

# The Second Life of Food: When Social Marketing Bridges Solidarity and Waste Prevention

## 7

### The Case of the Italian Food Bank

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#### Chapter Overview

Building on the social ecological framework, the case of the Italian Food Bank sheds light on how multi-level social marketing strategies and synergistic collaborations between various groups of stakeholders could create an enabling environment for change that eventually benefits the individuals, communities, environment, and society at large. The Italian Food Bank has been recovering the food that would otherwise end up in landfills in order to redistribute it to charitable organizations for the benefit of those in need since 1989. It further takes an active role in public policy advocacy, spreading the best industry practices and public awareness-raising initiatives aimed at curbing food waste in collaboration with food producers, retailers, public institutions, and other non-profits. In this way, by bridging two urgent social problems—food waste and food insecurity—as well as connecting public, non-profit, and for-profit organizations, it eventually transforms “food recovery” from a cost to a multiplied value, thus creating a win-win and a virtuous circle for all stakeholders involved.

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## Theory

Change of behavior is a complex process, where individual willpower alone is often not sufficient to lead to a relevant and sustainable improvement of individual and social welfare. In a response to criticism of social marketing approaches being predominantly focused on the individual (Basil, 2015; Helmig & Thaler, 2010; Rothschild, 1999), the range of theoretical frameworks applied to solving the problems of concern to social marketing has been expanding to embrace wider socio-environmental perspectives. In particular, a social ecological approach has been proposed as a framework useful in design and planning (Collins, Tapp, & Pressley, 2010), as well as execution and evaluation (Gregson et al., 2001; Lindridge, MacAskill, Gnich, Eadie, & Holme, 2013) of social marketing strategies. Originating from the ecological theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1974), social ecological framework essentially focuses on how behavior and its change are simultaneously affected by multiple levels of interaction and social contexts (Collins et al., 2010; Gregson et al., 2001; Lindridge et al., 2013). First, at the *microsystem* level, we are talking about direct and immediate, often face-to-face interpersonal interactions and respective social roles that affect one's behavior. Second, the *mesosystem* level represents links between multiple microsystems in which behavior can be affected by social rules and formal structures. Third, *exosystems* represent aspects within wider social structures that go beyond individual control or involvement (e.g., policy, economic factors, the media, material structures, and facilities) and thus impact behaviors indirectly. Fourth, *macro-systems* or generalized sociocultural factors represent an overarching configuration of behaviors within a certain culture and functioning at the level of belief systems, customs, lifestyles, etc. Another, slightly less prominent, element from Bronfenbrenner's original ecological theory, *chronosystem*, focuses on the component of temporality, transitions, and sequences of events, which in a social marketing perspective suggests that efforts oriented at behavior change need to be fairly regular or otherwise consistent over extended periods of time (Shaw, 2014).

Social marketing strategies that are based on the social ecological framework thus stress not only the importance of taking into consideration various economic, environmental, and social influences relevant for a targeted behavior change, but also the need to design multiple-component programs consisting of interventions on multiple levels of social environments that work in a complementary and synergistic manner (Moore, de Silva-Sanigorski, & Moore, 2013). This can be achieved by involving a wider range of stakeholders and establishing closer collaborations between community, social, institutional, and policy approaches (Lindridge et al., 2013).

In this study, building on the social ecological framework, we present the case of a multi-level initiative by the Italian Food Bank that creates an enabling environment for change by synergistically addressing two vital social problems and connecting various groups of stakeholders.

## Campaign Background

### Two Global Problems of the Food Domain

Nowadays, the world lives a paradoxical situation when it comes to food. On the one hand, abounding warnings about the obesity epidemic suggest that the most challenging and urgent problems, at least in the Western world, are linked to the affluent diets and the overall abundance of food. The other face of abundance of choice is the so-called surplus food issue, i.e., generation of stocks of edible food products that for various reasons are not purchased, consumed, or otherwise (re) used and thus go to waste at different stages of the food supply chain (Garrone, Melacini, & Perego, 2012). Food waste amounts to about 1.3 billion tons globally and about 88 million tons in Europe. Translated in per capita rates, consumers in Europe and North America throw away around 95–115 kg of food per year. The costs of such losses are estimated at US\$680 billion in industrialized countries and €143 billion in European Union alone (European Commission, 2012; FAO, 2011).

