Eurest Portugal, a local subsidiary of the multinational food and support services conglomerate Compass Group, has been shortlisted for the DuPont Safety and Sustainability Awards on the basis of the company’s achievements in stakeholder engagement for sustainability.

Founded in 1974, Eurest Portugal was acquired in 1995 by the world-leading London-based group overseeing operations in more than 50 countries. Domestically, the company is responsible for providing more than 250,000 meals per day, prepared and served by a workforce of approximately 5,000 employees. Eurest Portugal is the only actor in the local hospitality sector diversified across contract catering, cafeterias and canteens, vending and specialised on-site catering activities, recording a turnover in 2011 of €160 million.

The production of waste is an unavoidable by-product of Eurest Portugal’s core operations. Recognising this sustainability challenge, the company developed the innovative ‘Consumer Awareness, Respects the Environment’ (CARE) campaign, aiming to raise awareness about the importance of reducing everyday food waste while encouraging healthy eating practices. If at the end of a self-service meal a customer’s tray has no leftovers, they receive a card representing 10 grams of non-perishable food. At the end of the campaign, the cards are tallied and the amount converted into food products to be donated to a charity chosen by the client in question.

The impact of Eurest Portugal’s CARE campaign has been significant. Following implementation of the initiative across 41 catering units in 2011, the company observed a marked reduction in the production of organic waste of approximately 30 percent. From an economic perspective, this is expected to equate to over €1.2 million in direct savings, while the campaign has resulted in the donation of over three tons of food items to date to relevant charity organisations.