

Happy Hours Market

“Your groceries half-price to fight waste!”

Happy Hours Market Website



Every minute in Belgium eight tonnes of food are thrown away. Meanwhile, about 19% of the population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and approximately 13% struggle to buy healthy food.¹

The Spark

The story of Happy Hours Market (HHM) started when the two founders, freshly out of university and aware of the issue of food waste in Brussels, decided to try and see if they could do something about it. They borrowed a truck from a local catering company and knocked at the door of a few supermarkets in the university's neighbourhood. They explained that they wanted to redistribute the food the shops could not sell and were astonished to be given not a small basket but several carts full of goods!

They then proceeded to offer the products to students on the nearby high street and managed to sell most of them within the same day, which confirms that people are willing to buy food with a short expiry date if the price is low enough. This was before leftovers apps like Too Good To Go existed, and the founders needed to prove that there was an interest from consumers.

The leftovers of the sale were then donated to the university's community grocery which helps poor students. They repeated the exercise a couple of times, and then Happy Hours Market was officially launched in 2020. The main goal of Happy Hours Market is to tackle the issue of food waste by redistributing unsold food to those in need, reducing the environmental impact of food production and offering discounted prices to consumers.





Governance Model

Every morning, the Happy Hour Market team collects unsold food products from 52 partner stores. Most of them are franchises of the main Belgian grocery store chains: Delhaize, Carrefour or Intermarché. Donating companies can receive retributions for the goods that are later sold by Happy Hour Market, based on a share of the offered sales price.

The food is brought to the company's storing facility in Brussels and is listed on the company's digital app. Consumers can buy more than 5000 products for a discounted price every day between 8 am and 10 pm. Discounts can be up to -70 % and are on average half the original price if the expiry date falls on the same day.

The orders are delivered in the evening or the next day to several distribution points in Brussels, where consumers can collect them. The remaining food is donated to local associations that help vulnerable people. HHM currently works with 16 charities and employs more than 100 people. Since its foundation, more than 2000 tons of food have been saved from being wasted and more than 400,000 products have been donated to charities. 30,000 orders are placed each month.

Social Benefits

By offering food at a discounted price the initiative helps consumers access affordable and varied food options. Associations that support vulnerable people also benefit from the donations by receiving food for free.

Companies benefit from reduced waste management costs and costs related to managing products with a short shelf-life. They also avoid some of the loss of revenue from unsold products.

Environmental Benefits

Food waste from main retailers is reduced, lowering the environmental impact of not utilising all the produced food and transportation to the cities. Retailers have access to data on what HHM collects from them and sells, which can help them better plan their orders and avoid ordering too much.

By using or hearing about the Happy Hours Market app, consumers are made aware of the issue of food waste. Since half of food waste happens in homes, educating consumers can play a crucial role in addressing the issues related to food waste.

Replicability Potential

The initiative can be replicated to any country with large retailers. The retail market depends on proposing a wide array of products and will always generate surplus products, which means that actors like Happy Hour Market will always have a space to balance the market. Happy Hours Market aims to extend its activities beyond Brussels.

There are companies similar to HHM, such as Too Good to Go or Phenix, with the difference that they do not offer collection points. HHM originality lies in its logistics system, which helps to make the food more accessible and helps redistributing it to charities that often lack the resources.

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Sources:

- Interview Ludovic Libert
- ¹ <https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/menages/pauvrete-et-conditions-de-vie/risque-de-pauvrete-ou-dexclusion-sociale>



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