LOCAL’ LEVEL ANALYSIS
OF FNS PATHWAYS IN ITALY

THE CASE OF FOOD
ASSISTANCE IN TUSCANY

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The case of food assistance in Tuscany

About TRANSMANGO:

TRANSMANGO is an international research project that aims to explore diverse transition pathways to a sustainable and food secure food system. It is funded by the European Commission and runs for four years, from 2014 until 2018. The Transmango consortium consists of 13 partners from nine European countries and Tanzania. For more information, visit our website: [http://www.transmango.eu/](http://www.transmango.eu/).

About this Document/Disclaimer:

This report is part of Work Package 6 of TRANSMANGO which is focussed on ‘local’ level analysis of FNS pathways in Europe. This report is based upon ‘D6.1 Case-study selection and methodological guidelines for local level analysis of FNS Pathways’ (transmango.eu). The guiding research questions for the Work Package 6 ‘local’ level analysis were:

1. To what extent, and how, do the selected FNS practices / pathways reflect novel responses to FNS concerns in specific settings?
2. To what extent are these novel practices / pathways promising and successful?
3. To what extent do involved stakeholders explore up- and out scaling potentials?
4. How do stakeholders characterize their interaction with institutional settings?
5. How relevant is EU level policy making in this interaction with institutional settings?

This report is focussed upon “Food assistance practices” in Tuscany, Italy. This report presents the interpretations of the researchers, and does not necessarily reflect the views and nuances of the initiatives and respondents themselves. In total there are nine separate ‘local’ level analysis reports from ten consortium members and they will feed into the ‘D6.4 Syntheses report on FNS pathway-specific drivers, potentials and vulnerabilities’.

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Photograph on cover “The Emporia of Solidarity, Caritas in Prato, Tuscany, (Italy)” courtesy of Francesca Galli
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGEA</td>
<td>Agenzia per le Erogazioni in Agricoltura (National Agency for Payments in Agriculture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCI</td>
<td>Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana (Italian Recreation and Culture Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Common Agricultural Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBAO</td>
<td>Fondazione Banco Alimentare Onlus (Italian Food Bank Foundation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEAD</td>
<td>Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HACCP</td>
<td>Hazard-Analysis and Critical Control Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEET</td>
<td>Not (engaged) in Education, Employment or Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEAD</td>
<td>Programme Européen d’aide Alimentaire aux plus Démunies (European Program for Food Aid to the Most Deprived)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USL</td>
<td>Unità Sanitaria Locale (Health Service Units)</td>
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**The case of food assistance in Tuscany**

"The Hungry is there, at the corner road, and asks for citizenship. He asks to be considered in its condition, to receive a healthy nutrition. He asks for dignity, not charity."

(Pope Francis, International conference on Food, 2014)

1 INTRODUCTION

It is often implicit that the population of High Income Countries is food secure and food insecurity is not perceived as a problem to fix in our cities (Pothukuchi, Kaufman, 2000). However, despite the non-food related drivers of the phenomenon, in recent years there has been a dramatic increase in people asking for food assistance in Europe (Lambie-Mumford, Dowler, 2015; Caraher, Cavicchi, 2014), as an effect of economic downturn, austerity measures, unemployment and insecure jobs.

Among the multiple forms of poverty, food and nutrition poverty is a critical issue as food responds to a basic human need. As part of the primary needs, food intake determines not only human survival, but also the opportunity to live in good physical and mental condition. Minors who cannot rely on the right caloric intake are at risk for a full physical, psychological, intellectual as well as social development. In high income countries food insecurity is primarily a matter of inadequate income and poverty (Riches and Silvasti 2014). The increase of those requiring food aid –witnessed since the 2007-2008 crisis –is not tied so much to food availability but rather to an economic emergency, hence access to food is the key issue. Food is a basic need of individuals and families can be pushed, in conditions of need, to save on food to meet “less flexible” expenditure items such as electricity, gas and rent (Tait, 2015; Dowler 2003). Nevertheless, in Italy 8.5% of the families lamented not having enough money to eat at certain times of the year (ISTAT, 2014).

This also applies to Italy, where food poverty is not currently discussed as a policy priority but is addressed with an emergency approach, mainly by non-profit organizations. This has been evidenced recently by Caritas – the Pastoral body of the Italian Episcopal Conference1 – which shares the mission of the Catholic Church to serve the poor and to promote charity and justice throughout the world, by playing a role in terms of action and advocacy. In a recent report Caritas addresses the current Italian government to steer intervention towards poverty reduction, and emphasizes three key trends: firstly, that Italy is the only European country, along with Greece, without a national measure aimed at supporting the population living in absolute poverty (i.e., unemployment subsidy). Secondly, the current public interventions for poverty mitigation is deemed inadequate based on the decreasing economic resources dedicated, dispersed into a set of uncoordinated measures. Thirdly, most of the public funding available consists of financial contributions, while “person dedicated services”, which are led by Municipalities and the third sector, are underfunded.

This case study report deals with the food assistance network currently in place in Tuscany region (Italy) and describes actors, structures and practices that develop food assistance towards people that experience food poverty. By confronting consolidated and more innovative ways of delivering food aid, we aim at analyzing the interactions and the transformations occurring at the local level towards improved food and nutrition security. The degree to which a practice is new or innovative is context dependent. As Hargreaves et al. (2013) describes, practices are formed, changed and potentially fossilized, as the links between the elements of which a practice consists can be made, maintained and/or broken. Innovative practices are about the making and breaking of these practices and about making different assemblages of practices that in the end constitute new routines, new patterns and ways of connecting.

A wide range of actors and structures are engaged in food assistance activities on the territory, ranging from the distribution of food parcels to the traditional soup kitchens, from ‘emporia’ to social restaurants. Food assistance practices entail several actors and resource flows that are, formally and informally, interconnected. Each of these services is directed to a specific profile of users and relies on a specific

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1 Caritas Italy is the Pastoral Body created by the Italian Episcopal Conference to promote, in collaboration with other bodies, the charity in the community. *Caritas* is the Latin word for “charity”.
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flow of food and other resources supply. Charitable food donations are often combined with the collection and redistribution of ‘surplus’ food – safe food that, for various reasons, is not sold through regular market channels (Garrone et al. 2014). Food assistance also relies on public funding, deriving from the European, national, regional and municipal levels.

Based on an analysis on the main practices adopted by food assistance operators in Tuscany (Italy) it emerged that the food assistance “system” is highly fragmented. The degree of government involvement, funding, regulatory controls, voluntary sector participation and reliance on surplus and donations is highly variable and context specific. Practices of food assistance vary in the criteria for access, resources used and in the allocation of responsibilities among the actors involved. In addition, given the challenging context of rising numbers and “normalization” of recipients, uncertainty about available resources, not to mention traditional issues related with food assistance (Poppendieck, 1998), some of the organizations involved are reflecting on their role and are willing to rearrange their activities (Cavicchi, Santini, 2014; Wakefield et al., 2013; Shimada et al., 2013; Popielarski, Cotugna, 2010). The initiatives that arise in order to supply surplus food for redistribution are not coordinated or, sometimes, even competing with each other. They rely upon the interaction between voluntary actors – acting within religious and nonreligious organizations – that have their own specific history, professional profile and cultural references, but pursue food and nutrition security in Tuscany, in different ways in different areas. More consolidated practices, such as food parcels, co-exist with other emergent ones, such as “emporia of solidarity” (i.e., retailers where recipients directly “purchase” food through income based cards) where the charitable aim is coupled with the attempt to reduce stigmatization, increase empowerment and support nutritional choices.

By confronting with leading actors of food assistance in Tuscany (i.e., Caritas, the Food Bank, Tuscany regional administration, retailers and experts on these issues), it emerged that they are rethinking their role to address changing needs: private companies are increasingly involved in food assistance operations and adjust their activities and strategies accordingly; public institutions rethink the boundaries between charitable assistance, welfare system and market-based food system. Several actors strive to respond to the emergency faced by the most vulnerable groups of the population, and at the same time are under pressure to reframe food assistance in a “right to food” perspective (Dowler and O’Connor 2012). Our main interlocutor was Caritas who is now reconsidering its role in contributing to food poverty mitigation by setting up a territorial “Alliance for Food”, a vision which has been thought of in abstract terms but has not be reflected into a concrete application yet.
2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODS

The aim of the work package 6 of the Transmango project, in which this report fits into, is to explore relevant transition pathways within the fragmented food and nutrition security (FNS) landscape. Such landscape is constituted by a range of various and often contrasting social practices that co-exist and interact with one another; continuously producing new practices. The present report aims at illustrating the interactions and the transformations occurring at the level of practice in a local case study.

We focus on food assistance in Tuscany (Italy) by referring to the theoretical framework proposed by Hargreaves et al. (2013), who suggest a combination of Multilevel perspective (MLP) with Social Practice Theory (SPT) to address transition and transformation towards food and nutrition security. In fact, food assistance practices cut across different and multiple regimes (i.e., the food system, welfare and policy and civil society). Innovations in food assistance are therefore perceived as “regime-crossing” systems of practices.

Hargreaves et al. (2013) recall how MLP and SPT theories address different units of analysis, with MLP primarily concerned with transitions in regimes and SPT concerned with transitions in practices. According to Shove&Pantzar (2005), practices are constituted by images, skills and materials (Figure 1); however, there are many formulations of the core elements of practices2.

FIGURE 1 - CONSTITUTING ELEMENTS OF PRACTICES: IMAGES (MEANINGS AND SYMBOLS), SKILLS (KNOW-HOW, FORMS OF COMPETENCE) AND MATERIALS (TECHNOLOGIES, ARTEFACTS).

Practices form, change and are overhauled as the links between the three elements are made, maintained and broken. Innovation is about the changing relations among the elements, in terms of coherence, interconnectedness among practices (i.e., systems of practice) and temporal or path dependencies.

FIGURE 2 – PROTOPRACTICES, PRACTICES AND EX-PRACTICES (SOURCE: PANTZAR AND SHOVE, 2010, P.450)

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2 For a synthesis of the different formulations see Gram-Hanssen (2009).
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We analyse food assistance practices by highlighting skills, images and materials within each practice and how these elements change and evolve.

Analysing the links between regimes and practices in this understanding of transition processes demands simultaneous investigating along distinct but connected lines of enquiry: 1) on a vertical level, focusing on transitions in regimes as they occur through interactions between niches, regimes and landscapes; 2) on a horizontal level, focusing on transitions in practices as they occur through change and continuity in different circuits of reproduction. 3) points of intersections between the vertical and the horizontal.

We highlight how transitions in food assistance practices in Tuscany are taking place (i.e., the “horizontal”) and their potential for transformation at the level of FNS regimes and landscapes (i.e., the “vertical”)

In the results section we report on a set of practices, consolidated and innovative ones, adopted by different stakeholders to tackle food poverty in Tuscany. By identifying the key elements of the practices (i.e., images, skills and materials) the potential for transitions in practices is highlighted. Furthermore we address the links between practices, resource flows and actors at different levels of the food assistance “system of practices”. This will allow to identify transition pathways –actual and potential –across the multiple levels of regimes and landscapes. The case study specific research questions are the following:

1) How does food assistance develop in high income countries? Overview of current trends, bottlenecks and main frames and solutions adopted.
2) Which food assistance practices take place in Tuscany region, Italy? By whom are they developed?
3) How do food assistance practices address different vulnerabilities and vulnerable groups?
   a. Focus on skills, and competencies; claims, values and meanings; assets, materials, resources.
4) How have practices and respective aims evolved over time?
5) How is food assistance re-thinking its role in a changing environment? In relation to which drivers?
6) What transitions pathways can be identified in the current process of change of the food assistance system?

In order to address these questions, a set of methods and tools are used, in relation to each research question, as summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Methods and tools</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,6</td>
<td>Academic literature analysis and “grey” literature collection (policy documents, NGO reports, secondary data, news articles etc.)</td>
<td>80 academic articles (since 1977 to 2015) on food assistance in high income countries Reports by Caritas Europe, Italy, Tuscany and dioceses (several years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,3,4,6</td>
<td>Attendance to public events, on-site visits, direct participation to food drives</td>
<td>2 presentations of annual report by Caritas Tuscany Attendance to a meeting of the Food Bank with Pope Francis in the Vatican Participation to the annual Food Drive organized by the Food Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,3,4,6</td>
<td>In-depth and semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>18 in-depth and semi-structured interviews (see detailed list of interviews in Annex 1 and interview template in Annex 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practices of food assistance have been identified and analyzed in Tuscany through semi-structured interviews, on-site visits and secondary data. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the key method of data collection given their utility in exploring a range of issues in-depth in a flexible manner. In particular, there was the need to obtain detailed information on specific aspects of the organizations’ work and on the motivations of people involved. In addition, semi-structured interviews have been used also to illustrate the workshops (forthcoming at the time of the interviews) and to invite participants\(^3\). Secondary data collected from the web (organizations websites and local newspapers) and from Caritas reports, the Regional Social Observatory Data and reports, FBAO reports, from Maino et al. (2016), Tomei, Caterino (2013), Rovati and Pesenti (2015) integrated the interviews.

\(^3\) Caritas regional director gave us indication on the largest dioceses to involve in our project, most of them corresponding to the biggest cities in Tuscany.
3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Literature review on food poverty and food assistance in high income countries

As a preliminary step we reviewed the scientific literature on food assistance in HIC to characterize how it is handled in the different countries and by which actors. The review addressed the following questions: How does food assistance develop in HIC? What are the main drivers and vulnerabilities of food assistance? Food assistance activities were addressed in relation to the food system and/or other systems (e.g. social security, labor, health) facing external factors of change (drivers) (Figure 1).

FIGURE 3 – DRIVERS AND SOLUTIONS TO FOOD POVERTY, SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM BRUNORI ET AL. 2015

A keyword research on Scopus was done, using as search terms “food assistance” (AND) “food security” (OR) “charity” (OR) “welfare”. The search has been limited to the disciplines of social science and humanities and resulted at first in 481 hits. After further refinements were made in order to select the results pertaining to HIC. We obtained 206 results, that have been subsequently screened for their relevance, according to the question “does the article explicitly refer to food assistance programs or initiatives undertaken in HIC by the State or by charities?”. We complemented the search with additional literature selected through Google Scholar. Eighty papers were chosen for the review (see Annex 3 for the full list). The time frame ranges from 1977 to July 2015. The main geographic areas of reference are USA, followed by Europe, Canada and Australia.

