

Australia's fight against food waste

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Food waste is Australia's \$36.6 billion challenge. And when we waste food, we waste the water, energy and land resources used to grow, make, move and sell that food – ultimately adding to climate change.

The Foodbank Hunger Report 2021 also reveals one in six Australian adults haven't had enough to eat in the last year: while food waste (across the supply chain) totals 312 kg per person each year.

There is little time to waste when it comes to meeting Australia's goal of halving food waste by 2030.

One of the key industry initiatives in the fight against food waste is the Australian Food Pact. The Pact is led and supported by Stop Food Waste Australia (SFWA) and brings organisations together in pre-competitive collaboration to reduce food waste in their operations and supply chain. Some of Australia's biggest food businesses have already joined, including Coles, Woolworths, McCain and Simplot. Embedded into SFWA's work is a commitment to enhancing the reputation, productivity, and resilience of Australia's food system.

Pre-competitive collaboration involves two or more companies operating within the same industry, coming together to address a shared problem or pain point that doesn't impact direct business competition.

Through the Australian Food Pact, businesses can reduce surplus nutritious food going to waste and increase profit by focusing on prevention, reduction and innovation as well as optimising donations to food rescue charities. Not only is food waste reduced (or eliminated) through these initiatives but businesses save money and reduce their environmental impact.

Stop Food Waste Australia is also building momentum in addressing food waste through the Horticulture Sector Action Plan (SAP). With extensive collaboration from the Horticulture sector, the Sector Action Plan will identify and prioritise food waste reduction actions and develop an effective strategy to ensure the maximum impact.

Existing processes throughout the supply chain including harvesting, processing, grading, transportation, sale, and safety will be considered in the SAP as part of a holistic approach to reducing food waste. The underlying goal is to reduce food waste and increase food donation while improving crop utilisation, profitability, and supply chain resilience.

Ultimately, we all want the food grown to be eaten and enjoyed. Along with changes across the supply chain, this also means supporting consumers to reduce food waste at home. According to the National Food Waste Strategy Feasibility Study, at least a 30% reduction in household food waste is required to achieve Australia's goal of halving food waste by 2030.

Research by Fight Food Waste CRC is exploring household food waste and the role of packaging. For fresh produce, packaging can be used strategically to help consumers enjoy food for longer and minimise food being wasted. There have been significant international successes with packaging changes such as removing 'best before' dates, using resealable bags, and including safe and optimal storage advice.

Halving Australia's food waste is going to require a collaborative effort, and we'd love all parts of the Supply Chain to get involved. For anyone working in fresh produce, any changes – however small – to reduce food waste can have a meaningful impact.

Register your interest with melissa@fightfoodwastecrc.com.au to find out more.

Stop Food Waste Australia is a partnership including federal, state, and local government, the agri-food industry and four major food rescue charities, and is supported by the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Support for the Horticulture Sector Action Plan is provided by the Queensland Government's Department of Environment and Science.

