

Project *brief*

Thünen Institute of Market Analysis

2021/08a

Reducing Food Waste in Retail

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- **New data basis for food waste in retail: Food waste in the entire retail sector is projected to be around 500,000 tonnes in 2019.**
- **21 companies – 16 from retail and 5 from wholesale – officially participated in Dialogue Forum on Wholesale and Retail in 2020.**
- **Companies commit to binding measures, such as data collection on food waste and cooperation with social institutions.**

The German government aims to halve food waste at retail and consumer level by 2030. We are supporting the retail and wholesale sector in the joint project handelsforumRLV (Dialogue Forum on Wholesale and Retail).

Background and aims

According to the National Strategy to Reduce Food Waste, food waste in Germany is to be halved at retail and consumer level by 2030. To achieve this goal, all actors in the food supply chain as well as consumers are called upon.

In this project, we analyse and quantify food waste in the retail sector in order to be able to map trends from 2015. It is also important for the evaluation to find out why waste is generated, what proportion of this waste can be avoided through different measures and what costs are associated with this.



Source: CSCP for handelsforumRLV / © handelsforumRLV

Based on the results, we want to identify and implement efficient measures to reduce and avoid food waste together with the relevant stakeholders.

Approach

In order to promote the transfer of knowledge between science and the companies, project results are communicated within the framework of regular meetings of the Dialogue Forum on Wholesale and Retail. Towards the end of the project, an accord is to be developed with the trading companies or associations. In this accord, concrete reduction measures as well as interim targets will be defined, with which the wholesale and retail sector will work towards halving food waste by 2030.

For 2019 the calculations are based on voluntarily provided data on turnover losses (markdowns) from 13 food retail and Cash and Carry companies represented by approximately 13,000 points of sale. The participating companies cover a market share of the total retail sector in Germany of about 35%. Markdowns include both food waste and redistributed food, such as food donations or as animal feed, as well as breakage and loss.

The calculations will be updated annually. This will enable the recording of the development of food waste (incl. redistribution) over the years and thus appropriate measures can be taken with regard to the target of halving food waste by 2030.

Key findings

In the retail sector in Germany, 500,000 tonnes of food are sorted out as waste every year. Supermarkets, discounters and hypermarkets generate 290,000 tonnes, while extended retailer (drugstores, beverage retailers, bakeries, butchers, online retailers, weekly markets and petrol stations) adds another 210,000 tonnes.

Even if 500,000 tonnes seem a lot at first glance, the retail sector's share of total food waste is only about 4% (see Thünen study "Food Waste in Germany - Baseline 2015"). More than half of all waste is generated in private households, 52% according to Baseline 2015 calculations. Because there are still data gaps, we can so far only estimate how much of the waste actually end up in the rubbish and how much is donated (e.g. to food banks), or redistributed elsewhere (e.g. processed into animal feed). Experts estimate that around 30% of the waste is donated.

All 21 members of the dialogue forum have already signed a declaration of participation in which they commit to certain measures:

INTERIM STATUS: IMPLEMENTATION OF NUMEROUS MEASURES

all 21 members

HandelsforumRLV
National Dialogue Forum for Reduction of Food Waste in Wholesale and Retail Industry

- Data Acquisition**
recording food waste data and improvement of the existing data
- Cooperation**
i.e. with a charity to redistribute marketable food products
- Reduction**
actions in the market, at the interface with suppliers, improved redistribution

Source: CSCP for handelsforumRLV / © handelsforumRLV

Binding measures include data collection on food waste and cooperation with charities. In the case of mandatory measures, 70 measures were implemented, 49 measures were implemented at the interfaces with suppliers and 37 measures were implemented to improve food distribution. Of these 156 measures, 27 were implemented in the course of cooperation in the dialogue forum. This is particularly noteworthy in view of the challenges posed by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Outlook

OUTLOOK TO 2022

HandelsforumRLV
National Dialogue Forum for Reduction of Food Waste in Wholesale and Retail Industry

- Enhanced data collection and improved analysis for retail and wholesale**
- Identification and implementation of further effective reduction measures**
- Agreement on an accord 2030**

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In order to reduce food waste even more, the members of the dialogue forum, in cooperation with the network partners, aim to achieve the following during the project period until August 2022:

- develop an accord with concrete intermediate targets,
- improve the measurement of food waste in the retail sector (including better recording of food donations and publication of data from food wholesalers),
- implement effective reduction measures.

Further Information

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DOI:10.3220/PB1615797125000

Partner

Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP)

Duration

9.2019-8.2022

Project-ID

2152

Publications

Orr L, Schmidt TG (2020) Monitoring der Lebensmittelverluste im Lebensmittelhandel. Braunschweig: Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut, 68 p, Thünen Working Paper 154, DOI:10.3220/WP1598947100000

Orr L, Schmidt TG (2021) Monitoring food waste in the wholesale and retail sector in Germany 2019: Food retail data. Braunschweig: Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut, 29 p, Thünen Working Paper 168a, DOI:10.3220/WP1613555002000

Funded by