FIGURE 4 – NUMBER OF PAPERS REVIEWED PER SUBJECT AND GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF REFERENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Charity</th>
<th>Welfare</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NS means Not Specified, not explicitly referred to a precise geographic area by the authors.

Based on the papers selected for the review, some overall reflections can be drawn and summarized in the following four key highlights:

- There is a lack of a universally agreed definition of food poverty at the political level

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5 The full literature review is available in a paper by Sabrina Arcuri, Francesca Galli, Gianluca Brunori “Insights on food assistance provision in High Income Countries: a systematic literature review” Modelli di welfare e modelli di capitalismo. Le sfide per lo sviluppo socio-economico in Italia e in Europa, IX Conferenza ESPAnet Italia, Macerata (MC), 22-24 settembre 2016 (forthcoming).
“Food poverty” is defined as the “inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so” (Riches, 2002). The term is commonly used as a synonym for “food insecurity”. Since food availability is not a real problem in High Income Countries (HIC), food insecurity is firstly addressed as a matter of income inadequacy (Riches, Silvasti, 2014). The recent financial crisis, in conjunction with austerity policies, has brought an increasing number of people to seek food assistance (Lambie-Mumford, Dowler, 2015; Caraher, Cavicchi, 2014). The profile of individuals in need has also changed, more and more including the “new poor” (Dowler, O’Connor, 2012), struggling every day with low wages, unemployment or insecure jobs and rising costs of living. Thus, when other demands, such as rent and utility bills, are pressing, food expenditure is compressed.

These conditions have steered an increasing effort by charitable organizations in the absence of a clear response by governments. For example in the US, despite the large federal expenditure on food assistance, the effort of a relatively small amount of private charity tends to prevail in the nation’s consciousness (Poppendieck, 2014). Or in Italy, where a large part of food assistance is managed by the non-profit sector and social enterprises based on volunteer work, with donations from the productive and commercial system to the European public subsidies to the most deprived. This necessary intersection between the private initiative and the public sphere can be explained by the partial failure of policies in engaging into a relationship with the most vulnerable actors.

Responsive policies are hindered by the lack of a universally agreed definition of the problem. Food poverty is in general peripheral to the work of most policy makers, although they are aware that many of their actions could have impacts on food poverty, both positively and negatively. There is need for an enhanced understanding of food poverty in HIC to rebalance the interaction between charity initiatives and the aid provided by the State through the welfare system.

- The economic crisis has determined an increase of poverty, but mostly of vulnerability to poverty, by those who live a temporary phase of “discomfort” which they can rapidly slip into (or get out from).

Although country-specific differences must be accounted for, the increasing number of those demanding for food aid is linked not to a food emergency in the strict sense, but to an economic emergency.

If we assume that the population is distributed according to a pyramid model that has a base of population that is food secure, while at the top of the pyramid there is extreme chronic poverty. Before the crisis people were sharply divided between those who were in food secure, and those who were instead in total insecurity (chronic poverty that could be helped by food banks and soup kitchens). Today, however, due to the complexity of vulnerability pathways, there is a gradual intensification of poverty gradients. Individuals are distributed among poor / temporarily poor / vulnerable / non-poor but there is no longer such a clear division between the areas of discomfort because the condition can quickly worsen or improve (Maino et al. 2016, our translation).

- There is a continuum between welfare and charity initiatives, either explicit or implicit, across several high income countries.

There emerges a continuum between welfare and charity initiatives, as food assistance lies at a midpoint between welfare and the food system. Prime example is the case of European Union, where the Food Distribution programme for the Most Deprived Persons (MDP) was embedded into CAP and delivered food from intervention stocks to member states until 2013. From 2014 on, the new Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) is intended as social policy. In both cases, although there is a coordination at a national government level, charitable organizations represent the last link in the chain that distribute food to the needy. In the USA, the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, former Food Stamps) is managed by the US Department of Agriculture and administered by local welfare offices: food assistance is intended as a social protection measure, providing financial assistance for food purchase to low-income households.
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The charity approach is often opposed to a welfare approach to the right to food. The intrinsic limitations of charity approaches with respect to stigmatization, lack of control over donations, nutritional issues, emergency relief and philanthropy are counterbalanced by weak welfare with regard to food poverty, whose safety net is more and more reshaped by budget cuts and decreasing levels of provision.

The hybridization between welfare and charitable system is often pointed as the sign of the inadequacy of social protection measures in covering the basic needs and charitable food programs attempt to supplement its shortcomings. However, food charities are not in-tended, by design, to fully meet clients’ needs, but only to provide a temporary relief. In fact, they are dependent on unpredictable levels of supply and can’t assure the nutritional quality of food. Further-more the stigmatizing nature of food charity makes it the last option, so much that food banks statistics are likely to provide an underestimate of food insecurity. Shortcomings of food assistance, both led by charitable organizations and governments, call for an increased understanding of the drivers and vulnerabilities of food poverty and how it is handled in HIC.

❖ There is a tension in food assistance between food surplus recovery and “right to food” approaches

Surplus food is safe food that is produced, manufactured, retailed or ready to be served but for various reasons is not sold to or consumed by the intended customer. Surplus food can be reduced at the source, or can be recovered and used in a variety of ways: feeding humans (e.g. donations to food banks and charitable institutions, or sales through secondary markets), feeding animals, waste recovery (e.g. sale to firms that produce fertilizers or cosmetics or energy), waste disposal (Garrone et al., 2014 a).

Food waste from a social perspective is defined as surplus food that is not used for feeding people, while food waste from an environmental perspective is defined as surplus food that is not re-used or recovered in any form. Surplus food that is not sold through normal retailing channels –such as products approaching their use-by date, (i.e. the date by which manufacturers and warehouses must supply perishable products) goods with faulty packaging, misshapen fruit and vegetables or goods that are consequences of overproduction, distribution delays and end-of line production (Sustain, 2002) –can be subject to donation. Donation to food banks is found to be a relevant management practice, especially in the ambient and chilled manufacturing segments and at retail distribution centers (Garrone et al. 2014b).

The concern on food waste is focusing the attention on the identification of the sources of waste and on finding new ways of avoiding unnecessary waste (i.e. standards, logistics and sell-by dates etc.). This is gradually bringing a change in the practices adopted by food system’s actors. A recent survey conducted by Harvard and Johns Hopkins University documents consumers confusion over the meaning of the date label terms (i.e., “best by,” “use before,” and “freshest before”, “expires on,” “sell by,” …) Survey results indicate that standardizing date labels and increasing consumer education on the meaning of date labels can help to reduce the significant amount of food that consumers unnecessarily discard. Walmart, the largest grocer in USA, has recently announced that it will be selling ugly apples at a discounted prices. Also Tesco, in an effort to reduce food waste, has launched the digital service “Wonky Vegetables,” a new initiative assuring that vegetables are delicious regardless of their physical appearance. In Italy, Coop retailers have launched the campaign “Good to be eaten immediately” to sell products approaching the use-by date at discounted prices: this has led to a sensible reduction of products that were previously donated to charitable organizations, hence compensated by monetary donations.

These trends suggest a possible tension emerging between on one side, surplus food recovery (which constitutes the base for several food banks’ activities and combines objectives of reducing hunger and food system surplus). On the other side, a “right to food” perspective is opposed, which aims at tackling the root causes of food poverty based on social justice and political and legal commitment by the State.
3.2 Food poverty in the European and Italian context: key dimensions of the phenomenon

At the European level, the figures on food poverty are provided by Eurostat and are captured using a specific indicator, referred to the ability of the person (or the household) to afford, at least once every two days, a protein meal (meat or fish or vegetarian equivalent). Such indicator is part of a battery of nine indicators, used by Eurostat to define the level of material deprivation of European citizens (i.e., not being able to support unforeseen expenses; having arrears in mortgage payments, rent, bills and other debts; not being able to afford one week's holiday away from home over one year; a protein meal at least every two days; adequate home heating; the purchase of a washing machine; the purchase of a color television; possession of a telephone; possession of a car). People are living in a state of severe material deprivation if they claim to have difficulties in at least four of these indicators. In Europe in 2014, 122 million people (24.4% of the population) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion and among them 55 million (9.6%) were not able to afford a quality meal every second day (Eurostat, 2015). Strong diversities are evident across EU countries, as indicated by the data reported in the figure below.

FIGURE 5 - INABILITY TO AFFORD A PROTEIN MEAL EVERY TWO DAYS (MEAT, FISH, CHICKEN, ETC. OR VEGETARIAN EQUIVALENT). SOURCE: EUROSTAT, 2015

The EU member that stands furthest from the Community average is Bulgaria: in this context, more than half of the citizens appears to live in food poverty (51.1%), followed by Hungary (33.0%), Slovakia (23.7%), Latvia (23.3%) and Romania (22.1%). Italy ranks eighth (14.2%), with values above the European average. On the opposite pole of the ranking appears as Sweden, where only 1.5% of its inhabitants manifested a food poverty problem, followed by Luxemburg and The Netherlands.

It is also important to look at variations in percentages before and after the crisis, as reported in the Table below. The variations before and after the economic crisis, show that from 2007 to 2013 the highest increase of food poverty was recorded in Italy: in just six years, people who did not afford a protein meal increased by 129.0%. Followed by the UK, where there was an increase of 117.5%, and Greece (+112.3%). These trends indicate that a worsening of deprivation levels does not correspond automatically to an absolute relevance of the phenomenon: in some cases, a strong increase in percentage values can coexist with very low absolute incidence.
Annex 4 provides an overview of the definitions of poverty adopted by the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) and present the main figures for poverty. As mentioned previously, in the seven years between 2007 and 2014, “the number of people living in absolute poverty is more than doubled, going from 1.8 a 4.1 million. This fast increase in a relatively short time has caused also a qualitative change in the features of people living in poverty. Up until 2007, families with three children and parents without working or elderly were the average representative absolute poor, in the South of Italy (i.e., “Italian model of poverty”). Economic crisis has impacted on those households with at least one component with a salary, with one or two children under 18 years and also in the central and northern parts of Italy. Inequalities have also risen: real income between 2007 and 2011 has decreased more (1.5%) than average of OECD countries (0.5%). Moreover, poorer population shares of the population have become poorer faster than the richer.

In recent years, among the people asking for help through Caritas help centres, the incidence of Italians has strongly increased (15% increase between 2013 and 2014, among all 85 diocese in Italy and 2832 help centres). Among needs expressed, the recipients lament a state of deprivation, as a result of the absence of or inadequate salary, the struggle to find an employment, and housing inadequacy, health problems and vulnerability of family conditions.

Tuscany has been for years a fairly wealthy region, with per capita income above the national average. However, the crisis that began in late 2007 has threatened this advantage mainly because it brings out some structural weaknesses. In particular, the crisis in the manufacturing sector, the low investments in innovation (with the exclusion of the fashion industry and other technological fields), and the decrease in consumption deriving from the decrease in employment due to industrial restructuring (Tomei, Caterino, 2013). After several years of increase, in line with the general trend in Italy, poverty in Tuscany seems to be stabilized, as indicated by relative poverty index. In 2014, relative poor have been 5.1% of resident population, 1.6 percentage points less than the previous year. This makes Tuscany the fifth less relatively poor region in Italy (after Trentino, Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Veneto regions). In absolute values, the percentage indicates that 191 thousand residents live below the relative poverty line.
Unemployment is intertwined with the NEET phenomenon (Not Employment, or in Education or Training) that cuts across the areas of education, training and work and involves 20% of Tuscan 15-29, (i.e., more than 100,000 young people). A trend that highlights a worrying growth, although below the national average, highlights a multifaceted discomfort, very difficult to deal with. This is even more alarming when discouragement (i.e. giving up the active search for a job) adds to the NEET condition.


A recent survey on the lifestyles and health behaviors among Tuscany young people highlights that a recent positive trend can be observed in relation to the “beneficial” effects of the economic crisis and that manifests in a reduction compared to the previous years in tobacco use, overweight population and gambling. The report links this to a contraction of resources within families, that reduce available opportunities for risky behaviors. However any correlation between unhealthy eating habit and poverty levels can be supported by available data.

The growth of poverty and social exclusion and the multiplication of possible sliding paths to poverty as well as those social segments thought to be at low risk only until very recently, rises the need to revise and tailor appropriate and specific policies that are able to deal with this whole series of critical issues through specialized services.

3.3 Food assistance in Tuscany (Italy)
Tomei and Caterino (2013) provide the first survey on the services and facilities that deal with the phenomenon of food poverty in Tuscany, and represents the first mapping at the regional level specifically for this field of action. The survey covers those actors operating the following categories: distribution of meals at home, social canteens, distributing basic necessities (food, medicines, clothing etc ..) and vouchers or food stamps.

The characteristics of food need see a widespread presence of local entities – public, private, social private and third sector – that perform support in this area, with more or less formalized and regular work patterns and characteristics of the service. Given the informal nature and the irregular character of many services, it is impossible to achieve total coverage of the entities involved in food poverty assistance in Tuscany.

Figure 8 illustrates the food assistance in Tuscany by highlighting the intersections and complementarities among different sets of actors that build up the food assistance network. This map was constructed and updated throughout the case study analysis with the aim of visualizing relations among actors, flow of resources and practices adopted to tackle food poverty in Tuscany.
The white boxes indicate the main actors involved in food assistance in Tuscany region (including recipients distinguished by longstanding poor and new poor) while the colored boxes indicate the food assistance practices. The double arrows indicate the flows of food/resources and the single arrows indicate other types of relations. The dashed arrows connect actors with the corresponding practices (either food assistance in the strict sense or related practices). The different colors identify different spheres or regimes of actors that overlap in addressing food poverty and are described in the following.

**Welfare: role of municipalities, health districts, region, state (in brown)**

In Italy we have a structured definition of what is the welfare system (see Annex 5 for a brief description of administrative and Public Health Service partition of Tuscany region). The framework law n. 328/2000 on policies for social services is the first law that makes an attempt to put together the different operational definitions of social services at the local, regional and national levels. It is the first law since the previous one in 1894 (the so-called Crispi Law) which had advanced in time through specific targeted interventions, creating a very complicated and diversified patchwork. The framework law in 2000 tried to build a common framework for the realization of an integrated system of interventions and social services, to be realized at the regional level\(^6\). However, the national framework law 328/2000 does not address food poverty in an explicit way: the law states that the State has to deal with is the fight against poverty, and it must provide the measures to combat poverty and social inclusion but it does not specify how to do so, at what level, and what are the tools available.

