



Helsinki

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Donating surplus food from food services in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area to food aid

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Helsinki

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1 Introduction

According to a report published in November 2024 by the Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke), around 18.5 million kilos of food waste¹ are generated in various food services in the entire Helsinki Metropolitan Area, i.e. Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen. “This means that food waste per capita in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area is around 15.4 kilos per year. The majority of this waste is generated in Helsinki, which also has the highest number of food service establishments. In Vantaa and Espoo food services, food waste is generated mainly in regional ‘hotspots’ such as large shopping centres or hospitals. If the total amount of food waste generated is divided into half-kilo portions of restaurant food, around 37 million portions per year are wasted in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. This means about 30 portions per resident annually. Most of the food waste, around 9.6 million kilos per year, comes from serving (surplus food from food services). This refers to food left in the cafeteria buffets or prepared for them. The second largest source of food waste is food left on plates, amounting to about 7.2 million kilos. About 1.7 million kilos of the waste is generated in the kitchen. If all surplus food from food services could be redistributed, a total of around 20 million portions could be served to people in need. This would amount to about 53,000 portions every day.” (Source: Silvennoinen, K., Lampi, V., Lehtonen, E. & Nisonen, S. 2024. Elintarvikejäte ravitsemispalveluissa pääkaupunkiseudulla:

Food Waste Ecosystem. Natural Resources Institute Finland. Helsinki. 28 p.)

Together with [Ruoka-apu.fi](https://www.ruoka-apu.fi), Luke also carried out a nationwide survey on the operations of food waste terminals in early 2026. A total of 11 food waste terminals answered the survey. They distribute donated food to 418 food aid operators. Food received from donors is collected, stored and transported through the food waste terminals to food aid operators in the network for further distribution. The majority of respondents (8/11) stated that there is not enough donated food to meet demand. Food aid providers are constantly hoping for more food to be distributed, as the number of people in need has also increased, according to the [Ruoka-apu.fi](https://www.ruoka-apu.fi) autumn 2025 report, and there is not always enough food for everyone needing it.

According to the food waste terminal survey, 7/11 food waste terminals received surplus food from food services: 3.8 per cent of donated food was from food services (cf. 1.4% in 2024). Most of the donated food comes from industry and wholesalers (48.1%) or stores (33.9%). Donating surplus food from food services can reduce the relatively high level of food waste in the services, while meeting the increased demand for donated food.

This publication concerns the donation of surplus food generated in food services

¹ According to the Finnish Food Authority’s food aid guidelines, food waste are foodstuffs or food that was originally intended to be eaten but which, for one reason or another, was not used as human food, animal feed or in any other way, but has been removed from the food chain and will be disposed of with biowaste, for example.

to food aid in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. The publication is intended for food service providers interested in donating surplus food from their services and food aid operators interested in receiving it. It offers an overview of food aid operations, food safety issues related to donation and surplus food donation experiments in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area as well as the operating models drafted based on them. The publication is a part of the [Food Waste Ecosystem project](#) that aims to reduce food waste and promote efficient utilisation of surplus food in food services in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The project is coordinated by the City of Vantaa, which implemented it together with the City of Helsinki, Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke) and Laurea

University of Applied Sciences. The project ran from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026. It was funded with support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The funding authority was the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council. The project is a part of the Helsinki+Espoo+Vantaa Innovations ([HEVi programme](#)).

After the project was completed, its language versions (Swedish, English), layout and printing of the publication were commissioned with support from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's national health and wellbeing programme [Terveydeksi](#) in spring 2026. Minor updates were also made to the publication in connection to this.

2 Objectives, scope, food aid and food security

2.1 Objectives

With this publication, we want to raise awareness among food service and food aid operators on the ways of donating and receiving surplus food safely. We also find it important to share the project's successful experiments of donating surplus food, which have become part of the parties' normal operations, and to present the operating models that have been designed based on these experiments. Interested parties can use this information for their own donation experiments.

The publication is based on the project experiments on donating surplus food from food services. These experiments aimed to:

1. Offer practical solutions to the challenges identified in the initial assessment related to the donation of surplus food from food services, such as chilling, packaging, notifications, pick-up and containers, and ensuring that the whole process is food-safe.

2. Steer edible surplus food to human consumption in accordance with article 29 of the Government Decree on Waste (978/2021): A food industry operator² must donate unused food to be redistributed primarily for human consumption if this can be done without compromising food safety and at a reasonable cost.
3. Bring together food services and food aid operators in a mutually beneficial partnership.
4. Bring new donation streams to food aid alongside traditional donors (industry, wholesalers and stores), as the need for food aid grows.
5. Use the pilot projects to create case studies and operating model(s) for surplus food recovery in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area according to the project plan.

The donors in the project trials were Sodexo, Soupster Family, Palmia, Espoo Catering and

Vantaan Tilapalvelut Vannti. The food waste terminals Stadin safka in Helsinki and Yhteinen pöytä in Vantaa pick up surplus food from cafeteria buffets and transport it to food aid operators. For more information on food waste terminals, please see chapter 2.3.2 of this publication. Espoo has no food waste terminal, so the food aid operators collect the food themselves.

The project experiments in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area were easiest to start with the food services that participated in the initial assessment, which included all of the above-mentioned parties, excluding Soupster Family. The experiments tested the donation process of both chilled and hot food. All but one of the experiments became part of the parties' normal operations in 2025, which means that they can be considered quite successful. The case studies of all the experiments have been published on the project website (in Finnish).

2.2 Scope

In terms of food services, all areas outside the Helsinki Metropolitan Area will be excluded from the publication, as will the food services and food aid operators in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area that have not been involved in the donation experiments of surplus food from food services in cooperation with

this project. The publication also excludes Kauniainen in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, as the representatives only became involved at the very end of the project and there was no time to start the experiments. Food services in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area may have their own donation operations and/or pilots of which we were not aware on the project level.

² According to the Food Act (297/2021), food industry operators include, among others, enterprises engaged in the primary production, preparation, serving and sales of food.

2.3 Food aid

2.3.1 What is food aid?

According to the Finnish Food Authority's food aid guidelines, food aid refers to the donation of food or foodstuffs free of charge or for a nominal compensation to people in need of food aid. The principle is that food donated to food aid must not, under any circumstances, end up back in commercial activities, for example in the display case of a commercial café. The suitable amount of 'nominal compensation' has not been specified, as this must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Food aid is a way to help disadvantaged people and promote social inclusion. More than 1,000 associations, organisations, parishes and other operators organise food aid in Finland, either full-time or alongside other activities. The largest of these are the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Finnish Red Cross (FRC): in 2025, parishes distributed 147,000 food bags and provided 347,000 meals for free or at an affordable price. The FRC distribution services for food aid and payment vouchers had a total of 345,000 customer encounters.

According to Luke's rough estimate – based on interview responses and literature – at least 16–20 million kilos of food are redistributed in Finland every year, and the need for food aid is growing across the country. Food aid operations lean heavily on voluntary work. According to Ruoka-apu.fi's latest report, more than 6,600 volunteers were involved in providing food aid in 2024, but the uncertainty

of funding and changes to wage subsidies bring challenges to the continuity of operations.

The influence of wellbeing services counties varies depending on the region – in some counties, cooperation is going smoothly while in others funding and possibilities for offering employment have declined.

The best-known way to organise food aid is through distribution events. In these events, foodstuffs donated by stores, wholesalers and factories are distributed to visitors either in pre-packed bags or by allowing the visitors to select and pack the products. Community meals, communal lunches and breakfasts and snack services have become more common in food aid in the last decade. Sharing a meal together is a great setting for talking with others, getting to know them and experience meaningful moments.

