



FEAD Country Fiche Italy

Written by Fondazione G. Brodolini
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List of abbreviations

AGEA	Governmental Agency for Agricultural Payments (<i>Agenzia per le Erogazioni in Agricoltura</i>)
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
DG EMPL	Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Fund
FEAD	Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived
MA	Managing Authority
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
OP	Operational Programme
PO	Partner Organisation
REI	Minimum income scheme (<i>Reddito di inclusione</i>)

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Executive summary

With an overall budget of € 670.6 million plus national contribution of € 118.3 million, FEAD in Italy largely builds upon the experience, knowledge, and extensive network of territorial organisations (11,000+) inherited from the predecessor programme (PEAD).

FEAD implementation in Italy is characterised by a strong involvement of volunteers and charitable organisations as well as a marked partnership approach by the Managing Authority, pursuing the active involvement of Partner Organisations in the planning and monitoring of the programme.

The FEAD OP I foresees four measures aimed at tackling respectively: food deprivation of most deprived individuals and families; material deprivation of children and young people in scholastic environment; food and educational deprivation of children and young people in deprived areas; and material deprivation of homeless and other vulnerable categories.

Measure 1 has started its implementation in 2015, while measure 4 is in its early implementation stages. The remaining two measures, targeted at children, have not yet started. While Measure 1 did not encounter particular obstacles, the start of the remaining three measures – which also represent the most innovative interventions – was hampered by regulatory and administrative hurdles, stemming both from EU (for example concerning the type of material assistance/goods to be provided to homeless and deprived children) as well as national regulations (for example concerning rigidities and burden of centralised procurement procedures).

While no clear-cut evidence on the effectiveness of the FEAD in terms of its contribution to poverty alleviation could be collected, several potential positive impacts of the programme have been detected. In the first place FEAD covers an important share of food aid distributed in Italy, which does not have a universal basic assistance/income support measure – although income support measures have been recently introduced. In 2015 and 2016 FEAD reached approximately 2.8 million people on an annual basis, providing much needed support to deprived families and individuals. Food support is delivered through an extensive network of Territorial Partner Organisations who in turn are coordinated by national level PO, mostly operating at the sub-national (regional) level. Additionally, FEAD contributes to supporting and strengthening the network of Partner Organisations, and to promoting dialogue and cooperation between PO and the territorial welfare services.

Introduction

The Italian FEAD OP is partly the natural continuation of the PEAD Programme, which ran from 1987 to 2013, and was aimed at putting to good use the unsold food stock produced through the Common Agricultural Policy funds, redistributing it to charities who would in turn deliver to the most deprived. Thus, FEAD in Italy largely builds upon PEAD experience, knowledge, and extensive network of stakeholders.

With respect to PEAD, the FEAD OP introduces several innovative elements, in line with the FEAD Regulation, namely the introduction of food and material assistance measures for deprived children and the homeless, the latter according to a "housing first" approach. Furthermore, the programme introduces in a more systematised manner the provision of accompanying measures complementing food aid support and encourages a system approach between territorial PO and welfare services.

The FEAD OP identifies three main types of deprivation to be tackled, namely: food deprivation, child deprivation, and extreme deprivation. Following this analysis, three groups of end-beneficiaries are identified, namely:

- homeless people;
- individuals and families in absolute poverty and severe material deprivation, with particular attention to people living in severe psychological and social discomfort and families with children (with a priority to larger families), people with disabilities or housing deprivation; and
- pupils in deprived conditions or housing deprivation.

In order to tackle the types of deprivations identified, four measures are foreseen under FEAD OP I Italy, namely:

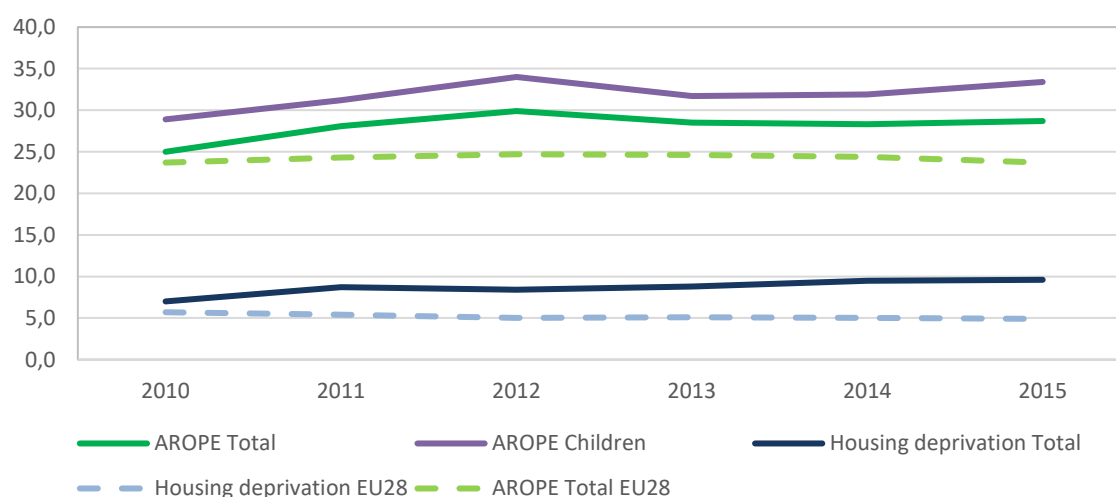
- 1) food deprivation;
- 2) material deprivation of children and young people in scholastic environment;
- 3) food and educational deprivation of children and young people in deprived areas; and
- 4) material deprivation of homeless and other vulnerable categories.

At the end of 2016, only measure 1 has been activated; while a call aimed at collecting the preliminary interest of municipalities in participating in actions funded by Measure 4 was launched in March 2017. Measure 2 and 3 are still not activated, partly due to administrative difficulties and regulatory limitations.

1 Context, general policy background of FEAD intervention (1 page)

According to available data from EU SILC, almost 29% of the Italian population (approximately 17.4 million people) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2015, up from 25% in 2008 (the EU average was just under 24% in both years). Moreover, 11% of Italians (7 million people) in 2015 were in severe material deprivation, up from 7.5% in 2008 (EU average was 8.5% in 2008 and 8% in 2015). In 2015, almost 12% (above 7 million people), lived in households with very low work intensity, 1.5 percentage point higher than 2008 (EU average was 9% in 2008 and 10.5 in 2015). The overall unemployment rate was 12% (above 12 million people) in 2015, 2.5 p.p. higher in comparison to the average of the EU. In general, the situation of Italy was in line with, or slightly worse, than the EU average at the outbreak of the crisis, and worsened more than the EU average since.

Figure 1 AROPE and house deprivation in Italy and European 28 (%), 2010-2015.



Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC)

An interesting composite indicator, included also as headline indicator for the EU 2020 Strategy poverty target monitoring, is the 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' rate (AROPE). It refers to the situation of people who are either at risk of poverty, or living in severely materially deprived situations, or living in a household with very low work intensity. The AROPE rate is therefore the share of the total population that is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Figure 1 summarises the most relevant figures concerning Italy and the EU-28 average, as well as the housing deprivation rate. Notably, the Italian situation is comparatively worse than the EU average. Moreover, in recent years, the situation has deteriorated in Italy compared to the other Member States whose situation has remained more or less stable. The AROPE rate for children increased by 5 p.p. from 2009, reaching 33.4% in 2015.¹ This figure is 7 p.p. higher than the EU average, which has declined since 2012. This poor performance vis à vis key poverty indicators is to be linked with a relatively fragmented social welfare system that is traditionally biased towards employment-related protection measures.

¹ Source: Eurostat.

2 Reconstructing the intervention logic of the FEAD OP (5 pages)

2.1 Objectives & target groups

The general objective of the Italian FEAD OP I is to tackle food and severe material deprivation and contribute to the social inclusion of the most deprived individuals. The EU2020 target for poverty reduction aims at decreasing by at least 20 million the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020, while the national target for Italy covers 2.2 million people.

The general objective has five specific sub-objectives, namely:

- 1) mitigate food deprivation;
- 2) promote social mobility, in order to tackle material deprivation of children and young people in the school environment;
- 3) tackle early school leaving to fight educational and social deprivation of young people in deprived areas;
- 4) mitigate material deprivation to tackle specific needs of children and other frail categories in material deprivation; and
- 5) tackle extreme marginality, with a focus on homeless and people in severe deprivation²

The Italian OP defined four types of material deprivation, namely: food deprivation, material deprivation of children and young people in school environment, food and educational deprivation of children and young people in deprived areas, and material deprivation of homeless and other marginalised groups. Starting from the analyses of the types of deprivation in Italy, the needs of the deprived, and the general and specific objectives, the OP identified the actions aimed at the achievement of results (more on this in the following section), and the definitions of specific target groups, which it is possible to cluster in three macro-groups:

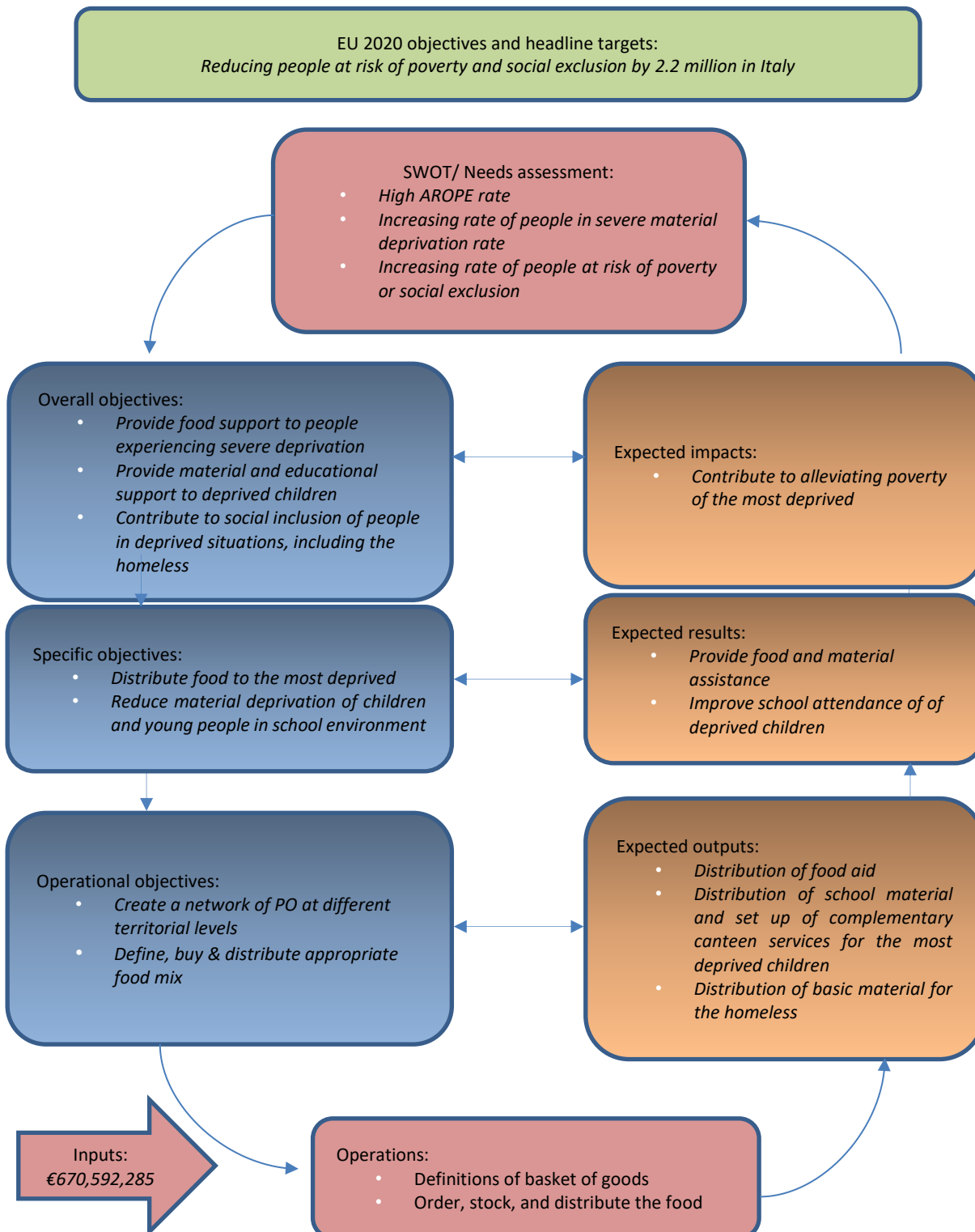
- the homeless;
- people and families in absolute poverty condition and severe material deprivation. Particular attention was given to people living in severe psychological and social discomfort and families with minors (priority was granted to families with a larger number of minors), people with disabilities or housing deprivation; and
- young students in deprived conditions or housing deprivation.

The ex-ante evaluation of the FEAD OP states that the intervention logic of the FEAD OP in Italy is relevant to the needs and is coherent with what has been identified in the analysis phase. The evaluation covers each type of deprivation the interventions have foreseen and the beneficiaries.³

² ISFOL, 2014, "Programma Operativo per la furniture di prodotti alimentary e/o assistenza materiale di base (PO I) – FEAD 2014 – 2020, Rapporto di valutazione ex-ante".

³ ISFOL, 2014, "Programma Operativo per la furniture di prodotti alimentary e/o assistenza materiale di base (PO I) – FEAD 2014 – 2020, Rapporto di valutazione ex-ante". Section 1.2: *La rispondenza della strategia proposta rispetto ai bisogni identificati*.

Figure 2 Italian FEAD OP needs assessment, objectives, operation, and outputs. Source: own figure based on Italian FEAD OP.



2.2 Operations and accompanying measures

The Italian FEAD OP details the operational steps of the four measures (i.e. food deprivation, material deprivation of children and young people in scholastic environment, food and educational deprivation of children and young people in deprived areas, and material deprivation of homelessness and other frail categories). The steps are described in the following subsections, although it has to be taken into account that measure 2 and 3 have not started due to administrative and regulatory constraints (both at the national and European level). Concerning measure 4, this is still in the early stages of implementation given that the call for expressions of interest targeted to cities and municipalities was launched in October 2016 and closed in mid-March 2017 and relevant projects have just been selected.

Food deprivation

By the end of 2016, the food support and distribution measure (1) is the only one to have been activated. It is also the more prominent one, its foreseen allocation (EUR 480 M) representing 61% of the overall OP budget. Measure 1 can be broken into different sub-steps, presented below, and an illustration of the process can be seen in figure 3.

A key element of Measure 1 and more generally a distinguishing feature of the Italian OP is the National coordinating group, composed of representatives from the MA (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies), AGEA (the Italian Intermediate Body within the Ministry of Agriculture) and the representatives of the national PO. The group ensures that the needs identified on the ground by the Coordinating and local PO are channelled in the operational aspects of the programme, including goods to be distributed, the criteria for the identification of beneficiaries and ongoing assessment of the implementation of the programme. This is anticipated in the OP and formalised through relevant administrative acts (Director decree 52 2017).

The main limitation of the programme, which is also its main strength, is that its operational structure is derived from the predecessor programme. The current programme sought to improve the monitoring, revise accreditation criteria of the PO. New accreditation criteria are being published by AGEA and the idea is to open the programme to a wider representation of civil society which is the backbone of the FEAD OP (particularly for measure 1 and 4).

AGEA foresees to the procurement of the food stock. This is delivered to the premises or warehouses of the registered partner organisations (which have 219 branches⁴). Partner organisations can be grouped under seven lead PO⁵, whose representatives, together with the Ministry of Social Policies and AGEA, form the coordinating group of the FEAD OP. Food is distributed through the 11,554⁶ territorial partner organisations on the territory – OPT in the operational programme. Local POs distribute food through five main channels: canteen services, distribution of food packages, social warehouses (*empori sociali* in Italian),⁷ food and beverage unit, and door-to-door delivery.⁸

Accompanying measures are offered by the local partner organisations on the basis of their capacities and resources. These range from initial needs assessments, to orientation and basic counselling services, administrative support and more personalised assistance. Some POs are also able to offer measures such as basic health care, school support, and job search counselling.

⁴ In 2016 the number of branches decreased to 213.

⁵ Fondazione Banco Alimentare, Associazione Banco Alimentare Roma, Croce Rossa Italiana, Caritas Italiana, Comunità di S. Egidio, Banco delle opere di Carità, and Associazione Sempre Insieme per la Pace

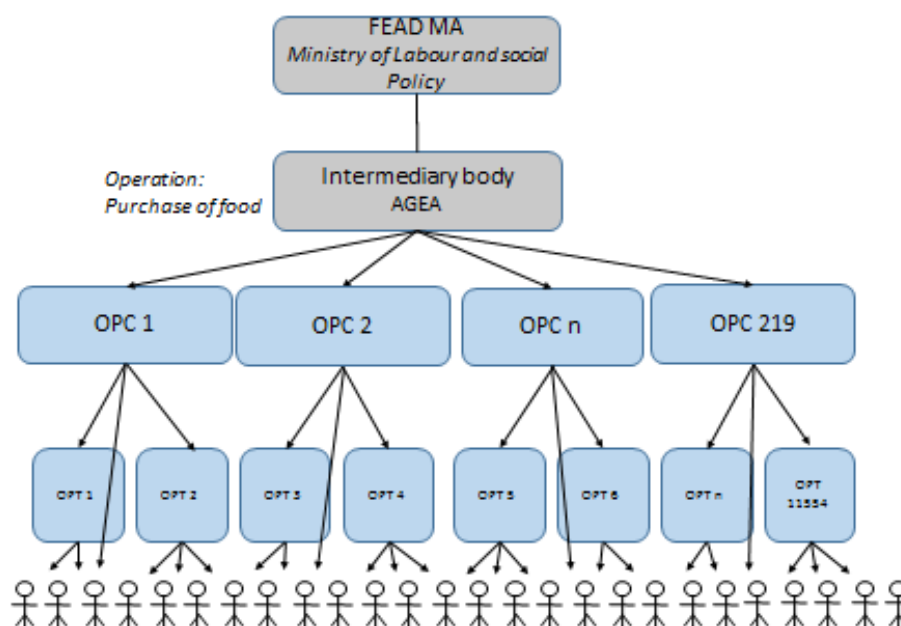
⁶ In 2016 the number of OPT decreased to 11470.

⁷ Social emporiums allow final recipients to choose products within different options.

⁸ FEAD annual implementation report – OP I 2014, 2015.

According to the FEAD implementation report 2016, around 70% of partner organisations provided accompanying measures. The budget originally earmarked for accompanying measures for measure 1 was 0.5 million for the whole programme period.

Figure 3 The detailed sub-steps of measure 1: The food supply chain. OPCs are lead partner organisations and OPTs are partner organisations on the territory.



Material deprivation of children and young people in scholastic environment

Measure two, which has not yet started, is the second largest in terms of resource allocation, with 150 million EUR earmarked for the period 2014-2020 (19% of the total budget).

The first step foreseen is the identification of goods to be provided to students, procurement and delivery mode. Material shall be delivered on a yearly basis, as well as reporting the expenses. The distribution of school material should involve the lead partner organisations involved in the measure. The partner organisations in the area shall distribute the material, either to end recipients or through other partner organisations (schools or not-for-profit organisations).

According to the latest information provided by the MA this measure is likely to be suspended because of administrative difficulties linked to procurement requirements. The FEAD Regulation in fact does not allow the distribution of vouchers that would have allowed families to purchase the preferred goods, in line with needs and children's preferences). The alternative would then be a centralised procurement procedure which is burdensome and does not allow the differentiation of goods to be provided to families. The provision of non-standardised goods is in fact an important element of the measure, in order to avoid stigmatisation and provide good quality material.

Food and educational deprivation of children and young people in deprived areas

The third measure has a foreseen budget of 77 million EUR for the period 2014-2020 (just below 10% of the FEAD budget). It has not yet started.

This measure only has one step. It consists of purchases, made by lead partner organisations of ready-to-eat meals to be distributed to schools in marginalised areas.

Material deprivation of homeless and other frail categories

Measure 4, with a foreseen budget of 50 million EUR (6% of the total allocation), is the smallest among FEAD measures but covers an important role given the lack of a systematic approach of national policies tackling homelessness. A call for expression of interest targeting regional and local authorities closed in March 2017, and its activation is likely approaching. Through this call local authorities can declare their interest for participating in the measure which foresees the purchase of basic goods to be provided to homeless individuals participating in housing-led solutions.

This measure has been somewhat hampered by a restrictive interpretation of the regulations which call for the goods to be provided to homeless to be of small financial value and to be transferred to the individual and that is not compatible with the idea at the basis of this action to buy small furniture and durable goods complementing housing first services.

Local entities and partner organisations purchase (following specific national guidelines) and distribute supplies to the homeless. The distribution can either be directed or done through other partner organisations. The budget originally earmarked for accompanying measures for measure 4 was 2.5 million for the whole programme period.

Each step is further operationalised in the FEAD OP document and has to abide by general principles, normally aimed at reducing the cost per unit and/or obtaining higher quality.

