

**Notes from the round table discussion on
SURPLUS FOOD REDISTRIBUTION.
organised by the Scottish Community Diet Project
on October 10th 2000
in the offices of Scottish Consumer Council, Glasgow.**

The discussions began with recognition of the many forms that surplus food redistribution can take the number of levels it operates at, the range of organisations and agencies that play a part and the varied impact it can have.

It was agreed however to concentrate the discussion on those aspects which most interested those who had chosen to attend¹. Therefore while appreciating the crucial nature of issues, such as the creation and use of surpluses through the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union, the discussion focussed on the food surpluses of retailers and their distribution via the voluntary sector.

A spur to the debate had obviously been the report on surplus food redistribution published by Sustain² with the support of Crisis Fareshare. A similar meeting had taken place a few weeks earlier in London and it was welcomed that representatives from both organisations had also chosen to participate in the Glasgow discussions.

There was a general recognition that surpluses were regrettable and wasted surpluses even more so. There were no suggestions however that surplus food redistribution had a role to play beyond the 'hunger agenda' in the operations of community food initiatives such as food co-operatives, community cafes or breakfast clubs in Scotland's low-income communities.

A key issue in the discussions was the inherent danger in surplus food redistribution of encouraging dependency both in terms of individual recipients and agencies. Agencies present were clearly aware of this and actively developing means of utilising surpluses in a manner that not only minimised or avoided dependency but could be used in the promotion of independent living skills.

It was appreciated however that these concerns would not always be appreciated nor a priority for all-recipient agencies and donating companies. Good practice guidelines and their active promotion were suggested.

Avoiding destructive competition between existing or potential recipient agencies was considered important, although difficult to achieve in a multi-agency voluntary sector and competitive retailing sector.

¹ See attached attendance sheet.

² 'Too much and too little: debates on surplus food redistribution', Sustain, 2000
www.sustainweb.org

It was agreed to contribute the day's thoughts to the report being produced following the London discussions and promote their findings.

A report on the similar³ event held in London on surplus food redistribution is available from Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming.

³ Held in London in September 2000. Report and 'action plan' available soon. Contact Sustain on 020 7837 1228 for details.