The financial support policies, (i.e., the money that the state transfers through regions and municipalities) are not compulsory or pre-defined in any way. There is not a national strategy and municipalities are expected to adopt and use different tools, as monetary contributions or support to rents, for those vulnerable groups that comply with a set of predefined requirements.

Two examples of support adopted by Tuscany Region in recent years are\(^7\): i) the Regional Financial Support to Households and ii) the Regional Social Loan. In relation to the former, Tuscany Regional Law (n. 45, 2 August 2013 n. 45), recognizing households essential role in education and personal care and provides support to families living in situations of difficulty. In particular, the measures are targeted at families living in difficult situations due to income inadequacy and unemployment, presence of newborn babies, disabled and large families.

Concerning the Regional Social Loan has set up the budget for social lending up to 3000 € without guarantees and without interest (to be returned in 36 months or even through socially useful activities) for families who find themselves in particular social and economic vulnerability. The allocation of the overall resources was made through the presentation of personalized projects for social inclusion for families in need by third sector organizations such as Public Assistance, ARCI, Caritas, selected through a public tender. It is a territorial network of 300 Listening Centres, the process starts with an interview and then an accompanying path to educate to using money wisely. The beneficiary is encouraged to be proactive to overcome temporary economic difficulties.

In terms of other non financial types of support, the following map by the Social Network of the Regional and Provincial social observers (2012-2013), gives an overview of structures responsible for the fight against poverty and social exclusion in the area: 8 social housing services, 3 emergency housing, 46 family-type community, 12 points distribution for clothing, 125 soup kitchens, delivering meals and food distribution, 3 showers service points, 70 day and night reception facilities, 27 structures of other nature. The second Report on Social Exclusion in Tuscany (Tomoi and Caterino, 2013), providing a focused contribution on food poverty, highlights that a high number of requests of help by third sector actors (i.e.,

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\(^6\) As for Tuscany, Regional Law 72/1998, which then became Regional Law 40/2005, and then Regional Law 44/2015.

\(^7\) Source: http://servizi2.regione.toscana.it/osservatoriosociale/img/getfile_img1.php?id=24437.
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Caritas among others) are reported by public social services. There is functional link that territorial welfare services have over time established with the voluntary assistance, thus assuming them as a strategic component of the local welfare system responsible for combating serious poverty.

“The profession of the “street educators”, who worked in the neighbourhoods and made a sort of monitoring activity has been dismissed but it is missing: they worked in very close contact with people and lived in the neighbourhoods, so as to notice potential situations of need and knew, for example, when people lost their jobs. They tried to offer proactive services to prevent people from falling into extreme need […]. Now it’s more and more difficult to act proactively, because we don’t have specific tools to intercept those individuals and families moving from a temporary vulnerable state to poverty. When people come to us, sometimes it’s too late and charitable organizations are struggling, too […] Sending people to, and receive from them it’s routine for us” (from the interview with Società della Salute, Pisa).

Though in some cases the user’s access channels share procedures among services and associations, there is a frequent lack of connection, leading to the risk of offering non-homogeneous responses – or even totally different responses – when facing similar problems. These would instead require aligned responses both from the side of professional social services, by the associations and the private actors.

FIGURE 9 – MAP OF SERVICES AGAINST POVERTY AVAILABLE IN TUSCANY. SOURCE: REGIONAL OBSERVATORY ON FOOD POVERTY.

Civil society: third sector active in food aid (in orange)

8 The study - a survey on 75 (out of 150) structures dealing with food poverty in Tuscany - reveals the existence of a more or less formal but consolidated relationship between public Social services and non-profit organization (religious or not), as well as procedures through which Social services officers signal and ask individuals in need to seek help from charitable organizations. Among the 68 cases out of 75 (90.7%) surveyed, the organizations assert that they routinely handle cases of people sent or reported by the social services of the local municipalities. This assumption of responsibility is not surprising with reference to the associations that conduct their activities in a structured way (i.e., within a 'institutionalized' framework); it is striking that such a link is also stated by all the associations that conduct their activities on a random or occasional basis.
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In the orange area of the map (figure 7) we have identified the actors, flows of resources and practices specifically aimed at food assistance. Our main interlocutor was Caritas, a religious organization that acts nationwide with a highly branched structure. It is a key actor of food assistance, thanks to its widespread presence on the territory and direct contact with recipients. It relies mostly on voluntary resources, both human and material and acts “in order to promote, also in collaboration with other bodies, the witness of charity of the Italian ecclesial community, in forms suited to the times and the needs in view of integral human development, social justice and peace, with special attention to the last and with a mainly pedagogical function” (Art. 1 of Caritas Statute). Caritas is organized into dioceses (i.e., the territorial subdivision according to the Church) and each responds to the Bishop. Within each diocese there are several parishes, which represent the baseline unit of aggregation and provides simplest services. It is necessary to consider that there is not a perfect coincidence between the ecclesiastical subdivision of the territory, which is that of Caritas, and levels of local government and administration.

FIGURE 10 – ECCLESIASTICAL SUBDIVISION OF TUSCANY: DIOCESES

Caritas is not the only relevant actor, there are other organizations that are involved in food assistance, active in tackling other forms of poverty: among others, the Community of Sant’ Egidio which, among its main activities develops voluntary services to the poor. Another actor is the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, a Catholic charitable organization founded in 1833 in Paris. Then there are the Red Cross (an association, member of the organization and Red Crescent International, which in Italy). Furthermore, the Venerable Confraternity of Mercy (Misericordia) of Florence is one of the longest-running institutions, being born during the 1200s, which also provides food assistance. All these actors are engaged in different activities, among which there is also assistance to food poverty, and they are said to be “front-line” organizations, since they are in direct contact with the recipients. There can be synergies, context and purpose specific, as they stem from different religious experiences (within and beyond the Church).

The main food assistance practices carried out by this plethora of actors can be distinguished in four main categories: i) distribution of meals in the form of parcels distributed in fixed locations, distribution of meals

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9 Sant’ Egidio Community: a Christian community that is officially recognized by the Catholic Church and claims 50,000 members in more than 70 countries;

10 The Venerable Confraternity of Mercy has, since its founding, worked for the transport of the sick to the hospitals and funeral services providing subsidies to needy and provide for the burial of the poor.
at fixed locations and hours, and distribution of meals by mobile units; ii) soup kitchen, open at lunch, dinner or both; iii) distribution by street units of food and drink iii) food voucher or Emporia cards (see paragraph 3.4 for detailed descriptions of the practices).

On a second level of the chain, acting according to a warehouse model, there is the Banco Alimentare (the Italian Food Bank). This is a non-profit organization that for over 25 years has been engaged in the daily contrast to waste and food poverty through a dense network of relationships that allows you to save and redistribute food that would otherwise be destined to destruction. The establishment of the Food Bank in Italy dates back to 1989 and stems from the initiative of a food industry leader, with Don Luigi Giussani, founder of Communion and Liberation, an ecclesial movement. The Tuscany Food Bank is one of the 21 territorial organizations of the Food Bank Foundation (FBAO). The Food Bank over the years has been able to create and structure an innovative organizational model capable of putting in contact areas which by their nature are struggling to build strong relationships. The feature that distinguishes the Food Bank is the ability to consolidate and structure the relationships between private and charitable organizations: the private, for profit, firms, who transfer their surplus to the Food Bank are able to reduce costs associated with the disposal of these surpluses, get tax benefits and improve their public image. At the same time, non-profit organizations that have an agreement with the Food Bank benefit from a stable supply of food for their front-line work, through a permanent and safe channel. A relevant share of food recovered derives from the Food Drive (Colletta Alimentare). The annual Food Drive represents the moment of greatest visibility of the Food Bank: every year on the last Saturday of November throughout Italy thousands of volunteers guarding the outlets of large retailers ask citizens to donate products to the recipients.

Caritas, Food Bank and other organizations receive a consistent share of the food resources through AGEA (The National Agency for payments in Agriculture), the national agency that collects and distributes food being transferred from the EU fund FEAD. In quantitative terms European FEAD funds represents the first source of supply of the Food Bank. FEAD resources, consist in distributions of food products through a purchase by AGEA, with a subsequent transfer to the partner organizations.

The revision of the EU policy, which provided for a change in the reference funds from PEAD to FEAD (see Annex 6 for detail) has led to a temporary lack of resources. However the new funding system endorses the existing mechanism of redistribution which is possible only with the presence of capillary networks of aid based on the presence of volunteers and informal, active contacts through NGO such as those mentioned above. The European program was acting as a subsidiary tool to support individuals and NGOs already engaged in this area, that already perform an autonomous, albeit more limited, recovery activity of food products and distribution to vulnerable groups. A measure, therefore, that has allowed the strengthening of a network already existing and traditionally active in this field. These networks have contributed in recent years to limit the effects of the shortage of income since, through food assistance have conferred a kind of minimum income that went to make up for the absence of effective public policies (Marsico and Frigo, 2014). The new operating funds for the poor seems to recognize this established network on the territory.

**The food system: farmers, processors and retailers (in blue)**

Among the food supply chain actors, we have indicated separately the farmers that are directly involved in the recovery of food surplus (e.g. mostly fruits and vegetables, as in the practice by “TiColtivo” the processing industry and food producers that refer to other non-profit organizations to transfer available surplus of food or food that is not compliant with formal standards (e.g., incorrect labeling) and retailers which get involved in different ways in food drives and surplus food donation to non-profit and charitable organizations (e.g. Buon Fine (“Good Ends”), the project led by Coop). Another practice that is spreading is illustrated by the “Mangiami subito” (“Eat me now”) organized by Coop is the sale at half price of fresh products that are about to expire to be found in dedicated sections of the retail stores. Another original and emerging practice that was found within the region, is the “SenzaSpreco” (“Without waste”)
experience which is a web platform that reconnects food producers, retailers and consumers with a double aim: either sale at lower price of food surplus or donation to non-profit or charities (the choice is up to the buyer).

An essential element of food assistance provision is the so-called Good Samaritan Law (Law n. 155, 16th of July 2003). The State enacted this single-article law 11 in order to equate to the final consumer voluntary non-profit organizations collecting food and redistributing it to the poor. In this way, responsibility for food safety shifts to charitable organizations, at least for the stages of conservation, transportation and storage, thus simplifying donation procedures for private firms. Many practices of food recovery have been triggered by the Good Samaritan Law (see section 3 of this report).

However, according to Tomei and Caterino (2013), it is an intervention in the perspective of food poverty as a symptom (at the opposite of food poverty as an effect), which is able to fill a gap in the system by relying to private social welfare, that is on non-profit and private sector, but unfit to overcome a rationale of unconditional assistance (2013:14-15). Currently, the Italian Parliament is about to pass a law on waste reduction through easier and more homogeneous food recovery procedures, thus integrating the Good Samaritan Law by providing incentives to private firms in order to further encourage donations.

11 Good Samaritan Law, n. 155 approved on 16/07/2003 - Regulation on the Distribution of foodstuffs for purposes of Social Solidarity - Art. 1. The recognized organizations (such as non-profit organizations of social utility (...), which carry out, for charitable purposes, free distribution of food products to the needy shall be treated as final consumers, for the proper state of transportation, storage and use of food” (authors’ translation).
3.4 FNS practices

**Premise: what is a “practice”?**

One point to be addressed in our case study has been how to delimit a practice. According to Røpke (2009), it is not so obvious and, apart from defining it as it makes sense for people, there are some issues arising when we try to set the boundaries to a practice. First of all, practices relate to each other and, even if a practice can be considered as a sub-practice of another one, such as cooking can be an element of taking care of one’s own nutrition, it still remains a practice itself. In addition, a practice can be studied only in the form of practice-as-performance, and this means that the same practice will always be different between individuals and groups, loosing tracks of the practice-as-entity. Third issue, when setting the boundaries between the elements constituting a practice, you must pay attention and distinguish them from the context in which the practice emerges (Røpke, 2009). It should be pointed out that particular care must be used when dealing with skills elements, which cover competence and knowledge needed to perform a certain practice. As we have found in our practices, in many cases, skills are directly linked to the ability to observe a certain procedure or regulation (by law, guidelines, etc.). These cannot be included within the practice itself but they rather constitute elements of the regime (i.e. institutional aspects) whose changes may be able to disrupt or trigger or consolidate a practice.

With these limitations in mind, starting from the literature, we have defined the practice of food assistance as all those activities involved in providing food and food related services to someone who could not, for many reasons, provide for her or himself. Of course, this means the practice of food assistance is composed of a complex bundle of practices, recognizable across time and space, and performed with some degree of regularity and repetition. These practices include the identifying needs, managing access to the service, building relationships with donors, recovering and buying food products, cooking, managing inventory and many others, differently assorted according to the manner in which elements combine, the way practices are performed, their level of consolidation or innovation potential.

**Soup kitchens (canteens)**

In common parlance, the term soup kitchen is used to designate a prepared meal program, whether the meal is consumed onsite or taken away (Poppendieck, 1994). In Italy, soup kitchens are commonly known as a “low-threshold service”, which means that identification is not required and anyone can have access to it. It represents therefore the oldest and still one of the most common instruments to address the poor and most marginalized people, although in the last years it seems to be extending to families with children, also in Tuscany (Tomei and Caterino, 2013).

Soup kitchens are available in all the cities where we conducted our interviews with Caritas members, and are carried out by Caritas as well as by other charitable organizations.

In the case of Livorno, where food assistance is made up of traditional low-threshold services, Caritas coordinates a complex network of donors, organizations, parishes and other partners, in order to have a widespread distribution and reach as many people as possible, promoting a decentralization of activities. Although the network is functioning and well organized, typical issues linked to supply-driven donations can be found:

“For the soup kitchen, every day we receive surplus food from Coop (see “Buon fine” practice) and from many shops, ranging from bars to bakeries, fisheries and butchers. Donations are either daily or weekly and thanks to this we have fresh produce, easy to manage for the canteen. Sometimes it’s hard to come up with a menu from what we are given, because we do not know in advance what we receive, but we will get by!” (from the interview with Caritas Livorno).

