



## GALLERY OF INSPIRING INITIATIVES



*Providing employment to people with disabilities  
Recycling unsold food*



# CirculAbility

## Gallery of inspiring initiatives

IO1



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# INTRODUCTION

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In our standard economic logic, resources, both human and natural, are either ignored as unprofitable or are exploited and discarded as soon as they cease to be profitable.

Sad are the numbers generated by the “extract, make, use, throw away” mantra: a third of the world's agricultural production is lost before it is consumed (1). At the same time, it is estimated that in 2019 more than 30 million European citizens could not afford a decent meal every day, or 6.7% of the population (2).

Beyond just food resources, it is also human resources that are wasted in this model. Thus, while in 2020 it was estimated that one out of five Europeans suffer from disability(3), only 50.8% of them had a job, compared to 74.8% of people without disabilities(4). As a result, their poverty rate was 70% higher than the average(5).

To the unacceptable moral drama, our economy adds the ineptitude of depriving itself of a fertile breeding ground of potential human resources perfectly fit for work. These figures and facts, illustrated by the absurdity of both natural and human overuse practiced by a soulless system, can only force a reaction.

This is the observation of the “CirculAbility” project, co-funded by the European Erasmus + program, which has set itself the task of exploring avenues of convergence between the fight against food waste, the fight for the rights of people with disabilities and fight for a sustainable and inclusive economy. These themes have crystallized around a specific activity: the reuse of unsold food by people with disabilities.

In various countries, this has been done successfully. But to be successful and financially viable, it requires a certain amount of technical and multidisciplinary expertise. The CirculAbility project aims to offer this expertise to professionals inspired to set up this type of project, through the analysis of successful and convincing initiatives and the creation of an adapted training for professionals in the sector.

In this production, the precepts of the circular economy are presented as well as the way in which it constitutes a relevant tool for the employment of people with disabilities. This theoretical framing is completed by the exhibition of a gallery of ten exemplary European initiatives illustrating how such an enterprise works.

Finally, some general recommendations will allow a better understanding of the main principles that should guide the achievement of these sustainable and solidarity-based projects.

[1] FAO, The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2021, 2021, consulted on <https://bit.ly/3mNCiV>

[2] Eurostat, Inability to afford a meal containing meat, chicken or fish (or a vegetarian equivalent) every other day - EU-SILC survey, 2011-2020, last modified 27 August 2021, accessed at <https://bit.ly/3yBDp10> on 08/29/21

[3] European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. People with disabilities, consulted on <https://bit.ly/3yDGfTc> on 24/07/21

[4] European disability forum, Employment policy, accessed at <https://bit.ly/3iXfNyL> on 22/07/2021

[5] French Ministry of Ecological Transition, The European Union, rights of people with disabilities and accessibility, May 21, 2021, consulted on <https://bit.ly/3aDDM1q>

# SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

*ADEME (the French National Agency for Ecological Transition) proposes the following definition of the circular economy: "A system of trade and production that, at all stages of the product life cycle (goods and services), aims to increase the efficiency of resource use and decrease the impact on the environment. (...) It is about doing more and better with less<sup>6</sup>."*

Strongly encouraged by the European Union in the framework of its new industrial (7), environmental (8) and food (9) strategies, this model opens the way to sustainable economic growth. Thanks to its initiatives in favor of a transition to a more circular economy, the European union projects the creation of 580,000 new jobs by 2030 (10). But as the triple transition toward a circular, digital and green economies takes shape, the question of the beneficiaries remains open.

The job creation generated by this model concerns jobs that are often manual, such as the collection, sorting, packaging, repair or delivery. Requiring only minimal training, they are more accessible to vulnerable groups. They are also meaningful, sustainable and rooted in their territory, in other words, they cannot be relocated.

In addition, the innovative philosophy of the circular economy leads it to explore new markets neglected by the traditional economy, allowing it to generate unexpected benefits where others would have seen only detritus to be disposed of. Turning lead into gold is an old alchemist's promise, but applied to an area such as food loss and waste, the circular economy is an elegant solution to revalue resources that are usually denigrated while creating local jobs that are adapted to the needs and resources of the community.

This economic strategy is all the more relevant as it comes at a time of great opportunity. Indeed, the time has come to take strong measures against food loss and waste. As part of the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Union intends to reduce food waste by 50% per capita by 2030 "at retail and consumer level" (11). As a sign of the times, the Commission plans to propose, by 2023, a series of legally binding targets to reduce food waste throughout Europe (12).

Thus, the creation of companies employing people with disabilities in the framework of food waste recovery activities is an operation that is both ethical, realistic and in line with the current policy direction.