On the other hand, food poverty and insecurity are far more common than usually thought about. Though out of 815 million people in the world that go hungry, only a small share is in Europe and North America, milder cases of food insecurity, such as worrying about obtaining food, compromising quality and variety, reducing quantities or skipping meals, are getting more and more commonplace (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, & WHO, 2017). In Europe, for instance, 23.7% of the population (ca. 119 million people) are considered at risk of poverty or social exclusion and some of them (ca. 8% of the population) live in such a state of material deprivation that they cannot afford a quality meal every second day (Eurostat, 2015).

The two food problems have a significant impact on the individuals and on social, economic, and environmental welfare and therefore are the objects of public policy concern, non-profit organizations' work, as well as numerous social marketing initiatives. With different targets for behavioral change outcomes, the two problems are often addressed by different sets of initiatives. In contrast, a number of organizations around the world, known as food banks, treat the two problems as a source of mutual benefit and implement the mission of reducing food insecurity through the fight against food waste. This case will focus on one of such organizations' social marketing efforts—the Italian Food Bank, *Banco Alimentare*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The case is based on the documents available from the Italian Food Bank and its partners' websites, mass media, policy documentation, and other information kindly provided by the Secretary-General, Liaison Officer to the Secretary-General for EU and International Relations, and Communication Manager of the *Fondazione Banco Alimentare Onlus*.

## **Banco Alimentare Initiative: Reducing Food Insecurity Through the Fight Against Food Waste**

*Banco Alimentare* was established as a non-profit organization in 1989, following in the steps of the first food banks in the USA (1967), France (1984), and Spain (1987) with the purpose of recovering the food that would otherwise end up in the landfills in order to redistribute it to the charitable organizations for the benefit of those in need. More specifically, it coordinates the recovery of surplus food at all stages of the food supply chain (agriculture and primary production, food processing, distribution, retail, and foodservice) and its transportation to the regional food banks, where food is controlled, selected, and reconditioned when necessary, and then redistributed to the network of charitable organizations (food pantries, soup kitchens, etc.) located all around Italy and in constant direct contact with the local communities.

Since 2008, the coordination of the network consisting of 21 regional food banks is carried out by the Milan-based Foundation (*Fondazione Banco Alimentare Onlus*). As a second-level entity, the Foundation carries out the overall guidance and coordination of the network including logistics, financing, legal aspects, and public policy advocacy, as well as social marketing activities, while the local food banks establish closer and more personal ties with the local populations and frontline charitable organizations. As of 2016, the *Banco Alimentare* network provides food to over 8035 charitable organizations that in their turn reach around 1.6 million of people in the state or at risk of food poverty.

Starting from its earliest days, *Banco Alimentare* was oriented at bridging the gap between the industry and the world of non-profits. Instead of targeting on-off donations, it preferred to invest into establishing long-term relationships between charitable organizations in need of food supply and the food business operators in possession of surplus destined to end up in the landfills. By demonstrating sensibilities for a whole range of human, societal, economic, and environmental issues, the Italian Food Bank managed to build a strong intersectorial network of various stakeholders engaged at a number of levels and in different contexts.

### **SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)**

#### **Strengths**

*Banco Alimentare*'s multi-level approach is uniquely positioned to address several food-related issues through a double "win-win" logic: While it provides food resources for the charitable organizations for free, it also enables the actors along the food supply chain to reduce their food waste, optimize their inventories, minimize their disposal costs, benefit from tax deductions and fiscal incentives, and strengthen their reputation (with consumers and stakeholders). In other words, it contributes to reducing the overall food waste and directly helps the vulnerable

individuals by providing food, which is also a first step toward social inclusion (Riches, 2002).

Another strength lies in *Banco Alimentare*'s strong and lasting relationships with volunteers, public, non-profit, and for-profit organizations both on interpersonal and institutional levels.

The extended network of regional food banks coordinated by *Banco Alimentare* is advantageous not only from the perspective of logistics, but also in a relational perspective as regional hubs take advantage of more direct personal networks with local communities and charitable organizations.

