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## Drivers of Food Wastage and their Implications for Sustainable Policy Development

Krista L. Thyberg  
*SUNY Stony Brook*, [krista.thyberg@stonybrook.edu](mailto:krista.thyberg@stonybrook.edu)

David J. Tonjes  
*SUNY Stony Brook*, [david.tonjes@stonybrook.edu](mailto:david.tonjes@stonybrook.edu)

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1 Drivers of Food Wastage and their Implications for Sustainable Policy Development

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3 Krista L. Thyberg \*

4 David J. Tonjes

5

6 Department of Technology and Society

7 Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794-3760, USA

8

9 \* Corresponding author:

10 Krista L. Thyberg

11 Department of Technology and Society

12 Stony Brook University

13 Stony Brook, NY 11794-3760

14 [KLThyberg@gmail.com](mailto:KLThyberg@gmail.com)

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16 **Abstract**

17 There has been growing interest in establishing food waste prevention and recovery  
18 programs throughout the world. The drive to target food waste stems from increasing concerns  
19 about resource conservation, food security, food waste’s environmental and economic costs, and  
20 a general trend in the waste management industry to transition to more sustainable practices.  
21 Here the drivers of residential, institutional, and commercial food waste generation in developed  
22 countries, particularly in the U.S., are explored. The impacts of food system modernization on  
23 food waste generation are examined, particularly impacts related to food system  
24 industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and economic growth. Socio-demographic,  
25 cultural, political, and economic drivers of food wastage are described with emphasis on how  
26 food waste perspectives may vary globally. Specific behaviors and attitudes which result from  
27 many of these waste drivers are then discussed. The examination of the range of food wastage  
28 drivers are used to provide insight into the best policy approaches to sustainably manage food  
29 waste. Food waste prevention policies are placed in context of the waste generating behaviors  
30 and attitudes that they address. A review of important background information on food waste is  
31 also provided, including definitions of key terms, food waste history, quantities of food waste  
32 generated, and the importance of food waste prevention for sustainability, as this information is  
33 all critical for effective policy development.

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35 **Keywords:** food waste, waste management, waste prevention, sustainability, behavior, policy

36 **1. Introduction**

37 In the U.S., food waste makes up nearly 15 percent of the disposed municipal waste  
38 stream and Americans dispose over 0.6 pounds of food waste per person per day. The amount of  
39 food waste disposed has been increasing over time (Thyberg et al. 2015). Globally, it has been  
40 estimated that one third of the edible parts of food produced for human consumption is lost or  
41 wasted (Gustavsson et al. 2011). Wasted food is a considerable component of the world’s food  
42 system challenges. The global population is quickly growing, urbanizing, and becoming  
43 wealthier, leading to a diversification of dietary patterns and an increase in demand for land,

44 resources, and greenhouse gas intensive foods, such as meat and dairy. It is estimated that  
45 continuing population and consumption growth worldwide will lead to an increase in the global  
46 demand for food for at least 40 more years, leading to intensified use of natural resources,  
47 especially land, water, and energy (Godfray et al. 2010). These difficulties are exacerbated by  
48 the world's changing environmental conditions which cause food production to be unpredictable  
49 and increasingly difficult globally (Garnett 2014).

50 It is becoming clear that the many negative environmental effects of food systems must  
51 be minimized to ensure enough food is available to feed the world's growing population in a  
52 sustainable way (Tilman et al. 2001). Shifting toward more sustainable food systems is both  
53 essential and urgent, and actions are needed throughout food systems on moderating demand,  
54 producing more food, improving governance, and reducing waste (Godfray and Garnett 2014).  
55 By wasting edible food, all of the resources spent growing, producing, processing, and  
56 transporting that food are also wasted, resulting in potentially needless environmental impact  
57 (Gustavsson et al. 2011). Reduced food waste and proper waste management can also save  
58 economic resources, contribute to food security, and minimize negative impacts of food waste on  
59 waste management systems.

60 Interest in food waste prevention and recovery has grown rapidly in the U.S. and abroad,  
61 as reflected in federal and state policies (Pearson et al. 2013, Platt et al. 2014). A recent survey  
62 indicated that awareness of food waste has begun to grow among U.S. consumers (Neff et al.  
63 2015). However, currently very little food waste is recovered (USEPA 2014) and prevention  
64 initiatives are limited. Prevention programs aim to reduce the amount of food waste generated  
65 and recovery programs typically aim to divert food waste from disposal (landfilling or  
66 incineration) and treat it with biological treatment (composting or anaerobic digestion [AD]) to  
67 capture nutrients and/or energy. Food waste prevention has the highest economic, social, and  
68 environmental benefit relative to other waste management approaches. The environmental  
69 benefits related to prevention are largely explained by avoided food production (Schott and  
70 Canovas 2015). Prevention also enables economic and social priorities to be achieved (e.g.,  
71 money saved by not purchasing food that is disposed, reallocated excess food to charity).

72 Effective policies for food waste prevention should address the behaviors and  
73 motivations of food waste generation. Some past work has focused on identifying behavioral  
74 causes of food waste using surveys and interviews (e.g., Graham-Rowe et al. 2015, Jorissen et al.  
75 2015, Neff et al. 2015, Parizeau et al. 2015). Here the drivers of these behaviors are first  
76 explored to provide a broad picture of food waste generation. The impacts of food system  
77 modernization on food waste generation are examined, particularly impacts related to food  
78 system industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and economic growth. Socio-demographic,  
79 cultural, political, and economic drivers of food wastage are reviewed with emphasis on how  
80 food waste perspectives may vary globally. Next, specific behaviors which result from many of  
81 these waste drivers are discussed. This knowledge of food wastage drivers and behaviors are  
82 then used to provide insight into the best policy approaches to sustainably manage food waste.  
83 Food waste prevention policies are placed in context of the waste generating behaviors and  
84 attitudes that they address. This research can be used to guide the development and  
85 implementation of multi-faceted food waste prevention programs which address the three aspects  
86 of sustainability (economic, environmental, and social factors).

## 87 **2. Background: Food Waste Definitions, History, and Quantities Generated**

### 88 **2.1 Food Waste Definitions**

89 Definitions of food waste are not universally agreed upon (Lebersorger and Schneider  
 90 2011), which makes studying and quantifying food waste difficult (Buzby and Hyman 2012).  
 91 Different categorizations are generated based on what materials are included, means of  
 92 production, and management approaches (Gjerris and Gaiani 2013). Multiple terms have been  
 93 used interchangeably, such as food loss, food waste, biowaste, and kitchen waste (Schneider  
 94 2013a). Also, often the same terms are used, but with different meanings (Gjerris and Gaiani  
 95 2013). This is exacerbated when reports are translated (Schneider 2013a). Table 1 provides an  
 96 overview of previously used definitions; Table 2 provides a complete definition of both food loss  
 97 and food waste as used in this paper. Here focus is placed on food waste rather than food loss  
 98 because in the developed world, food waste is generated in higher quantities than food loss.  
 99 Therefore, the greatest potential for reduction lies with the generators of food waste (retail and  
 100 consumer sectors) rather than loss (production and processing sectors) (NRDC 2012,  
 101 Papargyropoulou et al. 2014, Parfitt et al. 2010).