2.3 Description of national policy framework

Until recently, Italy did not have a comprehensive national policy measure tackling basic material support of the most deprived. Until 2012, Italy was one of just two EU countries without a comprehensive unemployment and social assistance schemes, the other one being Greece.⁹

These gaps have been traditionally and partially filled in through the involvement of the third sector which in Italy covers an important role in the provision of basic (and more advanced) social services, and throughout the years has developed a widespread network of organisations and charities working with the most deprived. The FEAD (and previously the PEAD) largely rely on this extended network and thus contribute to fill an important gap of the Italian welfare system.

Over the past few years however the national policy framework has experienced some important changes. Starting in 2013, following a pilot phase in the main Italian cities, the Government launched a means-tested inclusion subsidy (SIA - Sostegno per l'inclusione attiva), based on strict eligibility criteria¹⁰. SIA aims at fighting poverty through the provision of a financial benefit¹¹ to the most deprived families that must be accompanied by a personalized social and work activation project. Starting from January 2018 the SIA has been replaced by a more universal and generous measure, the Inclusion income (REI).

REI is funded through national resources (through the National Fund for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion), with a structural allocation of EUR 1 billion per year (which was increased to 1.6 in 2017), aimed at implementing the National Poverty Plan. Also the European Social Fund plays an important role funding the strengthening of the support services to be provided in parallel with the income support. In fact, in order to ensure integrated and multi-dimensional management of people in need, the Municipalities and / or the Territorial Areas must guarantee adequate professionalism. They can thus access resources of the National ESF 2014-2020 Operational Programme

⁹ Esser, I., T. Ferrarini, K. Nelson, J. Palme, O. Sjöberg, Unemployment Benefits in EU Member States, Report for European Commission. DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion. Brussels: European Commission, 2013.

¹⁰ For instance: ISEE below EUR 3000, not being a SIA recipient in the last six months, availability to work and strict limitations concerning the ownerships of movable goods such as cars.

¹¹ Averaging 80 Euros monthly per family member (capped at 400 Euros for large families).

for Social inclusion (PON Inclusion), co-funded by the ESF with over € 1 billion over the seven-year programming period. PON Inclusion will support the strengthening of the social services network and their collaboration with employment services and the other territorial actors.

Thanks to these recent changes, Italy is gradually closing the gap¹² with the other European countries. They will likely bring about new forms of cooperation between FEAD and the new instruments which should be facilitated by the fact that Managing authority for both FEAD and PON Inclusion is within the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, which is also responsible for the implementation and monitoring of SIA/REI.

In 2012 a special National Fund for Food-related matters for the most deprived (*Fondo nazionale per la derrate alimentari agli Indigenti*) was launched.¹³ The fund is managed by a coordination table within the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies (*Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali*). Resources are allocated on a yearly basis, normally around 10 million Euros, while in 2016/17 EUR 5 million were earmarked, complemented by EUR 9 million for milk purchase, and EUR 3.2 million for fruit juices). The Fund played an important role especially in the gap year between PEAD and FEAD.

Finally, and of great relevance to FEAD, in August 2017 an innovative law for the reduction of food waste was passed, the so-called Gadda Law¹⁴ aimed at simplifying procedures for reducing food waste and redistribution of food surpluses (estimated at 5 million tons every year).

2.4 Governance, FEAD delivery system and partner organisations

The Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority for FEAD is placed within the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. More specifically, both functions are granted to the pro-tempore executive of a special office of the General Directorate for Inclusion and Social Policies, within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

FEAD implementation has been characterised by a constant and positive dialogue among the involved stakeholders, given the strategic importance of the social partnership and of the different decision-makers along the multi-level structure outlined in section 2.2. This is also in line with article 5 of FEAD regulation. The expression of this partnership approach is the national coordination group.

The implementation of FEAD relies on the intermediate body, AGEA, for measure 1 (at December 2016 the only activated measure).¹⁵ AGEA is the agency that distributes agricultural funds. The choice stems from the fact that, since its launch, FEAD was considered as the natural replacement for the PEAD programme, which was distributing unsold food stock to people in food deprivation. AGEA purchases the quantity and typologies of food according to the reported needs and the budget available. The food purchase is centralised through public auctions open to food suppliers and to transport service companies that will then be delivered to lead partner organisations and partner organisations on the territory.

For what concerns the FEAD delivery system, as explained in section 2.2, the OPC, after having received the food will then distribute it either to the end beneficiaries or through their network of OPT. the system also foresees the purchase and distribution of food for

¹² <http://www.lavoce.info/archives/46502/per-il-reddito-di-inclusione-arriva-un-buon-memorandum/>

¹³ Decree of 17 December 2012. Available at: <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/02/22/13A01488/sq>

¹⁴ Legge 19 agosto 2016, n. 166 Disposizioni concernenti la donazione e la distribuzione di prodotti alimentari e farmaceutici a fini di solidarietà sociale e per la limitazione degli sprechi. (16G00179). Available at: <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2016/08/30/16G00179/sq> .

¹⁵ The system should liaise directly with partner organisations for measures 2, 3, and 4 according to the Operational programme.

specific needs, and the collection, transport, stocking and distribution of the food donations.

The distribution takes place through the five distribution channels identified, namely: canteen services, distribution of food packages, social emporiums, food and beverage unit, and door-to-door delivery.

Finally, for what concerns the eligibility criteria targeting partner organisations, these change according to the different measures:¹⁶

- In measure 1 the POs are accredited with AGEA following the PEAD criteria¹⁷, although new criteria are being introduced.
- In measure 2, suppliers are municipalities or groups of municipalities (so called *ambiti territoriali*) that have asked to adhere to the measure. These will be selected for these purposes: buy school supplies at a favourable price while guaranteeing its quality, offer a range of products tailored to the different school needs of the recipients, and secure delivery at appropriate times; in step 2 the selection of the partner organisations should be made taking into account the reference schools and territorial bodies the beneficiaries are referring to.
- In measure 3, suppliers' are school or territorial entities designed by lead POs (alternatively, by entities designed by lead partner organisations for this very reason). The selection for measure 3's will be based on the following criteria: ensure proper nutrition with balanced nutrition, buy meals at a favourable price, and guarantee coverage and supervision for children recipients between morning and afternoon activities.
- For measure 4 cities with more than 250,000 inhabitants and regions will act as partner organisations; alternatively they will draft guidelines for their subsequent identification.

¹⁶ Source: FEAD OP Italy.

¹⁷ More specifically the partner organisations on the territory, in order to be eligible, have to:

- be not for profit organisations or public bodies operating in the sector
- respect the requirements identified by ADG on storage, storage and distribution capabilities of products as well as flows traceability
- Local partner organisations have to operate on a network with territorial public services.
- the local partner organisations distributing to final beneficiaries have to offer accompanying measures.

3 Analysing the role and impact of FEAD support

3.1 Effectiveness

3.1.1 Summary of Inputs, Outputs and Results of FEAD operations

The Managing Authority within the Italian Ministry of labour and social policies is in charge of monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities. As for measure 1, AGEA will provide support in its role of intermediary body. Data is collected by partner organisations and is checked and validated by the MA. Moreover, the MA Authority guarantees the establishment and application of anti-fraud measures abiding with FEAD Regulation (art. 32.4).¹⁸

Data collection includes:

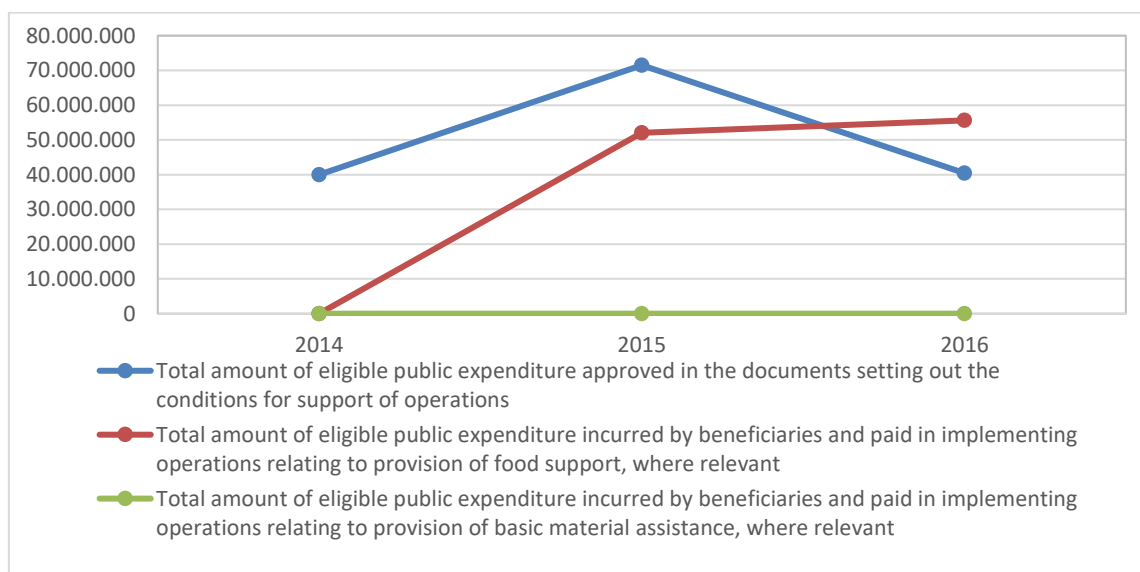
- yearly quantitative and qualitative monitoring of the implementation of the tendering procedures and of the relevant controls; and
- for what concerns data on partner organisations, including: food and distributed material goods (nature, quantity), and beneficiaries (final recipients) by type of distribution, specifying the number, age and gender.

The storing of data is done using the managing software SIGMA,¹⁹ already adopted in other projects during the framework period 2007-2013.

The total allocation for FEAD operations is planned at 788.8 million euros, of which around 31.5 million euros is allocated to technical assistance.

Eligible public expenditure (related to food support) as increased from 52 M EUR in 2015 to 55.6 in 2016, totalling 107.6 M EUR over the period. This is below the financing plan for 2014-2016 for which 151.9 M EUR were foreseen.