In Livorno, furthermore, access to the service is via vouchers released from Caritas Counselling Centre. The voucher is just a piece of paper with the indication of an expiry date on it, given in order to encourage people to take care of themselves returning to the Counselling Centre when it is about to expire:
The case of food assistance in Tuscany

“In this way we try to make sure that individuals do not fall into a situation of unconditional assistance. We try to make people understand that, above all, they have to take care of themselves and of what they need” (from the interview with Caritas Livorno).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to provide every day a square meal with available ingredients</td>
<td>• Emergency relief for the poor and marginalized</td>
<td>• Cooking facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to operate within food safety protocols</td>
<td>• Open to everyone</td>
<td>• Prepared facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to recruit and organize volunteer work</td>
<td>• Last resort option</td>
<td>• Spaces suitable for food consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to verify access criteria</td>
<td>• Stigmatizing</td>
<td>• Food vouchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Procedures established by the Good Samaritan law</td>
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TABLE 2 – ELEMENTS OF THE PRACTICE OF SOUP KITCHENS

“Spread canteens” model (Florence)

“Spread canteens” are a variation of soup kitchens, as they explicitly aim at addressing food poverty as well as social relations’ need. These canteens are scattered throughout the inner city of Florence and are characterized by smaller spaces, able to accommodate no more than 10-15 people at a time. This practice has developed from the decision to better meet the need of social relationships with and among recipients, by offering a more intimate and familiar environment for smaller groups of people. In addition, they offer a way to shorten the route to the canteen, which is an advantage especially for the elderly. Unlike the traditional soup kitchens’ modes of operation, they are only for Italian residents, as they have been commissioned by the Municipality of Florence, which contributes to the management together with Caritas and other non-profit organizations (ARCI). However, this shrinkage of access is partly counterbalanced by the many advantages that are persuading also other Caritas operators, to implement this practice in their cities.

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<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Material</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Coordination among municipalities, local associations and organizations</td>
<td>• Encourage social relationships</td>
<td>• Small spaces for food consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to operate within food safety protocols</td>
<td>• Avoid loneliness</td>
<td>• Cooking facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to verify access criteria and select eligible citizens</td>
<td>• Shorten the route to the canteen</td>
<td>• Prepared meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Procedures established by the Good Samaritan law (see note 11)</td>
<td>• More familiar and intimate atmosphere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
people donations in local churches, FEAD program (through partner organizations\textsuperscript{12}), food drives in supermarkets and specific donations from firms.

Since this is a practice carried out by many organizations on the territory, often without any coordination among them, and because the number of food provision activities seems to have increased due to the economic downturn, the actual size of food supplied to families in this way is largely undocumented. In Tuscany, this kind of service is mainly carried out at the lowest level by the parishes, by the associations of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the Catholic Association of Misericordia (‘mercy’) and other less structured organizations, whose services had remained the traditional ones.

In those cities where an Emporium exists (i.e. initiatives characterized by a small supermarket with controlled access where people can do the shopping for free, through an electronic card, see next section for detailed description of Emporia), since it has been opened, food parcels’ practice seems being replaced by the Emporium, as confirmed by people interviewed. For example, in Pisa and Grosseto, Caritas still supports and coordinates parishes in this activity, but the number of families and individuals who receive food parcels is decreasing, against an increase in Emporium users. In Prato, food-related activities are concentrated on running the Emporium, which is the largest one in Tuscany, as well as the first in Italy (see the practice of Emporia of Solidarity). Many operators interviewed are considering to gradually replace food parcels with an Emporium and are currently mobilizing resources and potential partners. However, in the city of Livorno, the replacement of current services with an Emporium does not represent a feasible option for Caritas, whose activity centres primarily on coordinating a large network of 42 parishes and non-profit organizations in food parcels’ delivery. Here, Caritas acts as intermediary for FEAD agreement and manages connections with local firms, restaurants, canteens and retailers in order to coordinate every day donations and surplus food recovery. In their case

“an Emporium would concentrate all the activities on us, while our organization is designed to decentralize food provision and hold the associations accountable for their direct recipients’ needs. There’s an emporium in our city, run by an independent cooperative, but we do not collaborate. […] In our city there has always been a myriad of small coops working autonomously, it’s not easy to coordinate” (from the interview with Caritas Livorno).

Even if it’s a common practice, targeted to families and individuals able to cook and prepare their own meal, several limitations of food parcels arose in the last years, suggesting an increasing inadequacy:

“When the first Caritas started this service in the 70s, people seeking for assistance were a few, marginalized people and the food parcel was a significant help. Now we meet a wider segment of population – it is more than tripled in the last years – people who had a job until yesterday and are used to take care of themselves and make their own food choices. So, food parcels are no longer an appropriate service, is the users themselves who say so” (from the interview with Caritas Lucca).

Furthermore:

“the food parcel is impersonal and inflexible. Sometimes it makes me feel ashamed for what we do, because if you come to us and say you need a pot of jam, but we give you just 5 kilograms of pasta, it’s not how it should work” (from the interview with Caritas Firenze).

<table>
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<th>Skills</th>
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<th>Material</th>
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\textsuperscript{12} Partner organisations are mandatory for all FEAD programmes and may be national, regional, or local public bodies or NGOs. They are charged with the actual distribution of assistance, and/or the provision of social inclusion measures to the most deprived. They are expected to have relevant expertise that would make them best placed to reach FEAD target groups, which can sometimes be hard to find (European Commission, 2015). In Italy, 7 NGOs are partner organizations, coordinating a network of 242 organizations and more than 15000 structures for distribution throughout the territory (AGEA, 2015).
The case of food assistance in Tuscany

- Ability to verify criteria for means-tested access
- Ability to observe FEAD guidelines
- Procedures established by the Good Samaritan law
- Low-threshold service
- Emergency relief for those who have cooking facilities at home
- Impersonal and inflexible
- Inadequate to respond to complex needs
- Scattered and undocumented practice
- Food aid consists of a box of basics, mostly non-perishable food
- Food from FEAD program, food drives and recovered food
- Fixed point of delivery

**TABLE 4 – ELEMENTS OF THE PRACTICE OF FOOD PARCELS**

**Emporia of solidarity**

Under the category of Emporia of Solidarity fall all those initiatives characterized by a small supermarket with controlled access where people can do the shopping for free, through an electronic card linked to a system which assigns a certain number of points according to the need of the individual. The first two opened in 2008 and since then around 60 Emporia have been counted in Italy\(^\text{13}\) (CSVNet, 2015).


**Caritas network of Emporia in Tuscany**

Here we refer to Emporia of Solidarity established within Caritas Network, and in particular on three main initiatives (available in the period of interviews):

- the Emporium of the city of Prato, opened in 2008 and currently the biggest and more structured in Tuscany [On-site visit and interview];
- the Emporium of the city of Pisa, opened in 2013 but already well integrated into networks both at local and Emporia level [On-site visit and interview];
- the Emporium of the city of Grosseto, opened in 2011, which functioning seems to be conditioned by isolation and geographic distance as well as the lack of local industries and firms [Skype interview].

**Skills**

The main channel to access a Caritas Emporium is via the Counselling Centre (Centro di Ascolto), where people go to seek some kind of help. Sometimes, as in the case of Prato and Pisa, Caritas establishes

\(^\text{13}\) During the elaboration of our case study, at least 2 other Emporia have been opened in Tuscany, while for others negotiations are in progress.
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links with Municipality, whose social workers are in charge of selecting recipients and delivering the electronic cards necessary for the access. An Emporium is designed to address mainly families in need and, although is difficult to make an identikit of beneficiaries, it can be said that they are beyond the conventional image of the poor and more and more including the “new poor” in the arena of needy (Maino et al., 2016). Beneficiaries are selected through means-tests which entail different criteria, both for the access and for the number of points assigned to their electronic card to be spent. A low value for ISEE (economic situation indicator) and the number of family components (priority is given to large families) are the main criteria considered for the access. However, other elements of need can be evaluated by the Counselling Centre (e.g., medical conditions and unemployment). The card is valid for 3 months in Prato, 6 months in Pisa, but in both cases a monitoring committee makes an evaluation and decides whether to extend the validity of the card or make some adjustments. This mechanism suggest the intention not to offer unconditional assistance, but rather to provide a safety net for those individuals and families who find themselves into a temporary state of need.

When individuals take their card, Caritas operators briefly illustrate the Emporium operation and rules. In the case of Prato, the delivery of the card is followed by a brief (one hour) training, made by a non-profit organization adhering to Caritas, explaining how the Emporium operates, where the food comes from, what are the rules of expiration date and why sometimes food could have reached its best-before-date. In addition, some “tricks” are explained to users, such as the “discounts” applied to batches of food next to expiry date. This is likely to be delivered without notice from producers to the Emporium and must be sorted as soon as possible. Then the Emporium applies a very low value, in points, in order to encourage individuals to take these products. The sudden availability of products for the Emporium makes necessary for people, in order to take advantage of this “discount”, to increase the frequency of shopping (rather than opting for a one solution grocery shopping).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emporium</th>
<th>Electronic cards</th>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Under 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisa</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prato</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>1845</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(+347 baby)</td>
<td>(+304 baby)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 5 – AVAILABLE DATA ON FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS ACCESSING CARITAS EMPORIA. SOURCE: ELABORATION FROM INTERVIEWS AND SECONDARY DATA.

Emporia are not open every day of the week. In Prato, it is open three days (Mon-Wed-Fri) for the normal shopping and the other two (Tue-Thu) only for distributing child care products to baby card owners, whereas in Pisa and Grosseto there isn’t such distinction (yet). Hours and days of operation are also depending on the availability of volunteers, which run the Emporia together with a smaller number of paid operators. In all the three cases, there are volunteers from the Italian and regional Volunteer Service.

Material

Emporia look like small stores: they have sliding doors, the typical furniture of supermarkets, with refrigerators, cash registers, food on the shelves, fruits and vegetables stands and shopping baskets at

---

14 The operators explain to Emporium users the difference between expiry date, which indicates the last day a product is safe to consume, and best-before-date which indicates the date the manufacturer deems the product reaches peak freshness. The date does not indicate spoilage, nor does it necessarily tells the consumer that the food is no longer safe for consumption. Sell-by date, in addition, is referred to the shelf-life of food, so it is more a guide for stores. Emporia can distribute foodstuffs with passed best-before-date but they don’t distribute any expired product.
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the entrance. It is worth to mention, among material elements, the only one that is missing: money, replaced by an electronic card similar to many others we keep in our wallets.

Ten basic foodstuffs represent the core of the Emporium supply, so as to ensure at least breakfast and a complete meal. These products are: pasta, rice, sugar, oil, milk, flour, biscuits, tomato sauce, tuna fish and legumes. Obviously, other products are often available but more linked to the specific donations made by private firms, according to their needs. This source allows the Emporium to offer an abundant variety of food products, ranging from ready-to-eat meals to frozen meat, although discontinuously.

The availability of other products is linked to local relations with firms and organizations. In the case of Pisa, for example, the Emporium receives meat from the Experimental Zooprophylactic Institute of Tuscany and Lazio, the institution in charge of micro-bacteriological analysis on batches of meat shipped to the harbour of Livorno. They used to analyze a sample of each batch and then dispose of the remaining meat (around 5 tons per year) with high waste disposal costs; now they deliver it to the Emporium, which is, on purpose, equipped with bigger cooling chambers. The size and storage capacity of the Emporium are key features in order to ensure a certain amount and variety of products.

Food sourcing takes place through a wide range of channels. All the Emporia in our case study receive, directly or by intermediary subjects (see footnote n.1 page 25), food from the European FEAD program, which consist for the most part of food with a long shelf-life and with a special packaging. (Error! Reference source not found.)

FIGURE 10 – FOOD FROM FEAD IN PISA EMPORIUM OF SOLIDARITY. PHOTO CREDITS: SABRINA ARCURI

Regarding FEAD products, the interviews revealed a general tendency not to choose them “unless are the only available […]. At least, fortunately, the previous label saying ‘Product destined to the most deprived’ has been removed” (from the interview with Caritas Pisa).

At the very beginning Emporia, as well as the other forms of food provision, counted more on regular surplus recovery from retailers. In Tuscany, since 2008, Caritas has an agreement with Coop (see “Buon fine” practice), aiming at recovering surplus food collected into this chain’s supermarkets. However, we know from interviews with both Caritas and Coop retailer, an increased attention towards the issue of food waste in the last years has led retailers to use several precautions, such as improving efficiency (by reducing errors and overruns) and selling products next to expiration date at discount prices (see the practice “Mangiami subito”). In the case of Prato Emporium, for example, where this was the main channel of supply, the consequence of the new line of action has been a reduction of food supplied from 45% of the year 2012 to the current 13% (2015). In order to remedy to this sudden lack of resources, the Emporium had to establish direct relations with producers and processing industries, often with the help
The case of food assistance in Tuscany

of retailers themselves. Now surplus\textsuperscript{15} food recovery is mostly linked to the territory and represents 71\% of supply (Prato). This means that surplus food is intercepted at an earlier stage and goes directly from private firms to the Emporium, avoiding unnecessary steps and waste of time, precious for food quality. This is true also in the case of Pisa, whose Emporium has a big network of producers, processing industries, retailers (Coop, Conad) as well as public institutions’ canteens, such as the University of Pisa and CNR. They have also an agreement with Pisa airport, whose staff delivers to the Emporium all the seized stuff that cannot be carried in the cabin luggage. By the way, Emporia may have a corner with clothes and products for personal care and home hygiene.

Differently than one would imagine, fresh fruits and vegetables are never lacking in Caritas Tuscany Emporia, thanks to several agreements made in the last years. The first is an informal agreement between ARTEA (the Regional Agency for payments in agriculture) and local fruit producers, where the Agency pays (a certain amount of) surplus production that producers themselves deliver to Caritas. The others are agreements among a broader range of actors (Red Cross, Food Bank, Mercafir, Bologna wholesale market CAAB) in order to deliver all those fruits and vegetables which has become surplus in Bologna and Florence wholesale markets, also due to the Russian embargo. In addition, in Pisa we have found a set of agreements made by Caritas with local farmers, urban gardens (the municipal “Homeless Project”) and the Farmers Trade Union (Coldiretti), in order to receive surplus fruits and vegetables (for example see the practice of “Cassetta Sospesa”).