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Table 1. Food Waste Definitions

| Author                                                             | Year | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kling                                                              | 1943 | Food waste is the destruction or deterioration of food or the use of crops, livestock and livestock products in ways which return relatively little human food value.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)                            | 1981 | Food waste is all food products allocated for human consumption that are instead discarded, lost, degraded, or consumed by pests at any stage of the food chain.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| FAO                                                                | 2013 | Food waste is food appropriate for human consumption that is discarded (generally at retail and consumption stages).                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| European Commission                                                | 2014 | Food waste is food (including inedible parts) lost from the food supply chain, not including food diverted to material uses such as bio-based products, animal feed, or sent for redistribution.                                                                                                                                      |
| United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)              | 2014 | Food waste is uneaten food and food preparation wastes from residences, commercial, and institutional establishments. So, food wastes from homes, grocery stores, restaurants, bars, factory lunchrooms, and company cafeterias are included. Pre-consumer food waste generated during food manufacturing and packaging are excluded. |
| United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (Buzby et al. 2014) | 2014 | Food waste is a subset of food loss and occurs when an edible item goes unconsumed. Only food that is still edible at the time of disposal is considered waste.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| World Resources Institute (WRI)                                    | 2015 | Food loss and waste refers to food, as well as associated inedible parts, removed from the food supply chain.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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Table 2. Food Waste and Loss Definitions Used in this Study

| Term      | Definition                                                                                                                        | Drivers                                                                                                       | Sectors Included                         | Examples                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Food Loss | Decrease in edible food mass throughout the part of the supply chain that specifically leads to edible food for human consumption | -Infrastructure limitations<br>-Climate and environmental factors<br>-Quality, aesthetic, or safety standards | Production, post-harvest, and processing | -Edible crops left in the field<br>-Food that spoils due to poor transportation infrastructure from factory to supermarket<br>-Food that is contaminated during food processing |

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                         |                     |                                                                                                                                              |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Food Waste | Food which was originally produced for human consumption but then was discarded or was not consumed by humans. Includes food that spoiled prior to disposal and food that was still edible when thrown away | -Decisions made by consumers and businesses<br>-Quality, aesthetic, or safety standards | Retail and consumer | -Plate waste<br>-Food that spoils due to poor storage in home or restaurant<br>-Restaurant food prepared but discarded due to lack of demand |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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## 2.2 Food Waste History

A history of food waste issues in the U.S. is given in Table 3. Examining the history of food waste provides a foundation for understanding how perceptions of food waste have evolved over time and why certain food wasting behaviors occur today.

Table 3. U.S. Food Waste History Timeline

| Period                     | Food Waste Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-Industrial (1750-1850) | -Food waste accounted for the majority of household solid waste<br>-In the U.S., these wastes were often fed to animals, usually pigs, because pigs are effective at turning food and plant wastes back into food (Ackerman 1997)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1895                       | -Atwater (1895) conducted a visual survey of residential New York waste bins and noted upper class areas showed a large portion of food purchased but thrown away; waste was less in more moderate neighborhoods                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 1902                       | -Atwater (1902) found student clubs wasted 10-14% of nutritive value of food; institutions wasted up to 25%                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Early 1900's               | -Organized waste collection became common in the U.S.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| World War I (1917-1918)    | -U.S. government encouraged pig feeding with food waste as a patriotic means to increase food production                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| World War II (1941-1945)   | -Wartime food scarcities increased attention to food waste (Kling 1943b)<br>-Rationing helped control food panics and discouraged wasting food<br>-U.S. government helped people cope with limited supplies of certain foods (USDA 1943) and encouraged consumers and handlers of food to save every salvageable bit (Kling 1943b)<br>-Williamson and Williamson (1942) noted that considerable food loss and waste was taking place; a large portion of food was wasted by the consumer during food preparation and as plate waste<br>-U.S. Food Distribution Administration (1943) estimated that overall U.S. food wastage was 20-30% of all food production<br>-Kling (1943b) estimated that 24% of produced food was lost or wasted<br>-In 1945, the FAO was established and listed food loss reductions as a priority |
| Post-World War II          | -U.S. consumer culture evolved from one of thrift (widespread during wartime), to one of abundance and waste because it was no longer patriotic to conserve food and food became less expensive (Bloom 2010)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1950s                      | -Because pigs fed garbage are particularly susceptible to diseases and food systems were becoming industrialized, regulations prohibited use of raw garbage as animal feed (Ackerman 1997)<br>-USDA began to formally study food waste, generating small, non-representative samples (Adelson et al. 1961, Adelson et al. 1963); they determined household food waste was 7-10% of total calories                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1973-1974                  | -Extensive surveys of household food waste were conducted by the University of Arizona Garbage Project (Rathje and Murphy 2001); they determined food was 9.7% of total household waste output (by weight) in 1973; in 1974, it was 8.9% (Harrison et al. 1975)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 1974                       | -First World Food Conference (Rome) identified reduction of post-harvest food losses as an element of the solution to global hunger; post-harvest losses were estimated at 15% and a decision was made to reduce this by 50% by 1985 through the Special Action Programme for the                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | Prevention of Food Losses (in 2010, Parfitt et al. noted no progress had been made toward this goal)                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1977      | -U.S. General Accounting Office issued a report to Congress titled ‘Food Waste: An Opportunity to Improve Resource Use’ urging the U.S. to examine food loss and waste                                                                                                                        |
| 1980-1981 | -Food waste was the focal point of Garbage Project research; participant surveys and food waste diaries were integrated into research; they found households wasted considerable amounts of food, but survey participants greatly underestimated the amount of waste (Rathje and Murphy 2001) |
| 1992      | -Garbage Project researchers concluded food was a significant portion of household waste (10-15% of all food bought)                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1997      | -Kantor et al. (1997) published quantitative estimates of food waste across U.S. food system and concluded 25% of food produced in the U.S. was wasted annually (96 billion pounds)                                                                                                           |
| 2010’s    | -Renewed interest in food waste; calls for waste reduction (Lundqvist et al. 2008) and better management (Lamb and Fountain 2010)<br>-Increased effort to quantify food waste disposal (see Table 4)                                                                                          |

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**2.3 Food Waste Quantification**

Quantification of the magnitude of food waste is essential for the development of effective, well-planned food waste management policies, and can be used to determine if future food waste recovery and prevention efforts considerably change the residual waste stream (Thyberg et al. 2015). Understanding the extent of food waste may provide an impetus for people to change their attitudes and potentially their behaviors toward food waste. However, definitional issues, the absence of sound quantification methods, and a general lack of imperative or political will have led to considerable data gaps regarding food waste quantities (Parfitt et al. 2010). A range of diverse methodologies have been used to quantify food waste, all of which have some drawbacks. Some approaches, such as waste characterization sorts and materials flow modeling, attempt to quantify the amount of food waste disposed in municipal solid waste (MSW) (wastes from residential, institutional, and commercial sectors). Other methods (e.g., food diaries, qualitative surveys/interviews, and food supply and nutrition data analyses) focus on overall generated food waste amounts from specific sectors (e.g., households, restaurants) or aim to link disposal amounts with behavioral actions. Some studies focus only on formal wastes and exclude wastes that escape through pathways other than the traditional waste management systems (e.g., waste that goes down the drain, food that is composted at home, food fed to animals). An Australian study estimated that informal food waste disposal represented 20 percent of Australian food waste flows (Reynolds et al. 2014), which suggests that informal disposal of food waste in the U.S. may be considerable.

Some recent efforts have been made to standardize or improve quantification methods (e.g., WRI 2015, Thyberg et al. 2015), although estimates are still varied and differ in their definitions and methodologies (WRI 2015). Table 4 presents some recent published countrywide and global estimates of food loss and waste and illustrates the diversity in scope, scale, and quantification methodologies.

Table 4. Recent Estimates of Food Loss and Waste

| Reference             | Estimate <sup>a</sup>         | Location | Method                                                | Food Loss <sup>b</sup> | Food Waste <sup>b</sup> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Pekcan 2006           | 816.4 grams/household/day     | Turkey   | FAO food supply data, household expenditures & survey |                        | √ <sup>c</sup>          |
| Lundqvist et al. 2008 | Up to 50% of total production | Global   | Food supply and loss data from Smil 2000              | √                      | √                       |

