

Reducing Household Food Waste in the UK

Food is a valuable resource and yet UK households throw away 7.0 million tonnes every year, a fifth of what we buy ends up as waste, and around 60% of that (4.2 million tonnes) could have been eaten, including around 13 billion '5 a day' portions.

Preventing household food waste could save the average family with children £700 a year and deliver significant environmental benefits in terms of landfill avoidance and the mitigation of climate change. Consumers have an inherent dislike of wasting good food and are looking for ways to waste less and realise these financial savings.

Food is wasted for a number of inter-related reasons, which vary depending on household characteristics. These include a lack of planning, buying more than is needed, not storing food to keep it at its best, confusion around date labelling and what food can be frozen, incorrect portioning and a lack of confidence around leftovers.

Influencing change

Over the last six years WRAP has built up a comprehensive [evidence base](#) which has raised awareness of the issue. We have developed a strong case for change and given focus to the areas where consumers need the most help, where business and local authorities can benefit, and where the biggest impacts can be made.



Influencing decisions around food product design, production processes, purchase and use is challenging. WRAP has worked with a

wide range of partners to develop a credible, integrated and consistent approach. Increasingly we are supporting people and organisations to develop their own action plans. We are providing them with a suite of tools and guidelines making it easier for those consumers who want to change to buy the right amounts of food and make the most of what they buy.

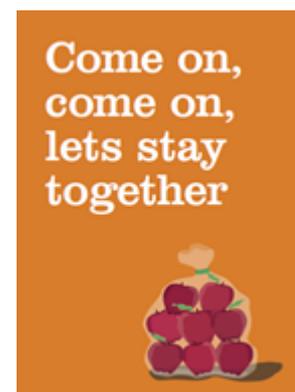


Taking action

Retailers and brands have spent at least **£15m** helping their customers reduce food waste.

For example:

- A cross industry initiative '[Fresher for Longer](#)' working with Marks and Spencer. Articles and interviews reached 5.5M consumers at launch.



- Tesco announcing a new action plan in 2013 working with their producers and suppliers to reduce food waste and helping their customers to find ways to save money.

Food Waste Hotspots

We have established the waste profiles for 25 of the most frequently purchased products so that we can identify those areas where we should prioritise our activity. This infographic shows some of the key insights from five of the products we analysed and what we are doing to tackle waste across the supply web.



- Sainsbury's 'Make your food go further' campaign in 2013.
- Unilever, responsible for brands such as Knorr and Hellman's, helping their customers waste less.
- The Co-operative showing LFHW messages and advice on till screens reaching 20 million customers a week.



- The introduction of better labelling (e.g. removing 'display until' from products).
- Pack sizes that are better suited to today's households (e.g. Kingsmill's 'Little Big Loaf').
- Morrison's 'Great Taste Less Waste' campaign.

These actions help to meet the targets of The [Courtauld Commitment](#) – a UK grocery retail sector voluntary agreement, funded by UK Governments, that supports its signatories in becoming even more resource efficient.

More than **300 local authorities** in England are supporting [Love Food Hate Waste](#) (LFHW) to help local residents. This includes cookery workshops and working with community groups, housing associations and businesses.

Community groups, charities and broader civil society are also engaged. A partnership between LFHW and The Women's Institute (WI) led to the development of approaches for community-level engagement that help consumers build confidence around food and realise the benefits of wasting less. Trials led to significant savings for participants and up to 50% less waste. The WI has recently completed a Lottery funded programme to extend their work to young parents from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Individuals have also been motivated by the LFHW campaign. They have started their own activities with friends and neighbours to tackle food leftovers and design new recipes. A lady from Chelmsford, named Elif, organised a successful 'Big Lunch' for her estate and is now looking to work with her local waste prevention officer to organise a 'Toffee Apple & Pear Crumble Tea Party'. This will make use of fruit that could go to waste.

Drivers and opportunities

WRAP's work on household food waste prevention has been driven by:

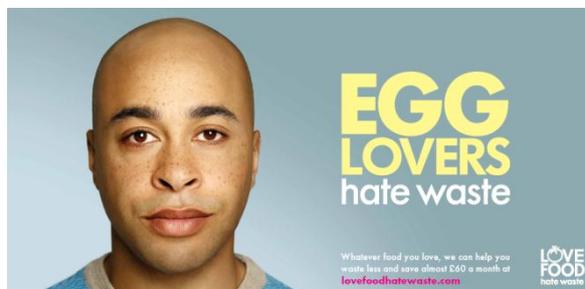
- The need to divert organic waste from landfill to meet the European Union Landfill Directive targets.
 - The UK generates around 15 million tonnes of food waste every year. Almost half of this comes from households, and around 4 million tonnes of this reaches landfill.
- The need to mitigate the effects of climate change, water scarcity and concerns around food security.
 - Avoidable food waste is associated with 17 million tonnes of CO₂e emissions, the same as 1 in 4 cars on UK roads.
- The potential to make significant savings for consumers and local authorities.
 - Consumers spend **£12.5 billion** on food that is not eaten (14% of their spend on food).
 - Local authorities spend hundreds of millions of pounds collecting and landfilling this waste.

Progress

Since 2007, millions of people have benefitted from work by WRAP and its partners, throwing away less food and saving many hundreds of pounds for their household. Key achievements are:

- Avoidable food waste has reduced by **21%**. This is a decrease of **1.1 million tonnes** which would have cost **£3.3 billion** to purchase.
- This means on average every household in the UK not having to spend **£130 a year** on food bought but thrown away, helping to mitigate the impact of rising food prices.
- Preventing **4.4 million tonnes** of carbon dioxide emissions **a year**, and saving a **billion tonnes** of water.
- **Every £ spent by WRAP on reducing household food waste has contributed towards preventing around £500 of food being wasted.** Additional spending by LFHW partners has more than matched the WRAP spending.

Local authorities will have saved around **£85 million** in avoided gate fees and landfill charges.



More still to be done

Whilst these are great achievements progress has slowed in recent years and much more still needs to be done to tackle this issue. Many of us still underestimate how much food we throw away, and the benefits of tackling that. There are a million more households in the UK now compared to 2007 meaning many more shopping trips and meals to prepare – all of which could lead to more food waste. Raising awareness of the benefits of wasting less food, and providing relevant advice is harder in tough economic times when all of our resources are stretched, and there are competing priorities.

Working together, retailers, brands, businesses, national and local governments, communities and individuals can make a real difference to the amount of food and drink wasted from our homes every day.

Further analysis is underway, of the new WRAP evidence which will be published spring 2014 and will help inform and drive our activity and our work with partners in the months ahead. We will be looking for partners to collaborate with each other and WRAP to fully implement our technical recommendations, deliver updated, targeted messaging as part of comprehensive campaigns, go further and faster to drive innovation and change to make it easier for the public to waste less food and to reach more people, more often, building on the successes to date.

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November 2013

