

FUTURE FOOD 2026 | UAE Food Cluster

29 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Zero Food Waste Workshop

Sideline Meeting Post Event Report

UAE FOOD BANK

NATIONAL CSR FUND MAJRA

Forum dates
29–30 September 2026

Le Méridien Dubai Hotel
& Conference Centre

Practical lessons from food retail, manufacturing, hospitality and events on prevention, safe redistribution and circular recovery.

Contents

01 Executive summary 05

02 Session proceedings and food recovery 07

03 Retail and manufacturing lessons 09

04 Hospitality and event operations 11

05 Panel discussion and shared challenges 13

06 Key findings and reported results 15

07 Proposed follow up and conclusion 17



The workshop at a glance

2 Forum days

6 Speakers and moderator

5 Industry organisations

4 Recovery initiatives

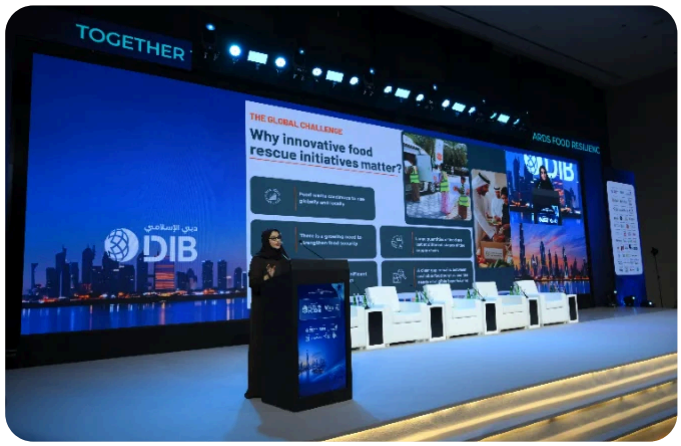
7 Priority actions

Prevent avoidable waste first, preserve safe surplus for people and use suitable recovery channels for material that cannot be consumed.

Image gallery











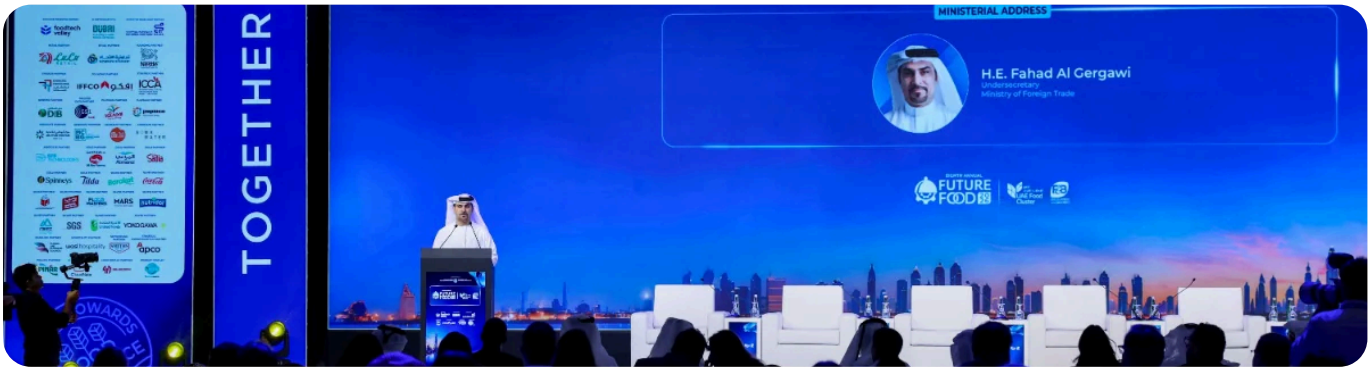

دبي الإسلامي
DIB








SME & EXHIBITION AREA


TOGETHER
MINISTERIAL ADDRESS
H.E. Fahad Al Gergawi
Undersecretary
Ministry of Foreign Trade

01 Executive summary

The workshop showed that progress towards zero food waste depends on decisions made before surplus is created: what to buy, how much to produce, how food is displayed and how organisations coordinate recovery.

