

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

Changing norms, habits and practices to reduce consumer food waste at home and at schools

Food waste presents significant challenges in households and schools, driven by societal norms and practices. Drawing from research, we propose some strategies to mitigate this problem.

In households, social norms heavily influence wasteful behaviors. Consumers often struggle with interpreting food expiration dates and tend to overprepare meals to prevent hunger. Interventions should target these norms by promoting smarter packaging and challenging the belief that excess food is desirable. Recommendations include encouraging meal planning and educating consumers on mindful purchasing, preparation or food storage practices. Additionally, the enabling environment, comprising governments, retailers, and businesses, can support waste reduction through policy interventions, educational initiatives, and community engagement.

Similar behaviors are found in schools, particularly among students. Peer pressure and perceptions of food appearance, texture, and taste contribute to wastage. Interventions should prioritize open communication between parents and students and integrate food system awareness into educational activities. Collaboration among students, parents, teachers, and canteen staff is key. Students can support each other in accepting less visually appealing foods, parents can involve students in lunch preparation, teachers can supervise meal breaks, and canteen personnel can promote balanced eating habits and provide educational materials. Government initiatives are crucial in creating an enabling environment for waste reduction in schools.

In conclusion, addressing FW necessitates a comprehensive approach that considers social norms, behaviors, and environmental factors.

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