Regardless of whether food aid is provided through distribution or as communal meals, modern food aid supports the wellbeing and inclusion of the aid recipients also through other means than just nutrition. Guidance and counselling services, group activities and employment promotion work are part of the day-to-day work in food aid. The nationwide Ruoka-apu.fi service, managed by the Church Resources Agency, is intended for anyone seeking and organising food aid, as well as for food donors.

2.3.2 What is a food waste terminal?

A food waste terminal is a regional logistics centre for surplus food. It often works as part of a wider network, such as Yhteinen pöytä in Vantaa or Stadin safka in Helsinki, collecting food from different sources and distributing it to food aid providers such as organisations and parishes. Most of the donated food in the terminals comes from industry and wholesalers (48.1%) and from stores (33.1%). The terminal can also accept large batches that a single food aid operator could not receive, allowing the donor to easily distribute a larger batch of products to several operators in the region.

The food that passes through the food waste terminal is often surplus food but still usable, and aims to reduce food waste and support those in need of food aid. Food waste terminals employ people and allow food to be recycled and distributed more efficiently. The food waste terminals do not currently prepare food or portions for distribution to the network or to be eaten on site or for people to take with them.

During the Hukatonta Vantaa ('Wasteless Vantaa') project (from December 2017 to December 2019), the community-based food aid model Yhteinen pöytä launched in 2015 by the City of Vantaa and the Helsinki parishes was extended to the following 15 municipalities to reduce food waste: Järvenpää, Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, Oulu, Jyväskylä, Rovaniemi, Lahti, Vaasa, Tuusula, Hyvinkää, Kouvola, Hämeenlinna and to some extent Porvoo and Espoo.

Stadin safka is a joint operation of the City of Helsinki and the parish association, which

develops food aid in Helsinki together with food aid operators and uses surplus food³, which would otherwise go to waste, for the benefit of Helsinki residents. The operations were planned and piloted in 2018–2020, and Stadin safka became a permanent operation in January 2021.

As a project focusing on the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, the Food Waste Ecosystem project worked closely together with Yhteinen pöytä and Stadin safka, in particular, as they had the sufficient resources and the will to try out new types of operations as food waste terminals.

2.3.3 Why is it important to donate surplus food from food services to food aid?

The national food waste terminal survey was conducted for the second time in early 2026. The survey was carried out by Ruoka-apu.fi and Natural Resources Institute Finland. The 11 food waste terminals that responded to the survey distribute donated food to 418 different food aid operators. The survey also uses the term 'food waste terminal' to describe logistics centres and food banks operating in the food aid sector.

"The majority of food waste terminals (8/11) reported that there is currently not enough donated food to meet demand. Only two operators reported that they receive enough food for their operations. This is partly due to the decline in donated food from grocery stores, which was an issue highlighted in the terminals' responses. A growing proportion of the discounted products that used to be distributed to food aid are already sold at the stores. Stores' sales management

³ Surplus food is defined in the Finnish Food Authority's food aid guidelines as food that is still usable for human consumption but is at risk of becoming food waste. Surplus food may not be of the quality expected of commercial food in all aspects, so it is typically sold at a discount price or donated to food aid. See also the definition of food waste.

systems have also been successful in reducing wastage.” (Source: <https://ruoka-apu.fi/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Havikkiterminaalien-vuosi-2025-selvitys.pdf>).

According to a situational review published by Ruoka-apu.fi in autumn 2025, there is also higher demand for food to be distributed than there is supply: a total of 73 per cent of respondents reported an increase in the number of customers and 63 per cent reported a decrease in the amount of food available for distribution in 2024. The decrease in the amount of surplus food from stores could partly be offset by surplus food from schools and central kitchens. Of the respondents, 22 per cent distributed surplus food from schools.

The challenge is that potential donors may not always be interested in donating their food or that food aid operators may not have the chance to pick up the food from the donor.

2.4 Food safety

The Finnish Food Authority has updated its guidelines on foodstuffs suitable to be donated to food aid on 7 January 2025. The guidelines are intended for operators providing and distributing food aid (charity organisations, associations and similar food aid operators), donors of food aid and food control authorities supervising the operations. The guidelines deal with the food safety of food aid operations and the interpretations related to these operations. The guidelines also cover some of the basics of food aid, such as registration and control, and foodstuffs suitable for food aid.

Unwillingness to donate food may be due to a lack of information about the possibilities of donating, it may be perceived to be too much work, or it may be due to previous bad experiences. We also came across these views during the initial assessment of the Food Waste Ecosystem project in autumn 2023.

However, surveys conducted during the project with the staff of donating kitchens, food waste terminals and food aid operators show that donating surplus food from food services is not considered a chore, but rather highly rewarding at all stages of the process. These challenges are not insurmountable. Successful donation activities require that the operators get to know each other to establish trust. Additionally, clear guidance and motivation of staff, coordination of cooperation – at least during the initial stages – and food-safe practices throughout the donation process are needed.

The food safety issues identified as challenges in the project’s initial assessment (see section 2.1 of this publication) were clarified in the updated guidelines, which allowed the planning and implementation of pilot projects for donating surplus food.

Prior to the first pilot in Helsinki, food safety issues related to surplus food from food services were reviewed with food inspectors, verifying that the planned model meets food safety requirements. The following is a summary of what all food service operators interested in donating their surplus food, those receiving donated food and those coordinating such activities should know.

2.4.1 Obligation to register

Each operator must register before starting its operations. This obligation applies to both donors and the parties receiving the donated food. [ilppa](#) is a notification service where operators can submit notifications, statements and applications required by food and health protection authorities. In most cases, an inspector will inspect the establishment at the start of operations or, at the latest, within 12 months of receipt of the notification. Usually, the inspector will agree on the date of the first inspection in advance with the location in question. The processing time is specific to each control unit, and the date of the inspection is indicated in the inspection certificate sent after the notification has been processed. In Helsinki, for example, the first inspection of locations preparing food (e.g. central kitchens, restaurants) is carried out one month after registration and inspections of food aid operators within six months of registration.

The registered and inspected sites and their ratings are shown on the [Oivahymy website](#). The duty of in-house control also applies to both parties. In-house control is the operator's own system for ensuring that food is safe and complies with the requirements of the Food Act.

Some operations in the food sector can be so low-risk or small-scale that it is not necessary to use control resources on inspecting them regularly (risk category 0). For example, charity organisations that carry out food aid activities are in risk category 0, i.e. they submit a notification of their food sector operations and are then registered in the system for inspected locations. Based on the notification,

the inspectors will then assess whether the location requires an initial inspection. If the food to be handled or distributed is perishable, an initial inspection is always carried out. If the food business operator only distributes dry goods, vegetables or other foodstuffs that can be stored at room temperature, no initial inspection is required after receipt of the notification. However, it may be necessary to interview the operator when receiving the notification, even if no inspection is carried out. If repeated shortcomings are found in a 0-risk category location, regular inspections can be started. [The Finnish Food Authority's risk category guide](#) has more information on the matter (in Finnish).

2.4.2 Suitability and functioning of the premises

Food premises inspections assess factors such as the structure of the location and the adequacy and functionality of equipment. The premises must be adequate and comply with [The Finnish Food Authority's guidelines on food hygiene in registered food businesses](#). In terms of operations, the temperature, cooling and protection of the food donated to the food aid are key: for example, hot food must be served at a temperature of at least +60 degrees Celsius and cold food (e.g. side salads) at a temperature of no more than +6 degrees Celsius for the entire serving period in order for them to be suitable for donation (see chapter 2.4.3). Hot food must be chilled in accordance with the legislation (article 23(1) (10) of the Decree 318/2021 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry).

