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

Food Waste in Mangaung, South Africa

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Abstract

Food waste is a challenge that not only relates to food security, but also to environmental issues. Some researchers feel that one of the keys to achieving sustainable food security globally, is to reduce food waste. Moreover, food waste reduces the overall productivity of our food system, resulting in increased pressure on the poor. South Africa is considered a food secure nation and has enough food for every one of its 53 million people, yet 26 % of the population in South Africa regularly experience starvation, whilst another 28.3 % are at risk to experience starvation. Food security affects the formal and informal settlements in both the rural and urban areas. Urban informal settlements are the largest group that experience starvation with 32.4 % and in rural informal areas 37.0 %. In South Africa, 23 % of households run out of money to buy food and 21 % have to skip meals to stretch the use of food for longer. Furthermore, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 seeks to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.” The third target under this goal (Target 12.3) calls for cutting in half per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer level, and reducing food losses along production and supply chains (including post-harvest losses) by 2030. Consequently, waste reduction at household level consumption becomes critical. Subsequently, the aim of this study is three-fold: firstly, to establish what the attitudes of consumers in different socio-economic classes towards food waste are; secondly to determine how much and what type of food is wasted; and thirdly, to use the empirical data to develop feasible methods of waste reduction. A two-part stratified survey was undertaken in the greater Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, Free State, South Africa. The questionnaire was administered via paper-and-pencil to accommodate those who do not have access to computers. A purposeful sample was drawn and the respondents completed food diaries for two weeks. Bulk purchases, lack of meal/menu planning and excessive cooking was identified as main reasons for food waste. Respondents indicated that they waste 5 % of their food, however the food diaries indicated higher rates of waste.

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