6 ADEME, Économie circulaire, consulted on <https://bit.ly/3mVFWiC> the 24/07/2021 (translated by us)

7 Commission européenne, Circular economy action plan, consulted on <https://bit.ly/3p0xy4d> the 24/07/21

8 Commission européenne, A European Green Deal, consulted on <https://bit.ly/38sSlnF> le 23/07/21

9 Conseil européen, De la ferme à la table: rendre l'alimentation plus saine et plus durable en Europe, consulted on <https://bit.ly/2YQAK7K> the 24/07/2021

10 Commission européenne, Towards a circular economy, consulted on <https://bit.ly/3v8FjWV> the 24/07/2021

11 Conseil européen, Réduire les pertes et les gaspillages alimentaires, consulted on <https://bit.ly/3p2dLSa> the 24/07/2021

12 Commission européenne, Questions et réponses: stratégie «de la ferme à la table» - construire un système alimentaire sain et entièrement durable, consulted on <https://bit.ly/3DGcYdv> the 24/07/2021

## METHODOLOGY

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Coordinated by APF-France handicap, CirculAbility brings together the skills and expertise of seven international partners: in Belgium, POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ-PLS and ARFIE; in France, HANDICAP TRAVAIL SOLIDARITÉ-HTS and APF-France handicap; in Luxembourg, LE TRICENTENAIRE; in Italy, ENAIP LOMBARDIA; in Spain, AMPANS.

In order to carry out this study, the partnership used a participatory research method. A questionnaire was developed by a working group including representatives of all the members of the partnership. The questionnaire was designed to identify the different variables that underlie the success of food recovery businesses employing people with disabilities.

Once the questionnaire was drawn up, it was widely distributed to the six European countries targeted by the project. This first phase of data collection, spread over four months, allowed us to obtain an overview of the initiatives in this field in Western Europe. The richness of this collection is illustrative of the dynamism of European actors in the implementation of actions in favor of a sustainable and inclusive transition.

From this panel, a dozen companies were contacted in order to offer them a series of semi-structured interviews. The aim was to explore both the success factors and the main difficulties encountered in their operations. These exchanges allowed the partnership to obtain an overall view of the various parameters considered central by these field actors

After analysis, different points on which a project leader should focus emerged. They are the result of cross-reflection by the various partner members, each of whom, thanks to his or her own expertise, was able to draw attention to a particular dimension of this theme. These different key success factors are summarised in the last part of this publication.

In order to illustrate these factors, the ten most exemplary initiatives of these different parameters are presented. Some of them, although their field of activity does not strictly concern the one framed by the present project, have been selected for the relevance of certain elements of their journey, reflecting the good practices necessary for the development and prosperity of a social and circular economy initiative in general.

These projects reveal the potential contained in the alliance between sustainability and solidarity. Our wish is that they can inspire anyone who wants to embark on this kind of adventure and contribute to the spread of a human and environmentally friendly economic model.

# ATELIER GROOT EILAND



## KEY FACTORS



- Intensive collaboration with public services;
- Insertion in the local context allowing the establishment of partnerships that are beneficial to all parties;
- Creation of a range of products and a brand image;
- Work in short circuit and recovery of unsold food from their own activities;
- Establishment of tailor-made jobs adapted to their beneficiaries.

*Illustrating the possibilities of building multiple partnerships with local actors, the Atelier Groot Eiland demonstrates the viability of ambitious integration projects capable of being deployed on the scale of an international metropolis.*

*Atelier Groot Eiland is a Brussels social economy structure fighting against poverty and supporting job seekers and, in general, precarious people in their professional path. To this end, it organises professional experiences adapted to its public and free training, while being part of a resolutely sustainable approach.*

*The unsold food collected from various partners (the Delhaize supermarket, the morning market of the Abattoir in the municipality of Anderlecht, their own organic store The Food Hub, etc.) is transformed in their workshops:*

- Into sorbets and ice creams for the fruits;
- In truffles and desserts for the chocolate;
- Soups and other dishes for the vegetables;
- The old bread recovered from the partner Delhaize is passed on to the partner Brussels Beer Project which makes a beer out of it, the "Babylon".

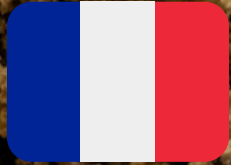
Thanks to these activities, 120 kilos of food are recovered and transformed every week in Brussels.

In addition to the recycling of unsold food and their organic store, Atelier Groot Eiland runs a series of social and professional integration activities for people with difficulties, through six training workshops: Bel Mundo (restaurant), RestoBel (restaurant), Bel'O (sandwich shop and tea room), Klimop (carpentry), Bel Akker (set of five urban agriculture gardens) and ArtiZan (workshop and store for handicrafts). These different activities work in synergy, and have allowed them to create a range of local sustainable products based on a short supply chain, work on seasonal products and the implementation of a "zero waste" philosophy.

