

## Reducing food waste



### Key role of consumer behaviour, but also of packaging

Too much food still ends up in the rubbish bin. Targeted campaigns involving local operators are vital in changing consumer habits to adapt their buying to what they need. At the same time, packaging enables companies to extend the shelf life of the product as well as provide better product dispensing, thereby reducing waste.

prevent **pack**

### Belgians throw away more than 15 kg of food a year

According to FEVIA, Belgian consumers throw away between 5 and 10% of the food they buy. Between 15 and 20 kg of food per citizen ends up in the rubbish bin each year. This represents approximately 180 euros.

'Even if consumers are generally more aware of the problem of food waste, we still have a long way to go,' says Nathalie Ricaille,

Policy Officer at Espace Environnement and Communication Manager of the European GreenCook Project. 'To reduce food waste, we have to work on both packaging and consumer behaviour. That is why it is important to promote initiatives that encompass these two aspects, in particular by getting certain clear messages across to the general public.'

### Longer shelf-life, better dosing

The actions being taken by the industry are many and varied. 'As well as limiting the amount of packaging, the industry is deploying special efforts to reduce food waste,' states Ricaille. 'For example, modified-atmosphere packaging used for meat, allows the packaged product to be kept in good condition for longer.' Another type of 'intelligent' packaging indicates when the product should be eaten or warns when the cold chain has been disrupted during transportation.

In addition, companies are increasingly offering resealable packaging for products such as cold cuts and sliced cheese. The same is true of packaging that allows appropriate dosage or portioning. 'Resealable packaging and dispensers help limit waste provided they are suited to the product. The key is to ensure that the packaging is perfectly suited to the product and its use. With the introduction of such packaging, consumers better understand the key role they play in protecting the product and extending its shelf life.'

good to remember

Packaging protects the product, extends its shelf life, and encourages efficient dosing.

One of the key functions of packaging is to limit food waste.

Reducing food waste also involves campaigns to raise consumer awareness.

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### Creative campaigns to change purchasing behaviour

Reducing food waste also involves changing consumer behaviour as well as packaging. 'Campaigns are being developed at distribution level to encourage more responsible behaviour. Above all, the idea is to increase the visibility of products and packaging that help reduce food waste,' continues Ricaille. 'For example, some supermarkets, such as Leclerc in France, are introducing special labelling for packaging that creates less waste by calling attention to its ability to store the product longer, among other things.'

Another initiative, where possible, consists of promoting purchases of cold cuts and cheese sliced to order. This encourag-

es consumers to match the amounts purchased to the actual needs of the household, thus reducing the risk of waste.

For fruit and vegetables, conversely, the appeal of bulk buying remains up for discussion. Frequent handling by consumers damages the more fragile fruits and vegetables. This leads, of course, to sizeable losses at the point of sale or at home. In any event, systematically packing each piece of fruit does not make any sense. The right approach therefore has to be found, from both an economic and an environmental standpoint.

### GreenCook promotes local campaigns

The GreenCook Project focuses especially on reducing waste through supermarket campaigns. Coordinated by Espace Environnement, it brings together partners from five countries in northwestern Europe. 'Several initiatives at the point of sale have been remarkably successful,' declares Ricaille. 'For example, nutritionists give demonstrations to explain to consumers how to prepare a sauce with tomatoes that are no longer presentable enough for a salad; or how to make smoothies with slightly damaged fruit. Another example: signs on the meat shelves give specific advice, for example, regarding the number of grams to allow per person.'

The GreenCook Project goes even further. In addition to supermarkets, the home, school canteen, and restaurant have also been identified as key sources of waste. Targeted campaigns are being developed for each of these. 'The fight against waste is extremely topical. That gives motivated operators genuine room for manoeuvre to encourage the spread of these innovative initiatives,' concludes Nathalie Ricaille.



Several initiatives in supermarkets are aimed at raising consumer awareness at the point of purchase.

#### About Espace Environnement

The Espace Environnement activity is linked to sustainable development. A partner to public authorities, associations, and businesses for more than 40 years, the institution promotes responsible 'eco-citizenship' that is based on consultation with local operators and the participation of residents. Its main action areas are land use planning, urban design, the fight against indoor pollution, the creation of green spaces, cleanliness, and reducing waste.

### For additional information

Espace Environnement: [www.espace-environnement.be](http://www.espace-environnement.be)

GreenCook: [www.green-cook.org](http://www.green-cook.org)

