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## CONCRETE ACTIONS FROM CZECH REPUBLIC

6 May 2021

Jindrich Fialka – Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Czech Republic

Full speech

Good afternoon to everybody, distinguished Madame Secretary General, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here with you today and share our experiences in this very important area, I think. I am personally very grateful for your kind invitation to your Annual Convention meeting. I have followed some presentations got by colleagues earlier this day and this is fantastic part from changing views and experiences, I have to say. We start with appreciation of all the efforts and fantastic work made by the European Food Banks Federation and its national member associations. This really help us as government to improve our policies, how to implement sustainable agriculture and food systems as well.

The 5% of human population still face hunger every day so consequently they suffer malnutrition, illnesses and diseases and their situation is more and more negatively influenced by current COVID pandemic, so local conflicts unfortunately. At the same time, we see enormous food waste, shortage of potable water and climatic excess to agricultural land. In the Czech Republic we feel strongly committed to change the situation and my Ministry is not only setting agriculture policy, but our main mission is to help people. And I am very glad to cooperate these Food Banks with their fantastic colleagues in the Czech Republic. And the activities are part of global activities under the United Nations umbrella, namely under the Sustainable Development Goals, by implementing their targets and activities. And at the same time, we support all relevant activities at national level as well and I am very glad to present some concrete examples now today.



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The key, the key issue is creating of functioning platform for stakeholders and to keep their really up-to-date dialogue with all stakeholders. So, I am very grateful for the long-term cooperation between the Czech Federation of Food Banks, represented by Veronika, and the Ministry of Agriculture because the importance of all stakeholders is in the entire food supply chain, it is the key indicator. Of course, the best introduction of food waste is the, is SDG number 2 and 12, so I have already mentioned this effort, and this is a really big problem related to product, let's say capacity of our planet and the perception of our consumers as well.

I am very, very glad to promote to cooperation and preparation of subsidy programme. This started this programme in 2016 and you can see the development of this situation. If you can see the last row, in euros you from 2016 have been provided more than EUR 12 million to national Food Banks associations for investment support and as well, for financial support, to enable them to store and to distribute collected food to final recipients.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 donations of safe foods do not completely fulfil the requirements of food law. I have to say, just the issue of labelling and quality, you have for example, canned this meat and there is another kind of meat that is declared on label, so the food safety is the first issue. So, the system does not allow to provide further in via the food chain unsafe food, I have to mention. And we have created even the national food act amendment under which there is obligation for shops above 400 square meters of selling area, to donate to Food Banks. So, we have a specific legislation in the EU I have to say, and our national court let's say confirmed this public interest in the first place where we are very glad for this piece of legislation. And we are, of course, are trying to improve the situation in education of our people, starting with these programmes at schools for children above six years, so I will be mentioning later on a slide.

And, like most cooperation we prepared joint methodology help to implement all these donations and the system under the very safe way because I have to mention again, that the food safety issue is a priority in the entire system in the Czech Republic. So, and we of course cooperate not only with the Federation of Food Banks but via the institutions as well, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Environment, and retailers of course and many other subjects. We have a national platform for this but for me, the results are the key.

For me, the key is the final target: 85% of Food Banks' activities are supported by our Ministry. Of course, we are trying to enhance another staple just to provide another support and I have to say, we are on a good way. We are trying to educate our citizens not to buy more but try to buy adequately, let's say. And we have at national level a great discussion about 'use by' date and so on, so about food packages, about plastic packaging in the COVID-19 pandemic and of course, in relation to the environment all these aspects.



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I would say we are supporting national collection days, which is nowadays presented twice a year, if I am not mistaken, and this helps a lot to increase the number of collected food and the key issue is that the food is distributed very efficiently to final recipients.

Of course, the active support from our Ministry is one issue. We are trying to support our connections, however there is a significant social dimension. This is not about tons; this is not about money; but this is about the change of the perception for a population that we have to start with ourselves. If you ask your friend if he's making food waste, he says no but in the end, we have 30% food waste in global level so we realised that we have to start with ourselves. And, of course, we are trying to improve our state authorities in the entire process as well, namely our colleagues from Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Environment because we are well aware of our responsibility to planet and all these activities.

I have already mentioned, we are trying to educate our students, our children in schools, we developed a school programme. We are using support from European Union as well in this way. And this is a fantastic opportunity for us because we support the distribution of milk, fruit and vegetables to school. We of course educate them about how the food is produced, what is the shelf life of the food, how they can care about food properly. And we have to start in a more systematic way I think in all Members States, to start with our children and show them the whole story about food production, about agriculture, about sustainability and this is exactly what we are trying to do in the Czech Republic.

Last year was very difficult by affecting all of us by pandemic of COVID-19. And we are very grateful to the Federation of Food Banks as a distribution channel for food, masks and other properties needed for final recipients. We are grateful for this channel and for this cooperation and of course, we will do our best in a future period to support and try to improve our national system as well. And I am looking forward to meeting our colleagues this year on UN Summit on Sustainable Food Systems and I think this will help us to promote food systems and supply chain sustainability.

So, thank you very much for this opportunity to be with you and stay with you for another part as well.



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