The viability of their company is ensured by the diversification of their economic activities and by the numerous partnerships and public funding: European Union (ESF), Brussels-Capital Region, Flemish Community, Brussels municipality, Molenbeek municipality, the PSAC (Public Social Action Centers) of many municipalities, the Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie, etc.

For more information, please visit the website: <https://www.ateliergrooteiland.be/en/>

# SOLIFOODWASTE



## KEY FACTORS



- Use the most available unsold food in the area as a priority;
- Use recipes that allow for flexibility in the choice of ingredients;
- Partnerships with public services to obtain aid for integration through professional activity;
- Collaboration with associations or public services specialized in working with people with disabilities;
- Work in short circuit and collaboration with other economic actors located on the territory.

*The SoliFoodWaste project is a concrete example of the economic viability of a company that recycles unsold food by people with disabilities. It illustrates the main success factors required for such a company: a preliminary study of the resources of unsold food available in the area; the establishment of numerous private, associative and public partnerships; networking with other social economy actors, etc.*

*The Solifoodwaste project is a European project that seeks to create a channel for reducing food waste while creating jobs for people with disabilities. The aim is to bring the SoliPain and SoliFruits projects to the regional and then the European level, two circular economy schemes designed by the Handicap-Travail-Solidarité (HTS) association and implemented by teams from the sheltered sector (EA or ESAT, Establishment and help service through employment).*

*The pilot project for the Nantes region plans to collect unsold bread, fruit and vegetables, transform them in the same structure and then resell them, while creating sustainable jobs for people with disabilities. In the long term, this project aims to become the first major European project to combine the circular economy and the integration of people with disabilities, and to spread its model throughout the different member states of the European Union.*

Today, unsold bread is collected by HTS employees in local supermarkets and other partners. The bread is then sent to the ESAT Sésame Services located in La Montagne close to Nantes. This logistic organisation will soon be extended thanks to a partnership with the employees of the public mailing service of La Poste. In the future, unsold bread will also be transformed into animal feed (in the form of pellets) and sold to agricultural cooperatives. A similar collection system is being developed for unsold fruits & vegetables, in partnership with two ESAT in the region: Val-de-Vay and Ipolais.



# SOLIFOODWASTE



The bread is then transformed into delicious cookies by the people with disabilities working in the ESAT Sésame Services and sold in bulk grocery shops, for collective kitchen (daycare, schools) and in department stores in the region around Nantes, under the brand "Hanso & Zédé" ("Handi-Solidaire & Zéro-déchet"). Last June-July 2021 during six weeks, six people with disabilities working in the ESAT La Cholière have been transforming in a department store in Nantes unsold bread, fruits and vegetables from the day into pastries (cakes, cookies, muffins, pie shells, etc.), savory preparations (soups, pizzas, etc.) and smoothies for the clients.

Another selling point is the "anti-waste workshop", which was the first "anti-waste" store opened in France by HTS inside the shopping mall "Beaulieu" in Nantes. The workshop is now run by the ADAPEI 44 (the Loire Atlantique departmental association of friends and parents of mentally handicapped people). Two workers with disabilities work there daily to transform unsold fruits and vegetables from the day into fresh smoothies.

To this day, 12 workers with disabilities are involved in the transformation of bread, while 6 workers are involved in the valorisation of fruits and vegetables. Eventually, the plan is to provide employment to 63 people, 48 of them with disabilities.

Solifoodwaste's success is due to the establishment of numerous partnerships, both public (various aids and financing) and private (recovery of unsold goods and logistical support) or associative (partnership with associations specializing in the support and assistance of people with disabilities).



The company also benefited from the pragmatic and realistic spirit of the people in charge of the project. A preliminary study was carried out to determine the resources of unsold food available in the Nantes area. Bread, fruit and vegetables are the most numerous unsold products, which ensures relatively constant supply chains, while the different recipes selected for their revalorisation allow for a great deal of flexibility in terms of the precise ingredients required (a pie can be prepared using different fruits depending on the season or availability, for example).

For more information, please visit the website: <https://life-solifoodwaste.eu/en/>

# BIO&CO

ENSEMBLE  
CULTIVONS  
LA  
SOLIDARITÉ  
!

## bio & co

Vous voulez savoir comment ?



### KEY FACTORS



- Adoption of a systematic approach to managing food loss and waste at all stages of the food chain.

*Bio&Co is a social economy model of agricultural enterprise with the aim of reintegrating vulnerable people into the workforce by combining environmental and social justice. Its effectiveness in the fight against pollution and food waste comes from its optimisation of all waste management processes at all stages of the food chain.*

*Ateliere fare fontiere (AFF) is a Romanian non-profit association that employs disadvantaged people in social and solidarity economy workshops or in social enterprises of integration through economic activity, in order to prepare them for a full social and professional reintegration into the conventional labor market.*

Their Bio&Co initiative is a Romanian social farm located in Ciocănari that has taken a systematic approach to food loss and waste, having developed processes tailored to managing this issue throughout the food chain.

