

Campaign win: supermarket giant Tesco tackles supply chain waste and extends transparency, time for other retailers to act.



20th September 2017

Following campaigning by Feedback (1), the UK's biggest supermarket, Tesco announced that it would be making a joint commitment with their top 24 suppliers to halve food waste in their supply chains and report transparently on waste, as well as extend food waste reporting to their operations in further European countries.

This level of ambition is what is needed from retailers in addressing food waste and Feedback urge other supermarkets to tackle supply chain waste.

Feedback's Executive Director Carina Millstone said:

Feedback has been calling on supermarkets to take responsibility for the colossal amount of food waste in their supply chains for many years. Today, we are delighted that Tesco has finally pledged to address this hidden scandal and look forward to seeing commitment translated into swift action and demonstrable results. Tesco's announcement marks an important first step in making significant inroads in the global fight against food waste, and we call on all supermarkets to follow suit and reduce supply chain food waste immediately."

In 2016 Sainsbury's agreed to release data on its in-store waste, but since then progress from other supermarkets has stalled (2). Since supermarkets are already collecting data on retail food waste, it's only a short step to have it audited and made public (3). To date, supermarkets have focused on food waste within their own stores, but most waste takes place in supply chains and homes which supermarkets have direct influence over.

Supply chain data is crucial as Feedback have reported cases of supermarkets pushing food waste up the supply chain, causing farmers and suppliers to carry the cost. Our recent research report shows a massive concentration of power in the groceries sector has allowed supermarkets to force suppliers to waste food through stringent cosmetic specifications and unfair rejections of food (4). Thanks to the Groceries_Code_Adjudicator in the UK this practise is being addressed, but there is still much more to do and obtaining accurate data is an important first step. A report published today by WRAP and the World Resources Institute on behalf of Champions 12.3 highlighted the importance of accurate food waste data across supply chains (5).

Supermarkets also need to recognise the role they play in reducing **household food waste**. To tackle the consumer food waste issue, supermarkets should fund consumer waste analyses based on where people shop to highlight what supermarket policies reduce waste and which drive it.

Transparent data enables us to see the **best and worst performing retailers**. Citizens can vote with their wallet and they are ready to punish supermarkets who fail to address this issue – 53% of consumers would consider boycotting a supermarket with a poor track record of wasting food. Transparency also enables government and social entrepreneurs to create data driven solutions which are needed to tackle this massive issue.

However, **transparency is not enough**: less promising are Tesco's waste figures themselves. Despite its very public commitment to food waste reduction, Tesco's waste as a percentage of food sold remains at a stubborn 0.5%, and food waste tonnage actually increased this year compared to last: in 2016-2017, Tesco is responsible for a staggering 46.7 tonnes of food that was never eaten. Clearly, laudable initiatives have not yet yielded food waste-busting results, and the pace of food waste

reduction efforts required between now and the end of the year to meet the target of zero wasted food must pick up dramatically if it is to be achieved. We look forward to seeing the impact of this ambition set out today in the months and years to come.



-ENDS-

Notes to editors

(1) Feedback is an environmental organisation that campaigns to end food waste at every level of the food system. www.feedbackglobal.org

(2) In 2013, Tesco responded to pressure by Feedback's longstanding campaign and our direct challenge to the retailer and **published third party audited figures** of how much food it wastes in its UK operations as well as identifying food waste hot spots in its supply chain. In 2016 Sainsbury's published their in- store waste figures.

(3) Disappointingly, none of the other retailers has taken up our challenge to follow suit. Retailers continue to report their food waste data secretly, with the British Retail Consortium **only publishing an annual aggregate figure** for the whole industry, which does not include data on supply chain food waste.

(4) Our research has found that there is a massive amount of food waste across the food supply chain. In Kenya, [up to 50%](#) of produce is rejected before being exported. On average, 80% of mangos grown in Senegal are deemed unacceptable for export to Europe.

(5) Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 – “By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.” – Progress Report