If the inspection reveals that the premises and equipment of the restaurants are not suitable for the operations being carried out, corrective

actions are ordered to be completed by a certain deadline. In some cases, the operations may also be suspended or restricted. This is part of the regular monitoring of all restaurants, whether they donate surplus food or not.

Food services interested in donating surplus food should contact the City's own food inspector or advice centre, which will direct the contact request to the inspector of the location (e.g. kymp.elintarviketurvallisuus@hel.fi in Helsinki). This will help assess whether donating the surplus catered food to food aid is possible for the restaurant.

2.4.3 Utilising perishable food in food aid after being served once

Perishable food⁴ once served to customers or diners in a food establishment, such as a restaurant, may not be served to customers a second time (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Decree 318/2021, article 23). However, according to a memo of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Decree 318/2021 on 31 August 2021, it is possible to e.g. donate such surplus food to food aid. According to the Finnish Food Authority's interpretation, perishable food once served buffet-style can be donated to food aid under the following conditions:

1. The food is organoleptically impeccable.
2. Uninterrupted cold/hot chain has been ensured at all stages.

3. The hot food must have been served at a temperature of at least + 60 °C throughout the serving period, so that it can be
 - donated to food aid as hot food, or
 - chilled to + 6°C within 4 hours on the same day (either at the serving point or at the food aid operator's premises⁵) and then donated as chilled.
 - chilled to + 6 °C within 4 hours on the same day and frozen immediately after the cooling process. In this case, it is recommended that the food be donated as frozen.
4. Cold foods, such as salads, cold cuts: can be donated when the food
 - has been kept at a temperature of + 6 °C or less (no time limit) throughout the serving period in the location where it was originally served
 - has remained at a temperature of no more than + 12 °C for a maximum of 4 hours during its entire serving period at the serving location, in which case
 - it may be delivered to the consumer receiving the food aid within the 4-hour serving period, but not afterwards.
 - it must not be chilled to + 6 °C or lower for subsequent donation.

⁴ In the Food Act, perishable food is defined as food requiring temperature control, which, due to its qualities, provide good conditions for microbial reproduction and must therefore be stored at a temperature other than room temperature, but which is not frozen food (Food Act 297/2021, section 5(29)).

⁵ According to the Finnish Food Authority's food aid guidelines, a food aid operator is defined as a charity organisation, charitable community or other operator that provides or distributes food aid to people in need. Food aid operators and individuals providing food aid are treated as food business operators ((EC) No 178/2002 section 3(3) and the European Union Guidelines on Food Donations 2017, later the EU Food Donation Guidelines).

The food service operator may serve or otherwise hand over such food to the consumers as hot, cold or frozen.

Perishable food that has been served to customers once elsewhere in a buffet-style setup **can only be re-served once through food aid**. Once a food aid operator serves such food, it can therefore only be served that one time. Any uneaten food must be disposed of properly (see Chapter 11.7 Disposal of leftover food in the Finnish Food Authority's guidelines). However, there are no legal limits on the number of times food stored at room temperature can be served.

In addition to the above-mentioned section of the food aid guidelines, the Finnish Food Authority has issued the following guidance on reheating:

When reheating food, it is essential that the riskiest temperature zone (from +6 to +60 degrees Celsius) is passed as quickly as possible and that the food is heated throughout to above the set serving temperature of a minimum of +60 degrees Celsius before serving it (i.e. to above +70 degrees Celsius).

When using a microwave oven, the food heats up unevenly, different parts of it to different temperatures. This also means that the microbes are destroyed unevenly in different parts of the food. When using a microwave oven, the best heating results are obtained by mixing the food to be heated (if possible) and then continuing the heating process.

Regular temperature measurement of reheated food must be part of in-house control.

2.4.4 Starting the donation operations of surplus food from food services

From the perspective of food safety, in addition to taking the above into account, the parties must agree between themselves whether the food is to be delivered hot or cold. In addition, the basic requirements for donating surplus food from food services should be clarified and reviewed together: appropriate chilling and refrigeration equipment, dishes and containers, sufficient space for packaging, transport and transport boxes. Writing down and defining the responsibilities of different operators is important to avoid any confusion as to who does what when starting the operations.

Temperatures and their monitoring and verification play a key role in food safety, as do the delivery, transport and reception of food. The donor is required to ensure that the food is properly chilled and that records are kept of this. The recipient must ensure the temperature of the food and its adequate refrigeration. The recipient's facilities for handling, heating, serving (hot and cold food) or packaging food must be adequate, including kitchen facilities, equipment and storage facilities.

Persons handling unpackaged⁶, perishable food must have a hygiene passport. However, this is not required e.g. for persons handling whole vegetables.

The transport of food must be organised in a way that the hygiene quality of the food is not compromised during transport. Food must be transported in such a way that any odour, taste or other harmful characteristics are not transferred to the food from the transport vehicles, boxes, other foodstuffs or goods.

As not all organisations that receive surplus food actually distribute food aid as their main duty, but rather provide services such as substance abuse services, these matters may not be self-evident to the operators. In Helsinki and Vantaa, the food waste terminals have ensured that surplus food from food services is transported to operators who meet these requirements. The operators have been advised in the matter as necessary. The safest way to start donating surplus food is with a competent food waste terminal: their own operations are usually in order and they know their customers and the City's food inspectors.

⁶ According to the Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, unpackaged foodstuffs refer to food that is packaged by the consumer (self-service) or packaged at the consumer's request at the point of sale (service sales) or packaged at the point of sale for immediate sale or served at the point of sale to the end consumer, ready for consumption (834/2014, section 3(2)(2)).

3 Pilot projects of donating surplus food and co-development

3.1 Donating surplus food from food services to food aid in Helsinki

The first experiment in donating surplus food was launched in Helsinki between Sodexo and Stadin safka in March 2024. The pilot was designed at a meeting convened by the project in early February, where the project parties could directly agree on the practical arrangements, thanks to their good preparatory work. It was agreed that Sodexo would chill the leftover food from lunch service and Stadin safka would pick it up the next day. The pilot involved five donor locations⁷ and three food aid operators, to which Stadin safka delivered the food. The initial duration of the pilot was set at three months.

A press release was sent out about the launch of the experiment, which was well received and shared by the media, including Helsingin Sanomat and Yle. The experiment was evaluated in April with an interim feedback survey to the food aid operators' staff: the experiment received praise from both sides and was subsequently extended to new locations in the autumn. The experiment became part of the parties' normal operations from the beginning of 2025 onwards.

The news shared during spring and the workshop meetings likely had an impact on the launch of similar experiments with Palmia and Soutpser Family in Helsinki in autumn 2024. These experiments also went so well that it was announced in January 2025 that all the Helsinki experiments would be integrated as part of normal operations. This was nothing short of miraculous: the challenges highlighted in the initial assessment of the project had been successfully addressed, even though in autumn 2023 it had still seemed that there were too many obstacles to overcome for both donors and food aid operators! The challenges highlighted at the time included equity, storage facilities, logistics, legislation, the Finnish Food Authority's guidelines, in-house control, chilling, packaging, notifications, collections, containers, product labels, outsiders in the premises of an educational institution, resources, the novelty of donating food as a practice, expectations of the recipient's level of professionalism, lack of surplus food to donate and the risk of preparing excess food, and lack of information about potential recipients.