They collect their own waste as well as from those local businesses. Food waste that is still in good condition is entrusted to social canteens, while food waste that is not fit for consumption is composted and used to feed the soil, thus reducing the need for fertilizers and pesticides.

The work teams are diverse: long-term unemployed, addicts, people with disabilities, school dropouts, victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, prison sentences, homeless, etc.

Ateliere fare fontiere employs these people in its farm, while offering them assistance and social support. Thanks to this, they manage to combine the objectives of social and professional reintegration of people in difficulty and the environmental transition.

For more information, please visit the website: <https://www.atelierefarafontiere.ro/>

# TRAVIE ET FÄRM



## KEY FACTORS



- Flexibility in the choice of recipes and the products needed to produce them in order to cope with supply uncertainties;
- Not hesitating to mix the recycled products with fresh ones to ensure the taste and the quality of the final preparation;
- Sale within a catering service, allowing a greater flexibility in the offer proposed to consumers;
- Integration in a pre-existing logistic circuit in order to limit harvesting, transport and storage costs;
- Integration in a short circuit logic, since the unsold food is recycled and then resold in the stores from which it comes;
- Pooling the resources of competent actors in their own fields.

*The success of the cooperation between Färm and TRAVIE illustrates the potential of partnerships between specialised structures when they join their forces around a common commercial project. The flexibility in the choice of the recipes and the management of the unsold products as well as the availability of the pre-existing logistic network of Färm were decisive factors in the success of this initiative.*

*TRAVIE is a Brussels ETA (sheltered workshop), whose mission is to contribute to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the society and to the development of their personal autonomy by offering them a useful and remunerative work. Färm is a cooperative network of organic stores, aiming at promoting healthy, local, sustainable and ethical food. They collaborated within the framework of a program of the Good Food Strategy, financed by the Brussels-Capital Region, around a project of recovery of unsold food for revalorisation by workers with disabilities.*

*TRAVIE recovered unsold organic vegetables from the Färm store to transform them into soups or pasta sauces, which were then mixed with fresh products and used to make lasagna, tomato sauces, etc. These processed products were then sold in the catering aisle of the various Färm stores.*

For this purpose, TRAVIE benefited from the logistics system of the Färm network, which ensured the recovery of unsold products and the resale of the products within its own stores. This system allowed to reduce significantly the cost of operations. This was made possible by the strong will and the implication of the workers of the Färm network, as well from the management as from the staff.

Another factor of success was the great flexibility adopted in the choice of the products and the recipes. The confidence of the Färm network and the fact that the products were put on sale within their catering services allowed a certain flexibility, since the workers of TRAVIE were not required to prepare fixed products whose recipes would have been decided beforehand. Thus, the uncertainty inherent in unsold food recovery activities caused by the inconsistent flow of food supplies, making it difficult to predict what products and quantities will be received each day, was overcome.

For more information, please visit the website: <https://travie.be/fr/>

# SOCIÉTÉ COOPÉRATIVE ENVIE



## KEY FACTORS



- Develop partnerships with private players to reduce logistics costs;
- Collaborate with actors specialised in training in order to improve the chances of reintegration through work for the beneficiaries;
- Develop a network of partners where everyone benefits from their participation in the project;
- Distribute tasks equitably among the different partners according to their specialties;
- Create a brand and an effective communication strategy to promote it.

Illustrating the powerful positive social impact that can result from the partnership between social economy enterprises and conventional economy enterprises, the enVie project owes its success to its effective burden-sharing among the different partners. Each partner contributes its specific skills, and the overall synergy works for the benefit of all.

The enVie cooperative offer soups produced in Brussels by long-term unemployed people, based on the purchase of surplus fresh vegetables produced in Belgium from the members of an agricultural cooperative, and redistributed through a network of supermarkets.

When developing her project, Naomi Smith, enVie's general manager, wanted to develop a company with three objectives: to offer employment opportunities to long-term unemployed people in order to reintegrate them into the professional world, to reduce waste due to surplus vegetables and to promote local agriculture. This initiative is currently supported by five partners, each with a specific role:

- The multinational McCain provides logistical and strategic support to the operations;
- The Colruyt Group's supermarkets provide distribution points for the products;
- The human resources company Randstad plays a crucial role in the creation and training of work teams;
- The agricultural cooperative REO Veiling supplies surplus fresh vegetables from Belgian producers;
- The FEBA (Belgian Federation of Food Banks) supports enVie as an ethical partner, putting all its expertise as a social actor at the service of this project.



Through its action, enVie wishes to reduce food waste by using surplus or unsuitable vegetables in fresh soups. These vegetables are processed by employees benefiting from a training program via Randstad. The goal is to reintegrate these long-term unemployed people into the labor market through stable and rewarding jobs. Each worker is hired for one year and receives the training and practical experience necessary to qualify as a " Manufacturing agent in the food sector ".+

Currently, the enVie soup range is available under the "Boni Selection" brand in all 132 OKay stores in the country and in about 40 Colruyt supermarkets.