|                            |                                                                                                                           |                |                                                                     |                |                |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| WRAP 2009                  | 8.3 million tonnes/year (22% of purchases)                                                                                | U.K.           | Food diary, composition analysis, and local data                    |                | √ <sup>c</sup> |
| Hall et al. 2009           | 40% of total food supply (1,400 calories/person/day)                                                                      | U.S.           | FAO food supply data & human energy expenditure model               | √              | √              |
| DEFRA 2010                 | 15% of edible food & drink purchases (16% of edible calories)                                                             | England        | Food purchasing data and WRAP 2009 waste estimates                  |                | √ <sup>c</sup> |
| Australian Government 2010 | 4.06 million tonnes/year (2.67 million tonnes from households and 1.39 million tonnes from commercial/industrial sources) | Australia      | State and local waste data                                          | √              | √              |
| Buzby et al. 2011          | 29% of available food supply                                                                                              | U.S.           | USDA food supply data & loss factors                                |                | √ <sup>d</sup> |
| Gustavsson et al. 2011     | 33% of total food production                                                                                              | Global         | FAO food supply data & loss factors developed by the authors        | √              | √              |
| Koivupuro et al. 2012      | 23 kilograms/person/year                                                                                                  | Finland        | Food diary                                                          |                | √              |
| Kummu et al. 2012          | 25% of total food production (614 kcal/person/day)                                                                        | Global         | FAO food supply data & loss factors from Gustavsson et al. 2011     | √              | √              |
| WRAP 2013                  | 4.2 million tonnes/year                                                                                                   | U.K.           | Food diary, composition analysis, and local data                    |                | √ <sup>c</sup> |
| Beretta 2013               | 48% of total calories                                                                                                     | Switzerland    | Mass & energy flow model                                            | √              | √              |
| USEPA 2014                 | 34.69 million tons/year                                                                                                   | U.S.           | Materials flow model                                                |                | √ <sup>e</sup> |
| Oelofse and Nahman 2013    | 9.04 million tonnes/year (177 kg/person/year)                                                                             | South Africa   | FAO food supply data & loss factors from Gustavsson et al. 2011     | √              | √              |
| Buzby et al. 2014          | 31% of available food supply (133 billion pounds)                                                                         | U.S.           | USDA food supply data & loss factors                                |                | √ <sup>d</sup> |
| FUSIONS 2015               | 100 million tonnes/year                                                                                                   | European Union | National waste statistics and selected research study findings      | √              | √              |
| WasteMinz 2015             | 148 kg/household/year                                                                                                     | New Zealand    | Waste audits                                                        |                | √ <sup>e</sup> |
| Reynolds et al. 2015a      | 7.3 million tonnes/year (4.1 million tonnes from municipal sources and households and 3.2 million tonnes from industry)   | Australia      | Estimation approach using data from government and industry reports | √ <sup>f</sup> | √ <sup>f</sup> |
| Thyberg et al. 2015        | 0.615 pounds/person/day (35.5 million tons/year)                                                                          | U.S.           | Waste characterization studies                                      |                | √ <sup>g</sup> |

141 <sup>a</sup> Estimates as reported in each study. Exact definitions of food loss and waste used may differ from the definitions  
142 used here. Some of these differences are noted.

143 <sup>b</sup> Food loss and waste are defined in Table 2

144 <sup>c</sup> Only residential waste included

145 <sup>d</sup> Only retail and consumer waste included

146 <sup>e</sup> Only household food waste disposed with refuse collected curbside included

147 <sup>f</sup> Only food waste disposed in formal solid waste routes included

148 <sup>g</sup> Only food waste disposed in the MSW stream included

149 **3. The Importance of Food Waste Prevention**

150 A sound understanding of the importance of studying food waste provides a foundation  
151 for developing sustainable policies to address it. In particular, teaching people about the  
152 implications of food waste can alter their perceptions and attitudes toward it, potentially yielding  
153 behavior changes that can reduce waste. Therefore, the four primary motivations for studying  
154 food waste which address environmental, economic, and social issues are reviewed here.

155 **3.1 Environmental Impacts of Food Production, Storage, and Transportation**

156 There is growing recognition that there are substantial environmental burdens associated  
157 with the food supply system (production, packaging, distribution, and marketing). Producing  
158 food affects the environment to the detriment of humans, animals, plants, and ecosystems  
159 generally (Gjerris and Gaiani 2013). There has been a decadal shift in demand from local and  
160 seasonal foods toward imported, non-seasonal fruits and vegetables, increasing transportation  
161 and energy use. More food processing also has led to increased energy and material inputs. The  
162 increased demand for resource intensive foods, such as meats, makes the environmental impact  
163 greater.

164 Food production and distribution requires large amounts of energy and other resources  
165 (Cuellar and Webber 2010). Key environmental risk areas include water, soil, and air. Food  
166 production can contribute to water pollution and eutrophication, particularly due to the seepage  
167 of nutrients, such as manure and fertilizers, into the broader environment. Agriculture is the  
168 largest human use of water so it is a great consumer of a limited resource (Lundqvist et al. 2008).  
169 Agriculture may lead to sediment transport and deposition downstream, as well degradation of  
170 aquifers (Trautmann et al. 2015). Food supply chains can also have negative emissions to air,  
171 including greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural machines and food transport vehicles  
172 (Weber and Matthews 2008). Direct effects of food supply systems on the land include soil  
173 erosion, nutrient depletion (Nellemann et al. 2009), on and off site pollution (Trautmann et al.  
174 2015), deforestation, desertification, and biodiversity loss. A large percentage of the world's  
175 land area is in agriculture; approximately 51 percent of U.S. land is used for growing food  
176 (USDA 2015). Land use changes resulting from agriculture can result in biodiversity loss,  
177 natural ecosystem loss, and overall ecological degradation (Pretty et al. 2005).

178 By wasting edible food, all of the resources that went into growing, producing,  
179 processing, and transporting that food are also wasted, resulting in potentially needless  
180 environmental impact (Gustavsson et al. 2011). The production of this lost and wasted food  
181 globally has been estimated to account for 24 percent of total freshwater resources used in food  
182 production, 23 percent of global cropland, and 23 percent of global fertilizer use (Kummu et al.  
183 2012). In the U.S., the production of wasted food requires the expenditure of over 25 percent of  
184 the total freshwater used in the U.S., about 300 million barrels of oil (Hall et al. 2009), and  
185 represents two percent of annual energy consumption (Cuellar and Webber 2010). Venkat (2011)  
186 estimated that 112.92 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year were emitted  
187 from the production, processing, and disposal of avoidable food waste in the U.S.

188 The impact of food waste on the environment is particularly concerning because  
189 population growth and changing consumption patterns will continue worldwide, leading to  
190 higher global demand for food and amplified environmental pressures. Thus, it is critical that the  
191 impact of food systems on the environment be reduced, yet still produce enough food to feed the  
192 world (Tilman et al. 2001). One means of reducing the environmental impact of food systems on  
193 the environment is to minimize the amount of food that is produced but is discarded (Godfray et  
194 al. 2010).



195 **3.2 Economic Losses**

196 The large economic impact of throwing food away affects all the individuals and  
 197 organizations involved in the food supply chain. Understanding the economic costs of wastage  
 198 may encourage behavioral changes to prevent waste, as saving money has been documented as a  
 199 driving factor in food waste prevention behaviors (Graham-Rowe et al. 2014, Qusted et al.  
 200 2013, WasteMinz 2014). Table 5 provides recent estimates of the financial cost of wasted and  
 201 lost food.

202 Table 5. Economic Costs of Food Waste and Loss

| Country     | Year | Estimate <sup>a</sup>                              | Sectors Included                                   | Reference               |
|-------------|------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| New Zealand | 2015 | \$589 million/year                                 | Avoidable household waste                          | WasteMinz 2015          |
| Australia   | 2015 | \$5.8 billion/year                                 | All sectors                                        | Food Wise 2015s         |
| Global      | 2013 | \$750 billion/year                                 | All sectors (seafood excluded)                     | FAO 2013                |
| U.K.        | 2012 | \$18.3 billion/year,<br>\$689/household/year       | Household                                          | WRAP 2013               |
| U.S.        | 2011 | \$197.7 billion/year,<br>\$643.3/person/year       | Avoidable distribution, retail<br>& consumer waste | Venkat 2011             |
| U.S.        | 2010 | \$161.6 billion/year, 1,249<br>calories/person/day | Avoidable retail & consumer<br>food waste          | Buzby et al. 2014       |
| Canada      | 2010 | \$21.1 billion/year                                | All sectors                                        | Gooch et al. 2010       |
| U.S.        | 2008 | \$165.6 billion/year,<br>\$390/person/year         | Avoidable retail & consumer<br>food waste          | Buzby and Hyman<br>2012 |

204 <sup>a</sup> Estimates given in currencies other than U.S. dollars were converted to U.S. dollars

205 **3.3 Food Insecurity**

206 Food security, the availability of and access to sufficient and healthy foods and good  
 207 nutrition, is imperative for the wellbeing of individuals and nations (Soussana 2014). Although  
 208 there appears to be sufficient food available to feed the world’s population, nearly 11 percent of  
 209 the global population is food insecure (FAO 2015). In the U.S., nearly 15 percent of households  
 210 were food insecure some time in 2012 (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2013). Due to this high prevalence  
 211 of food insecurity, food wastage has an important ethical dimension (Gjerris and Gaiani 2013).  
 212 If food resources were managed better and wastes were minimized, resources could be used to  
 213 help feed the hungry, such as by diverting excess food through charitable donations. A  
 214 theoretical estimate by Reynolds et al. (2015b) found that if all avoidable food waste in Australia  
 215 were rescued by charity, it could feed 921 thousand people for a year.