⁷ location = an individual kitchen/restaurant/cafeteria

During the project, a total of 25,500 kg of surplus food was donated through Stadin safka between March 2024 and December 2025 to people in need of food aid in Helsinki: a great achievement, as this amount would otherwise have ended up in biowaste! At the same time, all donors have implemented various wastage reduction measures. The project parties have also stressed that the purpose of donations is not to increase the amount of surplus food, but that the prevention of wastage is still a priority.

In March 2025, a new kind of surplus food donation experiment was launched in Helsinki between one of Soupster Family's locations and Andreaskyrkan, a food aid provider: the food waste terminal Stadin safka was not involved and the donor did not chill the food, but instead the food aid provider collects the food while it's still hot, immediately after lunch. Like other food aid providers, Andreaskyrkan has seen a significant increase in its clientele as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and rising food prices: the food distribution service receives around 500–600 clients per week, so there is a real need for the donated surplus food. This pilot also went well: it was extended to another donor location in autumn 2025 and became part of the parties' normal operations at the end of the year. The operational model based on the pilot is described in chapter 4.2.

In October 2025, a similar surplus food donation experiment directly between the donor and the food aid operator was launched in Helsinki. Every other Friday, the mental health association Etappi ry collected leftover food from a Sodexo location immediately after lunch. The surplus food was then immediately eaten at Malmin Varustamo parish that was hosting a meeting for a group of men. This experiment helped with utilising the surplus

food from Fridays, as Stadin safka does not do any pick-ups on Fridays. The experiment lasted only four times due to the duration of the group's meeting period. As above, the location of the food aid operator near the donation point was crucial for the donation of hot food in this experiment. This experiment also followed the approach described in chapter 4.2.

In the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, it is quite rare for a food aid operator to be able to pick up, let alone chill, surplus food from buffets.



Figure 1. A Sodexo employee of a donor location transferring surplus food from a lunch service to a chiller. Image: Veera Laanti, City of Helsinki.

3.2 Donating surplus food from food services to food aid in Vantaa

In Vantaa, too, experiments with donating surplus food had already been discussed in February 2024. The practical planning of the first experiment started between Vantaa's Tilapalvelut Vantti Oy and the food waste terminal Yhteinen pöytä and the project managers in Helsinki and Vantaa immediately after the first experiment in Helsinki started in March. A further meeting was held between the parties to review the practicalities at the end of April 2024.

The experiment was set to start in early May 2024 and run for four weeks. In this experiment, hot food was donated from two educational institutions, as Vantti did not have the option to chill it in these institutions. Yhteinen pöytä collected and delivered the food directly to the food aid operators. The experiment was evaluated immediately after its end in late May: it was concluded that it was not realistic to expand the donation of hot food without compromising the current logistics of Yhteinen pöytä. It was realised during the project that there should be completely separate logistics for the distribution of hot food, and the experiment was ended by mutual agreement.

However, the cooperation between the parties went well and they wanted to continue it with a chilled food donation experiment. Its planning was started in autumn 2024 and the experiment was launched in spring 2025. The experiment ended for one donation location at the end of September and continued as part of normal operations for the other.

Sodexo expanded its donation of surplus food to Vantaa after the good experiences gained in Helsinki: A month-long donation trial of surplus buffet food from food services was planned and implemented with Yhteinen pöytä in May-June 2024 at one donating location. The operating model was the same as in Helsinki, i.e. the donation location's kitchen chilled the food and the food waste terminal picked it up the next day. The feedback from the parties involved was again very positive, though some areas for improvement were identified: for example, recording the quantities of food correctly into the system was refined through cooperation. The experiment was continued and extended after the summer break for schools at the end of August. It later became part of the parties' normal operations.

Soupster Family started donating surplus food from its Vantaa locations even before the City of Helsinki: the experiment started in Vantaa already in May 2024 between Dylan Tiksi and Tikkurilan A-kilta. A food waste terminal was not involved in this experiment, and instead the food aid operator (A-kilta) collected the chilled food themselves. The experiment was continued and evaluated in August: everything was found to have gone smoothly and in good cooperation, so this experiment was also introduced as part of normal operations.

Palmia also started donating surplus food from its Vantaa locations before Helsinki: the pilot started in Vantaa already at the end of August 2024, with four donating locations. The pilot between Palmia and Yhteinen pöytä took place from 27 August to 17 December 2024. The donation of surplus food then became part of the parties' normal operations. During the project, a total of 11,400 kg of surplus food was donated through Yhteinen pöytä between May 2024 and December 2025 to people in need of food aid in Vantaa.

In the project's spring 2024 survey to the food aid distribution network, six Vantaa food aid operators had answered "yes" to the question of whether they would be interested in picking up food themselves from a donation location nearby. However, Yhteinen pöytä assessed that none of these operators had the practical capacity to collect the food. (This was also the case in Helsinki: Stadin safka estimated that only two food aid operators would in practice be able to pick up surplus food without the help of a food waste terminal, although several expressed interest in picking up surplus food in the survey. Of these two, one proved incapable of doing anything extra due to being in the middle of a reorganisation, while an experiment was started with the other.). All in all, the food waste terminals have played a key role in the experiments, and the model based on food waste terminals is described in Chapter 4.1.



Figure 2. Hanna Kuisma, Community Manager, and Soile-Maria Linnemäki, Service Supervisor, celebrate the Milan Pact Awards received by Yhteinen pöytä in October 2025. Image: Heta Hyvärinen, City of Helsinki.

3.3 Donating surplus food from food services to food aid in Espoo

Espoo was the first among the cities in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area to take action, as it conducted a survey on the possibilities of using surplus food among food service providers and schools already in the summer of 2023. The survey asked food services about the quantities, type, donation and sale of surplus food. Food aid operators were asked e.g. what quantities of surplus food they are able to accept, whether they are interested in increasing this quantity and whether they have previous experience of reusing ready-to-eat food from restaurants. Both parties were also asked about ways to increase the recovery of surplus food, and about their opportunities for chilling food and interest in participating in surplus food donation experiments.

At the time, the Food Waste Ecosystem project had just been launched in April 2023, and Espoo was not officially one of the project implementers, but there was great interest in what Espoo was doing and a desire to work together. After all, the project covered the entire Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The representatives of the Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Services County's food aid project, funded by Espoo food services and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, were interviewed as part of the project's initial assessment in autumn 2023.

The first joint planning meeting between the Food Waste Ecosystem project and Espoo's own food aid project was held in January 2024. The meeting was attended by a large number of representatives of the parties interested in cooperation: from the project's side, the City of Vantaa's Vitality Services, the City of Helsinki and Laurea University of Applied Sciences, and, from Espoo, Mannaapu, Edistia, Kaivo Espoo ry, Espoonlahti Parish and Espoo Food Services. All parties had a strong will to experiment with different ways of using donated surplus food from food services and to work together to find shared operating models in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Together, they wanted to find solutions to the problem of food waste in educational institutions and to the challenges faced by food aid operators to receive more donations for their growing client numbers.

Espoo Catering and Sodexo were mentioned as potential donors, although the representatives of these food services were not present in the meeting. However, a meeting had already been arranged with Espoo Catering on the subject. It was considered important to document the pilots in order to assess what worked well and what should be improved further. The updated guidelines by the Finnish Food Authority were eagerly awaited in order to get started, and they arrived the following week.

The practical arrangements were agreed on at the next planning meeting in early February, and the pilot was launched in March, more or less in pace with the first experiment in Helsinki. The partners in the Espoo pilot were Manna-Apu, the Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Services County's food aid project, Espoo Catering, Sodexo and Espoo Food Services. It was agreed that chilled surplus school food would be collected from a total of four schools on four days a week. Later, at the beginning of June, one daycare centre joined the donors. The food from there was picked up while still warm and then cooled down at Manna-Apu. However, this hot food collection had to be stopped at the end of the summer because the chiller in Manna-Apu broke down.

