less Wednesdays) and helped to shape the content. Malta found that more people were actively engaging with the issues in the campaign than was anticipated.

To any other city or countries considering implementing elements of this campaign, here are a few other recommendations:

1. Decide at the beginning of the project what your aims, objectives and evaluation methods will be. Refer to materials on the [TRiFOCAL resource bank](#) for inspiration.
2. Obtain relevant statistics for your city/country as early as possible in order to tailor the key messages.
3. Find a way to utilise an existing event or relevant festival that already has guaranteed attendees as a way to launch TRiFOCAL activity in your city/country.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Malta's participation in the TRiFOCAL project was extremely successful and worthwhile. Attending the International Food Festival enabled Malta to engage directly with citizens. Thousands of people were also reached via social media and the collections pilot kick-started organic waste separation from hospitality and food service businesses in Malta. Although challenges arose, having a dedicated team who believed in the goals enabled the Ministry – with support from the TRiFOCAL London team – to problem solve and successfully complete the localised campaign and dissemination seminar in Malta. The impacts of the project continue to provide positive opportunities for the prevention and recycling of food waste in Malta.

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