Convened around the UAE Food Bank's role in connecting donors with communities, the session combined an opening presentation, four company case studies and a moderated panel. Speakers described how demand forecasting, production discipline, smaller serving equipment, staff training and planned donation routes can reduce waste while protecting food safety and the customer experience.

The strongest shared message was to prevent avoidable waste first, preserve safe surplus for people and use suitable recovery channels for material that cannot be consumed. Landfill diversion supports this effort, but does not by itself demonstrate that less food was wasted.



Main takeaways

- Measure waste by source and cause, then connect the findings to procurement, production and service decisions.
- Plan safe food donation early, with clear segregation, traceability, handling and collection arrangements.
- Choose recovery solutions that fit the waste stream, operational capacity and available partners.
- Use respectful customer prompts and visible staff behaviour to make smaller portions and repeat servings normal.

Prevent → **Redistribute** → **Recover**

The order of priority the speakers returned to throughout the session

Session leadership and speakers



Speakers and the UAE Food Bank team at the Zero Food Waste Workshop session



Masooma Bahram Mussa Haidar

Moderator and opening presenter

UAE Food Bank



Sharon Sausman

Head of Quality Assurance & Compliance

Spinneys



Leena Verghis

Quality Manager

Advanced Baking Concept



Lavanya Nidunapu

Health, Safety & Compliance / HACCP Manager

LEGOLAND



Maitha Alkaabi

Senior Manager, Food Hygiene & Safety

Dubai World Trade Centre



Abdulaziz Albader

Head of Sustainability

Almarai

02 Session proceedings and food recovery

How the workshop unfolded

Opening presentation

Masooma Bahram Mussa Haidar explained that wasted food also represents wasted water, energy, land, labour and other resources. She positioned the UAE Food Bank as a link between food donors, approved charitable channels and communities in need.



Company presentations

Sharon Sausman described Spinneys' retail waste-reduction journey; Leena Verghis presented Advanced Baking Concept's manufacturing approach; Lavanya Nidunapu shared service-design changes at LEGOLAND; and Maitha Alkaabi outlined Dubai World Trade Centre's event-catering experience.

Moderated panel

The presenters returned for questions, with Abdulaziz Albader of Almarai joining the discussion. Topics included demand forecasting, shelf-life management, technology, production and packaging, event-organiser responsibilities and consumer behaviour.

Closing round

The closing round asked each organisation to identify one behaviour it would change.

Every wasted meal also wastes

- Water
- Energy
- Land
- Labour



The UAE Food Bank contribution

The opening presentation described a recovery process that begins with identifying safe surplus, arranging collection or donor delivery, applying the relevant safety and quality checks and distributing through approved charities and organisations. Partnership capacity is therefore central to whether surplus can reach people in time.

Identify
safe surplus

→

Collect
or donor delivery

→

Check
safety and quality

→

Distribute
via approved charities

Initiatives discussed

Sustainable Goodness

Facilitate the release and redistribution of eligible rejected port shipments where the food is safe for human consumption and the necessary approvals are obtained.

Hospitality recovery and recycling

Collect safe surplus for redistribution while routing suitable organic waste through recycling partners, with recovered organic material returning to local farms.

Community fridges

Bring food access and surplus donation closer to communities through dedicated refrigerators and operating guidelines.

Ramadan campaigns

Respond to seasonal increases in food production and consumption through targeted recovery and community initiatives.



The moderator emphasised that collecting more surplus is not the sole objective. Better planning and earlier intervention are needed to prevent waste, with recovery providing a responsible route for what remains.

03 Retail and manufacturing lessons



Spinneys

Sharon Sausman described food-waste management as an integrated quality, safety, environmental and compliance responsibility. The retail challenge is to maintain availability and freshness across stores, factories and warehouses while managing products with different shelf lives and demand patterns.

The presentation highlighted locally sourced produce, imperfect vegetables and the use of suitable ingredients in in-store preparation. Safe surplus was directed through food-bank and charitable partnerships; an internal bread-distribution arrangement was also described where external collection volumes were insufficient. These routes were presented as subject to quality, date and safety checks.

Black soldier fly project growth

2 pilot stores → **20** stores + **3** warehouses

Spinneys' black soldier fly project illustrated how a recovery model can expand through segregation, staff training and dedicated transport. Potential outputs were presented as part of the project account rather than a universal solution for every waste stream.