### **Weaknesses**

The amount and the typology of food products available for recovery and redistribution coordinated by *Banco Alimentare* are constrained by a number of legal, operational, and transportation factors. More importantly, the amount of redistributed food destined for human consumption is only a small fraction of the overall volume of surplus food, most of which still goes to waste. In Italy, out of 5.6 million tons of surplus food, 91.4% or 5.1 million tons goes to waste (Garrone, Melacini, & Perego, 2015).

As is the case with other food banks (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2005), *Banco Alimentare* is dependent on partner organizations on both the donation and distribution sides.

### **Opportunities**

*Banco Alimentare* operates in a macro-context of increasing food poverty in need for collective action: Italy is one of the countries that overindexes (vs. the EU average) on the risk of poverty or social exclusion with 30% of the population being at risk (around 18 million in 2016, +1.3% from 2015) (Istat, 2016).

Culturally, there is growing social consciousness manifesting in companies' CSR initiatives, increasingly treated as a matter of businesses' economic survival (Lubin & Esty, 2010), on the one hand, and growing awareness in the general population about food waste and its social, economic, and environmental implications, on the other (European Commission, 2012).

The opportunity at the exosystem level is characterized by a favorable legal climate oriented at fostering the surplus food donations via incentives and overall simplification of the donation process for the food business operators in Italy.<sup>2</sup>

### **Threats**

On the macro-level, the awareness of food poverty in developed countries like Italy lags behind awareness about food waste (FAO et al., 2017).

The proportion of surplus food and the degree of its recoverability varies according to the different stages of the food supply chain and the different categories of products and thus creates different levels of costs and barriers for interventions and behavior change.

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<sup>2</sup>Compare to the French example based on penalizations instead (Chrisafis, 2016).

Stringent criteria for food safety, food hygiene, consumer information and liability, and other legal and operational barriers on the exosystem level restrict surplus food recoverability and increase the complexity of redistribution operations.

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## Target Audience

As a multi-level, multifaceted, and multi-site initiative, *Banco Alimentare* targets various groups of stakeholders. Its primary target consists of the food business operators, based on the fact that they produce 57% of food surplus (of which 64% in primary production, 5% in food processing, 24% in retail and distribution, and 7% in foodservice) and, unlike households responsible for the remaining 43%, provide better opportunities for recoverability—understood as the ability to recover food that is safe for human consumption using the minimum level of intervention (highest for food processing and retail sectors) (Garrone et al., 2015). As of 2016, *Banco Alimentare* works with 1387 food companies, 929 retailers, and 367 food-service operators that regularly donate their surplus food and support its operations in other ways.

In order to support the change of behavior for its primary target, *Banco Alimentare* also targets those who more or less directly influence whether or not food businesses intervene to curb food waste by donating food surplus for the benefit of people in need. On the one hand, following the exosystem logic, *Banco Alimentare* invests in the relationship with public institutions for the sake of promoting food-related policies and legislation at the national and the EU level. As a result of policy advocacy, the Italian Food Bank contributed to Law No 155/2003, the so-called Good Samaritan Law, which enabled the launch of the *Siticibo* program that rapidly (within 24 h from the first preparation) recovers and redistributes chilled food products and ready-to-eat meals from foodservice venues to soup kitchens. In 2016 alone, the program redistributed 326 tons of fruit and vegetables, and 1188,466 portions of ready meals (178 tons), which was simply not possible without the policy. More recently, thanks to the Law No 166/2016, known as the “Gadda Law,” the network of foodservice partners for ready-to-eat meal recovery was expanded to include fast food restaurants and cruise ships.

On the other hand, and from a more macro-perspective, *Banco Alimentare* pursues overall social mobilization in regard to both food waste and food insecurity issues. In the times of ubiquitous appeal of CSR and triple bottom line orientation,<sup>3</sup> more and more business operators in the food supply chain are guided by consumer values and aspirations in regard to social justice and environmental sustainability, which makes increased public awareness a pragmatic argument used to convince

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<sup>3</sup>The term “triple bottom line” (Elkington, 1997) refers to managerial imperative to reorient from solely profit- and shareholder-orientation toward generation of stakeholder value and managing simultaneously for company’s total social, environmental, and economic impact. To achieve such “triple bottom line” goal, companies engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities considered today as a form of ethical accountability (Roberts, 2003, p. 256 cit. in Herrick, 2009).

more and more food businesses to adhere to *Banco Alimentare*'s initiative. Moreover, it creates a cultural climate that helps promote and enable change in the direction of anti-waste and social inclusion behavior.