After the summer, the kitchen operations of two of the schools involved changed and they could no longer continue as donors. They were replaced by two other schools. There were therefore still four donor schools by the end of 2024. In 2025, the school food pilot continued

as part of Manna-Apu's basic operations, and Palmia joined the list of donors also in Espoo in the autumn. During the project, a total of 21,352 kg of surplus food from food services was donated through Manna-Apu between March 2024 and December 2025 to people in need of food aid in Espoo. The operational model based on the experiments is described in chapter 4.3.



Figure 3. Donated surplus food from food services being packaged for recipients of food aid at Manna-Apu. Image: Laura Kallahti, Laura Kallahti Photography.

3.4 Co-development by Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo

A workshop in Helsinki in April 2024 organised by the project provided the food services and food aid operators in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area with the first opportunity to take part in co-development on the theme of using surplus food as defined in the project plan. The participants to the workshop heard about the first experiences of the experiment of donating surplus food from food services between Sodexo and Stadin safka. They also had the chance to get to know each other and exchange their thoughts about the topic, also with representatives from Tampere food bank who had been invited to the event. Trips to Tampere and Vaasa had taken place earlier, in autumn 2023, to learn more about donating surplus food from food services. The experiments

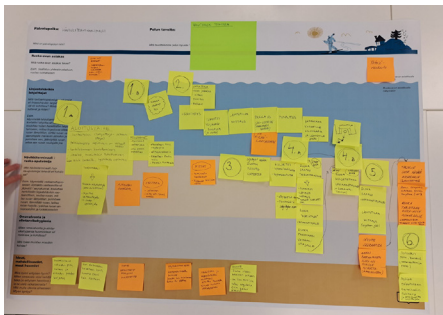
themselves and the related meetings and visits to different locations were, of course, also very much part of the co-development – this was not limited to just the project workshops.

The next workshop was held six months later in November, when all the 2024 donation experiments in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area were reviewed together according to the project plan, reflecting on the experiences gained and lessons learned. It was also an opportunity to hear about the Zipli app for the first time. The app development was started together in the autumn to create an electronic meeting place that connects donors and food aid operators.



A workshop was held for the project partners on the development of the application, and the application was piloted in 2025 in Helsinki as part of the Kokeilukiihdyttämö experimentation accelerator coordinated by the City Executive Office.

Figure 4. Ninja Fedy presenting the Zipli application for the first time to the app's target group at a project workshop in November 2024. Image: Heta Hyvärinen, City of Helsinki.



The co-development continued in the April 2025 workshop: the participants worked on three different approaches in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, based on the pilot projects for donating surplus food from food services. These are described in more detail in the next chapter.

Figure 5. First version of the operating model 1 at a project workshop in April 2025. Image: Heta Hyvärinen, City of Helsinki.

4 Operating models

4.1 Operating model 1: Food waste terminal model for chilled food

Operating model 1 (figure 6) was the result of surplus food donation experiments in Helsinki and Vantaa with food waste terminals (Stadin safka and Yhteinen pöytä). The key to this model is that a food waste terminal or other logistics operator/logistics centre acts as a link between the food service and the food aid operator, and that the food service chills the food.

4.1.1 Preparation stage: Agreeing on common practices

There are many ways to **contact and get to know** other parties: in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, the Food Waste Ecosystem project played a key role as a 'bridge builder', facilitating first contacts between the different parties through seminars and workshops. Local food aid operators can be searched through the [ruoka-apu.fi](https://www.ruoka-apu.fi) website, for example. In many regions, there are also networks of food aid operators or logistics centres that can be used to reach the recipients of surplus food. Donors of surplus food can be found among local educational institutions' kitchens or lunch restaurants, for example.

The first step is to arrange a face-to-face or remote meeting between the interested parties. We call this phase before the actual donation and receipt of the donation the **preparatory phase**, where the parties discuss the conditions of their cooperation and **familiarise themselves with [The Finnish Food Authority's food aid guidelines](#)**. Food

inspectors should be contacted at an early stage of the preparation and, if possible, invited to a preparatory meeting. When the preparatory phase is managed well, the operation has a better chance of success and the whole thing runs more smoothly.

The ground rules and practical matters are also agreed during the preparatory phase, such as:

- the food to be donated: type of food (categories), temperature, quantity and frequency of collection
- containers: transported back and forth between the operators, agreement on which party's containers and transport boxes to use, possible purchases needed
- communication: agreeing on internal (communication channel, e.g. calls, WhatsApp group or other app) and external communication (e.g. a newsletter)
- division of responsibilities and processes between and within the parties: temperature measurements (who measures and at what point), sharing allergen information and similar data, schedules and exceptions (whether regular breaks/interruptions are already known, e.g. summer and other holiday periods, etc.), what to do in case of exceptions/problems (what to do if food is too hot, dishes are dirty, etc.)

If the process still looks feasible after these things have been assessed, visits and a tour of the operations are agreed: the routes for drivers and other logistics aspects are agreed on during the on-site visits. Close initial communications, visits and follow-up meetings improve trust and the chances of success. Feedback should be given from both sides, so that the practical process is honed to best serve both parties.

A trial period should be agreed for the donation of surplus food from buffets. After the period, the parties decide on whether to continue the donations as part of normal operations: three months proved to be a good trial period in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The preparatory phase ends with **briefings for all staff involved.**

The food waste terminal and the food aid operator go through the same preparation phase, i.e. the food waste terminal instructs the food aid operator on what to do. At the same time, they can discuss on how to consider the needs and habits of the food aid clients. If the food aid operators receiving the surplus food through the food waste terminal are known before the first meeting of the parties, they can be included in the meeting with the donor.

4.1.2 Donating

The actual donation process for surplus food from buffets starts with a kitchen professional from the food service in question checking whether the leftover food is eligible for donation according to the Finnish Food Authority's food aid guidelines: **Hot food must be served at a temperature of at least +60 degrees Celsius and cold food (e.g. side salads) must be served at a temperature of no more than +6 degrees Celsius for the entire duration of the serving period in order to be eligible for donation.**

The hot food is then chilled according to the instructions of each donor's in-house control. Before being transferred to the chiller, **the temperature of the food is measured and the food is packed into GN containers** and weighed. Depending on what has been agreed in the preparatory phase, the food waste terminal is either notified of the food to be collected or, in the case of a regular pick-up, only notified if there is no food to be collected. **The food service reports the food's information to the food waste terminal as agreed:** In Helsinki, the kitchen of the donating location will label the container with basic information about the food (name, common allergens, date) or possibly attach a printout of the product label with the allergens, if one is available. In Vantaa, the kitchen staff of the donating location will inform the driver of Yhteinen pöytä food waste terminal of the temperature and weight of the food when the food is picked up. This information is entered in the donor's system and is also recorded by the Yhteinen pöytä for statistical purposes.

Depending on the location, the dishes are left in the chiller overnight (as they do not necessarily cool down before the end of the working day) or transferred to the cold room at the end of the day (if cool enough). Cold storage boxes can usually be packed either when the food is placed in the cold room to wait transport or when the transport arrives.

4.1.3 Transporting food

The food waste terminal's driver will collect the food from the location(s) reported by the donor. The food is transported in a cold storage box and a refrigerated truck. Stadin safka also uses cold packs in its cold storage boxes to keep food cooler during transport. At this point, Yhteinen pöytä in Vantaa moves directly to stage 4.1.4, i.e. the food does not go through the terminal.