- Feed ingredients
- Fertiliser
- Fuel pathways

What proved difficult

In-house composting struggled with variable supermarket waste composition and the need for a consistent feedstock mix. A vehicle biofuel trial faced maintenance concerns. The operational lesson was to test feasibility and partner capability before scaling a technology.

Advanced Baking Concept

Leena Verghis organised the bakery manufacturer's approach around four pillars: prevent, rescue, recover and learn.

Prevent

Demand-based procurement, alternate approved suppliers, accurate batch planning, recipe adherence, yield monitoring, preventive maintenance and training.

Rescue

Safe products outside a customer's specification go to segregated donation routes, supported by traceability and handling controls.

Recover

Wet dough is collected in baked form by a partner for conversion into animal feed.

Learn

Monthly dashboards link waste, yield, unsold finished goods, donations and root causes.

Challenges identified

- Short-dated raw materials
- Excess inventory
- Out-of-specification products
- Process losses
- Forecast mismatch
- Slow-moving stock

Wet dough was identified as a recovery challenge, showing that recovery requirements can themselves affect processing decisions.

Machinery faults, process deviations and staff practices were treated as different problems requiring different corrective actions. A further company representative reinforced shelf-life validation, food-safety management and packaging segregation during the panel.



Transferable lesson

A waste figure becomes useful when it identifies a decision to change. Categorising waste and recording its cause allows organisations to distinguish forecasting problems from equipment failures, handling errors and specification issues.

04 Hospitality and event operations

LEGOLAND

Lavanya Nidunapu demonstrated how service design can reduce food waste while maintaining a generous guest experience: smaller plates, shallower buffet containers, divided inserts, occupancy-based deployment, standard portions and controlled repurposing.

The emphasis was on presenting an attractive buffet with less food exposed at any one time, rather than reducing service quality.

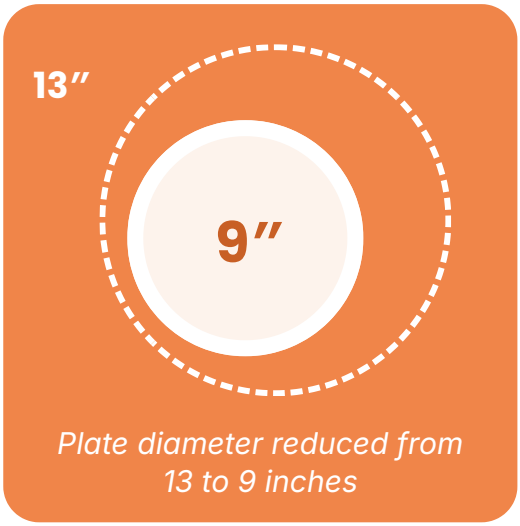


Plate diameter reduced from 13 to 9 inches

Forecasting inputs shared daily across departments

- Previous attendance
- Advance ticket sales
- Hotel occupancy
- School holidays
- Local events



Separate child and adult portions helped align production with actual needs. Other changes included bulk dispensers, fewer individual sachets and beverage cartons, lean ordering and receiving controls.

Repurposing examples were described only within the operation’s time, temperature and food-safety procedures. They should not be treated as permission to reuse food outside those controls.



Guest messaging encouraged smaller first servings and return visits to the buffet. Friendly, child-appropriate communication can influence both children and parents.

Dubai World Trade Centre



Maitha Alkaabi described a shift from donating leftovers to managing food waste throughout menu planning, production, service and event review. Sustainability requirements around COP28 were presented as a catalyst for this broader approach.

The venue considered visitor demographics and food preferences when planning menus and used information on yield, production, waste and donations to review performance. Smaller plates, revised serving vessels and alternative service formats helped manage the expectation of a full buffet. A small-scale incentive trial rewarded clean plates with coffee.

Event-specific tagging and colour coding supported sustainability reporting, while comparing the same event across editions offered a more useful view than comparing venue-wide annual totals with different activity levels.

Maitha emphasised the need for organisers, exhibitors, caterers and visitors to share responsibility. Measuring waste in event halls remained harder than measuring it in kitchens.