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## Social Marketing Objectives

*Banco Alimentare* conceives of its main objective as consisting of four ambitious dimensions. First, its core objective in terms of *social benefit* is to alter the typical behavior of food businesses and save edible surplus food from waste by giving it a "second life" in the hands of charitable organizations. Second, from the perspective of *economic sustainability*, food donations facilitated by the food banks' network enable recirculation of value within the economic system and optimization of spending behavior by both profit and non-profit organizations. Though food companies give away their products without any compensation, they gain material (saved costs of storage and disposal) and immaterial (reputation) value. The charitable organizations that receive food donations for free then can also invest the saved funds into the implementation of other needed social initiatives. Third, by restructuring the overall food supply flows and preventing food waste, *Banco Alimentare* aims at overall energy conservation and reduction of harmful CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as an *environmental benefit*. Finally, the overarching *educational goal* of the food banks' operations is to raise awareness about food waste and food poverty and foster a collective action in order to address both of them. On a moralistic level, such education aims at the promotion of solidarity and social coherence. The food banks' network structure thus targets cognitive change and creation of social ties between a vast number of actors based on the value of charity, understood as both an act (of giving) and a feeling (of goodwill).

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## Barriers, Benefits, and Competition

Due to operational, legal, logistical, economic, and safety barriers, the food recovery initiative is a costly enterprise. The cost of food recovery for the businesses ranges from €0.05 to €0.1 per kg for food processing companies, from €0.4 to €0.8 per kg for food retailers, and from €1.5 to €2 per kg for foodservice, excluding the costs of the Food Bank's operations (Garrone et al., 2015). The issue of costs is the primary reason why some food businesses do not engage in recovery and stick to a more conventional (but less socially and environmentally advantageous) option of disposal. Moreover, some food businesses are not equipped with technological or business management tools to efficiently identify "moments" and "places" where food can be recovered for further redistribution. For this reason,

*Banco Alimentare*'s collaborates with a number of Italian universities to study "best-in-class" business practices<sup>4</sup> and to promote them among food business operators.

On the other hand, the benefits of collaborating with the Food Bank are not limited to the philanthropic enterprise of the fight against food waste and helping the poor: Surplus food represents a considerable economic cost (storage, disposal) to the food business operators that they can reduce through donations. Furthermore, the food businesses gain from tax benefits and the overall boost in reputational terms due to a stronger CSR profile that nowadays is essential for attracting consumers.

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## Positioning

By bridging two urgent social problems as well as connecting various stakeholders on both profit and non-profit sides, *Banco Alimentare* markets donations of surplus food as essentially a "profit-making" activity. Even though food recovery, on average, has a cost of €0.2–2 per kilo, on the receiver's and end user's ends (charitable organizations and people in need), it has a much greater value ranging from €2.5 to 6.5 per kg (Garrone et al., 2015). In this way, food recovery is positioned as not only "zeroing out" of storage and disposal costs for food-donating businesses, but also as an action that eventually multiplies the use-value of food by 3–10 times, thus creating a win–win and a virtuous circle for all stakeholders involved.

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## Research

The Italian *Banco Alimentare* initiative was established following the benchmark model of the Barcelona-based Spanish Food Bank. In terms of research, both today and in its earlier days, it relies on secondary data about population, its food insecurity and food waste-related trends. Qualitative insights obtained through what can best be termed as expert knowledge-exchange sessions have also been an important source of information needed to explore the context and design its initiatives. As a matter of fact, *Banco Alimentare* was first founded in collaboration between two experts coming from two different backgrounds and with different sets of expertise in regard to food. One was a Catholic theologian and educator Luigi Giussani involved in the world of charitable organizations providing food for those in need.

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<sup>4</sup>"Best-in-class" food processing companies recover up to 80% of their food surplus (vs. 42% on average) and retailers up to 30% (vs. 10% on average) thanks to systematic engagement in food surplus assessment, the existence of formalized procedures to do so, a high level of coordination between various business units, and transparent processes and mechanisms of collaboration with the external organization in charge of recovery and redistribution (Food Bank) (Garrone et al., 2015).