Once at the food waste terminal, **the food is weighed, its temperature measured and the food's information is recorded**: the incoming products, their weights and temperature are recorded in the food waste terminal's own tracking system at this stage. This is a good practice in terms of the food inspectors and traceability. **The food waste terminal also ensures that the food information is passed on to the next stage** and checks the information regarding allergens, dates, donor name, etc. The food waste terminal also sorts the food containers for their recipients according to the number of visitors and demand, and then packs and transports them to the recipient, the food aid operator.

4.1.4 Serving and distributing food

When the food arrives, the food aid operator will measure its temperature and transfer it to the fridge or freezes it for later use. The food aid operator can **pack food in boxes to be distributed in a food bag (see models 2 and 3) or serve the food to clients on the same or the next day, reheated. The temperature of the food is measured before serving (+70 degrees Celsius) and any leftover food is disposed of after serving.**

Helsinki's Stadin safka has a policy that the food aid operator washes and dries the GN containers and their lids in the end and takes them back to the food waste terminal as cleaned. They are transported back to the donor from the terminal. Yhteinen pöytä

at Vantaa does not require the food aid operator to wash the dishes, as long as they are wiped clean of most of the food traces. This is because it is difficult to wash the large containers if there are no proper kitchen facilities and if the container does not fit into a standard dishwasher. Both Stadin safka and Yhteinen pöytä have their own containers, which are mainly used and circulated in this model. The dishes are not returned from the food aid operator to the food service donating the surplus food: the food waste terminals always take clean dishes to the donors on their visits.

4.1.5 Other things to note

On a national level, it is challenging for the process of food aid operators operating with project funding when this funding is on pause or ended. The turnover of staff and volunteers also poses challenges: it is then particularly important to provide training on how to donate and receive surplus food from buffets.

Food should be packed in an appropriately sized container: an excessively large or small container leads to problems such as soups spilling over. The food waste terminals and food aid operators must also remember to wash and dry the containers and transport them in a way that ensures their cleanliness. The first experiment of donating surplus food from food services in Helsinki proved that green salads did not tolerate transport well, so their donations were stopped.

4.2 Operating model 2: Direct donation model for hot food

Operating model 2 (figure 7) was the last to emerge in Helsinki, when an experiment was set up to donate surplus food without a food waste terminal's involvement (Stadin safka), directly between the donor (Soupster Family) and the food aid operator (Andreaskyrkan). The key to this model is the short distance between the donor's location and the food aid operator's location, and the fact that the donation is hot food, which is then chilled and packed in take-away containers by the food aid operator. This model requires the food aid operator to have its own chiller, which is very rare. The preparatory phase is the same as in operating model 1 (see 4.1).

4.2.1 Donating

The actual food donation process starts with the food service's kitchen professional checking what food is left over from lunch and packing the hot leftover food directly from the buffet line into the GN containers. They will then measure the food's starting temperature and transfer the dishes to the thermo-boxes. The kitchen professional also ensures that the menus and allergen information are enclosed.

4.2.2 Transporting, storing, serving and distributing food

The food aid operator picks up the hot food directly from the restaurant immediately after lunch. Once back at their own location, the food aid operator measures the temperature of the food, which must be above 60 degrees for hot food and below 12 degrees for cold food. The food is then transferred to a chiller where the temperature is brought down to 0-2 degrees Celsius. After cooling, the food is packed in freezer boxes marked with the food information. The boxes are frozen, except on Wednesdays and Thursdays, when they are distributed directly to food aid clients for them to take home. Some of the food is also served on the pick-up day at a communal lunch. The GN containers are washed and returned to the restaurant daily in connection with the pick-up.

4.2.3 Other things to note

The challenge in this approach is how to find partners without the network of the food waste terminal available. The surplus food application currently under development or a map on the Ruoka-apu.fi website showing available food aid operators could make it easier to find partners. In addition, take-away containers are expensive, and so the operators should aim to find sponsors or negotiate on discounts to purchase larger quantities. The food donor and the recipient getting to know each other before starting the process is especially important in this operating model.

4.3 Operating model 3: Direct donation model for chilled food

Operating model 3 (figure 8) emerged as a result of the food donation experiments carried out in Espoo in the Western Uusimaa Wellbeing Services County's food aid project. As above, the key to this model is that there is no food waste terminal involved (as there isn't one in Espoo). The donations are made directly from the kitchens of educational institutions to the food aid operator (Manna-Apu), which packs the food also in take-away boxes. The difference to the previous model is that this model donates the food as either chilled or frozen. The preparatory phase is the same as in models 1 and 2 (see 4.1 and 4.2).

4.3.1 Donating

The actual process of donating surplus food from food services starts with the donor's kitchen professional moving the food eligible for donation to the chiller immediately after lunch and notifying the food aid operator of the surplus food. The food is kept in the chiller from four hours to the next day, depending on whether it is frozen and the pick-up time. A kitchen professional will check the temperature of the food and pack it for transport.

4.3.2 Transporting, storing, serving and distributing food

The food aid operator will collect the chilled or frozen food the next day from the school in a refrigerated truck, using thermo-boxes. On arrival, the food is transferred directly to the freezer if it has already been frozen by the donor. Chilled food, on the other hand, is then divided into portions and packed into deli food boxes (package with a heat-sealing foil), labelled with product information labels (colour-coded for allergens) and placed in the freezer room.

The food is then reheated and served at a communal meal within two months of being picked up. A poster on the wall of the location explains the colour codes to the food aid clients. During the communal meal, it must be ensured that the food's temperature remains above 60°C for the duration of the meal (i.e. one hour).

4.3.3 Other things to note

The challenge with this approach is the availability of GN containers and the packaging costs (10 cents per package). One food aid operator in Espoo collects the food directly from the donor, warm, and chills it in its own chiller, as in model 2 (see 4.2). About 2,000–3,000 portions are distributed in Espoo each month with this model. In the feedback received, people have stated that food from schools is good, and there is demand for more.

The Finnish Food Authority's comments on this model:

This is a "product packaged for immediate sale", which is considered to be an unpackaged foodstuff. This means that it is not compulsory for the labelling to be on the packaging. However, the name of the food and the allergen information must also be provided by the food aid operator, primarily for unpackaged foods. The information must be provided in writing, near the unpackaged food in some clear manner (e.g. a brochure, bulletin board, other clear method) and linked to the product in question.

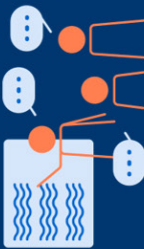
The food aid guidelines allow for providing information on unpackaged foodstuffs packaged for immediate sale primarily in writing, but also orally under certain circumstances. If the information is given orally, an easily visible and clear placard or notice board or similar in the vicinity of the food must indicate that information about the food is available from the staff on request, for example: 'For further information about the food and its potential allergens, please ask our staff'. As an exception, stating the meat's country of origin is not required for food served at a food aid venue that is prepared at a service location.

In principle, the Finnish Food Authority sees no obstacle to using the colour coding method, as long as there is no risk of confusion. Even if a family has the opportunity to pick up food several days a week, traceability can still be organised in the operations as described. Guidance on packaged food in food aid operations is presented in sections 11.6.2 and 11.6.3 of the food aid guidelines. The guidelines describe the information required for packaged and unpackaged foodstuffs. Sections 11.6.1 - Packaged foods and 11.6.4 - Incorrect or incomplete labelling should also be considered. PLEASE NOTE! The control unit may, however, require the operator to apply a different solution on sharing food information in specific situations, if the control unit decrees that the method described above does not meet the legislated requirements in comparison to the operations in practice. (Source: Iiris Myllymäki, Finnish Food Authority, email 29 August 2025).