Figure 4 Allocated and incurred expenditure, 2014-2016



Source: SFC2014

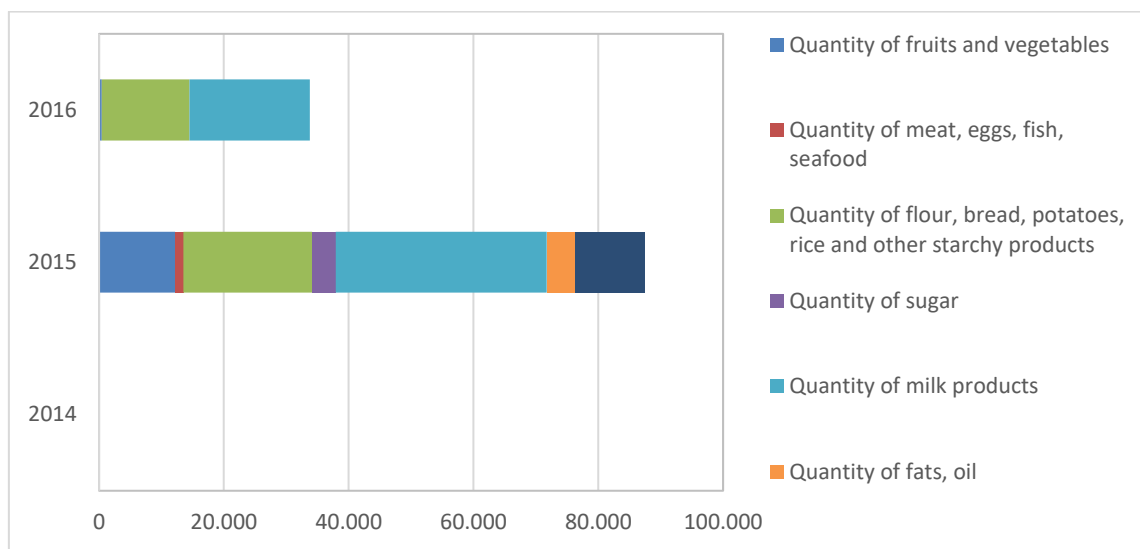
Between 2015 and 2016 121,280 tonnes of food supplies were distributed through 34.8 M meals and 102.9 M food packages. The majority of food distributed was in the form of milk products, followed by flour, bread, potatoes, rice and other starchy products.

A list of indicators is attached in the Annex.

¹⁸ Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2014:072:0001:0041:EN:PDF>

¹⁹ The system had an estimated cost of EUR 275,425.4.

Figure 5 Type and quantity of distributed food, 2014-2016



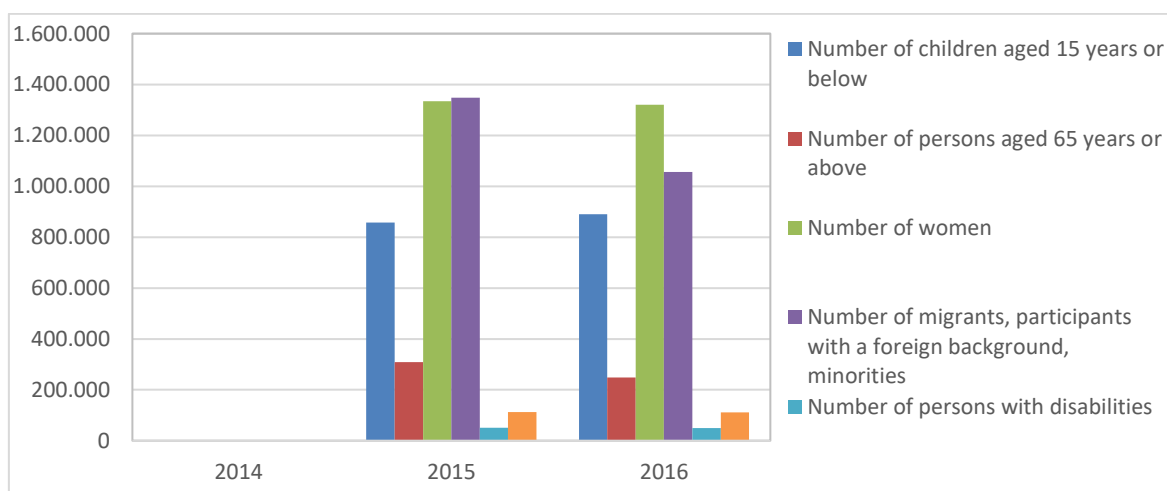
Source: SFC2014

An average of 2.8 million end recipients have been supported annually, evenly distributed between 2015 and 2016, 85% of which are “regular” recipients (according to estimations made by the PO):

- In 2015 2.8 million recipients were reached; of these 30% were below 15 years old, 11% above 65 years old, 47% women, 48% migrants, and 2% people affected by disabilities²⁰.
- In 2016 2.8 million recipients reached. 32% were below 15 years old, 9% above 65, 47% women, 38% migrants, 2 % afflicted by disabilities.

Overall looking at the target groups, we notice that there is a substantial gender balance, and a marked presence of migrants (although their rate slipped from 48 to 38% between 2015 and 2016.).

Figure 6 Participations by target group, 2014-2016



Source: SFC2014

²⁰ The information on recipients is based on estimates made by the POs

3.1.2 To what extent does the FEAD contribute to national and EU objectives of achieving poverty reduction and social inclusion?

The objective of FEAD is to “ultimately contribute to the objective of eradicating poverty in the Union by contributing to achieving the poverty reduction target [...] in accordance with the Europe 2020 strategy, whilst complementing the Structural Funds”. More specifically FEAD in Italy, through the provision of food and material assistance to the most deprived, shall aim at alleviating the worst forms of poverty and contribute to achieving the national target of the Europe 2020 Strategy of reducing by 2.2 M the number of persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

FEAD has reached out an estimated 2.8 million recipients in both 2015 and 2016, i.e. approximately 40% of the Italian population in severe material deprivation (6.98 million people²¹). The relatively strict eligibility criteria (described in section 3.3) ensure that only those in need received support. However, it should be noted that the number of those in extreme poverty is increasing, as so is the need for food assistance, which is in line with the EU average²².

It is important to highlight that the number of “regular” end-recipients is around 2.3 M, thus ensuring a satisfactory coverage of the most deprived, although clearly the support provided cannot by itself suffice to lift the out of poverty, but rather provide a temporary relief and an indirect support to household budgets that can be used to purchase more sustainable items and services. In terms of intensity of food aid, the average 2015-2016 weight of food distributed per participant is above 21 kgs. Under the assumption that one full meal may weight an average of 250gr (of row foodstuff), this means over 80 meals per year.

Concerning food aid, FEAD relies on an effective, well-tested and capillary delivery mechanism²³. This ensures that support provided is well-grounded in the different local contexts and thus responds to concrete needs of the most deprived. One of the underlying principles on which FEAD is based is to support and strengthen the cooperation and dialogue with social and territorial services so as to ensure that end recipients “captured” through FEAD are given the opportunity to access more comprehensive services. According to field research carried out this cooperation and dialogue does take place, and this is an important effect of FEAD, but it does so with varying levels of success, especially because social services across many Italian territories are short of human and financial resources and are thus not able to act as “relay” mechanism.

Field research confirms that the FEAD provides vital and stable support to many Partner Organisations, which would otherwise risk disappearing. According to the preliminary survey on PO carried out in 2015 according, some 30% of partner organisations rely on FEAD for more than 80% of the resources distributed. Yet, important differences exist at regional level. FEAD covers a much larger share of food distributed by PO in Southern Italy which is traditionally poorer than the rest of the country. For these organisations FEAD support is thus essential and most of the network collecting food surpluses would be significantly affected (especially in the South) because the quantity collected autonomously would not reach a critical mass level for which it makes sense to continue the practice.

At the moment it is not possible to assess the effectiveness of measures 2-3-4, given that they have not yet being fully activated and that measure 2 is likely to be cancelled. When considering that almost half of the programme period has elapsed, it may be difficult to achieve the objectives foreseen in the OP.

²² In 2016, the EU average was 24.7 kgs per person, and ranged from 174 of LU to 3 in IE.

The programme as it is, has barely any chance to affect any of the baseline indicators on food insecurity or material deprivation. Yet it plays an important role as it fills an important gap in the Italian welfare system. FEAD reaches out to a relatively large share of people in need although with little “intensity” of support. Providing them food (although little) allows them to spend their energy finding jobs or with their families, rather than becoming completely marginalised and with little hope of being included in society again. Yet, partner organisations on the territory flagged that FEAD is not flexible enough to tackle emergency situations. ; yet without it the whole network would face serious problems and would not be in a situation to continue its activities (more on this in section 3.3).²⁴ In the words of several PO representatives, FEAD is a cornerstone for food aid in Italy and its role is pivotal in allowing several TPOs to operate on a regular basis. It provides them with a solid basis. Similarly, many TPO would cease to exist in absence of FEAD support.

3.1.2.1 To what extent are the FEAD objectives (as stated in Article 3 of the FEAD Regulation) on track to be achieved?

According to FEAD regulation, its objectives are to promote social cohesion, enhance social inclusion and ultimately contributing to eradicating poverty. This should be done complementing in a sustainable way the national poverty eradication strategy. Since the ex-ante evaluation, three clear deprivations were identified for the Italian context: food deprivation, child poverty, and extreme poverty. These three issues had to be tackled through the help of FEAD resources.

Within PO I, after the identification of the deprivations, a comprehensive set of interventions was listed, dividing and customising it to the specific different target groups, and territorial contexts. The aim was to tackle the main needs of people in severe material deprivation, following their specific needs, complying with FEAD article 3 and following EU2020 objectives.

At the end of 2016, only interventions concerning food deprivation has been activated (through measure 1) and these seem to be on track of achieving the measure’s objectives, while the measure on food support in schools is still being planned.

With 77% of the earmarked budget for the period 2014-2016 being spent, measure 1 is almost on track to reach its objectives, while the delay in the activation of measures 2, 3, and 4 may hinder the achievement of the objectives in terms of child and extreme poverty.

The measure directed at the homeless is now entering its implementation phase with the joint ESF-FEAD projects having been selected and about to start, although it should be said that with respect to the initial ambitions of this measure the objectives have been somehow downsized because of regulatory limitations and rigidities in interpreting the goods that could be distributed through FEAD funding.

Measure 2 is at a standstill and possibilities to reallocate its resources towards other measures are being discussed, including the possibility to redirect them into measure 1 while also reinforcing the allocation for accompanying measures. This would be consistent, on the one hand, with the increasing trend of people in absolute poverty being recorded and, on the other, with the introduction of the income support measure which could go in the direction of supporting potential beneficiaries of Measure 2 (deprived families with children). The implementation of measure 3 has not yet started either.

A number of intermediate objectives have been already been achieved, amongst which:

- Better knowledge of situation of extreme poverty through improved monitoring;

²⁴ The PO also raised a measurability problem. As a matter of fact, while the effect of measure 1 is ease to measure, the same cannot be said for social inclusion measures, spread between OP I and other programmes.

- Better emergence of extreme poverty through food distribution and outreach towards the most deprived;
- Higher self-awareness for the Partner Organisations also on their capability to encourage further social inclusion measures, as well as further efforts spurred towards being better equipped to that end;
- Increased stability of food provision, which is vital to the widespread network of Partner Organisations and helps medium to long term planning, including thinking of improved services; and
- Enhancement of partnerships, both at the governance and local level.

