Consumer food waste – Evidence and action

Andrew Parry
WRAP
What I’ll cover

- Why focus on consumer food waste?
- Some insights from WRAPs research
- Learnings from taking action
- Opportunities going forward
Helping you maximise resource efficiency

Find out how to achieve economic benefits and transition to a circular economy

More about us >

Our four strategic areas

Food waste reduction

Resource efficient built environment

Sustainable products

Waste as a resource
Action since 2007 to reduce food waste
Why focus on consumer food waste?

- Household food waste = ca 50% of the total arising in the UK:
  - 4.2 Mt avoidable; £700 per average family
  - 13 billion “5 a day” portions; 17 Mt CO$_2$e
  - Associated with 4% of the total UK water footprint

- 1/3 of out of home food waste is from customers plates (0.3 Mt)

- Ca 4 Mt more food needed by 2025

- Unintended consequences of moves to a healthy, sustainable diet

- Only ca 15% of household food waste is collected/used in a way that minimises impact
Importance of robust and relevant evidence

Download our research at: www.wrap.org.uk/waste-resource-listing
Avoidable food waste: amounts and reasons

- Not used in time (45%)
- Cooked, prepared, served too much (33%)
- Personal preference (15%)
- Accidents (4%)
- Other (3%)

Fresh vegetables and salads
Drink
Bakery
Meals (home-made and pre-prepared)
Dairy and eggs
Fresh fruit
Meat and fish
Processed vegetables and salad
Cake and desserts
Staple foods
Condiments, sauces, herbs & spices
**Intermediate Outcome:** Quantity of household food waste

**Final Outcomes:** Environmental and economic impact of food waste

**Influences:** Cultural, Governmental, Demographic, Technological, Economic, Industrial

**Retail Supply Chain**
- **Product**
  - Shelf life / formulation
  - Production methods & location
- **Packaging**
  - Functionality
  - Labelling

**Retail**
- Portioning & storage ‘devices’
- Marketing
- Price promotions
- Communications campaign

**The Individual**
- **Attitudes**
- Values
- Motivation
- Habit

- Knowledge & skills related to behaviour
- Awareness of the issue
- Facilities & resources

**Food-waste specific behaviours**

**Planning** – **Buying** – **Storage** – **Preparation** – **Use**
The broader context

Food Provenance

Packaging

Food Waste Collections

Food Safety

Food Inflation

Climate Change

Food / food waste

Food Security

Health

Water Scarcity

Food / food waste

change 4 life

Eat well. Move more. Live longer.
Factors influencing choice in store

Consumer Attitudes to Food Waste and Food Packaging (WRAP, 2013)
What food issues concern consumers?

- The price of food: 64%
- How long fresh food lasts for: 48%
- The amount of fat in food: 41%
- The amount of salt in food: 34%
- Food waste: 33%
- The use of additives (such as preservatives and colouring): 30%
- The welfare of animals: 29%
- The amount of sugar in food: 28%
- Food poisoning such as Salmonella and E.Coli: 26%
- Genetically Modified (GM) foods: 20%
- Food labelling (e.g. ‘use by’ date; storage instructions): 20%
- The use of pesticides to grow food: 18%
- The way that food products are packaged: 16%
- Food miles (e.g. the distance food travels to get to the shop): 15%
- None of these: 2%

% of people mentioning (average number of mentions = 4.25)

Consumer Attitudes to Food Waste and Food Packaging (WRAP, 2013)
Influences on food waste levels

Socio-demographic variables (e.g. age, household size)

Indirect influences*
- Time availability
- Cooking and food-management skills
- A desire to eat healthily
- Personal preferences ('fussy eating')

Direct influences
- Behaviours that influence food waste: planning, buying, storing, preparing, using leftovers and their interactions
- Amount and types of food and drink brought into the home

*There are likely to be other indirect influences, which have not been measured in this report
Household size & food waste

Average food waste (kg per household per week)

- Unavoidable
- Possibly avoidable
- Avoidable

Average food waste (kg per person per week)

- Unavoidable
- Possibly avoidable
- Avoidable

Bar charts showing food waste for different number of occupants and overall.
Age & food waste

Avoidable food and drink waste (g / household / week)

Avoidable waste (g / person / week)

- Fresh Vegetables & Salad
- Bakery
- Meat and Fish
- Fresh Fruit
- Homemade and pre-prepared meals
- Other

Avoidable food and drink waste (g / person / wk)
Healthy eating & freshness

- Those who cited ‘a need to buy a range of foods to ensure they can provide healthy food for their family’ as a barrier to reducing waste generated significantly more avoidable food waste.

- Similarly, those that stated ‘I don’t want to compromise on the choice of fresh foods I have in my fridge’ as a barrier also generated more avoidable food waste than those who did not.

