

Household food waste

Drivers and interventions

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Why do people waste food?

- “We live in a throwaway society”
- The “excessive, wanton nature of contemporary consumerism” is seen as evidence (Evans, 2012)

Or do we?



Wasting is not careless or carefree

Consumers...

- attempt to lessen anxieties about discarding food (Evans, 2012)
- describe themselves as worrying and feeling guilty about wasting (Quested et al., 2013; Abeliotis et al., 2014)
- favor options with less waste (Bolton & Alba, 2012)
- even forgo free food or drink in 'any size same price' promotions (Moore & Taylor, 2010)



Research in REFRESH

- Focus groups,
 - 4 countries (NL, Hungary, Germany, Spain)
 - 6 per country, $n = 147$
- Survey in the same 4 countries
 - 3354 households
 - REFRESH measure of HH food waste



Wasting is not carefree for consumers

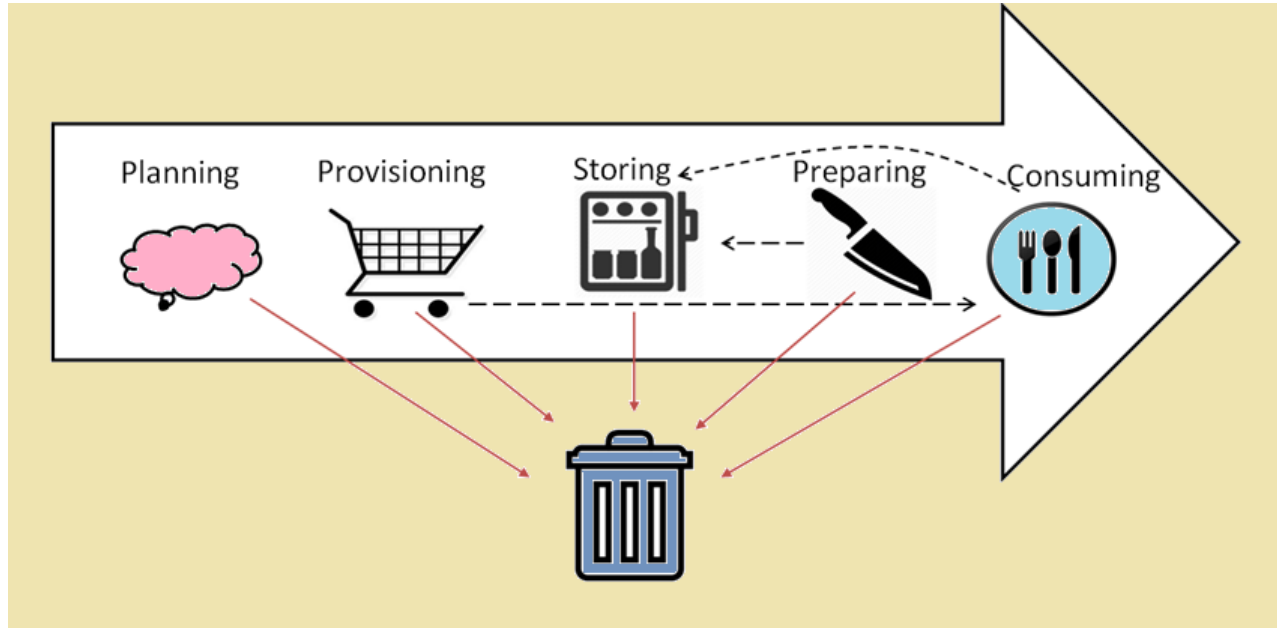
"Every time I throw something in the trash, I feel like I'm throwing away a 5 EURO note."



"Doesn't hurt my pocket. It hurts my soul."

*"Wasting is not acceptable to me at all.
But if it happens from time to time
then it happens."*

Waste as collateral damage





Waste prevention is not the main goal

Thus...

- Target household practices surrounding food
- Integrated with other goals



Social marketing approach

Motivation



Ability



Opportunity



Household practices

Household food waste



What affects food waste?

Motivation



- Notion that others waste a lot
- But not: the awareness of consequences



Thus... set the right norm!



**EVERY AMERICAN WASTES
290 POUNDS OF FOOD A YEAR**

COOK IT, STORE IT, SHARE IT.
JUST DON'T WASTE IT.

SAVETHEFOOD.COM



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Ad Council **NRDC**





Thus...

Solely increasing awareness about the negative impacts of food waste is unlikely to change consumer behaviour

Needs to be combined with other interventions!

What affects food waste?

Ability



Perceived skills to:

- Plan accurately
- Cook creatively
- Prolong the shelf-life of products



What affects food waste?

Opportunity



Perception of:

- Unforeseen events
- Less supply in store (quality and quantity)

Interventions:
how to decrease household food waste?





Apps...

- 🥦 Many apps with limited uptake
- 🥦 Planning and recipe apps most popular
- 🥦 Consumers are open and interested
- 🥦 But do not perceive a clear need
- 🥦 Investment (in time, energy, stamina) seen as higher than benefits



On-pack information...

- More than date labels
- Storage information / freezer guidance
- Storage advice useful when current behaviour is suboptimal



Combining motivation and ability/opportunity



**83% van de mensen kookt
nauwkeurig de juiste hoeveelheid
pasta, rijst en couscous. Dit voorkomt
voedselverspilling!**

Amount of wasted pasta + rice + couscous

- Significantly reduced when the combined intervention (measuring tool + social norm) was used
- No significant effect (compared to control) in the conditions with only measuring tool or only social norm

Moreover:

Less waste in post-measure than in pre-measure



Conclusion

Household food waste is a complex issue

An intervention needs to address
multiple aspects simultaneously
to be successful

Thanks!

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 @MCB_WU

REFRESH results: www.eu-refresh.org

New project FETE: <https://www.wur.nl/en/show/Food-Waste-Transition-from-Excess-to-Enough.htm>