For more information, please visit the website: <https://www.envieatelier.be/fr>

# TRICENTENAIRE



## KEY FACTORS



- Develop partnerships with actors with technical expertise;
- Develop partnerships with other inclusion actors;
- Develop partnerships with public authorities;
- Work with local supermarkets for sourcing;
- Design its products with a circular perspective.

*The Tricentenaire micro-brewery is an example of the success of an active collaboration between associations and public authorities. Thanks to this partnership, the municipality has been able to rehabilitate an old abandoned café and provide employment for people with disabilities.*

*In 2016, the Luxembourg municipality of Lintgen (Prettingen) and the management of Tricentenaire met to discuss the takeover of the village's historic café, which was no longer in operation. The results of these discussions were a beer, "La Circulaire", and the establishment of a micro-brewery on this site.*

*This beer is produced through the recycling of unsold bread to prepare the yeast. The spent grain (the bottom of the vat) is used to grow mushrooms, while the pitch (the crushed barley) is also used to make aperitif cookies served at the bar. The implementation of this initiative has been made possible thanks to multiple partnerships, both with public and private institutions.*

*For example, the project was supported by the municipality of Lintgen, which, in addition to making the surrounding land available, bought the old café. Possible support from the Ministry of Labor for the employment of people with disabilities and from the Ministry of Family Affairs for the costs of reconstruction of the site are still under consideration.*

In addition to this public support, the Simon Brewery offers its technical expertise, and various commercial surfaces make their unsold bread available. Also, the shelter workshops of APEMH (another association of the social and disability sector in Luxembourg) provide the wooden crates used to contain the beers, and contribute to the employment support of people with intellectual disabilities who work on this project.

Without this support, this initiative would not have been possible due to the financial burden and the need for material resources and technical expertise. The partnership with the Simon Brewery, in particular, has been crucial both in terms of sponsorship and brand sharing and in the development of the recipe and the microbrewery.

For more information, please visit the website: <http://www.tricentenaire.lu/fr>

# LAST MINUTE MARKET

SPIN-OFF COMPANY UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA



# OPEN GROUP



## KEY FACTORS



- Taking into account the favorable political context that facilitates the access to public subsidies;
- Being part of a favorable environment that is particularly fertile in terms of social sector actors;
- Enrolment in a network allowing contact with all the actors in the food chain.

*Representing the dynamism of the Italian non-profit sector in the fight against food loss and waste, the Last Minute Market initiative and its subsidiary Open Group illustrate the opportunities created by the fortunate conjunction of a strong political will and a commitment from civil society around these issues.*

*Launched in 1998 as a research initiative by the University of Bologna, the social enterprise Last Minute Market aims to connect businesses with unsold food with non-profit organizations in need of food. Today it is a nationwide organization that contributes to the creation of a network of food solidarity throughout Italy by bringing together supply and demand.*

*Last Minute Market is a structure that has developed in a favorable environment. Thanks to regional subsidies from the ESF (European Social Fund), this project was able to move from being a research experiment to a social enterprise. This was a fundamental help to overcome the initial financial difficulties of the project. The good results that came out of the project and a change in mentality regarding the importance of food waste reduction policies allowed the project to build more and more fruitful partnerships.*

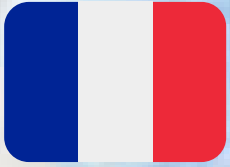
All the actors of the food chain are involved. In addition to putting them in contact, it also supports study and research projects on food loss and waste, training and awareness-raising projects for workers on these issues, as well as related communication campaigns.

Within the framework of this initiative, the Open Group company was born from the merger of three well-established social cooperatives in the Emilia-Romagna region. Part of a larger network coordinated by Last Minute Market, it aims to recover local unsold food for distribution to associations or cooperatives active in the field of food aid.

Concentrated in the nine municipalities of the Casalecchio di Reno district, this action has the support of the public authorities, particularly in the context of the aid given to the school canteens in the area. It has also established a fruitful partnership with the Coop Alliance 3.0 network of stores, which regularly makes available unsold goods and products close to their expiration date.