And another was the founding partner of the bouillon cube company, Star, Danilo Fossati, who had firsthand experience with food surplus and food waste issues in the industry.

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## Marketing Strategy

### Product

*Banco Alimentare* operates by the measure of kilos of surplus food saved from waste and transformed into a number of meals provided to charitable organizations for the benefit of those in need. On the receiver's end, food is provided either in the form of care packages or soup kitchen meals.

The opportunities for surplus food recovery exist at all stages of the food supply chain, but are generally higher in case of products nearing (or sometimes exceeding) the “sell-by,” “best before” or “use-by” date; aesthetic problems (product color, size, shape variations) and packaging defects (incorrectly labeled or damaged); supply inefficiencies (oversupplied items, product returns, or shipping errors); and unsold stocks (outdated promotional or seasonal items, discontinued products). Upon recovery, the food banks ensure that the donations have sufficient remaining product life and are compliant with hygiene, safety, and labeling standards for human consumption.

In addition to food-raising, *Banco Alimentare* runs by a more standard form of fund-raising, collecting donations of money from the supporters by means of direct deposits, donations of resources (e.g., vans, boxes, food containers, pallets, fridges, and other equipment), pre-tax and payroll donations, or purchase of small solidary goods (e.g., party favors, gift cards, calendars).

The food supply comes from national and European aid programs (35.4%, 23,563 tons), fruit and vegetable produce (16.8%, 11,155 tons), food processing companies (21.7%, 14,428 tons), retail (7.5%, 4966 tons) and wholesale (3.9%, 2594 tons), and foodservice (0.8%, 504 tons). A smaller share of food comes from private persons' donations during food collections (14%, 9268 tons).<sup>5</sup>

### Price

As was explained before, the cost of the behavioral changes for the businesses includes organizational, operational, and some monetary sacrifices, which *Banco Alimentare* tries to “zero out” (by spreading best practices, implementation of larger-scale interventions, policy advocacy, etc.) and transform into a multiplied

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<sup>5</sup>All data here refer to 2016.

value by taking into consideration a total of environmental, economic, and social benefits.

The same principle of mutually beneficial exchange (Rothschild, 1999) achieved through a “multiplication of value” effect is at work in case of volunteer and general public involvement at the microsystem level.

Founded on the values shared by all food banks, such as giving, sharing, solidarity, and fight against food waste, the Italian Food Bank—rooted in strong Catholic values—also embraces the value of charity in the double sense of the word as not only an act of helping those in need, but also as expression of goodwill and love of humanity. Targeting volunteers through these values, *Banco Alimentare* encourages them to donate their time in order to experience the feeling of social cohesion and the transformative power of giving.

Among other initiatives, *Banco Alimentare* encourages its food business partners to lend their employees as volunteers for a day, which not only helps the daily redistribution flow, but also serves as a corporate team building exercise, helps spread their core values, and brings closer together the giving and the receiving ends of the network. As of 2016, there are 1878 volunteers (and 119 staff members) who ensure the daily operations of food recovery, management, storage, preparation, and delivery to the charitable organizations.

## Place

The coordinator of the food banks’ operations, the Foundation is placed at the center of a network of networks. On the one hand, it manages the network of donors from the food supply chain, for which *Banco Alimentare* provides a solution to their food waste problem. On the other, there is a network of frontline charitable organizations that protect the vulnerable individuals and communities from food poverty and social exclusion, for which *Banco Alimentare* provides an ongoing supply of food resources.

In such a complex network, the breadth of reach is supported by the specialization of the individual actors, which eventually enables a time- and costs-effective transition of even short-life perishable foods from the donors to those in need. Geographically speaking, this network has expanded from the first and only warehouse in the Milan area in 1989 to 21 regional food banks in 18 Italian regions. The network is also a valuable source of touch-points for the initiatives aimed at raising the awareness around food waste, food poverty issues, and *Banco Alimentare*’s core values.

## Promotion

Besides marketing its food waste reduction program directly to food businesses, *Banco Alimentare* runs several coordinated promotional strategies that help

communicate its initiatives to the (present and future) volunteers, general supporters of its cause, and policymakers, as well as much wider categories of consumers.