3.1.2.2 To what extent has assistance reached the most vulnerable groups (homeless, children at risk of poverty, etc.) and does it help them move further towards inclusion?

For the time being the support delivered by FEAD is targeted to the broader target group of people in need, although eligibility criteria have been introduced and the number of beneficiaries has significantly been reduced with respect to the PEAD. This goes in the direction of better focusing the support.

Although the contribution of FEAD to combating poverty is not possible to be assessed, an effort has to be made to guarantee that help to the target groups will be continued at the end of the programme, FEAD had a good leverage effect helping almost 3 million people and providing a buffer that was fundamental in keeping the network of associations distributing food surpluses and food donations up and running.

Measures 2, 3 and 4 envisage a more focused action, aimed respectively at children and their families, and at the homeless.

As already mentioned the MA faced some problems faced with the submission of a plan for FEAD intervention directed towards the homeless (measure 4). The first project proposed envisaged the purchase of goods and movable properties (e.g. beds) meant to be the first step for sustainable housing inclusion. However this proposal was not approved by the European Commission since the help provided by FEAD should focus on primary goods (such as sleeping bags). The creation of workshops to reintegrate homeless was also considered not eligible.

Concerning Accompanying measures these should be strengthened for example by providing training and capacity building to local PO.

3.1.2.3 Are adjustments possible/made when needs change or new needs emerge?

In general FEAD regulations are seen to provide little flexibility in selecting the types of interventions to be implemented; although this rigidity does not refer to adaptation to new needs and emergencies. The MA and beneficiaries support a greater role and flexibility in selecting target groups in order to allow for great diversities according to contexts and territories (both among the EU28 and within Italy). Italy itself presents great heterogeneity across regions (e.g. northern and southern ones), and also diverse needs in rural and metropolitan areas.

The introduction of relatively strict eligibility criteria by the MA has created several problems among the PO who would prefer to be given more leeway in deciding whom to target. Eligibility criteria also increased the administrative burden on PO, especially for the smaller ones this can be a problem and it already caused some PO to drop out of the programme. The introduction of the eligibility criteria created a series of cases where people in deprivation were impossible to help because they could not produce the documents proving that they fulfilled the criteria. More leeway to the partner organisations on the ground would avoid the great majority of these issues. FEAD operators gained experience on the ground, and they know the background and the stories of the beneficiaries. Given that there is no black market of the goods distributed

through FEAD, there is red tape to be cut because it hampers the project from reaching the objectives it was meant to achieve.

3.1.2.4 Are horizontal principles such as reducing food waste complied with (Article 5 of FEAD regulation)?

According to the yearly implementation report of 2016, FEAD activities until 2015 were carried out abiding with the list of horizontal principles listed in the article 5 of FEAD regulation.²⁵

In particular, they took into account:

- Clause 6 of article 5,²⁶ relating to public health and against food waste. This was done especially through the selection of products, taking into account their capacity to keep quality while stored by lead partner organisations. Moreover, concerning coordination with ESF, food distribution was as complementary as possible with those undertaken under Thematic Objective 9 of the partnership agreement (tackling poverty and social exclusion). Finally, distribution of ready-to-eat meals was coordinated with the activities foreseen in National Operative Programme School (*PON Scuola*). It should also be noted that FEAD supports the reduction of food waste also indirectly, i.e., through the stable support ensured to Partner Organisations, which play a pivotal role in the recovery of food at the local level; f
- Clause 11 of article 5,²⁷ dealing with gender equality, with reference to selection criteria of final beneficiaries so to avoid any form of discrimination;
- Clause 13 of article 5,²⁸ relating with a balanced diet, taking into account environmental aspects and an adequate protein and carbohydrates intake as in the Mediterranean diet.

One of the seven organisations in the coordinating group is the major Italian foodbank organisation with a proven track record in putting to good use the food waste, being this one of their main objectives and a central feature of the PEAD project. The PO also shared data and information with the *Politecnico di Milano* University, carrying out a project on the issue, called REDUCE.²⁹ The room for improvement is still large, but there is a trade-off in retrieving food surplus. The food already collected is the cheapest one. The bulk of food waste stems from very fragmented small quantities of food scattered in small centres. The cost of its collection may often offset the price itself of the food. Moreover, FEAD POs have a clear preference for the collection of food with lowest perishability. Yet, there is still room for reducing food waste further.

Further efforts to be carried out in order to better address food waste. For the time being, it was decided that resources should be dedicated to ensuring that previous

²⁵ Regulation (EU) No 223/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2014:072:0001:0041:EN:PDF>

²⁶ "In accordance with their respective responsibilities, and to prevent double funding, the Commission and the Member States shall ensure coordination with the ESF, and with other relevant Union policies, strategies and instruments, in particular Union initiatives in the field of public health and against food waste." Ibidem.

²⁷ "The Commission and the Member States shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective are taken into account and promoted during the various stages of the preparation, programming, management and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Fund, as well as in information and awareness raising campaigns and exchanges of best practices. The Commission and the Member States shall use data broken down by gender, where available." Ibidem.

²⁸ "Member States and beneficiaries shall choose the food and/or the basic material assistance on the basis of objective criteria related to the needs of the most deprived persons. The selection criteria for the food products, and where appropriate for goods, shall also take into consideration climatic and environmental aspects, in particular with a view to reduction of food waste. Where appropriate, the choice of the type of food products to be distributed shall be made having considered their contribution to the balanced diet of the most deprived persons." Ibid.

²⁹ More information available at: <https://www.eventi.polimi.it/events/prevenzione-dello-spreco-alimentare-i-primi-risultati-del-progetto-reduce-ricerca-educazione-e-comunicazione/>

funding to partner organisation would not be heavily affected nor discontinued. This meant that no specific calls have been issued that fund only transport, storage of distribution of food donation. Other financial streams are available, see section on coherence.

3.1.2.5 Are there unintended results? Is there any evidence of impacts yet?

The following aspects should be highlighted in terms of "soft" results that could point toward potential FEAD impacts, going beyond its specific objective of providing food and material aid to the most deprived and pointing to a broader systemic change that could ultimately contribute to bring about a stronger drive towards social inclusion of the most deprived:

- A means to intercept extreme poverty: the FEAD is a key instrument to flag up situations of extreme poverty which used to pass unnoticed. This is extremely valuable as it is very often the case that social inclusion policies fail to reach out to the most deprived, first of all as they are not identified. Particularly the food package is deemed as a formidable tool to shed light on situations of extreme poverty, and further engage those who may be receiving this form of support for the first time. It is the entry point for further inclusion policies.
- Enhancement of partnerships: through FEAD support, although indirectly and mainly due to territorial needs, strong partnerships among local level actors are ensured.
- Increased knowledge and information: Information gathered on the most deprived increase the knowledge basis on poverty prevention measures and their needs
- A broad audience: criteria for the selection of the beneficiaries have widened, at least on paper, the audience of potential beneficiaries. However, FEAD requirements placed upon the TPOs, as well as the fact FEAD support is means-tested,
- Towards further inclusion: Accompanying measures, irrespective of a dedicated financial allocation, are carried out to a large extent by all POs. They clearly represent an important tool towards further integration. Volunteers often provides multiple forms of counselling and guidance, although the lack of specific expertise may hamper their effectiveness
- Awareness raising on POs' competences: the FEAD's requirements on accompanying measures work as a means to bring out competences and services not previously known/monitored. It is also a way to make organisations aware of their importance in the context of food aid distribution.

Regarding the evidence of impacts, the PO stated that according to their network of partner organisations on the ground FEAD is fundamental in keeping the Italian network of food assistance operative, especially in southern Italy (see section 4.4.2).

3.1.3 How are the various types of assistance delivered?

In November/December 2015 the MA launched a survey involving 542 partner organisations at territorial level (roughly 5% of the whole population and which provides support to 100,000 recipients).

The dimensions analysed were:

- 1) organisation of the food delivery;
- 2) distribution network of the lead and territorial partner organisations;
- 3) accompanying measures; and
- 4) recipients profiles.

The results show that over 80% of the organizations interviewed highlight a significantly higher workload with the new regulations introduced by FEAD, 55% have difficulties in dealing with the management duties, 47% stress new hurdles with the beneficiaries, and 32% of the POs state that the creation of files for every beneficiary leads to a reduction of the beneficiaries, especially among foreigners and old people.

These hurdles are somehow balanced by the fact that 82% of the respondents declared to have a higher knowledge of the recipients' needs, and 69% have the possibility to focus their help on people in greater weakness conditions.

This action is a first step towards the structured analysis that should be conducted before the end of 2017 on a significant sample so to comply with article 17.4 of FEAD regulation.³⁰

According to the preliminary survey carried out by the MA, the great majority of POs distribute food support through food packages (92.2%), followed by home delivery (28%), soup kitchens (9.8%), and with only a very small share distribute food through stree hels and social stores (5.2% and 3.9%).

Food support is delivered to end recipients according to well defined and alternative eligibility criteria: such rules and particularly the ISEE means-test (this should not surpass 3000 euros) is sometimes perceived by POs, especially those at the local level, as both a red-tape as well as too limiting. This entails several consequences, some of which are favourable (ref. also in efficiency) but others may work to the disadvantage of an effective food delivery. Amongst other:

- The number of those assisted has dropped with respect to the PEAS. While this may be due to better mechanisms to address double counting, it is also the case that some end-recipients cannot be counted as they would not meet the eligibility criteria, while still being in food support need. For those, POs need to find different ways of food provision.
- The yearly request of the ISEE certificate (or, in its absence, of a declaration from the PO that the individual meets the eligibility criteria) places a burden over the volunteers involved with food delivery within the POs, especially given the nature of their engagement. They often perceive as controversial having to deal with bureaucracy as they attempt to aid those in need. In some other instances, they struggle with the idea of being responsible for the decision on whether a given end-beneficiary meets the eligibility criteria. However, were the ISEE threshold raised to over 3000 euros, POs, that usually complement the basic FEAD basket with additional products, would face severe struggles to do this.

3.1.3.1 What are the types of assistance delivered, including those related to food donations and awareness raising activities?

3.1.3.2 What are the types of accompanying measures (OP I) and social inclusion activities (OP II) delivered?

As already mentioned accompanying measures are delivered at the local level, and their nature, extent and continuity are heavily related with the individual POs at local level. They range from basic needs assessment and orientation, to information and redirecting to social services.

3.1.3.3 How robust are good practice cases (such as leveraging amount of aid) identified by MAs and Partner Organisations?