30.7 t+

of food donated, as reported during the presentation

Early sharing of event schedules improved collection planning

Practical barriers raised

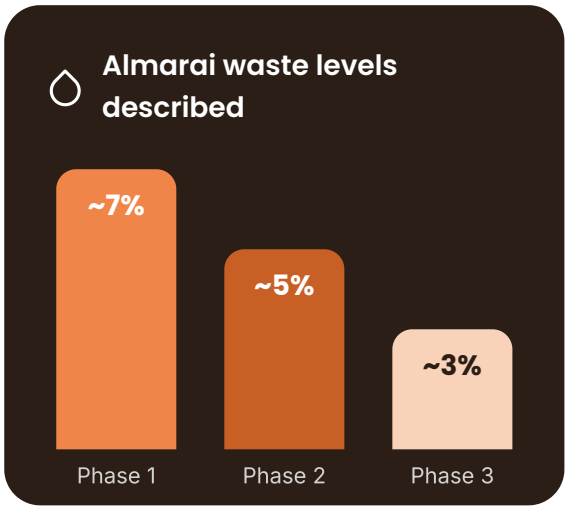
- Overestimated attendance
- Last-minute menu changes
- Insistence on particular ingredients
- Guest expectations
- Cost of recovery solutions

05 Panel discussion and shared challenges

Almarai on shelf life and circular production

Abdulaziz Albader described technology investment and shelf-life improvements as important levers for reducing losses in a large dairy and food-production supply chain, linked to product quality, food security and coordination with government and ecosystem partners.

A large producer needs several recovery routes matched to different materials; a single solution cannot address every stream.



- Packaging reduction
- Rendering of poultry by-products
- Oil and protein recovery
- Manure management
- Composting
- Biochar
- Energy recovery

A phased account linked to technology and shelf life; the transcript does not establish a common denominator or comparison period.

Forecasting and technology

LEGOLAND described shared daily forecasts, while Spinneys stressed waste categorisation, consolidated data and the use of planning technology, including AI. Data must reach the teams making purchasing, preparation and replenishment decisions.

Shelf life and supply-chain flexibility

Dubai World Trade Centre described accepting usable shorter-dated stock during supply disruption, paired with plans to consume it in time: coordinated planning within applicable requirements, rather than blanket acceptance or automatic rejection.

Shared responsibility at events

Clients may request production above realistic demand or change menus after ingredients are purchased. Food-waste planning needs to begin when the menu, attendance estimate and service format are agreed.



Closing behaviour change round

Each organisation identified one behaviour it would change.

Spinneys

Encouraged shoppers to consider reduced-to-clear items and imperfect produce, and to plan meals around what is available.

Dubai World Trade Centre

Challenged the expectation that hospitality must involve excessive variety and visibly overflowing displays.

LEGOLAND

Advocated taking only what can be eaten, returning for more when needed and using respectful messages reinforced by staff and family role models.

Almarai

Encouraged more deliberate purchasing around actual needs, including during Ramadan.

Advanced Baking Concept

Highlighted the challenge of extending a B2B manufacturer's sustainability work to end consumers.

The workshop closed with an invitation for audience questions and thanks to the speakers. No substantive audience question was recorded in the supplied closing exchange.

06 Key findings and reported results

What the discussion established

1 **Prevention and diversion are different measures.**
Reducing food purchased or produced unnecessarily preserves more resources than treating the resulting waste.

2 **Food safety governs each route.**
Safe donation requires timely identification, segregation, handling, traceability and collection; recovery materials require appropriate partner specifications.

3 **Measurement must explain causes.**
Weight alone cannot show whether a problem comes from forecasting, production, shelf life, service design or customer behaviour.

4 **Smaller operational changes can matter.**
Plate size, serving depth, replenishment frequency, menu breadth and guest prompts were recurring practical examples.

5 **Partnerships need operating arrangements.**
Transport, collection timing, acceptable materials, volume and cost determine whether a technically possible solution can work routinely.



Reported results

Figures as described by each organisation during the session, with notes on how to read them.

Spinneys

2 → 20

stores + 3 warehouses

Result or scale described

Black soldier fly project expanded from 2 pilot stores to 20 stores and 3 warehouses.