216 Furthermore, food loss and waste amplify the environmental impact of food production  
 217 along the entire supply chain by requiring more production than is needed based on market  
 218 demand. Therefore, reducing food waste, while maintaining current production levels, could  
 219 help meet global food needs. Essentially, food waste avoidance in one region could lead to a  
 220 higher availability of food elsewhere (Gentil et al. 2011). If less food were wasted, fewer  
 221 resources would be required to produce food that is not consumed, and these agricultural lands  
 222 and resources could be liberated for other uses, such as growing food for the world’s hungry  
 223 (Stuart 2009).

224 Reducing food waste will improve future food availability in the context of global  
 225 population growth and increasing resource scarcity (Buzby et al. 2014, Godfray et al. 2010,  
 226 Pearson et al. 2013). The United Nations estimate that the world population will reach 9.3  
 227 billion by 2050 (United Nations 2013) and this growth will require an increase in food  
 228 production by about 70 percent (FAO 2009). To produce enough food to sustain this high  
 229

230 population, pressure will be increased on agricultural land and other limited resources. It is  
231 necessary to develop ways to provide more food with fewer inputs so that the world's food  
232 system can deliver better nutritional outcomes at a smaller environmental cost (Garnett 2014).  
233 Reducing food waste across the entire food chain will be a key part of any strategy to sustainably  
234 and equitably feed the world's growing population (Foresight 2011).

### 235 **3.4 Environmental Impacts of Food Waste Disposal**

236 Food waste may have negative environmental impacts at the end of its life depending on  
237 how it is managed. In landfills, food waste converts to methane, a greenhouse gas with a global  
238 warming potential 25 times greater than carbon dioxide on a 100 year time scale (IPCC 2007).  
239 Although one quarter of U.S. landfills capture methane to create energy, fugitive emissions and  
240 landfills without collection systems cause landfills to be the third largest source of anthropogenic  
241 methane in the U.S. (USEPA 2011). Food waste tends to degrade faster than other landfilled  
242 organic materials, has a high methane yield, and does not contribute to considerable biogenic  
243 sequestration in landfills (Levis and Barlaz 2011); therefore, reducing the amount of food waste  
244 landfilled should be a priority. Treatment of food waste with waste-to-energy incineration  
245 (WTE) is not considered to be energetically favorable due to the high moisture content of food  
246 waste (which results in a lower heating value than other materials). Additionally, WTE is unable  
247 to capture valuable nutrients within food waste and various environmental pollution problems  
248 may arise from inefficient air pollution control measures. As a result, methods other than WTE  
249 for the handling of food waste are preferred (Pham et al. 2015).

250 Food waste can generate benefits (e.g., energy, compost) if managed through composting  
251 or anaerobic digestion (AD) or in landfills with efficient gas collection systems. Management of  
252 food waste through informal routes, such as donating it to charity or feeding it to pets, may also  
253 provide environmental benefit (Reynolds et al. 2014, Reynolds et al. 2015b). Reducing and  
254 diverting food waste from disposal may be a means to increase stagnant recycling rates and  
255 improve the overall environmental performance of waste management systems.

## 256 **4. Drivers of Residential, Institutional and Commercial Food Waste Generation**

257 There are many drivers of food waste generation from residential, institutional, and  
258 commercial sectors, although detailed information on the exact causes is limited (Lebersorger  
259 and Schneider 2011). In the developed world, particularly the U.S., increases in the volume,  
260 availability, accessibility (Rozin 2005), affordability, and caloric density of food have led to  
261 increased overconsumption and waste (Blair and Sobal 2006). There tends to be little  
262 understanding regarding what food is, where it comes from, and what its production entails  
263 (Stuart 2009). Culture and personal choice affect decisions regarding what is too good to throw  
264 away and these perceptions can change over time. Specific socio-demographic characteristics  
265 have also been associated with increased food wastage. Striking differences in attitudes toward  
266 food and food waste have been documented both within and across nations (Stuart 2009).  
267 Therefore, food waste generation is a function of cultural, personal, political, geographic, and  
268 economic forces that influence behavior in specific ways (Pearson et al. 2013) and it may differ  
269 from person to person, year to year, or from society to society.

### 270 **4.1 Modernization of Food Systems**

271 Modernization in food supply chains is associated with industrialization, economic  
272 growth, urbanization, and globalization. It is manifested through dietary transitions and affects  
273 the amount and type of food that is wasted (Table 6). Countries move through nutritional  
274 transitions and food supply changes at different rates, often directly related to cultural and

275 economic factors (Hawkes 2006, Drewnowski 1999). Those cultures which place emphasis on  
 276 food as a finite, valuable resource that is to be cherished are likely to modernize at slower rates  
 277 and ultimately have differing wastage patterns (Stuart 2009).

278 Table 6. Modernization’s Effects on Food Systems

| <b>Factor</b>            | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                       | <b>Effects on Food Systems</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Industrialization</b> | Transition from food production and preparation at home to large-scale operations and factories                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases distancing of people from food production and preparation</li> <li>- Increases food preparation outside the home</li> <li>- May reduce food costs</li> <li>- Contributes to abundance and variety of food</li> </ul> |
| <b>Economic Growth</b>   | Increase in disposable income                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases diet diversification, particularly a transition away from traditional foods</li> <li>- May cause reductions in disposable income spent on food</li> </ul>                                                            |
| <b>Urbanization</b>      | Population shift from rural to urban areas which requires the extension of food supply systems to feed urban populations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases diet diversification</li> <li>- Increases distancing of people from food production</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Globalization</b>     | Shift from local to global food sources; transition of dietary patterns away from traditional ways toward global trends  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases diet diversification away from local foods</li> <li>- Increases distancing of people from food production</li> </ul>                                                                                                 |

279  
 280  
 281 **4.1.1 Industrialization**  
 282 Industrialization of food systems, which results in a transition of food production and  
 283 preparation from the home to factory and from handcraft to purchasing (Strasser 1999), affects  
 284 the foods that people consume, the types and quantities of food waste, and contributes to  
 285 increased physical distancing of people from food production and preparation. In areas with  
 286 industrialized food systems with large amounts of food processing, people often purchase pre-  
 287 made foods, or canned and frozen vegetables. As a result, pea pods and corns husks, for  
 288 example, become industrial wastes, while packaging becomes more common in household waste.  
 289 In industrialized food systems, consumers often purchase pre-cut meats, such as chicken legs, so  
 290 there are no other components of the chicken to be disposed as waste at the consumer level; the  
 291 other parts of the chicken are utilized or disposed by industry during the chicken processing.

292 Increased frequency of eating at restaurants and consumption of takeout food  
 293 (commercially prepared but consumed at home) (Sobal 1999) have been observed in the  
 294 developed world. This is partly due to the dramatic rise of two-earner households, leading to  
 295 little available time for food selection and preparation. As food preparation and consumption is  
 296 increasingly accomplished in restaurants, some shifts in food waste from homes to the  
 297 commercial sector may occur. It is estimated that almost half the U.S. food budget is spent  
 298 eating away from home; USDA estimated that in 2012, \$672 billion was spent for food prepared  
 299 in the home and \$630 billion was spent on food outside of the home. This is a dramatic change  
 300 from the early twentieth century where almost all food expenditures were spent on food prepared  
 301 within the home; in 1929, \$15.3 billion was spent on food in the home and \$3.5 billion was spent  
 302 on food from outside (USDA 2013). Adults tend to be less likely to waste food that they  
 303 prepared themselves or that a loved one prepared. In cultures based on handwork, handmade  
 things are valuable as they embody many hours of labor. People who have not created or

304 prepared something themselves, or watched a loved one do so, value labor less than those who  
305 have, and therefore, are more likely to throw it away (Strasser 1999). As food preparation and  
306 consumption is increasingly done in restaurants, factories, or supermarkets, there is likely to be  
307 shifts in the types and quantities of food waste generated by residences, industry, and  
308 commercial establishments.