For more information, please visit the website: <https://www.lastminutemarket.it/english>

# LE PANIER DE LA MER



## KEY FACTORS



- Develop a partnership with public authorities to obtain aid for integration through professional activity;
- Develop a partnership with public authorities to obtain European funding;
- Develop a partnership with actors having a pre-existing logistic network;
- Diversify its economic activities to face unforeseen circumstances;

*The success of the company Le Panier de la Mer 62 shows us that one same activity can happily combine revalorisation of unsold goods, food aid and employment of people in precarious situations. A remarkable capacity of adaptation as well as a strong support of the public authorities and of active networks in the sector of the food aid allowed the success of the operation.*

*Faced with the observation of the important volume of fish that are not sold during the auctions and which are then wasted, the association Le Panier de la Mer 62 decided to act. Inspired by the first initiative of Panier de la Mer in the Breton town of Guilvinec, it shares with the latter a double objective:*

*-To provide social and professional support to people in precarious situations (in this case, recipients of minimum social benefits) by allowing them to work on an activity of revalorisation of unsold food.*

*-To distribute the products that have been transformed exclusively to networks and associations active in the food aid sector.*

In addition to these activities, Le Panier de la Mer 62 has also developed a catering service and proposes the organisation of cooking workshops to associative or institutional partners.

Partnerships have been crucial for the development of this structure. Thus, it benefits from numerous public supports: support from the PLIE ("Multi-year local plan for integration and employment ") of Boulogne-sur-Mer; grant from the European social funds (FSE) thanks to the help of the departmental council; subsidized contracts (whose totality of costs are covered by the State); etc.

In addition to these financial aids, Le Panier de la Mer 62 also counts on the logistic support of structures authorised to implement food aid actions (the Food Bank, the Red Cross, the Restos du cœur, the Secours populaire, ANDES, etc.) in order to ensure the redistribution of their products to the beneficiaries.

These collaborations have been crucial, especially since 2014 and a change in regulations requiring the association to purchase unsold fish instead of collecting them for free. This additional cost led to a necessary evolution of their business model, and the search for other sources of funding to balance their budget. Therefore, a catering service was created and a financial participation of 2€ per kilo of fish was asked to the food aid structures. These developments have ensured the financial viability of the business.

For more information, please visit the website: <http://www.panierdelamer.fr/>

# ESMENT



## KEY FACTORS



- Adopt a comprehensive food waste management strategy to maximize its usefulness;
- Diversifying business activities to ensure economic viability;

*Esment is an example of how an efficient food waste management policy through the scale of Lansink allows for an optimal use of resources and contributes to the economic viability of a structure supporting people with disabilities.*

*Since 1962, the Esment association and its staff have been providing support to people with a mental disability. It accompanies young children as well as seniors, people of all ages and needs, offering them support in terms of training, employment, leisure, etc. In addition to these activities of accompaniment, they have also developed agricultural activities, catering and accommodation.*

The creation of their ecological finca Weyler (a kind of collaborative farm) in the early 2000s was an opportunity to participate in the fight against food loss and waste. Following the principles of the Lansink scale, they sought above all to reduce the quantity of waste produced, before promoting the reuse of unsold items for human consumption and, as a last resort, to use them for composting.

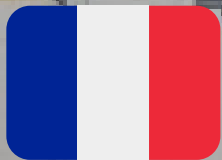
Thus, in their restaurant they only cook what is actually ordered by their customers. At the end of the day, they donate their unsold items to people with disabilities living in the association's residences. The inedible remains are used to make compost which is then used in the vegetable gardens of their finca. Finally, some of the vegetables thus produced are prepared in the menus offered by their restaurant, which allows them to close the loop.

The profits generated by this waste management policy increase in proportion to the number of their restaurants. If they were negligible when only one was open, now that there are three (and two more are planned to open in 2022) this policy has become increasingly interesting.

For more information, please visit the website: <https://esment.org/es>



# LE PAIN PERDU



## KEY FACTORS



- Develop a partnership with actors able to ensure logistic support;
- Developing a partnership with actors able to provide technical support and expertise;
- Develop partnerships with public authorities to obtain funding to launch activities.

*The initiative of ADAPEI 56, which enables the employment of eight to ten people with mental disabilities, proves that a judicious choice of partners and an intelligent organization of the logistic chains ensure the success of this type of enterprise. The most technical difficulties can be overcome, as long as you have efficient and motivated employees.*

*The mission of ADAPEI 56 is to allow adults with mental disabilities to access the world of work in order to promote their integration. In this context, it manages the sheltered workshop "Les Ateliers du Prat". Since 2014, it has partnered with the Banque Alimentaire 56 to collect and transform large quantities of bread unfit for consumption in the Morbihan department.*

*The bread is then processed in the Atelier Le Pain Perdu and the Banque Alimentaire 56 take care of collecting unsold bread from artisan bakers, supermarkets, canteens and communities. The bread is then transformed in the workshops of ADAPEI 56 and sold to the agricultural cooperative Eureden in order to be used for animal feed. By this system, the logistics are ensured by The Banque Alimentaire 56 upstream and by Eureden downstream.*

In addition to these direct partners, the implementation of this operation benefited from the financial support of the region of Brittany, the departmental council of 56 and the former community of agglomeration of Vannes. A partnership was also formed with twelve commercial companies, including Crédit Agricole, Michelin, Daniel and Nina Carasso, Groupama, etc.

