



Pigs are the answer to the supermarket food-waste crisis

Tristram Stuart

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Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's hard-hitting BBC1 series, *Hugh's War on Waste*, is doing a fantastic job of revealing that supermarkets have a lot more work to do if we're to believe they are sincere about tackling the nation's food-waste scandal. But there is no single silver bullet to solve this problem. Indeed, government has a big part to play. One way of gobbling up food that would otherwise rot in landfill is being hampered by European and more local red tape.

Until 2001 pigs and chickens could be used to recycle scraps into food for us. Foot and mouth put an end to that. Or rather, the realisation that the old system of boiling up swill on farms wasn't safe blinded Brussels and UK policymakers with fear that there was no safe system to replace this defunct one.

A system ensuring that food waste is properly treated, sterilised and rendered safe for pigs and chickens is scientifically possible and urgently needed. It would supply pig farmers with an eco-feed that doesn't damage the earth or bankrupt farmers. Feeding our livestock with South American soy and other crops that people could otherwise eat is ecologically and economically unsustainable.

My own organisation, Feedback, has been running a campaign — The Pig Idea — to encourage legislators to look at the centralised sterilisation deployed by the Japanese and South Koreans. To learn from the millennia of wisdom embedded in our farming practices, and implement this within a system that protects against diseases that no one wants — or needs — to see again. Pigs and chickens like the same food that we humans do: so it makes sense to use the millions of tons of leftovers from catering outlets, food manufacturers and retailers to fatten livestock, instead of dumping it in landfill or using it less productively than animals can for compost or biogas. Much food waste that the law does allow to be fed to livestock — uncontaminated bread, fruit, vegetable and dairy waste — is still being dumped. This is largely down to confusing red tape and discouraging noises from those who are more comfortable deforesting the Amazon to grow soy than they are exploring the viability of safe ways of recycling "former foodstuffs".

First we must avoid wasting food by relaxing cosmetic standards on fruit and vegetables; thwarting consumers' unwarranted fussiness; protecting farmers from supermarkets' unfair trading practices; and encouraging charitable redistribution of edible food. But we will never eliminate leftovers. And that is where pigs and chickens should be allowed to play their part again.

Tristram Stuart is the author of *Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal*

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 **Richard Gillingham**

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barbara stevens

1 hour ago

In Ww2 there was a pig bin for food scraps in roads, growing up in the war I remember them clearly and seeing the pig man collect the scraps for pig swill. Nothing was wasted in those dark war years in Britain.

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Mr Sean Grainger

2 hours ago

Mr Wu's pigs in Deadwood weren't too bothered about rendering.

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Greg Miles

11 hours ago

You are quite right and the way it can be done economically is using LED lamps on the UVC Band to sterilise the waste. Interestingly these lights will revolutionise the water treatment business as well.

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DENNIS RICHARDS

7 hours ago

@Greg Miles Just do not buy them from China, they will last three months if you are lucky. I am talking from much experience..... So much so that my last order of LED lights is coming from the US and I am paying 10 times what the Chinese prices are.

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