## Partnering with Food Business for Cause-Related Marketing

*Banco Alimentare* partners with the food businesses in creation of various promotional campaigns, when consumers are invited to purchase a certain product and, by doing so, contribute to the donation to the food banks' network. As a rule, the companies make a promise to contribute a certain sum of money or amount of food products to the food banks for every item sold during the designated campaign.

The previous campaigns involved both food brands, such as Coca-Cola, Kellogg's, Giovanni Rana (stuffed pasta), Oro Saiwa (cookies), Monini (olive oil), Naturelle (eggs), Rio Mare (canned tuna), Berna, Carnini, Sole, Torvis, Oro (local milk brands by Parmalat), Nipiol (baby food), etc., as well as non-food brands and products, including food containers (Cuki), cosmetics and personal care (L'Oréal Paris, Garnier, L'Erborario), household goods (Viakal, Dash), cellphone operators (Wind), financial institutions (Esperia bank, Deutsche Bank), and transportation companies (Trenitalia).

While the food banks' network is always a beneficiary (not a promoter) of such campaigns, they serve both social and regular marketing purposes as they increase sales, recognition, and identity of the advertising brand, as well as awareness of *Banco Alimentare's* causes.

## Visual Identity

While *Banco Alimentare* does not have a single slogan, its visual identity is uniform across regional food banks, various operational units (e.g., *Siticibo*) and individual campaigns since the introduction of its current logo (see Fig. 7.1). Reportedly, it was inspired by a picture of a round bread loaf (centerpiece) and enhanced with the graphical representation of the circular economy flow of food surplus feeding in the flow of charity.



**Fig. 7.1** Logo of Banco Alimentare, the Italian Food Bank

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## Social Media

Though present on Facebook since 2008, *Banco Alimentare* started implementing a deliberate social media strategy since 2013, with the purpose of growing the awareness about *Banco Alimentare* and extending the community of followers from the volunteers toward, more generally, supporters of its causes. In the 5 years following the setup of an editorial plan structured around a number of overarching topics leading to Calls-to-Action, a codified workflow and a scalable team structure for the social media, the amount of followers grew almost threefold. Social media presence is now expanding to other channels (LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram).

## Annual National Food Collection Day

Every year since 1997, the *Banco Alimentare* network arranges a one-day national solidarity campaign that takes place in a vast range of retail outlets around Italy and targets their regular customers. The volunteers meet the shoppers and ask them to contribute to the fight against food poverty by donating some non-perishable foods, such as baby food, tomato sauce, canned tuna, oil, rice, canned vegetables, biscuits, etc.

This event is in fact an atypical source of food supply for the *Banco Alimentare* network (responsible for ca. 14% of the annual total), since it does not recover surplus food otherwise destined to go to waste, but simply collects regularly purchased food from those willing to participate.

The annual collection day, however, represents a large-scale double awareness campaign. On the one hand, it is another occasion to increase the level of public education on the matters of food poverty. On the other, it is a prominent event that raises the awareness of the brand of *Banco Alimentare* itself. More specifically, it promotes its core values of solidarity and social cohesion considering the involvement of 145,000 volunteers for one day in direct contact with ca. 5.5 million shoppers. Additionally, it is a chance to communicate about the food banks' daily operations and struggles, thus driving consumers on other days of the year to make donations themselves, choose brands that donate to the *Banco Alimentare* network, and volunteer, at least occasionally, to help the local food banks.

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## Program Evaluation

The case of the Italian Food Bank sheds light on how multi-level social marketing strategies and synergistic collaborations with public, non-profit, and for-profit organizations could encourage changes in companies' and consumers' behaviors that eventually benefit individuals, communities, environment, and society at large.

## Food Recovery and Redistribution<sup>6</sup>

*Banco Alimentare* contributes to alleviating food poverty by giving food to close to 1.6 million of people every year by redistributing around 66.5 kilotons of products, an equivalent of 364,263 meals a day. Overall from 1994 to 2016, the organization provided a total of 1,137,261,363 kg of food for the benefit of charitable organizations.

It further contributes to reduction of food waste by saving 33,647 tons of surplus food otherwise destined to end up as waste, which also reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 84,118 tons per year.