³⁰ "The managing authority of an OP I shall carry out a structured survey on end recipients in 2017 and 2022, in accordance with the template adopted by the Commission. The Commission shall adopt implementing acts establishing the template after the consultation of relevant stakeholders. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the advisory procedure referred to in Article 63(2)." Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2014:072:0001:0041:EN:PDF>

3.2 Coherence

3.2.1 To what extent are the interventions coherent with other EU, national and regional interventions which have similar or complementary objectives?

It seems to be easier for the Italian managing authority to have greater level of coherence between FEAD and other interventions at national level, rather than other interventions at European or regional level. This is likely linked with the fact that the MA is within the Labour Ministry, and therefore set at national level (although with a good cooperation with other stakeholders through the partnership consultation set in place). Still, the national schemes to tackle poverty have undertaken radical changes in the last four-years (see section 2.3). As for complementarity with other European initiatives, this seems much more difficult to reach than what initially foreseen, mainly due to the different schedules the programmes have to abide with.

There is room for improvement, notably a certain need of a better management of different funds and services aimed at social integration.

3.2.1.1 What role does FEAD play in the national system of poverty alleviation?

The Italian public welfare system faced radical changes in recent years, as explained in section 2.3, with the introduction of experimental social card in 2013 and the following launch of SIA and then REI (partly financed through ESF within the PON Inclusion in 2014 for the part relating to the strengthening of territorial services). Moreover, in May 2017, the programme expanded and changed its name in REI (which stands for inclusion income). REI has larger budget available and looser eligibility criteria, and it is therefore able to help more people in a more thorough way. Also, its amount changes according to the recipients' conditions (generosity increasing with deprivation).

Yet, there seems to be a missing link between the basic needs support provided to help people in extreme deprivation and other sorts of help provided (mainly through ESF-funded programmes). The group of beneficiaries for which FEAD support seems more targeted to (i.e. the homeless) would not be eligible for other programmes in a following stage, unless REI will fill this gap in the policy design. Further cooperation is envisaged, yet it was not carried out according to the latest available data. Such is the case of cooperation between National Operational Programme for the School (managed by the Ministry of Education) and the FEAD actions foreseen in FEAD measure 2.

The MA noted that there is a need to rebuild the possibility for people in extreme situation, to reengage with the society. A new version of FEAD, with more flexibility and available tools at its disposal, may be more in line and more complementary with a structured and comprehensive welfare system.

3.2.1.2 To what extent is FEAD support complementary to support provided by other European Union instruments, in particular the ESF and AMIF?

The FEAD OP for Italy included a section on the complementarity between FEAD and ESF (for its activities under thematic objective 9, i.e. promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination), designing a mechanism that should have ensured it. The mechanism was based on the fact that the foreseen delivery of food and/or material assistance between the two programs should have been complementary, following what was foreseen in the partnership agreement.³¹ Examples listed in the OP are distribution of food and other essential items. These have the same final beneficiaries of the intervention foreseen in ESF under TO9, but with a different focus (ESF being more targeted on the promotion of active inclusion). Having the same managing authority for FEAD and the national OP on Inclusion should have also eased

³¹ FEAD OP highlights that FEAD interventions should target more emergency situations, whereas ESF ones under TO9 are supposed to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

the coordination.³² Finally, actions undertaken under the originally foreseen FEAD OP II should have been complementary and synergic with the ones carried out under FEAD OP I. Further synergies and more integrated approaches with the ESF are welcome, also considering that the administrative set-up of the FEAD is quite similar to that of the ESF, in so far as the specificities of the FEAD in terms of eligibility criteria, objectives and monitoring requirements are preserved.

3.2.1.3 Has the FEAD contributed to supplement or to displace national (public or private) interventions and financial resources used with similar or complementary objectives?

FEAD had an important leverage effect, allowing the network of stakeholders involved in the distribution of food surplus and food surplus to stay afloat. Food resources coming from FEAD (ranging from 30% to above 80% of food support share according to the regions and the stakeholders involved) were therefore fundamental in helping people, especially in the poorest regions (mostly located in southern Italy). This is because FEAD resorts to a plethora of volunteers working on OPC and OPT to collect and distribute food. The FEAD food buffer being absent, a lot of volunteers would have withdrawn because of a lack of food to distribute. This would have likely caused the collapse of the network in the areas when help is most needed. Finally, the resources provided by FEAD freed other resources that can be spent on other activities, both at public and private level. This is also true at micro-level within the families.

3.2.1.4 How coherent are the OPs internally and among themselves (e.g. multiple support forms, delivery methods)?

3.3 Efficiency

Based on available information it is not possible to run a sound cost efficiency analysis of FEAD, however it can be said that based on the delivery mechanism adopted, relying on an extended network of voluntary organisation FEAD support is cost-effective.

In particular, it has been mentioned that the calls for procurement issued by the IB resulted in a surprisingly high quantity of foodstuff, which made it possible to compensate for the reduction in overall resources as compared to the PEAD.

The administrative requirements of FEAD, both at the level of the OP as well as of the MA (for example in terms of audit and control requirements that call for a significant amount of resources) may play against the cost effectiveness of the Fund hamper the achievement of better results. In particular, the following issues have been highlighted during the field work:

- uncertainties with the interpretation of some requirements, as well as their rigidity: TPOs struggle a bit with some requirements, perhaps also due to some doubts over the interpretation of the Italian FEAD specific requirements. In particular, the rules for the selection of the end-beneficiaries, meant some difficulties for the TPOs. A reason for this is also the fact that the TPO's personnel is made up of volunteers with little to no experience with administrative issues. Their struggles are somewhat magnified by the fact that even factual mistakes may have some consequences on food provision.
- administrative burden: the recent Italian Code of Public Procurement (legislative Decree n. 50/2016) means that procedures for calls for procurement are quite burdensome and may cause volatility in food provision.

All the same, requirements on end-recipients and monitoring have brought about some positive consequence, such as:

³² A special table was foreseen by the National OP on Inclusion (tavolo dei programmatori attuativi) to guarantee a higher level of coordination.

- better targeting of end-beneficiaries, which also means better control of food distribution and possibility to prevent abuses
- more standardisation of data, which, despite facing some initial reluctance by the operators, does not actually increase the administrative burden and contributes to a more stable and efficient data gathering practice in the long term.

3.3.1 Are the elements of Management and Control System (MCS) requirements in FEAD set appropriately to minimise the administrative burden while allowing effective and efficient implementation?

On the side of the MA the main problem with the administrative burden is the scarcity of human resources within the MA to deal with all the regulatory requirements, in particular the audit and control system which is deemed to be on a par with the of the ESF while having significantly less resources.

The MA has not resorted to TA services for the time being, with the exception of services linked to maintenance and upgrading of the system for management and control.

At the level of the PO the main burden lies with the collection of monitoring data and with the control of end-recipients eligibility. The flat rate for administrative costs is a welcome innovation.

For what concerns the eligibility criteria for help provision, the intermediate body drafted guidelines trying to facilitate targeting of those in food deprivation condition.³³ While there are no eligibility criteria for provision of help to the homeless or in emergency cases, the guidelines state that for continuous provision of help there is the need of carry out an assessment of the economic and social condition of beneficiaries and the family members for the long-term delivery of the phase. These rely on one of the three following documents proving the state of deprivation: a low income as measured by a composite family revenue indicator (ISEE),³⁴ specific document by the municipality or the social services proving the condition, or a report of a home-based visit determining the condition of indigence. Yet, partner organizations on the territory highlight that FEAD rules helps in the provision of continuous help, while not being flexible enough to tackle emergency situations when they arise.

3.3.1.1 Is there any evidence of gold-plating at MS level in implementing the FEAD?

The introduction of the eligibility criteria was at the initiative of the MA, and it was originally greeted by scepticism from the partner organisations. This is linked to the fact that partner organisations rely on volunteers rather than employees. Volunteers are more reluctant to carry out controls and tend to consider self-assessment as a reliable rule of thumb to distribute food. The situation improved with the years (also thanks to discussions between MA and POs aimed at solving the issue), and the managing authority acknowledged that the introduction of eligibility criteria improved the transparency of the process and is consistent with the aim of reaching the target groups

³³ Agea (2014), "ISTRUZIONI OPERATIVE n. 22 - Oggetto: richiesta prodotti alimentari da distribuire agli indigenti. Regolamento (UE) n. 223/2014. Fondo di Aiuti Europei agli Indigenti (FEAD). Programma Operativo sugli aiuti alimentari e l'assistenza materiale (PO1). Anni 2014 e 2015". Available at: <http://www.agea.gov.it/portal/pls/portal/docs/1/4462205.PDF>

³⁴ ISEE stands for for Indicatore della Situazione Economica Equivalente, i.e. "equivalent economic situation indicator". ISEE is a synthetic indicator taking into account family income, the number of family members (adjusting it for possible disadvantages, such as the presence of people with disabilities), movable and immovable properties, and financial resources.

most in need. Yet the problem of the re-ranking is real and troubling, as shown in the section above.

3.3.1.2 To what extent are the costs involved justified, given the outputs/impacts that have been achieved?

Field research has ascertained full consensus from all stakeholders on the fact that the cost-effectiveness of the FEAD is high. The choice to focus on a limited and basic range of foodstuff in the FEAD basket has played to the advantage of efficiency. Nevertheless, burdensome public procurement procedures mean that the flow of food provision is not always optimal, which, in turn, is conducive to higher efforts to be made in order to ensure that food support consistently reaches out to those in need. Furthermore, if one thinks of the overall objectives, the fact that accompanying measures seem still somewhat limited in their capacity to promote further integration, may as well hamper the effectiveness of the fund and, in turn, its cost-effectiveness.

3.3.1.3 What type of operations for which target group proves to be most effective and efficient and why?

Given that only food support to the most deprived is currently undergoing, the answer is self-evident. In terms of target groups, according to estimates included in the draft final FEAD MTE report³⁵, it would seem that children, migrants and the homeless are the target groups with the best coverage.

3.3.1.4 What is the feasibility of alternative delivery mechanisms and support modes for the provision of support to the most deprived (e.g. shared management, indirect management, budget support)?

Shared management procedures in themselves appear to be suitable to effectively orchestrate the joint efforts of the FEAD and its stakeholders. Nevertheless, the limitations posed by the FEAD regulation (basic act) as to the types of support that can be catered to by the OP are not always viewed positively. Concerns are that more innovative forms of support aimed to promote further inclusion risk being curtailed. By way of example, Measure 2 was meant to be in the form of budget support for children

3.3.1.5 Does the procedure for identifying the end recipients facilitate access to FEAD assistance?

See above (section 3.3.1).

3.3.1.6 Does the use of flat rates under OP I simplify the implementation of operations by partner organisations?

The PO welcomed very warmly the introduction of flat rates in OP I, because it vastly simplifies the process, and avoids the production of document. The saving on the bureaucratic side allows to a more efficient use of resources and time.