One of the main difficulties encountered by the project was technical and concerned the process of transforming unsold goods and the machines used for this purpose. The time required to bake the bread, from four to six hours, did not allow to maintain a production line in constant activity, decreasing the yield. Faced with this difficulty, ADAPEI 56 was able to benefit from the support of engineers from the Eureden group. They were able to design machines adapted to this semi-industrial production activity.

For more information, please visit the website: <https://www.esatea-adapei56.com/>

# ESPIGOLADORS



espigoladors

## KEY FACTORS



- Develop numerous partnerships with ecologically and socially committed agri-food companies, producers or distributors;
- Develop numerous partnerships with public authorities at all levels (local, regional, national, European);
- Develop an effective brand image and communication strategy;
- Develop an efficient logistic organization.

*"What if... Ugly fruits and vegetables could offer opportunities to unemployed people, and vice versa?". Espigoladors is the first social enterprise in Spain to reuse surplus food by people at risk of social exclusion. Thanks to its numerous partnerships and solid logistics, it has managed to prove the viability of its model in the Catalonia region. Eventually, the company hopes to spread its business model to other regions in Spain.*

*Born in 2014, Espigoladors (which can be translated as "the gleaners") aims to bring back to life the traditional peasant practice of "gleaning". During the last centuries, once the main harvests were finished, peasants with little resources could come to collect the surplus produce in the farmers' fields (wheat spikes, nuts, olives...). Inspired by this ancient activity, the Catalan project has a triple objective of fighting against food waste, facilitating access to adequate food and creating employment for people at risk of social exclusion.*

*To this end, they maintain a rich network of partnerships with local producers, distributors and agri-food companies in the region. They recuperate either their surplus production or fruits and vegetables deemed too "unsightly" to be sold because of their appearance.*

When a partner inform them that they have surplus produce to donate, Espigoladors mobilizes its team of workers and volunteers to collect it. If necessary, these people are trained on site to carry out the task. Most of this food is then redistributed to food aid associations.

The rest of the harvest (about 5%) is recovered and transformed in the company's workshops under the brand name "es imp-perfect". The products are varied: jams, sauces, vegetable pâtés, creams, juices, cans... They are then sold in partner stores in recycled baskets (old pencil jars, bird nests, etc.). This last step contributes to the ecological philosophy of the project, as well as to the development of an original and recognizable brand image.

For more information, please visit the website: <https://espigoladors.cat/en/>



## THE SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES, WHICH ARE THE SUCCESS FACTORS?

On the basis of the observation of these different initiatives, we can draw some lessons about the factors that contributed to their success. Thus, the importance of collaboration, taking into account the territory and the local context, a spirit of originality and adaptability, among others, are common features of the various role models we have just observed.

These key factors are detailed in this section. The intent is to give a first glimpse to professionals who want to start such an activity of the elements that will ensure the success of their enterprise.

### 1) Establish successful partnerships

After analysing the different role models, it **appears that the establishment of an effective partnership** constitutes the most crucial factor for the success of a food recycling business employing people with disabilities.

The success of enVie is illuminating in terms of philosophy to adopt in this regard. **From its conception, this project took into consideration the expertise of the different partners** and the strengths they could bring to the realisation of the operations. The fact that the majority of these players are commercial companies (Colruyt Group, McCain, etc.) proves that it is possible to reach agreements that are economically lucrative for all parties involved, with a **win-win approach**.

Therefore, it is advantageous to look for partners with **complementary skills**, especially in terms of :

- Collection, storage and transport of unsold food (raw material and logistics dimension)
- Training in food recycling activities (human resources)
- Accompanying people with disabilities (human resources)
- Working with foodstuffs (technical expertise and infrastructure)
- Distribution and sale of products (trade and infrastructure)
- Communication and branding (marketing)





It is not necessary to select a different partner for each of these areas of activity. The example of the collaboration between TRAVIE and Färm illustrates that two players can form the core of such an enterprise. In their case, TRAVIE brought its expertise in terms of human resources (welcoming, training and accompanying people with disabilities) while Färm brought the raw materials, logistical support as well as the provision of its sales and distribution circuit.

This strategy of work in network allows to mutualise the competences as well as the costs and the benefits of such an operation. Applied on the scale of a territory and established between local actors, it allows to favour the economic growth of the region as well as to work in favour of the environment and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

## 2) Increased focus on logistics

The interviews conducted with the various organisations revealed that a problematic point for the majority of the actors was the **establishment of an efficient logistical circuit**.

Collection of unsold food, transport, storage, recovery operations, storage of final products, distribution and sale are all stages that **involve costs and difficulties**, which vary according to both the partners and the local circumstances of the territory.