Operating model 1:

Food waste terminal model for chilled food

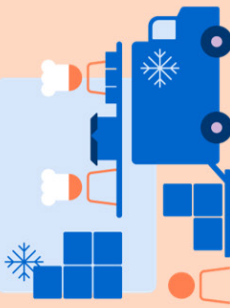
PREPARATION STAGE: Agreeing on common practices between all parties



- Familiarisation with the Finnish Food Authority's food aid guidelines
- Agreeing on the ground rules, practicalities and the trial period
- Notification of the plans to food authorities
- Briefing of staff

DONATION: Food service

- complies with the in-house control plan
- chills the food
- ensures temperature
- packs the food for transport
- reports the food details, quantity in kilos and temperature to the terminal as agreed



TRANSPORT FROM THE DONOR TO THE FOOD AID OPERATOR:

Food waste terminal

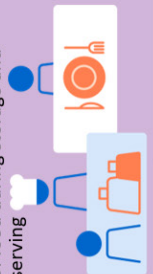
- ensures the correct temperature during transport
- finds a suitable recipient for the food
- passes on the food information to the food aid operator
- records the quantity of food and ensures its traceability



SERVING AND DISTRIBUTING FOOD:

Food aid provider

- packs food into portions and distributes them to people to take home OR
- heats up and serves the food to visitors for them to eat on site
- ensures the correct temperature of food during storage and serving



WASHING AND RETURNING DISHES:

- The dishes are returned to the food waste terminal with the next surplus food transport and from there to the donor



Figure 6: Operating model 1: Image: Saana Vainio, Creative Day and Heta Hyvärinen, City of Helsinki

Operating model 2:

Direct donation model for hot food

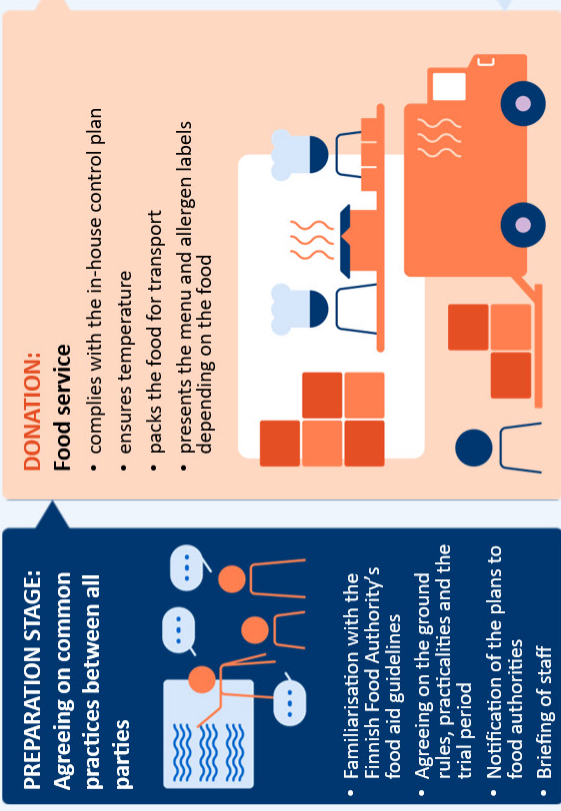


Figure 7. Operating model 2. Image: Saana Vainio, Creative Day and Heta Hyvärinen, City of Hel-sinki

Operating model 3:

Direct donation model for chilled food

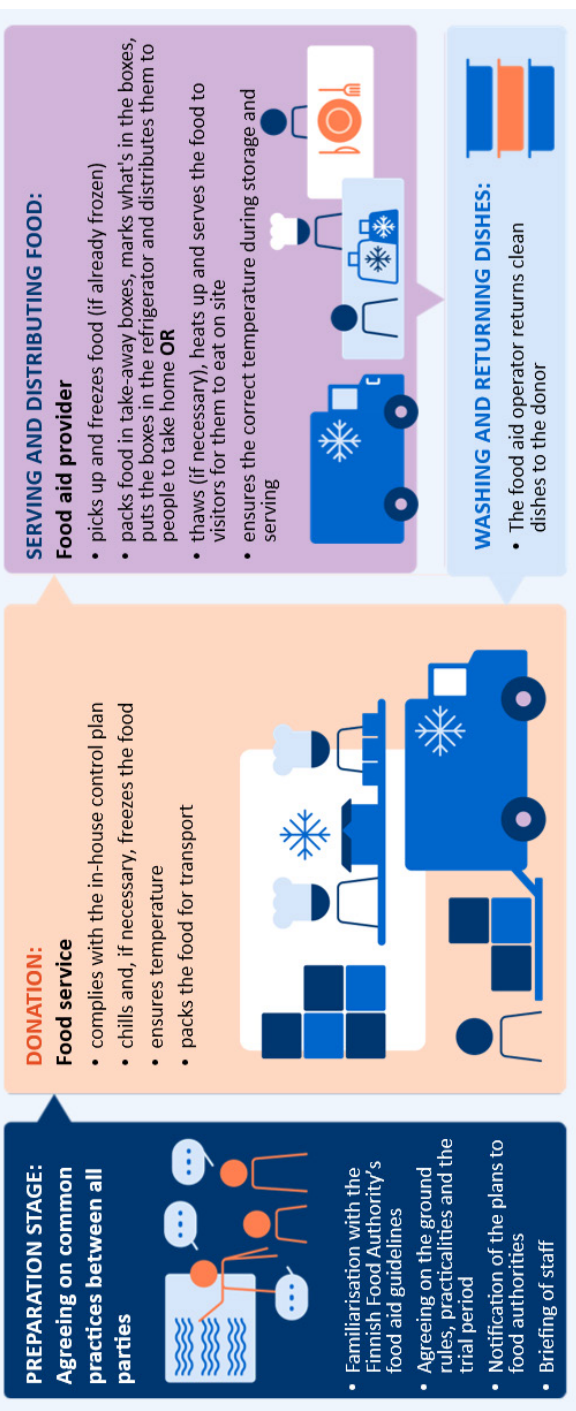


Figure 8. Operating model 3. Image: Saana Vainio, Creative Day and Heta Hyvärinen, City of Helsinki

5 Summary

All the food services and food aid operators involved in the project's experiments have the will to increase the utilisation of surplus food. Many of the challenges in donating surplus food identified in the initial assessment of the project are related to food safety, but these are not insurmountable: The Finnish Food Authority's updated guidelines allow donations of surplus food that has been served once, as long as temperature requirements and other guidelines are followed.

In practice, daycare centres generate very little or no surplus food that is still edible in terms of food safety, but schools, staff canteens and hotels with buffet-style food service still have plenty of potential for donating surplus food. This requires that the food services not only have the will but also the knowledge about who could collect the food and under what conditions (containers, in-house control, frequency of collection, notification, etc.). For the time being, selling surplus food is still far more popular than donating it, due to the challenges of donating and the potential income generated by selling it. There is also still potential to increase sales.

Despite the challenges identified in the initial assessment and during the experiments, the experiments have been quite successful in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and, with one exception, have been continued as part of normal operations. Donation operations have also been extended to new locations of the same donor, which has inspired new donors and food aid operators to join in – and hopefully this publication will do the same! An experiment

is not a failure even if it is ended: we warmly encourage you to experiment and innovate with an open mind. Sometimes solutions can be found in unexpected places!

Although donated food from food services is still only a fraction of the surplus food that goes through food aid operations, it is important: feedback from the experiments shows that for many people, the donated food is the only hot meal of the day, and food aid clients have been grateful for a good, ready-made meal. Donors, for their part, have been pleased that they have not needed to sort the food they worked hard to prepare into biowaste and that they have also been able to contribute to charity.