However, it should be noted that in all the cases under analysis, there is a certain amount of products that must be purchased on the market in order for the Emporia to be able to always ensure at least basic supply. In the case of Grosseto Emporium, difficulties linked to the lack of firms, on one side, and the partial isolation due to geographical distance, on the other, often force the Emporium staff to directly purchase most of the foodstuff (from the interview with Caritas Grosseto). Conversely, in all the Emporia there is a large – perhaps too large – availability of some products, such as bread, especially from large retailers that must ensure the availability of fresh bread even late in the evening. Even if Emporia have a network of partner organizations to supply, like small soup kitchens or minor organizations, it is not uncommon to have themselves a surplus: in the case of bread, it is sometimes fed to animals (as they do in Prato). It is important to underline how the network being established among Emporia (also beyond Tuscany) and between Emporia and the other organizations on the territory represents also a channel where to convey excessive, unmanageable amounts of surplus food received without sufficient notice. As the director of Pisa Emporium stated

"we are getting obsessed about wasting food" (Conversation with Caritas Pisa).

Image

Caritas represents the key actor in the Emporia under review. However, an essential and general feature of Emporia is the broad range of actors involved in providing a service which none of them could have offered separately (Maino \textit{et al.}, 2016). In Prato Emporium, the biggest one, initiative came from Caritas together with the province and municipality of Prato and the local bank foundation, but the list of organizations participating in the project is much longer\textsuperscript{16}. An analogous combination of public, private and social private actors supports the Emporium in Pisa, located in the main place of aggregation of a neighbourhood with prevalence of public housing, next to a counselling office for advice and support for gambling problems.

Another, essential feature of Emporia – confirmed also by our case study – is they don’t focus solely on food provision, but they offer a range of non-food related supplementary services (Maino \textit{et al.}, 2016):

\textsuperscript{15} Surplus food is defined by Garrone \textit{et al.} (2014) as “safe food that is produced, manufactured, retailed or ready to be served but for various reasons is not sold to or consumed by the intended customer”.

\textsuperscript{16} Involved partners are Solidarietà Caritas Onlus, Volontariato Vincenziano, Centro di Aiuto alla Vita, Associazione Giorgio La Pira, Unicoop Firenze-Sez. Soci Prato, Confartigianato Imprese Prato, Parrocchia Santa Maria delle Carceri, Prato pro Emergenze Onlus, Società San Vincenzo de Paoli.
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- Social loans from Tuscany Region and microcredit services;
- Family budget courses, involving retired bank employees as volunteers;
- Italian classes, complemented with a babysitting service;
- Cooking classes, involving school students and recipients from many different countries and food cultures, to learn the best use of some food and typical recipes with scraps.

A new idea arising within Emporia is to provide the possibility, for beneficiaries, to work inside the Emporium itself or in collateral activities. Although this seems to consolidate as a practice in other regions (Emilia-Romagna), the operators we interviewed in Tuscany are still reflecting whether it is an opportunity or a risk and on the issues linked to this initiatives:

“I think it is quite difficult for a person in need to work alongside someone else who works as a volunteer. They have different perspectives: the first works for him/herself, the second for the others. First of all, it’s as if people pay by working what they receive from the Emporium, it is not solidarity anymore. Secondly, there is a problem of control that makes the option quite problematic” (from the interview with Caritas Prato).

“The question is how to give dignity to people. I do not think that recipients have to do volunteer work in the same place where they receive assistance – otherwise you’d create a short circuit – but we should rather be able to create and transmit the willingness to get involved in other paths and make sure that those who receive give something else... I always say that inside the Emporium, everything has a value and nothing has a price, but if you have to work to buy points to do the shopping at the Emporium, it is no longer the case” (from the interview with Caritas Pisa).

Many operators agree that the Emporium is the best available solution to cope with some problems related to food assistance, such as stigma and limited choice on the food received with food parcels, and that potential opportunities are yet to be discovered. It seems to overcome the “better than nothing” perspective linked to food parcels delivery. However, Emporium limitations are well known:

“the Emporium is just another way to deliver a food parcel, with the only difference that within the Emporium people can do it by themselves” (from the interview with Caritas Lucca).

In Table 6 we tried to make a synthetic comparison of main aspects related to Emporia and Food parcels, since the first is considered a plausible substitute for the latter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emporium</th>
<th>Food parcels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target</strong></td>
<td>Families, “new poor”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access criteria</strong></td>
<td>Families, individuals able to cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiative</strong></td>
<td>Caritas Network and/or Municipal Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong></td>
<td>Attempt to assimilate recipients to normal consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supply</strong></td>
<td>FEAD, FBAO, Red Cross, donations, surplus recovery from a network of local retailers, firms and public institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Available food</strong></td>
<td>Basics + a larger offer depending on surplus recovery and donations from private firms and retailers + agreements with private/public actors for fruits and vegetables (ARTEA, Wholesale markets BO and FI)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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| Meeting nutrition requirements and food preferences | Baby card in some Emporia; a points system encourages to make healthier choices; halal food in some Emporia and chicken meat is preferred to pork meat when it is bought | Fixed amount and type of food (“it is unflexible and impersonal”) |

TABLE 6 – ELEMENTS OF COMPARISON BETWEEN EMPORIA AND FOOD PARCELS. SOURCE: OWN ELABORATION.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Managing expiration dates, stocks and shelves in order to limit wastage of food</td>
<td>• Overcoming food parcels</td>
<td>• Food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Managing points assigned to products | • Recovery of surplus food on the territory | • Supermarket furniture (refrigerators, “cash register”,…)
| • Managing the software | • Culture of donation (sometimes it is lacking, as in the case of GR) | • Electronic card for users |
| • Ability to observe FEAD guidelines | • Overcoming the stigma associated with receiving assistance | • Halal food (GR) |
| • Food safety protocols and HACCP | • Stigma is still linked to the card for access to Emporia | • Baby card (PO) |
| • Procedures established by Good Samaritan Law | • Having feedback on recipients’ needs/habits: no judgement but analysis | • Suitable spaces (storage room, area for quality control) |
| • Create a network of donors and charitable organizations | • Education goals: disciplinary sanctions of school students are converted in voluntary works at the Emporium (PI) | • Software to keep track of food managed within the Emporia |
| • Network of Emporia of Solidarity | • Childcare protection with baby card | |
| • Agreement with FBAO, AGEA, ARTEA | • Meeting different needs and food preferences | |
| • Ability to verify criteria for access | • A place for social aggregation and education | |
| • Coordination | | |

TABLE 7 – ELEMENTS OF THE PRACTICE OF EMPORIA OF SOLIDARITY

Adding meanings to the emporium: the model of “Botteghe” (Lucca)

These shops, thought to be scattered throughout the city, are an ambitious model of emporium, aiming at addressing nutrition aspects and, at least partly, overcome the issue of supply-driven food donations. In addition, this model of emporium aims at taking into consideration some aspects of the supply chain, such as care about local producers and social justice, going relatively unnoticed in the “traditional” Emporium. As the director of Caritas Lucca stated:

“Individuals must have an adequate diet, in terms of health and lifestyle but also socially just. This is why we have made an agreement with local producers: they sell us products – for example cheese from a local dairy farm – at favourable prices and we pay in advance. In this way, we can distribute an excellent, local product and, at the same time, we act as a “bank” for these small enterprises, often in liquidity crisis. We try to put these meanings in our activities, while often the “surplus recovery” meaning prevails” (from the interview with Caritas Lucca).
The case of food assistance in Tuscany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Nutrition and health skills to support people's choices while doing their shopping</td>
<td>• Nutritional education: not just food but food that meet dietary and nutrition needs</td>
<td>• Local food from farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classification of products with different colours according to their nutritional value</td>
<td>• Short food supply chain</td>
<td>• Suitable spaces for scattered shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dietician's support</td>
<td>• Support to local farmers by buying their quality products and paying in advance</td>
<td>• Revaluing excellent local productions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Network of local producers</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8 – ELEMENTS OF THE PRACTICE OF LUCCA MODEL OF EMPORIA (“BOTTEGHE”)

Italian Food Bank (FBAO)
FBAO is the Italian version of food bank, operating since 1989 to collect food surplus and redistribute it to over 8,000 charitable organizations of the network. It is the main organization that operates at the national level and it represents Italy in the European Food Banks Organization (Santini and Cavicchi, 2014). It works through a network of 21 regional food banks, each of them collecting and distributing on its territory, although following indications and distribution agreements from the FBAO. FBAO counts on 117 employees, 1,738 volunteers, more than 39,000 square metres of storage facilities and a fleet of 80 vehicles for food transportation (Santini and Cavicchi, 2014). Its activities mainly centre on logistics, as intermediary between donors and charitable organizations, and education, addressing both new potential donors and consumers.

The Food Bank has distinguished itself for its ability to consolidate and structure the relationships between private and charitable organizations: the private enterprises that transfer their surplus to the Food Bank are able to reduce costs associated with the disposal and get tax benefits while improving their public image. Meanwhile, non-profit organizations that have an agreement with the Food Bank benefit from a stable supply of food, through a permanent and safe channel. Beyond FEAD resources, a relevant share of food recovered derives from the National Food Drive Day.

Practices led by FBAO are described in the following paragraphs. We decided to focus on the practices which show a high educational value, thus introducing a new element of meaning with respect to the most common practices carried out by the FBAO. The following practices, thus, are not peculiar of Tuscany, but are carried out by the regional food bank in Tuscany to which the interview refers.

Siticibo (FBAO)
Siticibo started in Milan in 2003 in the wake of Good Samaritan Law (enacted in Italy as Law n. 155, 16th of July 2003). Its main objective is the recovery and redistribution of surplus food from canteens and catering services (hotels, corporate, hospitals and schools canteens, etc.) as well as big retailers (Rovati and Pesenti, 2015). Food recovered through this channel consists primarily of fresh and ready to eat meals from catering services, while bread, fruits and desserts are often recovered from school canteens. Since highly perishable foods are handled, in order to ensure food safety, modes of collection are described in very strict and scrupulous procedures, agreed with donors, and volunteers are properly trained on HACCP. Essential material requirements to carry out this practice are facilities for heat removal (for the donors) and refrigerated vans, key components of the FBAO fleet vehicles.

After food is rescued, it is immediately delivered directly to charitable organizations located next to the point of collection, in order to allow immediate consumption of the products.

Sometimes, the place of recovery is too far and the value of food is too low to justify the trip. In these cases, the regional food bank puts in place a kind of triangulation with a local organization, acting as a...
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guarantor for this one – based on an existing agreement between these two – and allowing it to pick the food recovered on its own. This is valid, for example, in Grosseto, quite isolated because of geographical distance from the other cities of Tuscany (from the interview with the regional food bank of Tuscany).

Apart from the value of recovered food, this practice has also a high educational value:

“Recovering food from school canteens, for example, is more a matter of education: children learn they don’t have to break the bread’s wrap or damage the fruit they don’t eat, because it will be recovered and given to someone else” (from the interview with the regional food bank of Tuscany).

Skills | Image | Material
--- | --- | ---
• Following procedures established by Good Samaritan Law | • Recovery of food from public and private canteens and retailers | • Facilities for heat removal
• Ability to observe protocols and rules to safely manage fresh and cooked food | • Km0 distribution of recovered food | • Fresh food and ready to eat meals from canteens
• Volunteers trained on HACCP | • Engagement of children, students and employees | • Refrigerated vans
• Triangulation opportunities | • Education | •

TABLE 9 – ELEMENTS OF THE PRACTICE OF SITICIBO

“Colletta alimentare” (‘National food drive day’) [FBAO]

Since 1997, the last Saturday of November, the FBAO organizes the largest national food drive, called “Colletta alimentare”. The event involves thousands of supermarkets (~11,000) and volunteers throughout Italy, as well as supermarkets’ clients, which directly engage themselves in donations. In this occasion, volunteers become more than 100,000, including also those from local charitable organizations which receive food drive’s products.

Volunteers stay at the entrance of supermarkets and ask people to freely give what they can, providing information on which food items are needed more. Preferably, people are asked to give non-perishable food, such as canned food, pasta, rice, tomato sauce, oil, sugar and baby food, as well as personal care items.

In Tuscany, food collection is organized on a provincial level and in most (80%) of the provinces the regional food bank can count on a temporary warehouse. For a couple of months next to the collection day, this is the site where provincial volunteers and organizations deliver and then pick up all the stuff they collected. Warehouses are connected through the SIR (i.e., Internal Network System) which, starting from the information on the number of beneficiaries and their needs – organizations range from those helping families with children to rehab centres for drug addicted – allocate a certain amount of products to each charitable structure which has participated in the collection. The SIR allows the regional food bank to keep track of every single kilogram of distributed food (from the interview with the regional food bank of Tuscany).

Skills | Image | Material
--- | --- | ---
• Volunteer work | • Consumers’ engagement | • Non-perishable food items, baby food, personal care items
• Flyering to inform consumers and give indications | • Education to the culture of gift | • Supermarkets’ spaces
• | | • Informative flyers, boxes and bags for individual donations by supermarket
**TABLE 10 – ELEMENTS OF THE PRACTICE OF “COLLETTA ALIMENTARE”**

**Other relevant practices**

Beside the aforementioned, real practices of food assistance, which constitute the hard core of this system, there is a set of collateral practices, intersecting with the former ones and contributing to change them by influencing flows of resources, actors’ involvement and meanings associated to the activity of charitable organizations.

**SenzaSpreco**

SenzaSpreco (‘Without waste’) is a project by the cooperative “Le mele di Newton” (‘Newton’s Apples’) designed to reduce food waste. Five young fellows founded the coop in 2010, with the aim of scientific and cultural divulgation on sustainability topics. “SenzaSpreco” also aims to support, with all those who care about this issue, advocacy strategies towards institutions, in order to spread and promote good practices inside the productive and consumption processes, and moreover to stimulate improvements of the current regulation” (from SenzaSpreco website).

SenzaSpreco revolves around three main kinds of activities:

1. **The Market place** – It is a web-platform, currently in beta, that allows all those who are involved in the production, distribution, transformation and trading phases of the supply chain to sell discounted food products, in surplus or close to the expiry dates, to single buyers or companies or to donate to charities.

2. **Tailored Services** – SenzaSpreco creates custom-made projects for particular targets and geographical areas. It can also activate actions and events to facilitate the matching of supply and demand of unsold food products. An example is the case of a grocery and an Hotel Management School: the first has unsold fruits and vegetables at the end of the day, the latter the necessity to buy them at a lower price in order to use for students’ training. SenzaSpreco has facilitated the creation of a link to connect them in a medium-long term project.

3. **Education and awareness** – SenzaSpreco offers information tools, workshops, seminars and events for school-students, as well as for adults and children, because they think the wasting of food is mainly a cultural problem as is proved by the huge amount of domestic food waste.