- There was however some evidence to suggest that a healthy diet (self-reported) was associated with lower levels of avoidable food waste. This may not necessarily be a result of their diet, but other factors that may correlate with healthy eating, such as cooking skills, simply eating less food or thinking more about food.
Presence of children

- Overall households with children don’t waste more than others – BUT this means children are wasting as much as adults
- More likely to plan meals, and use the freezer
- Less likely to use leftovers, and more likely to throw food away due to it going past the date

- Evidence of cooking more than is required, and having more ‘meal’ waste than households without children

- Waste LESS fresh fruit & veg, but also buy less......
Understanding what motivates people

Motivations to reduce food waste*:

- Saving money (78%)
- Managing an efficient home (70%)
- Feeling of guilt (57%)
- Reducing impact on the environment (48%)
- Food shortages elsewhere (39%)

*WRAP consumer food waste tracker Spring 2013
Tackling food waste - an integrated strategy

- National / large scale communication
- Community engagement & support
  - Awareness raising & enabling behaviour change
- Changes to products, packaging & labelling
  - Making it easier for consumers to buy the right amount, and use what is bought
Consumer engagement - evolving strategy

UK families are throwing away £50 of food every month.

Who ate all the pies?

Not us.

We throw away over half a million every single day.

Vegetable Lovers: think green

Food Lovers: save money

Don't know what to do with your leftovers?

Quarter of the food binned each year has not even been opened

Daily Mail
Examples of action - products
Joined up approach

- Importance of integrating relevant (to consumers!) messages and solutions
  - Food waste and food safety
  - Food waste prevention and collections
  - Food and packaging
  - Food waste and healthy eating
LOVE FOOD hate waste

Fresher for Longer

The Grocer
Keep food in original packaging, shoppers urged

BRITS could save hundreds of pounds a year by storing food in the packaging it is bought in, experts claim. Fruit and veg will last for another two weeks if kept in packets, say Government-funded waste watchdogs. It claims an average

Until lunch do us part
Fresher for longer

At Tesco we’re committed to helping you reduce food waste.
Keep your carrots fresh by keeping them in the fridge in their packaging.
Date labelling

Consumer insight: date labels and storage guidance

Determining consumer understanding and use of date labels and storage guidance in order to reduce household food waste.

Helping Consumers Reduce Food Waste – A Retail Survey 2011

www.defra.gov.uk

Guidance on the application of date labels to food

September 2011

Date Labels

Use By:

Food can be eaten or thrown away up to the end of this date. Follow storage instructions on package. Take by dates are usually found on perishable products such as meat, soft cheeses and dairy products.

Best Before:

These dates refer to quality rather than food safety. Foods with a best before date should be used up before the best before date. They may no longer be at their best. One exception is milk – never eat unopened after the best before date. Best before dates are usually found on items with long shelf lives such as cereal, noodles or dried foods, and preserved fruit and vegetables.

Display until and Sell By:

You can ignore these dates as they are for shop staff not for shoppers.

For handy tips and recipes to help reduce food waste, visit food wastedateaware.com
Links between food waste and broader objectives

- Tackling food waste is not really about tackling waste, but influencing attitudes to food, and related behaviours, skills etc
- Obvious synergies with other approaches to influence diet and health
Living a healthy lifestyle – looking at diet and physical and mental health - FREE

A two hour taster course for anyone wanting to know more about nutrition and health issues.

The course will look at:
- Nutrients in food and their role in the body
- A model of how to get the right balance for good health
- The relationship between diet and physical and mental health
- The importance of nutritional information available on food products
- Preparation of healthy recipes.

What other courses are on offer?

These courses are organised by Derbyshire County Council’s Adult Community Education Service to support the Heart of Derbyshire campaign.

There are hundreds of daytime and evening courses throughout the county on a wide range of subjects including arts and crafts, computing, health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy and opportunities for families to learn together.

Course costs are very reasonable and you can buy gift vouchers to give friends and family the gift of learning. To find out more please visit www.derbyshire.gov.uk/adulteducation
Family A

- Meal planning / shopping planning to reduce food thrown away as it’s not used in time
- Switching to soft rolls to avoid crusts being thrown away (previously refused by children)
- Portioning of food on the plate to avoid leftovers

Family B

- Reduce amount of toast made for breakfast (previously cooked far too much)
- Portioning
- Not eating biscuits before meals, so they have room for their meal

Family C

- Freezing crusts and then using as breadcrumbs later
- ‘Take control of the fridge’ to avoid throwing away chilled foods
- Bought a juicer to use up bruised fruit
- Letting children self-serve their meals / listening to children before packing their lunch box
Changes in consumer food waste

Food waste

Are you binning good food?
Food waste from our homes has reduced, but there’s still a long way to go

2007
5.3m tonnes

2012
4.2m tonnes

From 2007 until 2012 avoidable food waste was reduced by 1.1m tonnes

The UK could halve avoidable food waste by 2025 compared to when WRAP started work on this in 2007

2025
?
Impacts of changing diets?

- Increase in more perishable foods
- Potential for unintended consequences (>1 Mt more food waste?)
Courtauld 2025

- Discussions with industry, Governments and other stakeholders about a new framework for collaborative action in the UK
  - tackling food waste across the whole life-cycle
  - taking a whole system view to address other areas of resource efficiency, including getting more value from unavoidable waste
  - Opportunity to take a more ‘holistic’ approach to food consumption

- The new framework, Courtauld 2025, would start in 2016, and run until 2025
Summary

- Tackling food waste is not really about waste, but influencing attitudes to food, and related behaviours, skills, and making changes to what we buy.
- An integrated and evidence-based approach has delivered a significant reduction over 5 years.
- Obvious synergies exist with other approaches to influence diet and health.
- Reducing food waste further is a global, regional and national priority.
- Collaborative action will be key to delivering against challenging new targets.
Thank You