This is why it's important to all parties to share information about their partners to their staff: working together is more motivating when you know where the food is coming from and how it is used. The process is driven by individuals inspired to act, with their joys and sorrows. Communication is a key part of testing new models: getting to know each other, explaining the basic operations and the motivations behind them, and writing a press release or a newsletter together when starting operations or achieving results. By sharing information about these experiments and operating models, we hope to give the readers new knowledge, motivation and inspiration for similar experiments.

We warmly thank all those who participated in the experiments and we welcome all new projects and experiments! This has been a great start.

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Ruoka-apuohje – Finnish Food Authority

Food Act

Ohje rekisteröidyn elintarviketoiminnan elintarvikehygieniasta

Elintarvikehuoneiston ja kontaktimateriaalitoiminnan riskiluokitus ja elintarvikelainsäädännön mukaisen valvontatarpeen määrittäminen – Finnish Food Authority

City of Helsinki's press releases and news articles about donation experiments:

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<https://www.hel.fi/fi/uutiset/paakaupunkiseudun-havikkiruokakokeilut-onnistuivat-yli-odotusten>

Description

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Summary:

This publication concerns the donation of surplus food generated in food services to food aid in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. The publication is intended for food services interested in donating surplus food and food aid operators interested in receiving it. It provides an overview of food aid activities, food safety issues related to donation and surplus food donation experiments in the Helsinki metropolitan area as well as the operating models drafted based on them.

The publication is based on surplus food donation experiments carried out between 2024 and 2025 as part of the 'Food waste ecosystem' project and the background materials mentioned in the list of references. The following catering services donated surplus food as part of the experiments: Vantaan Tilapalvelut Vantti, Espoo Catering, Palmia, Sodexo and Soupster Family. Waste food was collected directly from the donors by the food waste terminals Stadin safka in Helsinki and Yhteinen pöytä (Shared table) in Vantaa, and through them by several food aid operators in Helsinki and Vantaa, A-kilta in Vantaa, Andreaskyrkan in Helsinki and Manna-apu in Espoo.

The report is a part of the Food Waste Ecosystem project that aims to reduce food waste and promote efficient utilisation of surplus food in food services in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The project is coordinated by the City of Vantaa, which implements it together with the City of Helsinki, Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke) and Laurea University of Applied Sciences. The project will run from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026. It is funded with support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The funding authority is Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council. The project is a part of the Helsinki+Espoo+Vantaa Innovations (HEVi) programme.

Keywords:

food waste, edible food waste, surplus food, circular economy, sustainable development, sustainability, responsibility, food services, food aid, food waste terminal, food safety

Kuvailulehti

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Tiivistelmä:

Tämä julkaisu koskee tarjoiluhävikin lahjoittamista ruoka-apuun Helsingissä, Espoossa ja Vantaalla. Julkaisu on tarkoitettu tarjoiluhävikin lahjoittamisesta kiinnostuneille ravitsemispalveluille ja vastaanottamisesta kiinnostuneille ruoka-aputoimijoille. Siinä esitellään ruoka-aputoimintaa, lahjoittamiseen liittyvää elintarviketurvallisuutta sekä pääkaupunkiseudulla tehtyjä tarjoiluhävikin lahjoittamiskokeiluja ja niiden pohjalta syntyneitä toimintamalleja.

Julkaisu perustuu vuosina 2024–2025 osana Food waste ecosystem -hanketta toteutettuihin tarjoiluhävikin lahjoittamiskokeiluihin ja lähdeluettelossa mainittuihin taustamateriaaleihin. Kokeiluissa tarjoiluhävikin lahjoittajina toimivat seuraavat ravitsemispalvelut: Vantaan Tilapalvelut Vantti, Espoo Catering, Palmia, Sodexo ja Soupster Family. Tarjoiluhävikkiä vastaanottivat suoraan lahjoittajilta hävikkiterminaalit Stadin safka Helsingissä ja Yhteinen pöytä Vantaalla sekä näiden välityksellä useat eri ruoka-aputoimijat Helsingissä ja Vantaalla, A-kilta Vantaalla, Andreaskyrkan Helsingissä sekä Manna-apu Espoossa.

Julkaisu on osa Food waste ecosystem -hanketta, jonka tavoitteena on ruokahävikin vähentäminen ja hävikkiruuan tehokkaampi hyödyntäminen pääkaupunkiseudun ravitsemispalveluissa. Hanketta koordinoi Vantaan kaupunki, joka toteuttaa sitä yhdessä Helsingin kaupungin, Luonnonvarakeskuksen ja Laurea ammattikorkeakoulun kanssa. Hankkeen toiminta-aika on 1.4.2023–31.3.2026 ja se rahoitetaan Euroopan aluekehitysrahaston (EAKR) tuella. Rahoittava viranomais on Uudenmaan liitto. Hanke on osa HEVi-ohjelmaa.

Avainsanat:

ruokahävikki, hävikkiruoka, tarjoiluhävikki, kiertotalous, kestävä kehitys, vastuullisuus, ravitsemispalvelut, ruoka-apu, hävikkiterminaali, elintarviketurvallisuus

Presentationblad

Författare	Heta Hyvärinen
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Sammanfattning:

Denna publikation gäller donation av serveringssvinn till mathjälp i Helsingfors, Esbo och Vanda. Publikationen är avsedd för näringsstjänster som är intresserade av att donera serveringssvinn och mathjälpsaktörer som är intresserade av att ta emot den. I publikationen presenteras mathjälpsverksamheten, livsmedelssäkerhet i samband med donation och försök med donation av serveringssvinn som gjorts i huvudstadsregionen samt verksamhetsmodeller som uppkommit utifrån dessa.

Publikationen bygger på de försök med donation av serveringssvinn som genomfördes 2024–2025 som en del av projektet Food waste ecosystem och det bakgrundsmaterial som nämns i källförteckningen. I försöket fungerade följande näringsstjänster som donatorer av serveringssvinn: Vantaan Tilapalvelut Vannti, Espoo Catering, Palmia, Sodexo och Soupster Family. Följande svinnmatsterminaler mottog serveringssvinn direkt från donatorerna: Stadin safka i Helsingfors och Yhteinen pöytä i Vanda, och via dem flera mathjälpsaktörer i Helsingfors och Vanda, A-kilta i Vanda, Andreaskyrkan i Helsingfors och Manna-apu i Esbo.

Utredningen är en del av Food waste ecosystem-projektet vars mål är att minska matsvinn och effektivare utnyttja svinnmaten i näringsstjänsterna inom huvudstadsregionen. Projektet samordnas av Vanda stad, som genomför projektet i samarbete med Helsingfors stad, Naturresursinstitutet och yrkeshögskolan Laurea. Verksamhetstiden för projektet är 1.4.2023–31.3.2026 och det finansieras med stöd av Europeiska regionala utvecklingsfonden (ERUF). Nylands förbund fungerar som finansierande myndighet. Projektet är en del av HEVi-programmet.

Nyckelord:

matsvinn, svinnmat, serveringssvinn, cirkulär ekonomi, hållbar utveckling, ansvarstagande, näringsstjänster, mathjälp, svinnmatsterminal, livsmedelssäkerhet

The logo for Helsinki, featuring the word "Helsinki" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is centered within a black outline that forms a speech bubble shape, with a pointed bottom and rounded top corners.

Helsinki

The Urban Environment Division is in charge of urban planning, construction and maintenance, building control, and services related to the environment in Helsinki.