### Growth and Reach

*Banco Alimentare*'s overall progress has been remarkable. While in 2000 the Food Bank network was able to reach around 5400 charitable organizations and provide food to about 900,000 people in need, it is now constantly present in more than 8000 organizations reaching up to 1.9 million disadvantaged individuals every year.

The intensity with which food surplus is now recovered and redistributed in the Italian food industry has grown from 7.5% in 2012 to 9% in 2015 (Garrone et al., 2015).

The Italian experience has also become a useful model to follow in case of Paraguayan and Argentinian food banks, especially when it comes to fund-raising, volunteer training, and coordination of collection days. More recently, *Banco Alimentare* became one of the partners of the EU-promoted LIFE-Food.Waste.Stand-up project, which advances the *Banco Alimentare*'s synergistic and multi-level orientation at creating collaborations between food producers, retailers, and consumers at a larger institutional and national scale.

### Public Awareness

The public awareness about food issues in Italy is as high as ever with 84% of Italians being aware of economic, environmental, and ethical consequences of food waste (Waste Watcher, 2016); 58% taking action to reduce it (by reutilizing the ingredients of the unconsumed meals, paying attention to the expiration date, etc.) (Coldiretti/Ixe', 2017); and 64% willing to boycott the companies that do not demonstrate sensibilities for environmental or social sustainability (Findomestic, 2017). Though increase in public awareness is certainly a complex enterprise that involves a large number of players and forces, the work of the Italian Food Banks'

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<sup>6</sup>All data here refer to 2016.

network—in terms of the information outreach and delivering value by saving food from waste and helping people in need—has been of significant impact.

## Increase in Exposure

The proper brand of *Banco Alimentare* has gained considerably greater exposure<sup>7</sup> in the latest period (2015–2017). For instance, it was recently featured in the nationwide pre-Christmas campaign #natalepergialtri (*Christmas for others*) by Coca-Cola, on the onboard meals distributed by the main Italian train carrier Trenitalia, in the nationwide CSR-focused campaign by the stuffed pasta brand Giovanni Rana, and in a video broadcasted to the visitors of the main entrance Pavilion Zero at Expo 2015, the universal exposition in Milan visited by more than 22 million people.

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## Discussion and Lessons Learned

By bridging two urgent societal problems and trying to solve one through another, the Italian Food Bank not only found a way to provide food to a considerable fraction of those in need, but also contributed to a change of businesses' and some consumers' behavior that benefits the economy, environment, and society at large. Thanks to its long and consistent presence on the Italian non-profit scene, efficient network structure skillfully coordinated by the Foundation, effective public policy advocacy, thought-provoking awareness-raising initiatives, campaigns in collaboration with highly visible food and non-food brands, *Banco Alimentare* managed to grow its own brand that embodies the fight against food waste and values of social cohesion, and thus create an enabling environment for gradual behavior change.

In the current setting of increasing awareness, consumer pressure for responsible business conduct, legal climate of incentives, many more substitutable ways are becoming available for the food industry and the individuals to contribute to the social causes of food waste prevention and alleviating food insecurity. For this reason, the next step for the Italian Food Banks' network will likely be to find the strategies to operate in the conditions of a higher level of competition among social marketers for both recourses and the targets' attention.

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<sup>7</sup>According to an advertising effectiveness framework DAGMAR (Colley, 1961), greater exposure intrinsically leads to raising consumer awareness as the first fundamental step in convincing them to take action. It is then followed by comprehension and conviction mind states, all of which are enabled by efficient communication.

### Discussion Questions

1. What approaches might *Banco Alimentare* use to further grow the amount of recovered and redistributed food?
2. In what other ways (beyond the amount of recovered and redistributed food) can *Banco Alimentare* deliver on its social marketing objectives?
3. What can *Banco Alimentare* do to further increase its volunteer base?
4. In what other, currently underexploited ways, can *Banco Alimentare* utilize its nationwide network of food banks?
5. In what ways can *Banco Alimentare* capitalize more on its social media presence?
6. What other initiatives can *Banco Alimentare* implement to enhance its own brand?
7. Which slogan or other verbal cues can be added to support the visual identity of *Banco Alimentare*?

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