



Supermarkets throw away billions in unsold food each year | Photo source Jose Zegarra Malatesta on Pixabay

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DIGITAL PLATFORM HELPS MERCHANTS CUT FOOD WASTE

 FOOD & DRINK

A French company has developed a platform that connects companies with extra food and charities in need

Spotted: According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, around one-third all the food produced globally for human consumption is lost or wasted. That is a loss of around 1.3 billion tonnes of food or around \$1 trillion annually. French startup, Phenix, is working to change this with their digital platform, through which merchants can offer unsold products to consumers and charity organisations.

France's Garot Law, passed in 2016, sought to curb food waste by, amongst other things, making it illegal for retailers to throw away unsold food before its sell-by date. However, very few charities were able to keep track of the stores left with excess food, especially in rural areas. Enter Phenix, whose platform has created a real-time, reliable connection between supermarkets and organisations in need of food donations.

While originally a purely digital platform, Phenix has grown in line with the increasing demand of their partnered stores and charities. There are benefits for both too — shops using the platform not only reduce their waste disposal costs but also gain a tax deduction on the food they donate — from which Phenix collects a commission.

Today, Phenix works with more than 900 stores in France, Spain and Portugal, as well as more than 550 food banks, soup kitchen, farms, zoos and other organisations in need of food. The company is also looking to extend its model by developing tools to manage the reuse and recycling of other types of waste.

Reducing food waste is a major issue globally and, unsurprisingly, we are seeing a wide range of innovations attempting to tackle it. These range from technology that turns food waste into **bioplastic**, to waste milk made into pretty **vases**.

31st January 2020

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Takeaway:

Phenix uses a hybrid business model that combines profit and growth with an environmental and social mission. This has so far proved successful, the company having raised more than €15 million in fundraising, and its team to 130 employees. In addition to providing a viable solution to the problem of how to connect charities with excess food suppliers, Phenix is also demonstrating that a successful, environmental company can be built around a hybrid model, which could set a precedent for other such businesses. However, it remains to be seen whether this model will also work in countries without legislation against waste.