

10 Minutes for the Planet
A Shameful Waste part 3
Great ideas to save food ©
by Sarah Heath



Hello! I'm Sarah Heath and you're listening to 10 Minutes for the Planet on EnglishWaves.

In the last two programs, the subject of global food waste has been considered and what some of the effects are of that unnecessary extravagance. So, how can this squandering of food be tackled?

It takes minimal effort for all parts of society to play their role in ensuring that food waste is avoided. The World Resources Institute and the Waste and Resources Action Programme compiled data from 700 companies in 17 countries on their efforts to reduce food wastage through separate initiatives and the economies they make in thus doing. The study concluded that for every €1 spent on investing in preventative measures, a saving of €12 was made.

Governments have started to instigate cooperative schemes between public services as well as better collaboration between all levels of the food chain. For example, Italy is in the process of recovering a billion tons of excess food each year, after the government offered tax breaks to supermarkets which donated leftover food to charity.

And in other countries, supermarket chains have started to do their bit. The German company, Lidl, which has over 10,000 shops in Europe, has pledged to cut food waste per store by 25% by the year 2020 and have committed to the UN Global Goal's target for a 50% reduction in global waste by 2030. To bring customers on board in the UK, they have been offering a box of slightly damaged produce at £1.50 to encourage consumers to accept less-than-perfect food which is nevertheless perfectly fine to eat.

Industrial-sized food manufacturers can make better use of massive composting machines which can churn through nearly 2,000 kilos of food to make a ready-made liquid compost, negating any need to dump it in landfill sites. And new technology in making biogas means that households can convert their own waste into fuel by installing a purpose-made machine.

And perhaps unsurprisingly, new solutions have now become digital! Innovative developers have come up with apps which make sustainable eating all the more attainable: a Swedish start-up puts consumers in touch with local restaurants and bars who have unsold food through their app "Karma"; "Too good to go", is available in 9 European countries and provides a platform for shops to sell their surplus goods at a

reduced price; “Farmdrop” cuts out the supermarket middle man completely by delivering fresh food directly to the consumer making it more environmentally friendly on several levels and the Marine Conservation Society has produced an app which provides consumers with information about sustainable fishing as well as which restaurants adhere to more ocean-friendly buying strategies.

Less digital but just as effective is a measuring cup invented by The Netherlands Nutrition Centre which allows for precise measuring of rice and pasta based on portions rather than weight, so that the correct quantities are cooked at home. And there are ‘smart’ fridge magnets which monitor the expiration dates of food being stored in the fridge. One company has devised recloseable lids on packaging for fresh produce, ensuring a longer fridge life.

Everyone can make a difference with the smallest of steps: take-aways might make life easier but often restaurants minimum spend policy for food to be delivered, can result in over-ordering. Meal planning is a very effective way to cut costs both for personal households and the negative effects on the planet. Buy efficiently, consider better storage and keep a good, basic stock of dried goods in the kitchen cupboard. All very manageable steps for every household to take.

And it can be very sociable too! A social enterprise in the UK called Apples for Eggs is based upon a system of exchanging produce without any money changing hands. Local communities get together, keeping the food supply chain short, and swap food which means that local growers, bakers or hen owners can get rid of their surplus of cakes, jars of home-made jam, bunches of fresh herbs, or.....apples and eggs.

Tune in next week for more stories on the environment, here on English Waves.