#### 309 ***4.1.2 Economic Growth***

310 Higher incomes have generally been associated with the consumption of a more varied  
311 diet (Drewnowski 1999, Pingali and Khwaja 2004). Growth in household incomes is associated  
312 with a decline in starchy food staples and a diversification of diet toward more meats, dairy, fish,  
313 and poultry (Fischler 1999, Parfitt et al. 2010), per Bennett's Law (food share of starchy staples  
314 decreases as income increases) (Bennett 1941). This worldwide trend with increases in  
315 consumption of protein and energy rich foods, and convenience foods, and decreases in rice  
316 consumption, has been documented. Particularly, Asian diets are shifting toward more Western  
317 foods (Pingali and Khwaja 2004). Western diets, with vulnerable, shorter shelf-life foods, are  
318 associated with greater food waste and a greater drain on environmental resources (Lundqvist et  
319 al. 2008). Rathje and Murphy (2001) point out that diet diversification may lead to more food  
320 waste, and the more repetitive the diet, the less food wasted. Thus, census tracts with mostly  
321 Mexican-American families had less food waste because the ingredients for Mexican food are  
322 consistent, making it easy to incorporate leftovers into new meals and staple ingredients are used  
323 in almost every meal. In restaurants, larger menus lead to more waste because there are  
324 additional ingredients to manage.

325 As incomes rise, people may be able to waste food because food expenditures are not  
326 considerable portions of their income. In wealthy countries, such as the U.S., food is relatively  
327 inexpensive compared to other expenses (e.g., housing) and people can afford to waste food  
328 (Pearson et al. 2013). The FAO suggest that the careless attitude of consumers who can afford to  
329 waste food is a large contributor to household food wastage (Gustavsson et al. 2011). The  
330 proportion of U.S. household income spent on food has steadily declined as people have gotten  
331 wealthier, food prices have decreased, and the cost of other necessary items have increased. The  
332 USDA determined that in 1929, Americans spent 19.3 percent of their disposable personal  
333 income on food; the percentage steady declined and in 2012, it was 6.1 percent. In poorer  
334 countries, however, expenditures on food are still high. For example, in Pakistan 47.7 percent of  
335 disposable income was spent on food in 2012; in Cameroon, it was 45.9 percent (USDA 2013).

#### 336 ***4.1.3 Urbanization***

337 Urbanization requires extensions of food supply systems (Parfitt et al. 2010). It leads to  
338 diet diversification and a disconnection from food sources which ultimately may increase food  
339 waste. Urbanization has increased substantially in the U.S.; in 1790, five percent of Americans  
340 lived in urban areas, by 1890 it was 35 percent, and in 2010, it was 81 percent (U.S. Census  
341 Bureau 2012). Urbanization is expected to continue increasing globally; one estimate was 70  
342 percent of people worldwide will live in urban environments by 2015 (United Nations 2008).  
343 Concentrated, population dense urban food systems are different from those of dispersed, low  
344 density rural systems (Solomons and Gross 1995). There are far fewer farms and farmers in  
345 urbanized areas, so fewer people interact directly with agricultural processes or live near places  
346 where food is produced, hindering knowledge about food origins. This promotes disconnections  
347 from food (Parfitt et al. 2010), so that people have no sense of what their food is made of or how  
348 it was produced (Fischler 1999). Since food sources are not local, there are more opportunities  
349 to market diverse foods, different from those grown locally. Lebersorger and Schneider (2011)

350 found residual waste from urban Austrian households contained significantly more food waste  
351 than rural areas.

#### 352 **4.1.4 Globalization**

353 Food systems have changed due to the shift from local to regional to global foods in  
354 terms of quantity, type, cost, variety, and desirability (Hawkes 2006). Globalization means the  
355 linkage and integration of previously local, national and regional phenomena into organizational  
356 arrangements at a global scale (Sobal 1999). Food supply globalization was made possible by  
357 social and technological changes occurring after food supply industrialization (Robertson 1990).  
358 New dietary patterns reflect global patterns and may differ significantly from traditional food  
359 practices, particularly because non-local foods are available for consumption and there is an  
360 overall increase in the range and quantities of available foods (Pingali and Khwaja 2004).  
361 Globalization has been associated with the consumption of fewer locally produced plant foods  
362 and more imported and processed foods, particularly animal products (Pingali and Khwaja 2004,  
363 Sobal 1999). Food now travels long distances (Pretty et al. 2005), and to more supermarkets in  
364 place of small, local markets, and so consumers purchase more non-local foods. Changes in  
365 diets spurred by globalization affect the type of food that is disposed; people also may be more  
366 likely to waste food as they do not have a deep connection and understanding of it.

#### 367 **4.2 Cultural Factors**

368 Culture plays a fundamental role in shaping food, eating, and nutrition (Rozin 2005,  
369 Sobal 1998), as well as waste generation. The amount of food a society wastes is dependent on  
370 cultural habits and attitudes. People from different cultures regard different foods and food parts  
371 as edible, and throw different parts away (Strasser 1999). Pollan (2007) points out that some  
372 cultures, particularly the U.S. and Australia, have weak food traditions of their own, meaning  
373 there are few longstanding rules and rituals about what to eat and when to eat it, and there are  
374 weak connections between the production and preparation of food and its consumption. Bloom  
375 (2010) has argued that the U.S. has an unhealthy relationship with food, and overall, the U.S.  
376 food culture places little value on food, leading to waste. Other societies have a strong  
377 appreciation for food, including production and preparation. Countries such as France have deep  
378 food cultures which are deeply embedded in culture and which have been developed over long  
379 periods of time (Gatley et al. 2014). French attitudes toward food tend to emphasize moderation  
380 and quality, rather than abundance and quantity as in the U.S. (Rozin 2005). Countries with deep  
381 food cultures tend to be more resistant to change (or at least change slower) primarily due to  
382 strong values surrounding what foods can be grown during certain seasons and how foods are  
383 prepared. Many cuisines depend on the longevity of traditional recipes and cooking techniques  
384 (Conveney et al. 2012). Deep food cultures may be less affected by changes brought on by  
385 modernization of the food supply system.

386 Furthermore, there are cultural differences in daily food practices which may affect  
387 wastage. For instance, there may be cross-national differences in shopping patterns in terms of  
388 the amount of food purchased in a single trip, the number of days between shopping trips, and  
389 the amount of food stored in the household (Neff et al. 2015). Household shopping practices,  
390 particularly the size of the store where groceries are purchased and the frequency of shopping,  
391 have been shown to affect wastage (Jorissen et al. 2015). In developing countries, consumers  
392 generally buy smaller amounts of food each time they shop (compared to developed countries),  
393 often just enough for meals that day (Pearson et al. 2013), which may reduce waste. Extant  
394 educational campaigns may also cause differing waste patterns. Mena et al. (2015) found that  
395 Spanish retail food managers did not see food wastage as a major problem, but managers in the

396 U.K. placed waste on a higher agenda. This is possibly due to recent campaigns in the U.K.  
397 emphasizing food waste as a problem.

#### 398 **4.3 Socio-Demographic Factors**

399 Surveys of attitudes and behaviors have shown some correlations between food wasting  
400 behaviors and certain socio-demographic characteristics (Pearson et al. 2013), although there is  
401 no clear consensus regarding which socio-demographic factors relate to more waste.  
402 Understanding demographic patterns can lead to a better understanding of how wastage patterns  
403 may change as demographics change (e.g., ageing populations). Age has been shown to affect  
404 food waste generation, with young people wasting more than older people (Cox and Downing  
405 2007, Hamilton et al. 2005, Quested and Johnson 2009, WasteMinz 2014). In Australia, food  
406 waste fell sharply as age increased; among 18 to 24 year olds, 38 percent of respondents wasted  
407 more than \$30 (Australian) on fresh food over two weeks, compared to seven percent of people  
408 aged 70 and up (Hamilton et al. 2005). In the U.K., people over age 65 wasted considerably less  
409 food than the rest of the population (approximately 25 percent less when household size was  
410 controlled for). These older participants felt that wasting food was wrong, which may be based  
411 on the fact that many people of this age group experienced austerity and food rationing during  
412 World War II, establishing attitudes against wastefulness (Quested et al. 2013). It is unknown if  
413 current young people will waste less as their knowledge, attitudes, and lifestyle change as they  
414 age (Pearson et al. 2013).