Therefore, an interesting solution would be to integrate into existing logistic circuits. Several options are available: to collaborate with retail outlets (enVie, TRAVIE and Färm), food aid associations (Panier de la Mer 62) or agricultural cooperatives (ADAPEI 56), to join a network connecting the various actors of the food chain (Last Minute Market), etc. Choosing partnerships wisely can significantly reduce the worries caused by this aspect of operations.

Another solution, more dependent on initial circumstances but just as effective, is to **use resources that already exist internally**. The examples of Bio & Co and Esment illustrate the rich possibilities of combining production, catering, recovery and sales activities within the same structure. If the context is favorable, the reuse of unsold food can be a natural extension of the company's original activities.

## 3) Seeking government support

Another decisive factor for the success of the various initiatives encountered was the support they received from the public authorities. This support can take several forms: funding to compensate in part for the **important start-up costs of the activities** (ADAPEI 56); public aid covering work integration contracts (Solifoodwaste, Panier de la Mer 62); support for the preparation of applications for European funds (Panier de la Mer 62, etc.); logistical support (from La Poste with Solifoodwaste), etc





These partnerships with public authorities can be established with **different levels of power**. This is the case with Atelier Groot Eiland, which has approached both the Brussels-Capital Region and the Flemish Community, the European Union and the various Brussels municipalities, each of these subsidies **enabling it to finance a different dimension of its activity**. Besides the fact that this has allowed it to increase the scope of its action, it has also given it a certain security as to its long-term viability, since by diversifying its financial sources it has not become dependent on the will and interests of a single public body.

Finally, it should be noted that to be possible, the partnership with public actors must meet the political interests of the moment. Last Minute Market took advantage of the progressive Italian and European interest in the fight against food loss and waste to develop its network, while Tricentenaire capitalised on the will of the municipality of Lintgen to revalorise the local coffee that had been abandoned. Designing a project that **takes into account the social and economic situation and priorities of a given territory** ensure that it is well received by the entire community.

#### 4) Being part of a favorable territory

If the initial territory is chosen carefully, many **opportunities for collaboration with the local community can be realised**. This dimension is crucial, especially since food recycling activities require close sources of supply in order to reduce logistics costs as much as possible. It is therefore necessary to carefully study the possible partners in a given territory before designing the activity: are there local farmers or producers? Are there supermarkets? Bakeries? Restaurants? And would these actors be willing to enter into a partnership to get rid of their surplus?

This mindset can be applied to dimensions other than procurement. Is there a rich associative sector, active both in terms of food aid and support for people with disabilities? Are local policies and public authorities favorable to this kind of activity? Are there enough potential customers for our products, or do we face competition from other companies? The success of Solifoodwaste is largely due to the fact that its location was carefully chosen, taking into account both the available raw materials (mainly bread and vegetables) and the various potential partners likely to be interested in the project.





## 5) Think circular

Applying the precepts of the circular economy to one's business model can be a relevant way to maximise the resources available on the territory, while participating in the fight to create a more sustainable economy.

This can be done right from the product design stage. **Eco-design** is a principle of the circular economy that designates the fact of making products, from the first stages of their creation, with a circular aim. For example, the beers produced by Tricentenaire and Atelier Groot Eiland, whose projects were designed to minimise the production of waste and to promote the maximum reuse and recycling of waste resources produced by their activities.

This logic is also applied to the internal management of waste produced by the entire structure. Initiatives such as Esment or Bio & Co illustrate how an integrated and systematic policy of managing leftovers and unsold products can lead to "zero waste". This allows to get the most out of the available food. The application of this principle can be as simple as cooking and offering via a catering service for unsold goods from one's own stores, as in the case of TRAVIE and Färm.



## 6) Design the product line intelligently

The best way to run a food recycling business is to achieve a balance between flexibility in the choice of recipes and stability in the type of unsold products sought.

Indeed, stability in the type of unsold goods sought is necessary to optimise the company's economic model. Solifoodwaste's success is due to a detailed analysis of the diversity and quantity of unsold food that would be available on its territory. Seeing that it was bread and vegetables, it was possible to design a production chain specifically adapted to the revalorisation of these products. This specialisation also allows the development of a strong branding strategy, in the image of enVie. Accepting all types of unsold food carries the risk of not being able to recycle them in a coherent way.

On the other hand, too much rigidity in the selection of products or the choice of recipes may also lead to numerous difficulties, particularly in terms of supply and brand visibility. Supply flows of unsold food are notoriously inconsistent, with the foodstuffs recovered often varies with each collection. A simple example: the same vegetables will not be available in the fall or spring. It is thus necessary to keep a certain flexibility in the choice of the recipes and the products necessary to the realization, as TRAVIE and Färm did it brilliantly. A soup, for example, can be composed with different vegetables depending on the availability of the day. To this end, the use of a catering service is an activity allowing flexibility and variability in the choice of the proposed dishes.