



ENVIRONMENT

Feeding the 7 billion©

by *Valentine Rinner*

You've almost certainly already heard some of these appalling figures: each year in Europe approximately half of the food we produce ends up not being eaten. At the same time 1 out of 9 people on the planet suffers from malnutrition and each minute 2,000 trees are chopped down to make more agricultural land and use up more of our resources to grow food that we already have.

Waste issues around food are some of the most central in increasing global and local food security as well as ensuring our ecological future. Curbing food waste is one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (the UNSDGs). SDG target, number 12.3 seeks to cut per capita food waste in half by 2030. If my math is correct that would mean that in Europe we have 15 years to waste only a third of the food we grow instead of half of it. Are you up for that challenge?

You've probably already asked yourself: what can I do at my level? Followed by the inevitable: aren't my efforts only a mere drop in the ocean? It won't change anything... Indeed, forcing yourself to finish up last week's broccoli for it not to end up in the trash won't solve global waste issues.

However some people have started to speak up and are initiating simple actions that are gaining momentum and impact. Across the Channel, London-born Tristram Stuart is the figurehead of the anti food waste movement. He speaks out against waste at all levels of the food supply chain. He originated the Feeding the 5000 in 2009 – a free banquet cooked from food that was going to be wasted by shops and supermarkets.

The event was held in Paris in 2013 as Le banquet des 5000 and was a huge success. It was co-organized by a variety of local organizations such as Disco Soupe: an anti food waste collective. Their mission statement is that friendly collective public experiments with cooking wasted foods is a way toward questioning the status quo on our eating system and habits. This event was highly mediatized and contributed to heightening political awareness and eventually led to large structural changes.

Indeed, the French Senate passed a law that will facilitate the cooperation between supermarkets and charitable organizations regarding unsold food. Edible unsold food ended up in the trash usually purposely poisoned with chemicals to prevent homeless

people from taking the food. Purposely poisoning edible food is now an illegal practice in our country. With this unanimously adopted law we are slowly narrowing the legislative gap with our neighbors.

However supermarkets aren't the only wasters. Each French person wastes between 20 and 30 kilos of food every year. That's over 1 million tons for all of us. Two French food entrepreneurs noticed that we usually throw food away because packaged foods are sold in fixed quantities that might not correspond to our needs. So they launched a franchise of bulk food grocery stores. Each month sees a few more franchises opening across the country.

Buying the exact quantity you need is only a slight change to your grocery shopping and storing habits, and the result is that it allows you to prevent not only food waste, but also plastic waste by reducing packaging, and economic waste by not buying more than you need.

Supporting anti food waste initiatives is at the same time economical, fun, trendy and environmentally proactively friendly. So now at the very least go finish that broccoli and start buying in bulk!