In our case study we focus on the first pillar of activity, that is the market place platform, thought as a link between those who have surplus and those who’d like to purchase at lower price or receive it in donation. The projects of SenzaSpreco market place won a contest sponsored by Coop and received funding for the pilot phase, along with the assistance of a Coop employee, who worked side by side the group for free. In order to better understand how the platform works, it could be compared to the e-bay auction system (from the interview with SenzaSpreco). It is a virtual market place to sell food still good to consume by combining economic savings with environment savings. The consumer can register, choose products and special offers of the day and pay in person or by Paypal, according to the rules defined between buyer and seller. There are already 60 users on the supply side of the platform (Coop is not included), that is producers, distributors, shop. Different kinds of ads, profiles and operation address the need of users, depending on their point of sale (profile for suppliers, shops, etc.):

“If a company place an ad for a pallet of tomatoes, this can be directly purchased online via an agreement between buyer and seller. But if the seller is a small store and the amount of surplus is not so much to justify a single ad for each product (it would be difficult to update the ad continuously), the shop can place a generic advertisement to inform it is going to sell the surplus at
50% discount at the end of the day. It is what many already do informally, like bakers” (from the interview with SenzaSpreco).

Food is never handled directly by the coop and logistics compete to buyers and sellers, according to the amount of food exchanged:

“we only provide a tool that facilitates the meeting between demand and excess supply in order to optimize the use of resources” (from the interview with SenzaSpreco).

All users – sellers, buyers or charities – can buy products available on the platform, but only charities can receive donations. This mechanism is possible because those registered as charities are the only users who can see donation offers on the website. On the other side, companies can decide whether to sell the products at 50% discount or donate them. Items for sale that do not find a buyer can still be donated to charities. A potential limitation to the use of the platform emerges with reference to older volunteers. SenzaSpreco, therefore, partially intersects with food assistance by representing an additional, potential source of food but it takes more the form of a practice of food waste reduction, addressing all citizens and supply chain actors:

“the entire population should give a value to these products, should not only be meant for food assistance, otherwise it is too easy to have clear conscience” (from the interview with SenzaSpreco).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management of the e-commerce site</td>
<td>Surplus and waste reduction: environmental protection perspective</td>
<td>Web platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating connections on the territory</td>
<td>Sellers engagement in waste reduction</td>
<td>Small retailers and producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surplus management</td>
<td>Engagement and education of consumers to waste reduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitating the meeting between supply and demand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 11 – ELEMENTS OF THE PRACTICE OF “SENZASPRECO”**

**Buon Fine (‘Good ends’) [CoopFI]**

It is a project for the recovery of unsold food products in favour of non-profit voluntary organizations assisting the needy. It dates back to the early 2000s, when a group of employees realized they were throwing away still edible food at the end of the day. Together with Coop members – 1 million and 250 thousands in Tuscany, which periodically meet in sections and deal with Coop social activities – they tried to find a solution to the problem of how to reuse these products. Last Minute Market by professor Segre of University of Bologna inspired “Recupero merci” (‘Goods recovery’) project:

“at the beginning ‘working better to waste less’ was the motto of the project. The current name, ‘Buon Fine’, came later, when with the help of a communication agency we decided also to give the initiative a logo: a box with a gift ribbon, to give an idea of the value of what is being donated” (from the interview with UniCoop Firenze).

Good Samaritan Law, which allows food recovery as long as it is donated to non-profit organizations, was essential for the success of the project:

“At the very beginning, operation was a bit rough but, since 2003, thanks to the Good Samaritan Law, it has become much easier […] it [the law] has also increased significantly the amount of food recovered, at least until 2013” (from the interview with UniCoop Firenze).
In order to implement the practice, Coop signs a standard agreement with non-profit organizations (and at this stage all the rules on how, who and when to manage products are fixed, with the direct involvement of the person in charge and the staff of the point of sale.

Since easier to manage, non-perishable food, products with packaging defects (damaged secondary packaging, broken multipacks, …) and non-food items were the only covered in the first period. Thanks to the Good Samaritan Law, since 2003 it has been possible to recover perishable foods next to expiry date, such as meat and dairy products, cooked and fresh vegetables and cold cuts: these are removed from shelves from 4 to 2 days before the expiry date, but organizations must serve them before the products expire.

The procedure implies for the staff to thoroughly check the products, remove them from sale and collect in special boxes in a suitable, separated space. Then, according to a fixed schedule, these products are recorded and delivered to the organizations at the supermarket. Organizations must sign a declaration where they ensure that the products will be destined only to the needy, or the agreement is cancelled. Currently (at the moment of the interview, October 2015) Coop has made agreements with 106 organizations, with the broader Buon Fine network including more than 300 charitable structures (from the interview with UniCoop Firenze).

The meaning of the project seems to have evolved over time:

“at the beginning ‘working better to waste less’ was the motto of the project, whose name was ‘Goods recovery’. The current name, ‘Buon Fine’, came later, when with the help of a communication agency we decided also to give the initiative a logo: a box with a gift ribbon, to give an idea of the value of what is being donated” (from the interview with UniCoop Firenze).

As one can expect, the purpose of Coop is to have less waste and increase efficiency as much as possible:

“After two or three years, for example, the more effective management of goods led to a reduction in donations, it means employees were working better. In the profit and loss account, donations are a loss, they are an inventory shortage. Since Buon Fine has started, 60 out of 100 damaged/expiring products are donations, it is a good action we make but there is not a revenue. With ‘Eat me now!’ we recover food with a gain” (from the interview with UniCoop Firenze).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observe procedures established by Good Samaritan Law</td>
<td>Interests in effective surplus management and waste reduction</td>
<td>Unsold but perfectly edible food, product with damaged packaging, food next to expiration date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following fixed rules and procedures for food selection, control and separate packing by the staff</td>
<td>Multi-stakeholder (employees, consumers, volunteers, members) engagement towards waste reduction</td>
<td>Non-food products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard agreement with non-profit organizations</td>
<td>Coop members and employees engagement in the starting phase</td>
<td>Boxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of expiration date and damaged products (increased efficiency and earning)</td>
<td>Specific logo</td>
<td>Storage spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional working hours for employees and proportional wage increase (cost)</td>
<td>Relations with local charitable organizations</td>
<td>Transport facilities by non-profit organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image of solidarity and responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 12 – ELEMENTS OF THE PRACTICE OF “BUON FINE”
“Mangiami subito” (‘Eat me now!’) [UniCoopFI]

In a context of greater attention towards the issue of food waste and, of course, pushed by the economic crisis, several supermarket chains\textsuperscript{17} have recently started to sell at half the price food products close to the expiry date. The practice seems to be well-spread both on the national territory and in the different major retailers; however, here we specifically address the case of Coop retailer in Tuscany (actually, on the 7 provinces covered by UniCoop Firenze) since it had a side-effect on many other practices analyzed in this report.

The initiative came from consumers – some of which Coop members\textsuperscript{18} – that started asking to buy for a lower price products next to expiration date. Economic hardship is the primary driver:

“Even those who are not below the poverty line can find it hard to make ends meet, but it is unlikely that they will go to the soup kitchen or to seek help from Caritas […]. Obviously, no one is going to check who buys these products, but we can assume that individuals and families in need know the good moments to find them are the morning and the early afternoon, when we gather them” (from the interview with UniCoop Firenze).

Since 2013, products are collected two or three days before the expiry date, with a new specific label indicating 50% discount and are gathered into a white tank with the sign “Eat me now!”. Foodstuffs are mostly cold cuts, meat and dairy products, cooked vegetables and delicatessen.

The initiative is only possible in those supermarkets with the software suitable to manage the operation and therefore it has not been extended to the entire chain of Coop supermarkets, but only in seventeen supermarkets. “Benefits are equally distributed among Coop and consumers: the first recovers resources from what was destined to become waste and because it removes products from sale two days before the deadline, the latter because they spend much less for a lunch or a dinner” (from UniCoop Firenze website).

By contrast, those who lost resources are the organizations providing food assistance, who can no longer count on the amount of surplus food once received on a daily basis from Coop through “Buon fine”. Compared to the overall amount of surplus currently recovered by Coop, this initiative accounts for two thirds, whereas the remaining part is surplus distributed to charitable organizations, highlighting a kind of potential trade-off between initiatives aiming at waste reduction and support to charitable organizations for food poverty alleviation (from the interview with UniCoop Firenze).

The practice aroused protests especially from Caritas, which was the main partner in “Buon Fine”, and thus, in order to try to compensate the sudden shortage of resources, Coop has decided to increase the frequency of food drives in its supermarkets and to make hefty money donations to allow Caritas to directly purchase mainly fresh products in short supply because of the new initiative introduced. Although recognizing the value of these substitutive initiatives, some operators pointed out a shift from a rationale of surplus recovery to a rationale of gift (from the interview with Caritas Lucca, Caritas Pisa, UniCoop Firenze).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ilfattoalimentare}, 6 Febbraio 2014, “Prodotti in scadenza: la lotta allo spreco alimentare si combatte nei supermercati. Coop, Auchan e Carrefour li vendono a metà prezzo”, available online at http://www.ilfattoalimentare.it/prodotti-in-scadenza-lotta-spreco.html

\textsuperscript{18} Coop Italia is a system of consumers’ cooperative, operating the largest supermarket chain in Italy. It involves more than 100 consumers’ cooperative of various size and 7.7 million members (www.e-coop.it).
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Table 13 – Elements of the practice of “Mangiami subito”

| Management of shelves and products’ expiration date/best-before-date | Waste reduction | Perishable food next to expiration date |
| Observe food safety regulation | Economic savings | Supermarket corners with signs and |
| | Economic gains | Specific label |
| | Involving consumers | |
| | Potential support to consumers in need | |

Cassetta sospesa (‘Suspended box’) [Casa TiColtivo] [http://shop.ticoltivo.it/prodotto/dona-cassetta/]

Casa (‘Home’) TiColtivo starts as a farm, owned by five guys with a graduation in Agriculture. It makes direct online selling through a website, where customers can purchase a (smaller or larger) box of vegetables that will be delivered directly home. After the starting phase, Casa TiColtivo opened a shop right outside the city of Pisa, while most of their croplands remain in a separated area. Gradually, this shop has become a place where people can buy fresh organic vegetables produced by the farm and products (jams, cheese, eggs, fruits) from other local farmers. It is also a place to eat (at breakfast, lunch and dinner, also home delivery) and a place to chill out reading a book on the grass. Since February 2015, Casa TiColtivo carries out the practice of Cassetta sospesa (which means “suspended, pending box”) in favour of Caritas. It takes the name – and meaning – from the philanthropic habit of “Caffè sospeso” (‘suspended coffee’), very popular in Southern Italy traditional culture, which is to leave a paid coffee in a bar for anyone who cannot afford it. Cassetta sospesa works like this: at the end of her/his online shopping on Casa TiColtivo website, the customer can choose to buy for 5 euro an additional box of fresh vegetables for the Pisa Emporium of Solidarity. It is not exactly the same of the other cassettes: actually, Casa TiColtivo picks a certain amount (4/5 kilograms, sometimes more) of surplus vegetables and brings it directly to the Emporium (or at least to Caritas offices). According to one of the farmers: “there is a subtle line between still eatable vegetables and surplus. A one-day old salad cannot be sold, but it is still good to eat and we can’t throw it away. This does not mean that we give them [Caritas, author’s note] food scraps, sometimes we bring it home and eat it ourselves” (from the interview to Casa TiColtivo).

Rather than a simple purchase, Cassetta sospesa is a donation the customer makes to the farm in order to recover their surplus and give it “to someone who cannot afford to buy healthy food” (from Casa TiColtivo website). At the beginning of the initiative, regular customers bought 10-15 Cassetta sospesa per week, that is more than 100 in the period between February and October [when we conducted the interview, author’s note]. However, the practice is strictly linked to online sales: since the shop opened, online sales have decreased and so did the number of donations.

Table 14 – Elements of the practice of “Cassetta sospesa”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing organic food</td>
<td>Improving the image of the company: philanthropic marketing device</td>
<td>Surplus of local and organic vegetables and fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations with Caritas Emporium</td>
<td>Direct involvement of consumers into a good practice</td>
<td>Transport facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing surplus vegetables and fruits</td>
<td>Providing with fresh, healthy food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skills Image Material
3.5 Foresight Workshop

**Summary of process and results**

Here we briefly report on the results of the reflection developed within the two workshops by key players of the food assistance system in Tuscany. As mentioned, we addressed Caritas as main interlocutor, who is now reconsidering its role in contributing to food poverty mitigation by setting up a territorial “Alliance for Food”, a desirable vision which has been thought of in abstract terms but has not be reflected into a concrete application yet. We adopted a combination of scenario approaches – explorative scenarios describing plausible future contexts and normative pathways that explore the feasibility of transformative change in different scenarios.

The work developed to study food assistance practices can be considered preliminary to the foresight exercise described in the following. A participatory scenario approach was adopted to investigate and challenge the feasibility of concrete plans for the future of the local cases and to inspire further innovation. This combined approach of using explorative scenarios to test back-casted transition pathways is particularly suitable to the case of food assistance for several reasons. First of all, the food and nutrition security challenges that food assistance responds to are contingent upon changing and uncertain socio-economic contexts. Explorative scenarios offer distinct and diverse accounts, co-created by local participants, of how future contexts could develop and change the challenges and opportunities of food assistance. Secondly, because robust food and nutrition security strategies are needed in the face of this future uncertainty, the back-casting of strategies has the potential to provide food assistance actors with a format in which they can look beyond present limitations and start with their desired long-term objectives, which can then be tested against scenarios to make them more robust.

We tested this methodology with the main actors of the food assistance system in Tuscany (Italy) in order to address the challenges and pressures of the current context of change. The delicate balance between actors, resources and responsibilities makes the food assistance system quite vulnerable to increasing demands, changing need and decreasing resources. The elaboration of strategies towards future FNS is recognized, first of all by the stakeholders, as a relevant goal to be accomplished.

We organized two workshops: the first one focused on creating a first draft of the local food assistance strategies, and then down-scaling the set of European food system scenarios to the level of food assistance in Tuscany. Local scenarios have been created, by examining what the local situation would look like in the context of each European scenario, with attention to key variables that effect the goals of the focal project in the future. The second workshop focused on developing desirable future visions and various transition pathways that could be used to achieve these visions in the context of the different local scenarios.