3.3.1.7 Is there any scope for simplification?

Further simplification is transversally called for by the stakeholders, especially those at the forefront of food distribution (i.e. local Partner Organisations) and this has much to do with the fact that their work is largely reliant on volunteers. In terms of more concrete proposals, the focus is on the procedures to ascertain that the beneficiaries are eligible for food support. A certain impression arises that the emphasis should rather be on further enhancing communication between the MA and the Partner Organisations as to the ways in which the possession of eligibility criteria should be verified rather than actually changing the procedures. Training and awareness raising of the POs would have simplification as a result.

³⁵ Figure 27, Coverage of food support by target group. This is calculated by proxying the number of individual in need by target group based on Eurostat and OECD data, which, however, are not always updated and are sometimes just rough estimates, e.g., for the homeless.

3.4 EU added value

There are three main areas where the European Added Value of the FEAD has emerged more clearly, notably:

- A guarantee of continuing support: the 7-year programming, as well as the fact that rules and allocations are set out at the EU level through structured processes and obligations, work as a safeguard for public action in such a relevant field as poverty prevention. According to the participants, it would not be unlikely for funds to be steered away from these measures in times of financial constraints, were it not for the EU level obligations.
- Better monitoring, which results in a better knowledge of the situation
- Better targeting of end-recipients, which means effectiveness and efficiency of the support.

3.4.1 What kind of EU added value is resulting from the FEAD support (volume, scope, role, and process) and how significant is it?

3.4.1.1 To what extent does FEAD add to existing actions, either by supporting national action in general or specific areas of national policy (volume effect)?

FEAD represents a significant percentage of the overall food support distributed by Partner Organisations in Italy. This was reported at around 30-40% during the fieldwork – although clearer evidence on this will be available once the end recipients survey findings will be published. There is a clear volume effect.

3.4.1.2 To what extent does FEAD broaden existing action by supporting groups or policy areas that would not otherwise receive support (scope effect)?

FEAD contributes to supporting a housing first approach through its Measure 4, and a greater attention to the problem of homelessness which is not adequately addressed by national policies. Furthermore, it is an entry point to social inclusion for many that would otherwise remain invisible to standard social inclusion services.

3.4.1.3 To what extent does FEAD support local/regional innovations that are taken up at national level or national innovative actions that are then 'mainstreamed' (role effect)?

The focus on homelessness and on a stronger cooperation between civil society and social services creates a positive role effect. Likewise, efforts to support food donations can be considered as part of an awareness raising action towards this problem.

Banco Alimentare launched initiatives to improve food collection at micro level, and launched the collaboration with the Information and Communication Technology Centre of the Bruno Kessler foundation that led to the launch of the Bring the food app (see section 6). Moreover, it started the mainstreaming of this experience, which now involves Milan metropolitan city after starting from Trento province.

3.4.1.4 To what extent does FEAD influence Member State administrations and organisations involved in the programmes (process effect)?

According to the PO, two main effects took place. The first one is the identification and filing of the indigent. The second one is the acknowledgement of the fact that the whole food support network is a welfare provider. This helps the member of the network in their interaction with regions or other organisation, giving more relevance to the overall network.

3.4.2 What would be the most likely consequences of stopping the FEAD support?

The most likely consequence of stopping FEAD would be a decrease in food support being provided. It would also significantly weaken the capacity of many organisations, especially the smallest and less organised one in sustaining their activities on the territory (not only those directly linked at food support provision), especially in Southern Italy.

This is proven by the fact that during the gap period between PEAD and FEAD, the whole system was at risk, and special measures had to be taken. Special food drives were organised to collect food in front of supermarkets, ad hoc help was asked to companies, and the new special National Fund for foodstuff to the most deprived (see section 2.3) gave help for around EUR 10 million. Still, the system held only because it was a short period and because the launch of FEAD was considered imminent. Longer pauses would likely lead to a "blood bath", in the words of the PO manager.

FEAD support is thus essential and most of the network collecting food surpluses would be significantly affected (especially in the South) because the quantity collected autonomously would not reach a critical mass level for which it makes sense to continue the practice.

3.5 Relevance

The reasoning on the relevance of the FEAD covered different aspects of the food support, as well as of the accompanying measures. Once again, the FEAD is deemed as overall extremely relevant, as it seeks to answer to a need that is most compelling, and it does so through a fully relevant means (food aid). However, some key issues have been identified, as per the list below:

- An ever-expanding audience of people in extreme poverty: an increasing need from end-beneficiaries is registered, especially as a result of migration influxes and enduring high unemployment rates in specific areas. This means that POs struggle to cope with the demand.
- Variety of products and social value of food: as the list of food products focuses on basic products, with a view to maximising efficiency and providing a sound basis of food support, there is an enduring need of complementing FEAD support. This choice seems to be deliberate; however, there is a widespread need of further food support. To consider also the social value of certain typologies of food products, e.g. for some children the distribution of a famous drink has also been a way for them to be better integrated in their classes at school.
- A need for further information and training emerges especially on the procedures and requirements of the FEAD in order to smooth out some administrative hurdles, but also, e.g. on accompanying measures.

3.5.1 How relevant is the aid to the target groups? How well does it respond to their needs? Are there any gaps?

3.5.1.1 How relevant is the aid to the target groups?

From the ex-ante evaluation carried out before the implementation of FEAD, we know that the actions designed by the programme were coherent with the needs analysis and the objectives (both general and specific), of the programme. Moreover, it is fair to assume that the actions are consistent with the results expected at least for what concerns measure 1 (i.e. meeting primary needs in terms of food deprivation) and its target group.

As previously mentioned the provision of food support, even if in parallel with accompanying measure, cannot in any way replace a more exhaustive and systematic

approach to fighting deprivation which provide sustainable solutions and pathways for social inclusion.

At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that food support is both a reference and a meeting point for the beneficiaries. It is not only about the material help per se, it is also concerning FEAD effect in dispelling worries. The time gained in not looking for food can be spent in looking for jobs, or in helping the children with their homework. In the words of the PO manager, the human value deriving from FEAD is "priceless".

3.5.1.2 How well does it respond to their needs?

As mentioned across the fiche, FEAD intervention is perceived as an immediate relief mechanism.

3.5.1.3 Are there any gaps?

Specific issues have to be tackled, such as responding to the needs of people barely missing eligibility criteria (or that become poorer than the beneficiaries because of re-ranking effects).

4 Conclusions

The FEAD in Italy can be considered as overall effective, coherent, efficient and relevant to the needs of the most deprived. There is also strong consensus that it has brought significant EU added value, as it will be recalled in the sections below. Yet, there are some areas where further efforts may be spurred.

In the light of the issues described, some suggestions for the way forward have been formulated, notably:

- **To stress the role of the FEAD as a means for social inclusion**, given that the capillarity of the FEAD delivery system makes it best positioned to intercept social exclusion and extreme poverty. It is also worth reminding, in this field, that the importance of food support as a social inclusion means per se, i.e. as a source of energy and because it frees resources and gives people a perspective, should not be underestimated.
- **A need for further information and training** emerges especially on the procedures and requirements of the FEAD in order to smooth out some administrative hurdles, but also, e.g., on accompanying measures.
- **To enhance communication**, to address the issues described above but also to boost the engagement especially of the TPOs so that they can better contribute to target those that are most in need with both food aid as well as support towards further inclusion. Further communication on FEAD results may also help improve the way the EU is perceived at the local level.
- **To favour the enhancement of partnerships at the local level**, also with a view to better face the volatility of food provision and to increase the variety of the offer
- **To sensitise bigger firms to the issue of food donation**, which remains a key complementary source for the provision of food aid to the most deprived and **explore the possibility to use the FEAD to finance the collection, storage and distribution of food donation**.
- **To increase accessibility to the FEAD network**, including by discussing the possibility to plan study visits, which, contrarily to the FEAD network meetings that remain rather high level, may provide the opportunity to discuss also the technicalities of the best practices under observation.
- **To improve synergies and strategic vision among funds and services aimed at social integration**, to make sure that clear avenues are identified to accompany people towards further social inclusion.

4.1 Effectiveness

While it cannot be measured towards the ultimate aim of lifting people out of poverty due to the magnitude and prerogatives of the programme, the effectiveness of the FEAD is confirmed by the analysis of both monitoring data and the results of the field work. A number of intermediate results, also at the system level, have been emphasised, in particular:

- It is a cornerstone of food aid and ensures stable, vital support to the broad network of organisations engaged in poverty prevention activities
- It reaches a broad audience, including those who would otherwise risk remaining invisible to standard social inclusion services/initiatives, and, therefore, it is a means to intercept extreme poverty and an entry point for social inclusion
- It enhances partnerships at the governance and local level
- It enlarges the knowledge base on the most deprived and their needs

- It contributes to reducing food waste, although mostly indirectly through ensuring continuing support to Partner Organisations

However, further efforts are desirable especially about accompanying measures – and this is indeed one direction that is being explored by the MA.

The training of Partner Organisations would be also important to that end.

Furthermore, more flexibility of the programme would be required in order to foster and simplify the start-up procedures for more innovative interventions such as Measure 4 (and 2).

4.2 Coherence

Although the overall framework of social inclusion and social integration has been weakened as the crisis struck Europe, the new forms (SIA – support for active inclusion and REI – inclusion income) are deemed as complementary to the FEAD. The REI itself is a fully integrated measure between national and European resources as it is funded through national (for the income support component) and ESF resources, under the National Operational Programme Social Inclusion (covering the socio-economic integration component). In addition to the Social Inclusion Programme the FEAD OP is also clearly complementary with the National ESF OP for Education and the one for Metropolitan cities, the latter foreseeing urban regeneration measures. Another important complementarity of FEAD concerns the support to a “housing first” approach to tackling homelessness, which is particularly important in Italy where the right to housing is not an enforceable right. Housing first measures are co-funded by FEAD as well as ESF funds.

Yet, the complementarity with the ESF may be further enhanced as regards, e.g., the training of personnel of POs for accompanying measures and integrated pathways to social inclusion. The idea of a single Managing Authority to that end is viewed rather positively and so is even the merging of the FEAD into the ESF, provided that the specificities of the FEAD in terms of eligibility criteria, objectives and monitoring requirements are preserved.

4.3 Efficiency

Large agreement was found on the recognition that the FEAD is a **very highly cost-effective fund**.

In particular, it has been mentioned that the calls for procurement issued by the IB resulted in a surprisingly high quantity of foodstuff, which made it possible to compensate for the reduction in overall resources as compared to the PEAD.

It is also worth mentioning that according to rough estimates by the MA, the FTE personnel involved in the management of the FEAD within the Ministry of Labour and social inclusion used to be as low as 1-2 FTE and has now just increased to around 3-4 in order to speed up with the implementation and untap the potential of measures 2, 3 and 4.

