

Defra food waste initiatives bear fruit

Every year, 190,000 tonnes of edible food goes to waste from retailers and manufacturers which could be redistributed. Defra is taking bold action to tackle this issue head on – spearheading a number of initiatives to get more surplus food to those who need it.

Last year, the first tranche of our [£15 million food waste initiative](#) saw [four companies receive a combined £4 million](#) to drive this effort forward. A year on, this ambitious work is bearing real fruit – with new schemes already diverting tonnes of edible food to charity centres across the country and new highly skilled teams in place to find new, innovative ways to reach hard to reach surplus food.

A second fund of £3 million, delivered by our partner organisation WRAP as part of their Resource Action Fund, is currently supporting 17 redistribution organisations carry out Food Waste Prevention work across the country. In light of the coronavirus outbreak, £2 million has been awarded to redistribution organisations to help charities with their food offer during this challenging time, which is still open for [small grant applications](#).

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

I am determined that we find new and innovative ways to ensure perfectly good, nutritious food does not end up in the bin and is instead redistributed to those who need it.

We have already committed £15 million to cut food waste, and have increased this during the coronavirus pandemic to support this effort even more. This huge challenge has highlighted the value of food and, more than ever, the importance of ensuring good food does not go to waste.

Two organisations helping to spearhead the charge in reducing food waste are FareShare UK and Company Shop Group. Each received nearly £2 million in the first round of Defra funding last year,

Company Shop Group, which consists of the UK's largest commercial redistribution organisation Company Shop and social enterprise Community Shop, redistributes surplus food and household products to people working in the NHS, emergency services and food supply chain, and to those in low-income communities.

Using the £1.9 million in funding from Defra, the company has kick started a project to target the hardest to reach surplus food and redistribute this to where it is needed most. Its social enterprise Community Shop, which runs a network of five social supermarket stores across England, also received

£50,000 in Covid-19 funding to support its efforts to combat the challenges of the pandemic.

Jane Marren, Managing Director of Company Shop Group, said:

We welcome the significant steps the Government has taken to support the reduction of food waste, and its recognition and investment in the surplus redistribution industry which is a crucial mechanism for achieving ambitious waste reduction targets.

We strongly believe business is a powerful force for social good, and this approach has never been more important than in today's circumstances. The funding provided by Defra and WRAP will enable us to redistribute even more surplus stock, support our food, drink, retail and hospitality industries, and most importantly, enable us to provide a life-line to even more communities in need.

FareShare has also used the £1.9 million they received in Defra funding, as well as an additional £444,000 during the coronavirus period, to enable them and their network partners to access many thousands of tonnes of surplus food with new equipment, vehicles and staff – saving this from the bin and delivering it to charities and communities across the country.

Lindsay Boswell, CEO of FareShare UK, said:

Getting good food to vulnerable people in the UK and cutting down food waste is our top priority, and this has never been more important than now during the coronavirus pandemic. The £1.9 million of Defra funding in 2019 helped us significantly, and combined with subsequent coronavirus grants, FareShare has gained access to many thousands of tonnes of surplus food.

The organisations we work with do truly amazing work and we're very proud to be working with them to help thousands of people across the country.

One beneficiary of emergency coronavirus funding was Oxfordshire-based charity SOFEA, which in partnership with FareShare rescues and re-distributes hundreds of tonnes of surplus food each year to charities throughout the Thames Valley region, supporting families in need while reducing food waste.

Through the £5 million [COVID-19 Emergency Surplus Food Grant](#), SOFEA have been awarded £50,000 to provide additional warehouse racking and the installation of two walk-in freezers.

Richard Kennell, CEO of SOFEA, said:

The funding will allow us to increase our capacity to handle all

types of food, including ambient, frozen and chilled. As we come out of the Covid-19 crisis it will enable our charity partners to be sure they can access a regular supply of nutritious food for their clients, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic where we expect to see increased need.