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19 This paragraph is largely based on a paper prepared for presentation for the 5th AIEAA Conference, “The changing role of regulation in the bio-based economy”, held in Bologna, 16-17 June 2016, authored by Galli, F., Arcuri, S., Bartolini, F., Vervoort, J., Brunori, G. “Exploring scenario guided pathways for food assistance in Tuscany”.
Based on the suggestions of participants and clustering within relevant themes, a set of macro-ideal targets was identified. Hence the macro-themes were scored based on the perceived relevance for food assistance in Tuscany. The following themes were elaborated and ranked: rights (13 points); governance (23 points) and networks (16 points) – these two themes were joined; person-centred approach (17 points); education (25 points); monitoring (12) – this was considered as a cross cutting issue; food waste (11 points); food quality (11 points). After the voting session, three themes were chosen as priority goals for the back-casting planning exercise.

**Governance.** One of the main vulnerabilities of the current food assistance network is the fragmentation of actors and activities on the territory. The creation of a coordination body is one of the main instruments proposed to address this issue, together with the participatory definition of rules and monitoring and assessment criteria for achieving FNS in Tuscany. This objective concerns first and foremost defining a multilevel responsibility (i.e., European, national and regional) in shaping regulations that address behaviours at lower levels. The plan for Governance and network consist of two main goals: i) development of an integrated and coordinated network for FNS and ii) development of a FNS policy adopting a prevention approach.

**Education.** Beyond contingent practices and emergency responses to food need, equal attention should be given to developing education paths to achieve FNS. Education relates to stimulating openness towards societal problems, voluntary action and gift, together with a food culture. Education processes should be planned to address, first of all, those who have a role as educators and trainers, both internal to the food assistance system (e.g., volunteers and third sector) and the food system in general (e.g., retailers or food processors). The plan elaborated for education for FNS in Tuscany develops around three main goals, which are interconnected and reinforcing one another: i) increasing awareness on available resources and production processes; ii) educating to cultural change towards healthier lifestyles; iii) achieving coordination and sharing of information on relevant themes.

**Person’s centred approach.** This theme refers to the ability of the food assistance system to identify, understand and respond to specific needs (also in relation to individual conditions and wider needs), possibly in a flexible and adaptive way. This food assistance system should become able to involve recipients, in a perspective that goes beyond the assistance logic. Adopting a “person centred approach” entails five main sub-objectives: i) treat food aid recipients as protagonists; ii) find multiple and integrated...
Q1. What are the most important differences between the 4 EU Scenarios in terms of opportunities and limitations for the ‘local’ case study initiatives?

The other outcome of the process consists in the development of four future scenarios for food assistance in Tuscany in 2030. These have been elaborated by participants by downscaling four European scenarios, previously elaborated at the European level (see Brzezina et al., 2015 for detail). The downscaling process consisted in addressing the question: “What would the (EU) scenario mean for food assistance in Tuscany?”. Although the four scenarios were developed around a wide set of relevant variables (i.e., economic up or downturn, immigration flows, urban rural relations, public health, availability of food surplus, availability of volunteer workers, degree of government involvement), two key variables across the four scenarios have been identified to simultaneously compare them. The first is way of intervention by Government, which may entail the adoption of an emergency approach (i.e., the State responds from time to time to social emergencies, when they arise) or a strategic approach (i.e., the State anticipates social emergencies by adopting a proactive approach). The second variable relates to the openness of society towards societal problems, such as immigration (i.e., civil society demonstrates an open or a closed attitude).

FIGURE 12 - LOCAL DOWNSCALED SCENARIOS ACROSS WAY OF INTERVENTION BY THE GOVERNMENT AND ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY TOWARDS SOCIETAL PROBLEMS.
The case of food assistance in Tuscany

- “Tuscany in 3D” (top-right). The right to food enters fully into the political debate: food assistance is conceived as a strategic task that allows to tackle bigger problems and needs. Public authorities develop a strategic approach to achieve closer collaboration between all players in the food system. Citizens are willing to contribute with voluntary work. The role of civil society associations is viewed by government as a resource for survival and functioning of the welfare system.

- “It could be better” (bottom-right). The pressure on the national health care system – due to rising incommunicable diseases derived from years of poor diet – brings a reduction to public expenditure on social services. A reactive public management approach and poor coordination between services prevail. Social actors must find a way to cope with the increased (food) poverty.

- “Solidarity in half” (top-left). Italian government adopts a high budget but targeted welfare strategy, by supporting eligible citizens with minimum incomes, exacerbating the differences with the most vulnerable groups. Market and redistributive policies ensure FNS to all eligible citizens. Civil society is very closed and uninterested to social problems.

- “Do I want to go to live in the countryside?” (bottom-left). The government decides budget cuts on social measures, considering these not as a priority. Food assistance support is limited to transferring European resources to social parties. The food assistance actors must intercept surplus of small producers and retailers, which are most resilient in the regional context, but this has become more complicated. Society is very closed, therefore human resources, i.e. volunteers are also scarce.

Q2. To what extent are these differences also translated into diverging strategic choices for the future?

The ultimate aim of this work is to obtain a final version of the plans enriched by the additions, revisions and comments made during the sessions of the second workshop. This was done during the scenario-based review of plans and a last plenary session, during which key recommendations and priorities were indicated by the stakeholders on each plan previously discussed. The main strengths and weaknesses of each plan across the scenarios and suggestions for improvement of the plans were collected into a matrix.

We can distinguish two levels of elaboration of the plans: revisions and additions to the plans which are valid across all scenarios and revisions and comments which are scenario specific, therefore suitable in case of contingent events happening in different scenarios.

One general remark can be made across all scenarios. In the governance and network plan, as well as in the other plans, the initiative by Tuscany Region is strongly called for. However, the leading role of the Tuscany Region is not plausible under all the scenarios: this introduces the possibility for other actors/networks to gain a leading role in this process. Another general remark that applies to all the scenarios: in order to achieve these sub-objectives, creating opportunity of exchange between actors will be necessary. Tuscany Region leadership would be desirable and, in order to mitigate a scenario of increasing lack of public support, sharp short-term and bottom-up actions by civil society and third sector, should be put in place and should gradually involve other institutional and private actors.

Q3. Which kind of other outcomes of the scenario work is important to highlight and understand overall case study initiatives dynamics?

- The first reflection concerns the tool provided to stakeholders to address uncertainty of future context in a systematic way. This turned out to be a challenging task, because of the difficulties not only in imagining long term ideal goals, but also coming down to concrete actions, that should take place in the medium and short-term.
• In relation to future oriented thinking, a key point concerns the boundary between actors’ sphere of influence and the given scenario context. Downscaling the scenario in the local context requires dealing with the delicate balance between exogenous events in relation to strategic actions: to what extent can stakeholders impact on the scenario and change it? The distinction depends on the perception that agents have. This process intended to allow for a conscious focus on actors’ agency potential: implicit in the method is questioning the supposed limitations on agency that participants have in the scenarios.

• Another crucial aspect in our study was given by the heterogeneous composition of the group of stakeholders invited to the workshop. Caritas represented the main partner of a broader network of stakeholders who have their own critical perspectives and aims. Such an “hybrid user environment” – in between a “one client” case and a fully dispersed case – is a specific feature of our case study: it poses a challenge in terms of “appropriation” of the results (i.e., the application of the plan for the achievement of focused impacts becomes inevitably harder) and requires to find a balance between the particular objectives of different stakeholders. This hybrid composition allowed them to take a step back while looking at their own plans and to adopt an external vision on the strategies. This is particularly relevant for food assistance in Tuscany, as this reveals to be a system de facto but not in explicit terms, in which actors otherwise meet and exchange to tackle daily needs but lack a strategic approach to food assistance (at least on a regional level). Co-designing of plans across scenarios has not only supported the elaboration and testing of planned actions, but has favoured exchanges between different organizations on ongoing mechanisms, strategies and actions (especially during working groups and lunch time side talks).

• Two final remarks on the foresight workshops. First, the process was initially designed to be developed in four days. We had to shrink into two days for organizational reasons, in order to fit into stakeholders agendas. This inevitably impacted on the degree of elaboration and completeness of downscaled scenarios and planning. Second, it is early to make a final statement on the actual feasibility of the plans drafted: this needs to be verified through careful monitoring in the next year time, to allow researchers to check on actual implementation, although the first short-term steps have already been set by including the results on the plans in next Caritas annual report for Tuscany Region.
4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Strengths and weaknesses of practices analyzed

In order to investigate a potential for innovation in the practice of food assistance, we have identified and analysed how its constitutive elements combine and how the practice has evolved (or is evolving) over time, in the light of the influence of some drivers and factors of change.

Since we faced an issue of fragmentation characterizing food assistance in Italian regions, we decided to address Caritas network’s practices at the specific level of the diocese. Notwithstanding, we have found a high variability in terms of resources (both human and material/financial), capacity of network creation, public institutions’ support – more often mutual than unilateral.

The practice of Emporia, that has evolved and spread all over Tuscany, as well as in Italy, is among the most innovative and promising for the future, also in relation to FNS outcomes. Nonetheless, the combination and the interconnections among the diversity of practices, for different purposes, although presenting several weakness, seems to be the strength of such a complex and informal system for contrasting food poverty at the local level. Several strengths and weaknesses can be identified in the practices analysed, in line with available literature on food assistance, confirmed by stakeholders themselves during the interviews. Here we briefly summarize the main ones.

The first point concerns dependence on donations, as shown by the unexpected interruption in 2014 of PEAD funding and the reduction of surplus food sourcing by supermarkets led by an increased attention towards food waste. The diversification of supply seems to be partly effective in addressing vulnerability linked to few donors: along with FEAD products and surplus recovered from retailers, Emporia seem able to build networks on a local basis with a broad range of actors stemming from farmers to food industries, from canteens to wholesale markets and many others (airport,…). However, the network and supply of food achieved in this way are complex to manage, both in terms of human and material resources (surplus creation within the emporia, for example). Sustainability in the long-term is to be further analysed. Furthermore, a tension between food surplus and donations was observed. Interviews with operators working in the field highlighted a trade-off between actions targeted to reduce food waste and actions for food poverty alleviation. Even if it’s difficult to monitor, supermarkets have been changing rules for their internal management of surplus and this has had an unexpected effect on charities. On one side, as they improve efficiency, the typical errors resulting in donations decrease; on the other side, by selling surplus at a lower price day by day, they reduce waste and have a revenue.

Secondly, a key issue for food assistance concerns dependence on volunteer work. For example Emporia have the necessity to ensure a scheduled and reliable operation, more often requiring specific skills, the use of paid staff increased, along with reliance on workers from the Italian and regional Volunteer Service (which provides for a reimbursement, although it is a voluntary activity).

Thirdly, nutrition related aspects are mainly addressed through the diversification of supply (constrained by dependence on donations). This is harder to achieve for specific products, such as baby food. The lack of fresh fruits and vegetables seems not to be a problem, as it has been addressed through ad hoc agreements with local producers and wholesale markets and Regional Agency for Payments in Agriculture. However, sustainability in the long-term must be further investigated. For example, such fruit and vegetables surplus currently derives from the Russian embargo products, which could be a temporary condition. Cultural aspects of food and preferences are being addressed, as shown by Emporia that trying to address a multi-cultural demand linked to the growing number of immigrants from many countries and cultures. In addition, the increasing numbers of people affected by celiac disease and food intolerances are posing new challenges to the operators interviewed. In relation to stigmatization, none of the practices identified can completely overcome this issue. Even in the Emporia, the assignment of the electronic card, according to some operators of Caritas, is per se an element of stigma.
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However, the Emporia represents an attempt to at least mitigate the stigma associated to food assistance by presenting the Emporia as close as possible to a common supermarket, thus trying to present the practice of “buying” food at the Emporia as the common practice of “buying food at supermarkets”. The birth of Emporia, according to some operators, has been appreciated by AGEA, since they operate as wholesalers for FEAD food and all the paper reporting has become easier to manage through the Emporia (from the interview with Caritas Pisa). This could favour the further spread of the practice.

4.2 Transformative capacity of practices analyzed

In light of the strengths and weaknesses of food assistance practices analyzed it emerges that charitable organizations are in a unique position to act as spokesperson between the poor and governments. It also emerged that a “self-reflexive process” –along the line researched by Elmes et al. 2016 –has started within charitable organizations, who are re-thinking their role towards the achievement of food and nutrition security in Tuscany and beyond. Charitable organizations are constrained in taking effective, strategic action against the root causes of poverty by the urgency to deal with daily operations and necessities, in what we have described as a tension between their witness function, which put them in the unique position to advocate for the poor, and their ordinary management function, which is every day “business as usual” functions, absorbing time and energies and that makes “the means become the ends” (Lorenz, 2012:395).

Recently Caritas’ counselling centres have faced not only a higher number of requests, but also a higher level of complexity of the phenomenon of poverty. In many cases, food assistance is the most immediate response the organizations are able to put in place, partly because individuals in need tend to seek for aid when they are struggling and need to satisfy immediate basic needs. However, managing food aid is becoming more and more time consuming and requires charitable organizations to display significant human and material resources. Stakeholders are aware of the limits of their actions in the face of broader needs and of the necessity to find a way to help people by “fostering their resilience” (interview with Caritas Lucca, 2015).

A potential line of action is raising awareness with respect to existing needs, which they know sometimes better than specific institutional actors. In practice terms, for example, it could be advisable avoiding excessive emphasis on the enormous amount of meals provided, tons of food donated or recovered and always larger numbers of people receiving help. The unintended effect of this kind of communications – also due to the high visibility given by media to charitable activities – could be giving the impression of a solved problem, something that food banks, partly, and their corporate donors, mostly, are blamed for by academics (Booth and Whelan, 2014; Riches and Silvasti, 2014). Rather, unaddressed needs should be highlighted, for example by emphasizing the number of individuals they have to turn away, tons of food they have to purchase and health necessities, cultural and dietary preferences that, despite everything, they fail to meet.

A challenging issue raised by many authors from different European countries is the lack of a systematic food insecurity and food charity monitoring (Silvasti and Karjalainen, 2014; Lambie-Mumford et al., 2014; Perez de Armino, 2014; Pfeifer et al., 2011). As is in our case study organizations, available statistics are often collected by churches and charitable organizations’ volunteers, in order to keep track of their own activities and performances and there are differences in the way data are collected, level of detail, reliability, interpretation. Not to mention the fact that each organization is only able to keep track of those who turn to them, but not of all the households in need. “The serious shortage in data collection concerning hunger and food insecurity including general lack of official monitoring, reliable statistics and time series indicates not only neglecting the problem but also denying it” (Riches and Silvasti, 2014:207).

