

## Avoid food waste, address food poverty

2016 Annual Meeting Resolution

theWI  
INSPIRING WOMEN



## Avoid food waste, address food poverty

‘The WI calls on all supermarkets to sign up to a voluntary agreement to avoid food waste, thereby passing surplus food on to charities thus helping to address the issue of increasing food poverty in the UK’

### Proposer’s Position

The proposer is concerned by the amount of edible food that is thrown away by supermarkets annually, especially in light of the growing numbers of people struggling to afford food, as well as the environmental consequences of food waste.

The proposer’s intention is reduce food waste by supermarkets by encouraging them to redistribute surplus, usable food to charities and food banks. This would have the twin benefits of alleviating the growing problem of food poverty in the UK, as well as reducing the environmental footprint of wasted food production.

Just 2% of edible surplus food is being collected and redistributed for human consumption

21% of households with children have suffered from some form of food poverty



## Food Waste

Food waste can occur at any stage of the food chain, from farm to fork, and can be separated into avoidable or unavoidable waste. Avoidable food waste is waste that could have been prevented had the food been better managed in the supply chain, food that had at some point prior to its disposal been edible. Unavoidable food waste is food which is not, or has never been, edible, such as bones or egg shells.

When disposing of waste the government promotes the use of the waste hierarchy which ranks waste management options from most to least preferable. Most preferable is prevention, reducing the amount of waste produced in the first place. Between 2007

and 2012 WRAP helped to drive a 21% reduction in the amount of avoidable food waste produced by households. The second most preferable option is redistribution, first to humans, and secondly to animals. The rest of the hierarchy deals with disposing of waste, through anaerobic digestion, composting, incinerating waste to produce energy, and finally sending waste to landfills or sewers.

WRAP estimate that around 15 million tonnes of food is wasted across the UK every year, 75% of which is avoidable. Seven million tonnes of this is household food waste, with agricultural and manufacturing waste making up around 6.9 million tonnes. It is estimated that just over 1% of the total, around 200,000 tonnes, is

thrown away by supermarkets and retailers each year. However, waste arising in one part of the supply chain will be influenced by other parts of the supply chain, for example, agricultural food waste could be affected by supermarkets' strict standards. FareShare estimates that only around 2% of edible surplus food is being redistributed for human consumption. Remaining waste food is used for anaerobic digestion, composting or incinerated for energy recovery.

# 200,000

tonnes of edible food is thrown away by the retail sector annually

## Food Poverty

Food poverty can be defined as the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet. In the decade between 2003-2013, food prices in Britain increased 47%, fuel prices increased 153% and housing costs increased 30.4%. But wages haven't kept up, during the same period wages only grew by 28%, meaning that many people are struggling to keep up with these increasing costs.

# 18%

of people in the UK have suffered from food poverty

As the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty noted, there are authorities that act to ensure payment of rent and payment of utility bills, which means that people in poverty often have little money left to pay increasing food costs.

Research by the Trussell Trust, FareShare and Tesco found that 18% of people in the UK have suffered from some form of food poverty, rising to 21% for households with children. This includes skipping meals, parents going without food to feed their children or relying on family or friends to provide food. More than 80% of parents in food poverty worry that they will struggle to provide nutritious food for their children in the near future; and

only a third of people currently suffering from food poverty expected their situation to improve in the coming year.

The Trussell Trust is the UK's largest foodbank operator with over 400 foodbanks. The charity estimates that it gave out three days of emergency food to over 1 million people in 2014/15. This is a big increase on 2012/13 when it gave out over 300,000 food parcels, and 2010/11 when it gave out around 60,000. However, the Trussell Trust is only one part of the food redistribution network and some estimate that the number of food banks could be double this. Another big organisation, FareShare, works to intercept food waste and direct it to 2,290 charities across the UK. This system has fed 17.7 million vulnerable people.

## Current Situation

WRAP estimate that around 15 million tonnes of food is wasted each year, of which only 20,000 tonnes are redistributed for human consumption. Most of the food that is currently distributed by the Trussell Trust has been donated by consumers – largely through collections at schools, churches and supermarkets.