Reading the figure

Describes programme coverage, rather than the proportion of total waste prevented.

Advanced Baking Concept

4.4% | 15.4%

less food waste | less to landfill

Result or scale described

4.4% reduction in food waste and 15.4% reduction in waste sent to landfill.

Reading the figure

Presented as a comparison with the previous year; detailed calculation methods were not supplied.

LEGOLAND

~1.7 t→641 kg

monthly food waste

Result or scale described

Monthly food waste described as falling from approximately 1.7 tonnes to 641 kg.

Reading the figure

The transcript gives two close starting values. The approximate baseline preserves that uncertainty; the period and activity levels were not specified.

Dubai World Trade Centre

30.7 t+

food donated

Result or scale described

More than 30.7 tonnes of food donated.

Reading the figure

Reported during the presentation; a clear reporting period was not stated.

Almarai

7%→5%→3%

waste levels (approx.)

Result or scale described

Waste levels described as moving from about 7% to 5% and subsequently about 3%.

Reading the figure

A phased account linked to technology and shelf life; the transcript does not establish a common denominator or comparison period.

07

Proposed follow up and conclusion

The following actions translate the workshop's practical lessons into options for participating organisations. They are proposed follow-up steps, rather than commitments adopted or assigned during the session.

Priority actions

01 **Establish a baseline** by waste source, material, destination and cause. Track kitchen preparation, service surplus and plate waste separately where feasible.

02 **Connect waste reviews to operational decisions.** Use short review cycles to adjust forecasts, purchasing quantities, batch sizes, replenishment and equipment maintenance.

03 **Agree a safe-surplus plan with recovery partners.** Define suitable products, donor checks, storage, traceability, collection lead times and contingency arrangements.

04 **Test one service-design change at a time.** Smaller plates, divided buffet inserts or revised portion sizes can be trialled alongside guest satisfaction and food-safety checks.

05 **Map recovery routes to actual materials.** Confirm partner acceptance criteria, processing needs, transport, costs and evidence of destination before scaling a solution.

06 **Include waste planning in event briefs.** Agree attendance assumptions, menu-change deadlines, service format and recovery arrangements with organisers before procurement.

07 **Use clear and respectful behaviour prompts.** Train staff, encourage modest first servings and make it easy for customers to return for more.

A focused first working cycle

Each organisation could select one high-loss product or service area, document its baseline and root cause, test a defined intervention and review the result.

A shared learning session with the UAE Food Bank and industry partners could then compare implementation lessons and identify gaps in collection, transport or recovery capacity.



A compact dashboard should distinguish

- Food waste generated
- Safe surplus donated
- Material recovered via other routes

Where relevant, use an activity denominator such as kilograms per meal, guest or unit of production so changes in business volume do not obscure performance.

Conclusion

The Zero Food Waste Workshop demonstrated that food-waste reduction is an operating discipline involving the entire food ecosystem. Retailers, manufacturers, attractions, venues and recovery organisations each control a different part of the journey, and the strongest results depend on those decisions working together.

The practical direction is clear: plan demand more accurately, prevent avoidable surplus, protect the safety of food that can be shared and choose viable recovery routes for unavoidable material. By linking measurement with daily decisions and reliable partnerships, organisations can turn the workshop's examples into sustained resource savings and social value.





FUTURE FOOD 2026

تجمع الإمارات للغذاء
UAE Food Cluster

UAE FOOD & BEVERAGE BUSINESS GROUP

29 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

UAE FOOD BANK بنك الإمارات للطعام

الصندوق الوطني للمسؤولية المجتمعية
NATIONAL CSR FUND MAJRA

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المبادرة الوطنية للحد من فقد وهدر الغذاء
National Food Loss and Waste Initiative

Together towards zero food waste

EXCULSIVE PRESENTING PARTNER

foodtech valley

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

DUBAI للاقتصاد والسياحة
Economy and Tourism

ECOSYSTEM ENABLEMENT PARTNER

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Spinneys

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emirates macaroni

SILVER PARTNER

FLOUR MASTERS

SILVER PARTNER

MARS
Tomorrow starts today

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nutridor

SILVER PARTNER

rakez
RAS AL KHAIMAH ECONOMIC ZONE

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