What charitable organizations can immediately do is to push the state and local governments and institutions to take part and coordinate appropriate mechanisms of monitoring.

The pathways for change towards FNS, drafted during the workshops, include broadening the range of action in unusual directions. For example:
Charitable organizations, such as Caritas, FBAO and the others, together with civil society and third sector organizations, should encourage and promote coordinated actions in order to implement a shared communication strategy;

These organizations, as well as researchers and public institutions dealing with poverty, should commit towards the creation of a single platform in order to share data and information from all the relevant stakeholders;

All these actors should promote, under the State coordination, the implementation of a mechanism of monitoring and specific indicators of the state of need, causes of vulnerability, available responses from all the relevant stakeholders and the ability to mobilize both public/collective and private/market resources;

Charitable organizations should continue in parallel to work on improving the efficiency of the current management of food assistance, for example through training initiatives;

Civil society, charitable organizations, third sector and all the other relevant private and public stakeholders involved in food assistance might engage in a debate on the right to food and remind State Parties to the ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights) of their obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human right to adequate food and nutrition.
REFERENCES


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## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1 – List of interviews, interviewees, affiliation, date, type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name(s)</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marco Lucchini</td>
<td>Italian Food Bank Foundation</td>
<td>18/2/2015</td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Donatella Turri</td>
<td>Caritas Lucca</td>
<td>7/7/2015</td>
<td>In person interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Francesco Manciocco</td>
<td>Ti Coltivo farm</td>
<td>7/10/2015</td>
<td>In person interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Luciano Rossetti</td>
<td>Coop retailer</td>
<td>9/10/2015</td>
<td>In person interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Giulia Lombardo, Marta Zanieri e Daniele Lanini</td>
<td>“Senza Spreco”</td>
<td>9/10/2015</td>
<td>In person interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Leonardo Carrai</td>
<td>Banco Alimentare Toscana</td>
<td>14/10/2015</td>
<td>In person interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Paola Garvin, Stefania Comparini, Luca Puccetti, Cosimo Romano</td>
<td>Tuscany Region</td>
<td>21/10/2015</td>
<td>In person interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Luca Tomei</td>
<td>University of Pisa</td>
<td>19/11/2015</td>
<td>In person interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Luca Grandi</td>
<td>Caritas Grosseto</td>
<td>27/11/2015</td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Alessio Cavicchi, Cristina Santini</td>
<td>University of Macerata, University San Raffaele</td>
<td>30/11/2016</td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Andrea de Conno and Antonio Minghi</td>
<td>Società della Salute, Pisa</td>
<td>10/12/2015</td>
<td>In person interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Alessandro Buti e Gabriele Chianucci,</td>
<td>Caritas Arezzo</td>
<td>16/12/2015</td>
<td>Skype interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Umberto Ottolina</td>
<td>Emporio della Solidarietà di Prato</td>
<td>17/12/2015</td>
<td>Visit to Emporia and in person interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dalia Venco</td>
<td>Caritas Prato</td>
<td>17/12/2015</td>
<td>In person interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Marcello Supressa</td>
<td>Caritas Pistoia</td>
<td>18/12/2015</td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Giovanni Tondo,</td>
<td>Caritas Siena</td>
<td>21/12/2015</td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Emanuele Morelli</td>
<td>Caritas Pisa</td>
<td>21/12/2015</td>
<td>In person interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Simone Picchi</td>
<td>Caritas Livorno</td>
<td>13/1/2016</td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Marzio Mori, Beatrice dall’Olio</td>
<td>Caritas Firenze</td>
<td>15/1/2016</td>
<td>In person interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Attendance to public events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Date and Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Dire, fare, partecipare per nutrire il pianeta”</td>
<td>13/3/2015 - organized by Caritas, Seminario Arcivescovile, Lungarno Pacinotti, Florence, Italy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Caritas and the Emporia of Solidarity in Pisa”</td>
<td>20/5/2015 – University lecture, Emanuele Morelli, Pisa, Italy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Dossier 2015 sulle povertà in”</td>
<td>15/10/2015 – Presenation annual report, Caritas Tuscany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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ANNEX 2 - Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews

Part 1 – Gaining knowledge on the practice
1. How was the practice established and for which reasons?
2. How does the practice work? What are the rules that shape the practice?
   - Skills, competencies: actors
   - Claims, values: meanings and rules
   - Assets, materials, resources
   - Numbers and data

Part 2 – Gaining knowledge on the evolution of the practice
3. Scaling up out?
4. Imitation?

Part 3 – Understanding the food assistance system
5. Links and connections: what is your network? Who are you in connection to?
   (Show the map, actors, connections, resources…)

Part 4 – Understanding vulnerabilities
6. Who are the vulnerable groups addressed? How are they changing?
7. What vulnerabilities do you address?
Examples:
   - Waste and surplus
   - Food affordability

8. What do you think your practice is vulnerable to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Internet use</th>
<th>Ageing</th>
<th>....</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Adverse events...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic...</td>
<td>Retailers promotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Do you determine any type of vulnerability? And for whom? Does anyone raise some conflict or attack by someone?
   Example: Creating a parallel market, low prices but not aiming at vulnerable groups.

TABELE 1 - MAIN HAZARDS REPORTED BY MEDIA. SOURCE: WP2 NATIONAL REPORT ITALY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Technological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate change</td>
<td>Food waste</td>
<td>Economic crisis</td>
<td>Political inefficacy</td>
<td>Accidental food contamination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad weather</td>
<td>Frauds</td>
<td>Financial speculation</td>
<td>Public budget constraints</td>
<td>GMOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrochemical use</td>
<td>Criminality</td>
<td>Energy costs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intensive livestock/farming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pollution</th>
<th>Strikes</th>
<th>Land competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal/plants disease diffusion</td>
<td>Food industry commercials</td>
<td>Credit crunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern lifestyles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 5 – Pre-workshop questions for Caritas members (from workshop guidelines):

10. What are the long-term objectives of the initiative? *(in this case, it is referred to Caritas commitment against food poverty and not to its general mission)*

11. Can initiative members give some preliminary ideas of what would be needed for this type of initiative to make a significant contribution to food and nutrition security in Europe?

12. Which elements are, or could be, relevant to the initiative and to its future success or failure?

13. Which actors are relevant to future success (including actors which could positively and negatively affect future success)? *(To take into consideration as potential participants to the workshops)*

14. Who can provide critical, useful outside perspectives on the initiative? *(idem as q. 13)*

ANNEX 3 – List of references for the literature review


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38 Lambie-Mumford, H. (2013). ‘Every town should have one’: emergency food banking in the UK. Journal of Social Policy, 42(01), 73-89.


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**ANNEX 4 - Definitions of poverty and main data trends in Italy (ISTAT, 2015).**

**Italian Official statistics by ISTAT distinguish two definitions of poverty:**
1) Absolute poverty. The absolute poverty basket is the set of goods and services that, in the Italian context, are considered essential to a family or household to achieve a minimally acceptable standard of living. The absolute poverty line is the minimum expenditure required to acquire the goods and services included in the absolute poverty basket. The absolute poverty line varies based on family size, composition, age, geographical area and size of municipality of residence.

In 2014, 1 million and 470 thousand households (5.7% of those residents) was living in absolute poverty (for a total of 4 million 102 thousand people, 6.8% of resident population). After two years of increases, the incidence of absolute poverty remained substantially stable. Absolute poverty is also stable in geographical areas, it came to 4.2% in the North, 4.8% in the Centre and 8.6% in the South. Absolute poverty remains almost double in the small towns of southern Italy compared with that observed in the metropolitan areas. The opposite happens in the North, where absolute poverty is higher in urban areas (7.4%) compared to the other municipalities (3.2% among the larger and 3.9% among smaller ones). There is an evident poverty gap between citizens and foreigners: absolute poverty it is more widespread in households composed by foreigners than in households composed only by citizens. In the North and Central Italy poverty among foreign families is more than 6 times higher than that of the Italian families, while in the South it is about triple.

2) Relative poverty. Relative poverty is a parameter that expresses the economic difficulties in the affordability of goods and services, in relation to geographical areas, and the average economic standard at national level. The relative poverty line for a family of two components is equal to the average expenditure per person in the country (or the spending per capita and is obtained by dividing the total expenditure on household consumption by the total number of members). In 2014 this expenditure is amounted to 1041.91 Euros monthly. Equivalent spending is calculated by dividing the value of family spending by an equivalence coefficient that allows to compare levels of spending of families of different sizes. Equivalence scales are a set of correction coefficients used to determine the poverty line if families have a number of different components of two. For example, the poverty line for a family of four is equal to 1.63 times the two components (EUR 1698.31), the threshold for a family of six is 2.16 times (2250.53 Euros).

Like for absolute poverty, relative poverty is stable and involves, in 2014, 10.3% of families and 12.9% of the residents, for a total of 2 million 654 thousand households and 7 million 815 thousand people. Stability is confirmed over the previous year, by geographical area and the improvement of the condition of households headed by a person seeking employment (the incidence of relative poverty decreased from 32.3% to 23.9%) or residents in small towns in the South (from 25.8% to 23.7%) where such improvement is in contrast to the slight worsening in large municipalities than the previous year (from 16.3% to 19.8%).

ANNEX 5 - Regional Health Service partition (3 broader areas) and provinces (10).

Within the regional level, Tuscany is divided into 10 provinces (currently waiting to be reformed by the national Government). A separate division concerns 3 main Health Service Units (USL), recently reformed in order to harmonize social and health services (previously provided by 12 different units.
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Figure 13 below). An intermediate level is that of “Società della Salute” (Health District) an organizational aggregation aiming at integrating the services and activities of municipalities and health agencies and working to give people unitary answers to social, health and social needs. These represent the main point of contact and access to territorial services. Together with Regional and National Government, these are the main public actors interacting - in many different ways - in food assistance provision.

FIGURE 13 - REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICE PARTITION IN BROADER AREAS AND PROVINCES

ANNEX 6 - From PEAD to FEAD: critical aspects and potentialities of EU funding shifts

The origins of the European funding. The issue of food poverty is not new in the EU institutions: the European program of aid to the most deprived is active since 1987 in Europe (Programme Européen d’aide Alimentaire aux plus Démunies - PEAD), born within the CAP, the Common Agricultural Policy,

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with the goal to donate surpluses of European agricultural production to charities that help the poor (Reg. 3730/87, laying down general rules for the supply of certain bodies of food from intervention stocks for distribution to deprived persons in the Community). The goal was the reduction of intervention stocks while ensuring ample supply of foodstuffs to the poorest people in the EU. In 2011 in the EU more than 31 thousands charitable organizations were benefiting from the EU program reaching 18.9 million people (35% of the poor people of the 20 beneficiary Member States). The number of recipients in Italy, benefiting from EU resources, grew from 2.7 million in 2010, to 3.4 million in 2011, 3.7 million in 2012 up to over 4 million in 2013 (Maino et al. 2016).

Reasons for change. The CAP revisions that have occurred over the years, substantially reducing the amount of surplus, have also led to a transformation of PEAD. This substantial change to the program in recent years has seriously jeopardized its refinancing due to the opposition of six member countries - Germany, Sweden, Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Denmark and Netherlands - which in 2011 had obstructed the Commission’s proposal for the continuation of PEAD for the years 2012 and 2013. The reasons behind this opposition essentially concern the fact that the program should have been transferred from agricultural policy to social policy hence under a de facto responsibility of Member states and a substantial reduction in terms of resources (from 480 million euro to 113.5 million euro). The intervention of the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ciolos, backed by supporters of PEAD countries (mainly France, Italy and Belgium), has enabled the funding of the Programme for the biennium 2012-2013 for 480 million euro planned originally.

The new Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD) was proposed in 2012 by the European Commission and strongly supported by the European Parliament as a practical tool to assist the disadvantaged and show the solidarity of the European Union. The proposal of FEAD is a novelty in the European legislative landscape, because until now the issue of extreme poverty was entirely delegated to the competence of the individual Member States. The overall objective is promoting social cohesion contributing to the achievement of poverty reduction target of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The specific objectives are to support national programs that until now do not provide financial assistance to deprived people through partner organizations and help to coordinate efforts, develop and introduce tools to promote the social inclusion.

The years of change. 2014 was a crucial year for European policy and measures combating poverty and social exclusion because it set the beginning of the new seven-year programming of FEAD in place of PEAD started in 1987. The following table summarizes the main changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PEAD</th>
<th>FEAD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Agricultural policy</td>
<td>Social policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of intervention</td>
<td>Distribution of food</td>
<td>Delivers a non-economic assistance (food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>products</td>
<td>and basic consumer goods) and social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>inclusion measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European budget, annual</td>
<td>Budget 2013: 500 million €</td>
<td>Budget 2014: approximately 500 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for all member States</td>
<td>euro (excluding national share expenditure) to all participating States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National share expenditure</td>
<td>Voluntary participation (20 member states)</td>
<td>Compulsory participation, at least for 15% of admissible expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget for Italy</td>
<td>100 million € in 2013</td>
<td>85 million € in 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Access to FEAD by Member States. Each Member State shall submit to the Commission an Operational Programme 1 and 2 of implementing the Fund for the period from 1 January 2014 to 31
December 2020. The operational programs are drawn up by Member States or any authority designated by the State in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and, where appropriate, the competent regional, local and other public authorities. The stakeholders in Italy were: Rossa Italiana, Caritas Italiana, Fondazione Banco Alimentare, Banco delle opere di Carità, Associazione “Sempre insieme per la pace”, Comunità di Sant’Egidio e Associazione Banco Alimentare Roma. Through the approval of national programs (for which 3.8 billion euro until 2020 were made available), material assistance which covers food, clothes and other items for personal hygiene is offered to recipients. It is a program that must go hand in hand with national policies oriented to social integration. National authorities can decide whether to buy food and goods, and supply them to partner organizations or whether directly fund the latter. In Italy the Operational Program covers four different goals that need work: beyond food poverty, material deprivation of children and young people in schools, food and educational deprivation of children and young people in disadvantaged areas of Italy, and material deprivation by homeless and other vulnerable people.

**Critical issues:** continuity from PEAD to FEAD (the operational program should favour continuity and not rupture from previous resources distribution routines), construction of inclusion projects without overlapping on other social funds (need for targeting), connection of the measures to the public network of territorial services (need for monitoring).