415 Family composition and household size significantly affect food waste generation.  
416 Households with children waste more than households without children (Cox and Downing  
417 2007, Hamilton et al. 2005, Parizeau et al. 2015, WasteMinz 2014). One common cause for food  
418 waste in Swedish households was that children often did not want to finish their food. Larger  
419 households waste less per capita than smaller households (Baker et al. 2009, Parizeau et al. 2015,  
420 WasteMinz 2015, Williams et al. 2012), especially those where people live alone (WasteMinz  
421 2014). Koivupuro et al. (2012) found no significant difference in waste per capita based on  
422 household size, but people that lived alone generated the most waste per capita. In particular,  
423 women that lived alone generated the most food waste per capita. Jorissen et al. (2015) also  
424 found that single person households wasted the most per capita.

425 Food is wasted across all levels of income (Pearson et al. 2013). Lower food waste has  
426 been found in low-income compared to high-income households (Cox and Downing 2007,  
427 WasteMinz 2014) and food waste has also been shown to increase with household income  
428 (Baker et al. 2009). However, others found little or no correlation between income and food  
429 wastage (Koivupuro et al. 2012, Van Garde and Woodburn 1987, Wenlock et al. 1980).

#### 430 **4.4 Policies Driving Food Waste Generation**

431 There are policies which contribute to food waste by mandating food disposal under  
432 certain conditions or by preventing its redistribution elsewhere. These policies aim to achieve  
433 some overall benefit (food safety or enhanced nutrition), but they may also lead to increased food  
434 wastage. Furthermore, litigation concerns may discourage the reuse or redistribution of edible  
435 food. As a result, there is tension between the need for food safety and nutrition and the desire to  
436 reduce food waste (Watson and Meah 2012).

437 A policy which may lead to food wastage is the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act  
438 which required USDA to update nutrition standards of the National School Lunch and Breakfast  
439 Program. The revised standard emphasized nutritional quality improvements for student meals.  
440 This policy has been criticized for leading to substantially more food waste because students  
441 dislike the new meals and are throwing away fruits and vegetables that they are required to take

442 (Jalonick 2014). At one elementary school after the implementation of the policy 45 percent of  
443 served food and beverages were discarded by students (Byker et al. 2014). However, Cohen et  
444 al. (2014) evaluated plate waste at several schools before and after the 2012 standards were  
445 implemented, and found substantial amounts of food waste both before and after the 2012 policy.  
446 Schwartz et al. (2015) found that the standard reduced plate waste in middle schools; so, it is  
447 unclear whether the standard causes increased food wastage. In 2014 a bill was proposed to ease  
448 the requirements of the meal standards, particularly regarding the amount of whole grains  
449 required in meals (Jalonick 2014).

450 The U.S. Food and Drug Administration sets federal calls for food safety, which are  
451 promulgated at the state and local levels as well. Food safety inspections or food labeling  
452 requirements mandate the disposal of food that is not allowed to be sold or consumed, such as  
453 food that is improperly labeled or inadequately stored. The USDA and the European Union (EU)  
454 have recognized that food safety policies contribute to waste, but consider human health  
455 protection the primary concern. Still, both have vowed to reduce food waste. The USDA is  
456 working to streamline donation procedures for wholesome misbranded or non-standard food that  
457 is fit for human consumption to redistribution agencies, and has spearheaded several food waste  
458 reduction initiatives, such as through tax incentives for donors and liability protection. These  
459 efforts include the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, U.S. Federal Food  
460 Donation Act of 2008, and Internal Revenue Code 170(e)(3).

## 461

## 462 **5. Behaviors and Attitudes Leading to Residential, Institutional, and Commercial Food**

## 463 **Wastage**

464 Food wastage is not the result of a single behavior, but combinations of multiple  
465 behaviors (Quested et al. 2013). Cultural, political, economic, geographic, and socio-  
466 demographic drivers described in section 4 may cause the behaviors, but so can personal  
467 preference, values, and attitudes. There is no clear consensus on attitudes toward food waste,  
468 although food waste awareness has been shown to reduce waste (Parizeau et al. 2015). Some  
469 work has found a lack of concern and awareness regarding food waste (Buzby et al. 2011,  
470 Pearson et al. 2013) and a perception that food waste prevention is not a priority (Graham-Rowe  
471 et al. 2014). Neff et al. (2015), however, found widespread awareness of food waste among  
472 American consumers. Here specific residential, institutional, and commercial food wastage  
473 behaviors are described.

### 474 **5.1 Institutional and Commercial Behaviors**

475 At the retail and institutional levels, food is generally wasted due to choices regarding  
476 quantities of available food and visual qualities of food. Specific causes include (1) un-  
477 purchased specialty holiday food; (2) damaged packaging; (3) damaged or inadequately prepared  
478 items; (4) overstocking or over-preparation of food; (5) routine kitchen preparation waste; and  
479 (6) out-grading/quality control (Buzby and Hyman 2012). Appearance quality standards cause  
480 retailers, particularly supermarkets, to out grade foods due to rigorous quality standards  
481 concerning weight, shape, and appearance (Gustavsson et al. 2011). Many grocers take pride in  
482 beautiful food displays with uniform, flawless food, which require the culling of even slightly  
483 imperfect items. Overstocking also is an issue because retailers would rather put more stock out  
484 than run out of items and restaurants prefer to have a wide array of available menu options  
485 (Stuart 2009). Inaccurate forecasting of food needs also is a contributor to wastage (Mena et al.  
486 2011). Although these factors may all contribute to food waste, the magnitude of wastage has  
487 been shown to vary across commodity types. Buzby et al. (2015) found that in U.S.

488 supermarkets, the percentage of fresh produce delivered to U.S. supermarkets that was not sold  
489 for any reason ranged from 2.2 (sweet corn) to 62.9 (turnip greens) percent; the range for fruits  
490 was smaller, ranging from 4.1 (bananas) to 43.1 (papaya) percent. These differences may be  
491 attributed to packaging differences, susceptibility to damage, and the public’s knowledge and  
492 familiarity with certain foods.

493 In food service, plate waste is a significant contributor to food waste (NRDC 2012), and  
494 results from large portion sizes and undesired accompaniments. Portion sizes are increasing  
495 inside and outside the home in the developed world (Wansink and Payne 2009, Wansink and van  
496 Ittersum 2007, Wansink and Wansink 2010). Portion sizes began to rise in the 1970s, and then  
497 increased sharply in the 1980s and continued to climb in the 1990s. Portion increases have been  
498 seen in supermarkets, where the number of items in larger sizes has increased ten-fold between  
499 1970 and 2000. The average sizes of certain foods, such as bagels and muffins, have increased  
500 significantly over the past 20 years. These large portions encourage both waste and obesity  
501 (Young and Nestle 2002). Kallbekken and Saelen (2013) found that reducing the physical size  
502 of plates in hotels reduced food waste by 19.5 percent.

## 503 **5.2 Residential Behaviors**

504 Consumer behavioral choices cause food wastage at the household level through the  
505 interaction of aspects of food’s journey into and through the home: planning, shopping, storage,  
506 preparation and consumption (Quested et al. 2013). Poor planning at the shopping stage leads to  
507 over-provisioning and impulse or bulk purchases (Koivupuro et al. 2012), which are significant  
508 contributors to food waste (Pearson et al. 2013). Food is commonly purchased without much  
509 thought as to how it will be used (Gustavsson et al. 2011) which can contribute to wastage.

510 In the home, wastes may be generated due to preparing too much food (Koivupuro et al.  
511 2012) or preparing food inadequately. People may lack the skills to prepare food well, or to  
512 reuse leftovers. In the U.K., 40 percent of household food waste was due to the preparation and  
513 serving of more food than could be consumed (Quested and Johnson 2009). Over-provisioning  
514 is both intentional and unintentional, as cooks may find it difficult to estimate how much to cook,  
515 but they also would rather prepare too much food than not enough (Pearson et al. 2013). Portion  
516 sizes in the home, as measured in the sizes of bowls, glasses, and dinner plates, and serving sizes  
517 as presented in cookbooks, have been increasing. The serving size of some entrees increased by  
518 as much as 42 percent in the 2006 *Joy of Cooking* cookbook from recipes in the first (1931)  
519 edition (Wansink and Payne 2009).

