



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2018, Ghent

“Global food security and food safety:
The role of universities”

The What and Why of Food Waste in Rural Lesotho

NATASHA CRONJÉ¹, LISEMELO NTLOPO²

¹*University of the Free State, Consumer Science, South Africa*

²*University of the Free State, Consumer Science,*

Abstract

Preventing food waste in rural communities can contribute to household food security and sustainability. Globally, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that approximately one third of all food produced for human consumption is wasted. This is 1.3 billion tons of food. The prevalence of food insecurity in Southern Africa is a concern. In Lesotho, approximately 36% of the population is food insecure. Very little data is available on food waste in Lesotho. It can help the food insecurity status of households if food waste is minimised. An exploratory cross-sectional survey was undertaken in the rural Mokhotlong District of Lesotho. The questionnaire examined the type of and main reasons for food waste. Basic knowledge of preventative measures that can be taken to prevent food waste and ways in which food waste is wasted within households were also explored. It was found that possible motivating factors of food waste include lack of planning and management of purchases, lack of storage, little knowledge of preparation and reuse or recycle of food. Knowledge to alter this behaviour is lacking. Data obtained indicated that the most preferred fruit and vegetables in households are also the most wasted with cabbage (55%), spinach (47%), swiss chard (22%) and potatoes (21%) are the most wasted vegetables. Seasonal fruits (peaches, plums, apricots) (50%), apples (35%) and oranges (22%) are the most wasted fruit. Cooked food most likely to be thrown away are leftover foods and staples such as rice, papa (harden soft porridge that is used as staple food in Lesotho) and pasta. Main reasons argued is the lack of storage space and facilities to keep it edible. The majority of the respondents indicated that they do not consider additional meals that can be made out of leftovers. Subsequently it is concluded that consumer attitudes, knowledge and behaviour play a major role in determining the amount of food that is wasted in the households. There is a need for communication and education to assist consumers at household level to minimise waste and store food.

Keywords: Food security, food waste, Lesotho, rural