Yet, a certain complexity and bureaucracy has been referred to by the stakeholders, which may hamper the achievement of better results. However, this is sometimes due to the fact that the personnel of the POs is largely made up by volunteers with little to no experience with administrative issues. A too high attention on small factual mistakes, e.g., in certifying and monitoring, is perceived as burdensome. Furthermore, the Italian Code of Public procurement may cause volatility in food provision, due to lengthy procedures for food procurement.

4.4 EU added value

There are three main areas where the European Added Value of the FEAD has emerged more clearly, notably:

- **A guarantee of continuing support:** the 7-year programming, as well as the fact that rules and allocations are set out at the EU level through structured processes and obligations, work as a safeguard for public action in such a relevant field as poverty prevention. According to the participants, it would not be unlikely for funds to be steered away from these measures in times of financial constraints, were it not for the EU level obligations.
- **Better monitoring**, which results in a better knowledge of the situation, and more standardisation of data
- **Better targeting** of end-beneficiaries, which means effectiveness and efficiency of the support.

4.5 Relevance

The FEAD is deemed as overall extremely relevant, as it seeks to answer to a need that is most compelling, and it does so through a fully relevant means (food aid). However, some key issues have been identified, as per the list below:

- An ever-expanding audience of people in extreme poverty: an increasing need from end-beneficiaries is registered, especially as a result of migration influxes and enduring high unemployment rates in specific areas. This means that POs struggle to cope with the demand.
- Variety of products and social value of food: as the list of food products focuses on basic products, with a view to maximising efficiency and providing a sound basis of food support, there is an enduring need of complementing FEAD support. This choice seems to be deliberate; however, there is a widespread need of further food support. To consider also the social value of certain typologies of food products, e.g. for some children the distribution of a famous drink has also been a way for them to be better integrated in their classes at school.
- A need for further information and training emerges especially on the procedures and requirements of the FEAD in order to smooth out some administrative hurdles, but also, e.g. on accompanying measures.

5 Good practices

During the interviews conducted, MA and PO shared a number of good practices that it may make sense to disseminate across FEAD stakeholders at EU level. Below is a list of the most relevant:

- *Bring the food app.* Since 2012, a couple of researchers from the Information and Communication Technology Centre of the Bruno Kessler foundation worked on the development of this app, liaising with the *Banco Alimentare* branch of Trento province. Currently the app is working in Trento and in Milano provinces. Thanks to this app, private citizens and companies can offer online food that will be later collected by charitable organisations so to complement the resources stored thanks to normal FEAD actions. Local FEAD POs will then distribute it using the FEAD network and according to the emergency situations in their territory they are more aware of. In one year the app will help by collecting ca. 300 tons of food.
- *The segmentation of the territory.* *Banco Alimentare* mentioned us in the interview that progress in the way of arranging the help towards the most deprived came through the segmentation of their help thanks to a network of small deposits on the territory. These helped by collecting small quantities of food at micro-level, which can later complement FEAD help according to the needs of the people and families liaising with the small centres. Having a widespread network allows to improve the efficiency of food collection, minimising food waste and spreading a culture that tackles waste and optimises resources
- *Relying on PEAD network.* This allowed us to save time in the initial phase of the project, and to have a ready-to-use, trained, and widespread network of PO on the territory. In the words of Patrizia De Felici, of the Italian MA, "The Italian food distribution network is interesting because it is based upon a planning and delivery mechanism which involves a broad range of stakeholders. This ensures an effective implementation of FEAD food assistance and above all a better identification and quantification of needs".³⁶
- *Launch of a modular training classes by OPC.* The Italian Red Cross (one of the seven main OPC) launched three different types of training for the upskilling of their volunteers. These are the general course for voluntary social workers, the course on supporting homeless people, and a course on addictions. The first is a 26 hour training courses for volunteers working for FEAD. The classes help volunteers in providing accompanying measures, on top of cultivating their abilities to quickly assess the final beneficiaries' needs. Classes also include social classes planning, active listening, and a primer on welfare state and social work. The second one (on supporting homeless people), gives 40 hours training (20 theoretical and 20 practical) on how to assess the needs of the homeless, starting with psychosocial analysis. The course on addiction is 32 hours long, covering not only drug abuse, but also gambling and social addiction. The primary focus being on stigma and discrimination reduction. In November 2016, 900 volunteers received training which led to qualifications.

³⁶ European Commission, Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived – Reducing Deprivation, supporting Inclusion: FEAD case studies, 2016.

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<http://www.lavoce.info/archives/46502/per-il-reddito-di-inclusione-arriva-un-buon-memorandum/>

6.3 Interviewees

Managing Authority: Cristina Berliri, Carla Antonucci and Patrizia De Felici

Partner Organisation, Banco Alimentare: Vittore Mescia

Participants to the Focus Group with representatives of MA, IB, and POs (national, regional and local levels)

7 Annexes

Table 1 Input, Output and Result Indicators 2016 (AIR 2017)

MS	Type of indicator	Type of OP		Indicator	Meas unit	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL
IT	Input	OP I	1	(1) Total amount of eligible public expenditure approved in the documents setting out the conditions for support of operations.	EUR	40,000,000	71,500,000	40,425,000	151,925,000
IT	Input	OP I	2	(2) Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations.	EUR	0	52,023,915	55,621,437	107,645,353
IT	Input	OP I	2a	(2) (a) total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to provision of food support;	EUR	0	52,023,915	55,621,437	107,645,353
IT	Input	OP I	2b	(2) (b) total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to provision of basic material assistance.	EUR	0	0	0	0
IT	Input	OP I	3	(3) Total amount of eligible public expenditure declared to the Commission.	EUR	0.00	0.00	33,011,947	33,011,947
IT	Output	OP I	4	(4) Quantity of fruits and vegetables.	tonnes	0	12,197	455	12,652
IT	Output	OP I	5	(5) Quantity of meat, eggs, fish, seafood.	tonnes	0	1,306	0	1,306
IT	Output	OP I	6	(6) Quantity of flour, bread, potatoes, rice and other starchy products.	tonnes	0	20,634	14,043	34,677
IT	Output	OP I	7	(7) Quantity of sugar.	tonnes	0	3,777	0	3,777
IT	Output	OP I	8	(8) Quantity of milk products.	tonnes	0	33,823	19,264	53,087
IT	Output	OP I	9	(9) Quantity of fats, oil.	tonnes	0	4,641	0	4,641
IT	Output	OP I	10	(10) Quantity of convenience food, other foodstuff (not falling under the aforementioned categories).	tonnes	0	11,140	0	11,140
IT	Output	OP I	11	(11) Total quantity of food support distributed.	tonnes	0	87,517	33,762	121,280
IT	Output	OP I	11a	(11) (a) share of food for which only transport, distribution and storage were paid for by the OP (in %);	%	0	0	0	0
IT	Output	OP I	11b	(11) (b) proportion of FEAD co-financed food products in the total volume of food distributed by the partner organisations	%	0	62.70	62.74	n.a.
IT	Output	OP I	12	(12) Total number of meals distributed partly or totally financed by the OP (3).	number	0	16,981,240	17,809,135	34,790,375

FEAD Country Fiche Italy

MS	Type of indicator	Type of OP		Indicator	Meas unit	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL
IT	Output	OP I	13	(13) Total number of food packages distributed partly or totally financed by the OP (4).	number	0	51,876,352	51,085,610	102,961,962
IT	Result	OP I	14	(14) Total number of persons receiving food support.	number	0	2,809,131	2,778,207	5,587,338
IT	Result	OP I	14a	(14) (a) number of children aged 15 years or below;	number	0	856,879	890,560	1,747,439
IT	Result	OP I	14b	(14) (b) number of persons aged 65 years or above;	number	0	309,205	248,892	558,097
IT	Result	OP I	14c	(14) (c) number of women;	number	0	1,334,337	1,320,000	2,654,337
IT	Result	OP I	14d	(14) (d) number of migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma);	number	0	1,348,383	1,055,718	2,404,101
IT	Result	OP I	14e	(14) (e) number of persons with disabilities;	number	0	50,564	50,077	100,641
IT	Result	OP I	14f	(14) (f) number of homeless.	number	0	112,365	111,000	223,365
IT	Result	OP I	15	(15) Total monetary value of goods distributed.	EUR	0	0	0	0
IT	Output	OP I	15a	(15) (a) total monetary value of goods for children;	EUR	0	0	0	0
IT	Output	OP I	15b	(15) (b) total monetary value of goods for the homeless;	EUR	0	0	0	0
IT	Output	OP I	15c	(15) (c) total monetary value of goods for other target groups.	EUR	0	0	0	0
IT	Result	OP I	19a	Number of children aged 15 years or below	number	0	0	0	0
IT	Result	OP I	19b	Number of persons aged 65 years or above	number	0	0	0	0
IT	Result	OP I	19c	Number of women	number	0	0	0	0
IT	Result	OP I	19d	Number of migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities	number	0	0	0	0
IT	Result	OP I	19e	Number of persons with disabilities	number	0	0	0	0
IT	Result	OP I	19f	Number of homeless	number	0	0	0	0

Source: SFC2014Table 2 FEAD financing plan 2014 – 2020

Table 3 FEAD financing plan 2014 – 2020

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
EU funding (FEAD)	90,202,680	92,006,734	93,846,868	95,723,806	97,638,282	99,591,047	101,582,868	670,592,285
National co-financing	15,918,120	16,236,482	16,561,212	16,892,436	17,230,285	17,574,891	17,926,389	118,339,815
Total public funding	106,120,800	108,243,216	110,408,080	112,616,242	114,868,567	117,165,938	119,509,257	788,932,100

Source: SFC2014

Table 4 FEAD type of material assistance 2014 – 2020

Spending by area	Public funding (€)
Type of material assistance (food support)	557,374,816
Type of material assistance (basic material assistance)	200,000,000
Technical assistance	31,557,284.00
Total	788,932,100
• accompanying measures	3,000,000

Source: SFC2014

Table 5 FEAD expenditure at the end of 2016

M S	Type of indicator	Type of OP	Indicator	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL
I T	Input	OP I	1 (1) Total amount of eligible public expenditure approved in the documents setting out the conditions for support of operations.	€ 40,000,000	€ 71,500,000	€ 40,425,000	€ 151,925,000
I T	Input	OP I	2 (2) Total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations.	€ 0	€ 52,023,915	€ 55,621,437	€ 107,645,353
I T	Input	OP I a	2 (2) (a) total amount of eligible public expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and paid in implementing operations relating to provision of food support;	0	€ 52,023,915	€ 55,621,437	€ 107,645,353

Source: SFC2014

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