520 Food spoilage due to improper or suboptimal storage, poor visibility in refrigerators, and  
521 partially used ingredients, leads to wastage (NRDC 2012). A survey of U.K. households found  
522 47 percent more fresh food was wasted compared to frozen foods because fresh food spoils faster  
523 (Martindale 2014). Another U.K. study found that more than half of food waste occurs because  
524 food was not used in time (Quested and Johnson 2009), possibly due to confusion over “use by”,  
525 “sell by”, “enjoy by”, and “best by” date labeling (Quested and Johnson 2009, Van Garde and  
526 Woodburn 1987). In the U.S., there are no federal standards on the presentation and meaning of  
527 date labels on food. State rules vary in coverage and what the dates mean which leads to  
528 consumer confusion (Kosa et al. 2007), and often results in safe, edible food being thrown away.  
529 This confusion and general misconceptions about food safety and high sensitivities to food safety  
530 are contributors to food waste (Pearson et al. 2013).



531 **6. Discussion: Policies for Food Waste Prevention**

532 This paper demonstrated that food waste is a complex, interdisciplinary, and international  
 533 issue which can have profound effects for global sustainability. Table 4 illustrated that large  
 534 quantities of food is currently wasted, and food waste disposal has been shown to increase with  
 535 time (Thyberg et al. 2015). Examination of the diverse range of food wastage drivers and  
 536 behaviors provides insight into the best ways to achieve successful food waste prevention, which  
 537 possibly can reverse the trend of increased food wastage. Currently in the U.S. there is no  
 538 widespread or visible political or social momentum to prevent food waste (Buzby et al. 2014).  
 539 Little research has directly addressed factors that motivate, enable or inhibit food waste  
 540 prevention behaviors (Graham-Rowe et al. 2014). Here prevention policies are placed in the  
 541 context of generation behaviors and attitudes; this context is valuable as we move forward with  
 542 developing policies to sustainably manage food waste in the U.S. and abroad.

543 **6.1 Policies to Prevent Food Waste**

544 Waste prevention requires changes in people’s behavior, both collectively (e.g.,  
 545 companies) and individually (BioIntelligence Service 2011, Wilson 1996). Sections 4 and 5  
 546 demonstrated that there are an array of attitudes, preferences, values, and behaviors toward food  
 547 which contribute to the propensity to waste food at residential, institutional, and commercial  
 548 sectors; these factors may differ from person to person. National circumstances and cultural  
 549 norms have also been linked to food wastage (BioIntelligence Service 2011), so wastage patters  
 550 may differ from region to region and country to country. This indicates that effective approaches  
 551 to food waste prevention may also differ (Buzby et al. 2011). Table 7 describes prevention  
 552 mechanisms which were developed based on behavioral and attitudinal factors that drive wastage  
 553 from residential, institutional, and commercial sectors in developed countries.

554  
 555 Table 7. Mechanisms to Prevent Food Waste Based on Waste Generating Behaviors and  
 556 Attitudes

| <b>Factor</b>                                              | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Mechanisms to Prevent Waste</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Over Preparation/<br>Large Portion<br>Sizes/Undesired Food | Excess food that is prepared but that is not consumed (includes plate waste)                                                                                                                                                              | 1. Public/employee education regarding proper food preparation, portion sizes, and on importance of ordering flexibility to ensure people like the food they are served<br>2. Food redistribution policies for edible retail and commercial food (e.g., to a food bank) |
| Inadequate Food Preparation/Lack of Food Preparation Skill | Food that is prepared incorrectly (such as by burning) or poorly (such as food that does not taste good) which results in wasting; food that is wasted due to an inability to reuse excess food or incorporate left-overs into a new meal | Public/employee education regarding proper food preparation and reuse                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Defects in Food or Food Packaging                          | Food that is disposed due to imperfect qualities of the food (such as bruising) or damaged food packaging (includes out-grading)                                                                                                          | 1. Logistic improvements (e.g., improved transportation that reduces food damage; improved food packaging)<br>2. Food redistribution/donation policies for edible retail and commercial food (e.g., to a food bank)                                                     |
| Over Stocking                                              | Excess food that is purchased but not consumed /sold (either at consumer or retail levels)                                                                                                                                                | 1. Public/employee education regarding food purchasing and planning<br>2. Logistic improvements (e.g., stock management improvement for retailers)                                                                                                                      |

|                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Spoilage/Food Not Used in Time/Confusion Over Date Labels/High Sensitivity to Food Safety | Food that is allowed to spoil before it can be consumed/sold or food that is believed to be inadequate for consumption based on personal preferences, date labels, or conceptions about food safety | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public/employee education regarding food storage, food safety, and food planning</li> <li>2. Improved, easily understandable food labeling systems</li> <li>3. Logistic improvements (e.g., stock management improvement for retailers, improved product packaging)</li> </ol> |
| Routine Kitchen Preparation Wastes                                                        | Non-edible food components that are disposed of as part of routine kitchen preparation (e.g., apple cores)                                                                                          | These wastes are hard to reduce completely; therefore, they are best targeted with policy options for MSW systems, such as food waste diversion policies (to AD or composting)                                                                                                                                           |
| Lack of Awareness or Concern About Food Waste                                             | Lack of awareness or concern about wasting food                                                                                                                                                     | Education regarding the issue of food waste, quantities generated, and why it is an environmental, economic, and social concern                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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**6.2 A Multi-Faceted Policy Approach**

Policies for food waste prevention should target the circumstances and actions that lead to food wastage and should be informed by motivations for waste production. Graham-Rowe et al. (2015) found that at the household level, survey participants were more likely to intend to reduce fruit and vegetable food wastage if they felt favorable about waste reduction, that others would approve of these behaviors, and confident in their ability to reduce waste. So, policy approaches should be multi-faceted and address attitudes and logistical aspects of waste prevention. There are a range of policy options to support food waste prevention (UNEP 2014) (Table 8). It is necessary to address multiple prevention mechanisms simultaneously because prevention is not created by one, but by many behaviors (Cox et al. 2010). Furthermore, by using multiple policy approaches, different parts of the population will be targeted, thus providing greater opportunities to engage more people (Quested et al. 2013). This is necessary because different populations will respond differently to prevention initiatives. For instance, Rispo et al. (2015) found that economically and socially deprived communities, particularly those in high-rise, high-density housing, will require exceptional efforts and additional resources to drive behavior changes to prevent food waste.

It can be concluded that a package of prevention policies are necessary to prevent food waste; they should encompass three key aspects: Values, Skills, and Logistics. The first aspect, Values, involves addressing values and perceptions which drive behavior. These values are grounded in the motivations for food waste prevention described in section 3. Values policy options should address identified concerns regarding food wastage, which include: (1) food waste is a waste of resources (money and edible food); (2) wasting food is wrong (WasteMinz 2014) and yields feelings of guilt (Graham-Rowe et al. 2014); and (3) food waste negatively impacts the environment (Doron 2013). An example of a Values policy is an educational campaign which teaches people about the importance of environmental and social altruism, and how preventing food waste can provide benefits (Wilson 1996). Another is one which emphasizes the economic impact of food wastage (Table 5); the concept of saving money has been found to be a powerful motivator to food waste prevention (Graham-Rowe et al. 2014, Quested et al. 2013, WasteMinz 2014). A means to support Value-driven behavior change is to provide the public with knowledge on food waste generation quantities. Miliute-Plepiene and Plepys (2015) found that improved awareness about food waste quantities spurred by the introduction of a food waste sorting program played an important role in food waste prevention in a Swedish municipality.

591 The next policy component, Skills, enables people to change their behaviors, such as by  
 592 providing training on how to prevent food waste. Stefan et al. (2013) found that providing  
 593 consumers with practical tools to improve their food planning and shopping routines could  
 594 reduce waste. Graham-Rowe (2014) also determined that people should be trained in food  
 595 management skills to empower them to reduce waste. Neff et al. (2015) found that concern for  
 596 foodborne illness was the most common reason for discarding food by American consumers.  
 597 Providing education training and skills to help people better understand food safety may be  
 598 essential for waste prevention. At the retail level, Mena et al. (2011) found that a cause of food  
 599 wastage was improper employee procedures for stocking, stock rotation, and other tasks. Better  
 600 employee training could address this skill-deficit.

