

P-05-963 Require supermarkets to donate excess food to charity, Correspondence – Petitioner to Chair – 17.06.20

Dear Janet Finch-Saunders MS,

In response to the Chair of the Petitions Committee, we would like to commend the Welsh Government's close work with charities such as the Trussell Trust, as well as the financial pledges offered by many major supermarkets, in helping to secure stable supplies for food banks across Wales in this difficult period.

We would also like to raise a few points for the Senedd's discussion of our petition, as we feel the Welsh Government's response places most of its focus on the current financial position of the major food donation distributor, Trussell Trust, during the time of upset caused by the coronavirus pandemic: while we feel that issues pertaining to the crisis should be a priority at the current time, we would also like to point out that the Trussell Trust has been reporting a record number of referrals to its food banks in Wales since last year, well before the coronavirus crisis.

UK Government authorities have maintained that food wasted by many supermarkets is still at an unacceptable level, despite the laudable donations and funds pledged by Morrison's, Tesco and other supermarkets voluntarily. In response to the UK Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee's report on food waste in 2017, Committee Chair Neil Parish MP concluded that while he "[commended] Tesco for publishing its food waste data from across the supply chain...The fact that no other retailers have followed their lead shows that a voluntary approach is inadequate...There is a huge amount of surplus food that is currently not being redistributed." This is a far-reaching problem, and though we are glad to see the Welsh Government's primary concern currently lies with alleviating the pressure of the coronavirus crisis, we believe that the twin issues of redistributing surplus food and preventing unnecessary supermarket food waste deserve to be considered on their own terms as separate to the pandemic.

Given the Welsh Government's commitment to halving food waste by 2025, we would like to ask what current Welsh Government powers are over surplus food redistribution, and what powers are being requested in the UK Environment Bill? What specifically does the Welsh Government propose if those powers are obtained, and with elections next May can we expect commitment to the proposals before the end of this Senedd term?

We appreciate the steps taken to communicate with the Trussell Trust and other organisations, and to ensure their financial stability at the current time. Although many food banks across the nation have sufficient food supplies and volunteers to meet demand, there are local food banks still in need of donations whose volunteer numbers have significantly reduced, such as in Caldicot where one food bank's staff has fallen from 20 to only 4. Some of these food banks are not affiliated with Trussell Trust.

When the French Government legislated a supermarket food waste ban, the law improved the quality of food donations, and saw them increased by 30% in the subsequent year alone. Despite concerns over the initial pressure put onto food rescue charities, the law helped make reducing food waste the norm in the food supply chain. Tackling food waste needs a far-reaching approach that engenders behavioural change, so that food system actors (including consumers) change their habits for the better; this needs to be a long-term change, and we urge you to settle for one that has permanent effects, rather than a temporary mandate. We hope you can see that more action on

these matters is necessary, and that while voluntary measures such as the Courtauld initiative are commendable and appropriate for the moment, the problems of food waste and food shortage are a lot older than the current crisis, and will certainly outlast it if left unchecked.

We'd be grateful if the Petitions Committee could keep this petition open and ask these further questions of the Welsh Government, as well as possibly contacting some food banks directly for their response.

Yours sincerely,