601 The final aspect of a policy package is Logistics which facilitates food waste prevention  
 602 and minimizes inconvenience, both of which have been identified as key aspects of successful  
 603 food waste prevention programs (Graham-Rowe et al. 2014). There are various logistical  
 604 improvements which may prevent waste. At the retail level, a major cause of food wastage is  
 605 poor forecasting regarding food needs. Improving forecasting practices and using up-to-date  
 606 data mining models are examples of logistical improvements which can reduce forecast error and  
 607 ultimately wastage (Mena et al. 2011). Other logistical based policies include those which  
 608 provide incentives to businesses to use preferred product packaging or those which support  
 609 research and development focused on improved packaging. Williams et al. (2012) determined  
 610 that 20 to 25 percent of household food waste was due to packaging factors. So, improved food  
 611 packaging can significantly prevent food waste. Packaging may be used to increase product  
 612 protection, facilitate temperature control, or prevent damage during distribution (Vergheze et al.  
 613 2015). Logistical improvements at the institutional level, particularly schools, which have been  
 614 identified include enabling the storage of intact food for later use, modification of policies which  
 615 encourage waste (e.g., mandating students take certain foods), and changes to daily operations  
 616 (e.g., increasing time students have to eat) (Blondin et al. 2015). A final policy option targeting  
 617 logistics are those that facilitate the redistribution of excess food to the needy. Logistical barriers  
 618 to donation may be substantial (Schneider 2013b), but they be overcome to some degree with  
 619 strong coordination efforts.  
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Table 8. Potential Food Waste Prevention Policies

| <b>Prevention Policy</b>                                                                                             | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Category</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Education to Promote the Importance of Food Waste Prevention in Terms of Environmental, Social, and Economic Impacts | Education campaigns addressing the issue of food waste, quantities generated, and why it is important to prevent food waste. These programs can focus on moral issues of wasting food and the potential to save money by preventing food waste. The campaigns may be done through various media outlets, including mailings, face-to-face training, email, and social media.                                                                        | Values          |
| Education to Promote Behavior Changes                                                                                | Education campaigns focused on behavior changes can target a variety of audiences and focus on various aspects of food waste prevention. These aspects include proper food preparation, portion sizes, food reuse, ordering flexibility in restaurants, food purchasing, food storage, food safety, and meal planning. The campaigns may be done through various media outlets, including mailings, face-to-face training, email, and social media. | Skills          |
| Encourage Food Redistribution/Donation Policies (for edible retail and commercial food )                             | Policies can encourage the redistribution of edible food for human consumption. Recovery policies may include tax incentives for donors, limited liability regulations for donors, programs to facilitate the                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Logistics       |

|                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |           |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
|                                            | connection between donors and the needy, or may facilitate logistics of collection and transport.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |           |
| Promote Food Redistribution to Animal Feed | Policies can facilitate diversion of wasted food from retail and consumer sectors to animal feed, such as foods that were refused due to packaging errors or blemishes. Programs may facilitate the connection between donors and the needy, provide tax incentives to donors, or may facilitate logistics of collection and transport. Furthermore, at the household level, education can encourage people to feed excess food to pets instead of disposing it. | Logistics |
| Incentivize Food Waste Prevention          | Policies can be enacted to incentivize prevention, such as rewarding companies that are able to significantly prevent food waste. Incentives can be financial, such as tax credits for those that prevent waste, or mandated higher costs for waste disposal (which should encourage reduction).                                                                                                                                                                 | Logistics |
| Increase Research and Development          | Policies to support research and development can contribute to innovations which may reduce food wastage. These include improved packaging that extends shelf life, improvements in food storage, or better tracking systems for stock management. Policies may include funding for research organizations or tax incentives.                                                                                                                                    | Logistics |
| Improve Food Packaging                     | Policies can encourage reconfiguration of product packaging to prevent waste, such as packaging to extend shelf life or protect products. Policies may include financial incentives to businesses using preferred packaging.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Logistics |
| Improve Food Date Labeling                 | Policies to eliminate ambiguous food labeling include well-defined, clear, scientifically-sound date labeling systems for food.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Logistics |
| Change Waste Collection System Design      | Policies to change the design of municipal waste collection systems can help prevent food waste. These include volume based systems for trash or reduced number of days that trash is collected.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Logistics |
| Change Treatment of Collected Wastes       | Policies can reduce food waste by stipulating how it is to be treated. An example is legislation to ban landfilling of organics. Fiscal incentives, such as taxes, fees, or subsidies, can also dictate treatment methods.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Logistics |
| Mandate Targets for Prevention             | Policies to mandate reporting of food waste statistics and achievement of specific prevention goals can encourage prevention.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Logistics |

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### 6.3 Selecting the Best Policy Approach

There are regulatory, social, and political obstacles to enacting food waste prevention policies. Thyberg and Tonjes (2015) outlined many of these challenges, including poor public participation, lack of efficient indicators to monitor performance, and uncertainty regarding policy outcomes. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to food waste; policy measures to address it should be custom tailored for each individual situation, integrate community needs, and involve a package of several measures addressing Values, Skills and Logistics. Holistic approaches which integrate education, financial aspects, and logistical improvements across food and waste systems are ideal.

It is unclear which combination of mechanisms to prevent food waste is most effective because evaluations of food waste prevention policies are scarce. Due to the inherent difficulty in studying and implementing waste prevention, there has been little quantitative work assessing its environmental impacts (Gentil et al. 2011). Moreover, it is difficult to demonstrate a consistent, direct link between specific policy mechanisms and measured waste prevention results (Cox et al. 2010). Further complicating food waste prevention is the fact that many food waste prevention initiatives are still in their early stages, so comprehensive data are not yet available (BioIntelligence Service 2011). Rather than struggle with the lack of existing data and concrete conclusions regarding the best policy means to prevent food waste, it is suggested that new, well-planned intervention campaigns be initiated, but with mandates for proper

642 monitoring and evaluation. These data can serve as critical resources for designing future waste  
643 prevention programs and improving existing programs (Thyberg and Tonjes 2015). Prevention  
644 initiatives targeting food loss (losses at production, post-harvest, and processing stages of the  
645 food supply chain) should parallel food waste prevention campaigns to address the issue from  
646 multiple angles.

647 Food waste prevention policies can substantially reduce the amount of food waste  
648 disposed, making it an effective alternative to collection and treatment of wastes economically,  
649 socially, and environmentally. However, even with rigorous prevention programs, food waste  
650 from residential, institutional, and commercial sectors will never be eliminated because some  
651 food waste is unavoidable (e.g., peels) (Schott et al. 2013), and redistribution of edible food to  
652 feed humans may be unfeasible due to food perishability and high transport or distribution costs  
653 (Buzby et al. 2014). Food also may not meet safety or quality requirements under food safety  
654 regulations (Salhofer et al. 2008). Furthermore, prevention activities may not broadly appeal to  
655 consumers and they may be costly (Buzby et al. 2011). Estimates of the proportion of food  
656 waste that is avoidable differ considerably across studies; estimates for the proportion of  
657 avoidable food waste are: 34 percent avoidable in Sweden (Schott et al. 2013); 47 percent  
658 avoidable and 18 percent partially avoidable in Germany (Kranert et al. 2012); 60 percent  
659 avoidable in the U.K. (WRAP 2013); and 54 percent avoidable and 12 percent partially  
660 avoidable in New Zealand (WasteMinz 2015). More studies documenting the proportion of  
661 disposed food waste that is avoidable would be beneficial, especially in the U.S. where data are  
662 lacking. Nevertheless, once prevention policies are enacted, recovery programs to encourage the  
663 capture of energy and nutrients from food waste should be pursued.

## 664 **7. Conclusion**

665 Increasingly citizens, scientists, businesses, institutions, and policy makers are realizing  
666 that the current food system is unsustainable and changes are required if the world will be able to  
667 support a population of over nine billion by 2050. Reducing food waste will become an  
668 increasingly important strategy to help feed this growing human population (Godfray et al.  
669 2010). However, food waste prevention has not yet become mainstream in the U.S. or abroad.  
670 Wastage of food is a widespread phenomenon globally and it is likely that food waste generation  
671 will continue growing if not curbed by prevention policies. Waste prevention in general has  
672 frequently been ignored in waste management, as signaled by states that define waste goals in  
673 terms of recycling or diversion, rather than using indicators that capture prevention success.  
674 Understanding the implications of food waste and adjusting attitudes and behaviors toward food  
675 in order to prevent it should be an urgent priority. This paper deepened the understanding of  
676 food waste and highlighted that it is a complex issue involving numerous diverse actors across  
677 the globalized food chain. Policies to prevent food waste should address the range of behaviors  
678 and motivations for wastage. They should be multi-faceted so that they target people's values,  
679 provide them with skills to prevent waste, and facilitate logistical improvements to encourage  
680 prevention. Food wastage is an issue that demands attention, research, and action, particularly  
681 regarding ways to prevent food waste generation.

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