# £160 million

the amount the voluntary sector would save if supermarkets double the amount of food they redistribute

From 2012-2013 WRAP examined the role that surplus food redistribution by supermarkets could have in the overall food waste reduction strategy. The research found that while the tonnages of surplus food available in a store are small compared to the whole supply chain, these volumes are still significant enough to have a real benefit to those in need. FareShare's own findings back this up, the charity estimates that the 300-400,000 tonnes of edible food being wasted across the supply chain could provide 800 million meals, yet only 2% of this total is being redistributed by the charity at present.

In its Feeding Britain report, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty found that doubling this redistribution (which would still be only 4% of usable food) would save the voluntary sector £160 million over the course of this Parliament.

Tesco is the only supermarket to publish its own independently assessed food waste data. Its latest data for 2014-15 shows that 55,400 tonnes of its food was thrown away, around 30,000 tonnes of which could otherwise have been eaten. To tackle this it has recently introduced a new app for store managers to alert local charities to surplus food available for collection at the end of the day. Sainsbury's has a nationwide scheme to redistribute food waste, and around 300 of its 1200 stores are involved in sending leftover food to charities. Marks and Spencer has recently launched a nationwide scheme which will connect all of its stores with local charities, working in partnership with a social network called Neighbourly.

As well as store-level interventions, major supermarkets have teamed up with charities such as FareShare to distribute more of their waste food to people in need. Tesco, Morrison's, Sainsbury's and most recently Asda, have all trialled selling 'wonky veg' in an attempt to reduce food waste further down the supply chain.

### FareShare

FareShare fights hunger and food waste by redistributing surplus that would otherwise go to waste. FareShare has provided UK charities with enough food for more than 17.7 million meals. The charity supplies food to over 2,290 charities and community organisations (charity members) across the UK, who in turn feed 194,650 people every week. FareShare operates in 20 regions, redistributing food across 200 towns and cities across the UK.

### Courtauld 2025

Courtauld 2025 is an ambitious 10-year voluntary agreement that brings together a broad range of organisations involved in the food system to make food and drink production and consumption more sustainable. Courtauld 2025 will build on the successful track record of the Courtauld Commitment to date. For example, between 2010 and 2012, Courtauld phase 2 prevented 1.7Mt (million tonnes) of waste across the UK, with 5Mt of carbon saving, which delivered £3bn of cost savings.

### France

In early 2016 the French senate passed a law which made France the first country in the world to ban supermarkets from throwing away or destroying unwanted food. The new law obliges supermarkets to sign a donation deal with charities to ensure the food is redistributed to people in need. Importantly, the law also makes it easier for charities to receive donations straight from the factories, which had previously been a long and complex process.

*While food has been a longstanding concern for the WI, the NFWI has no mandate to address food poverty. This resolution would empower the NFWI nationally and WI members locally to lead on reducing food poverty.*



## **Arguments** **FOR the** **resolution**

*This resolution harks back to the WI's historic roots in food production and feeding the nation – it would be a fitting resolution to carry us into our second century.*

*In this current economic climate, we cannot afford to continue wasteful practices where good food is wasted, families go hungry, and the environment suffers. Now may be the time for the WI to add its voice to those calling for innovation in not only how we eat food, but how we dispose of our food.*

*Is the voluntary approach that this resolution calls for the best approach? Consumers, advocates, and charities have already tried to voluntarily persuade supermarkets to address food waste, thus far with limited success. Should the WI call for legislative or mandatory action on this issue instead?*



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## **Arguments AGAINST** **the resolution**

*The WI has already undertaken significant work on food waste. Additionally, while national work on food poverty has not been possible due to a lack of mandate, a number of WIs have been working locally to support food banks. Is a national mandate necessary?*

*Almost half of all food waste in the UK is generated in the household, as opposed to just over 1% in supermarkets. If the WI is to tackle food waste, is a focus on individual action better than targeting supermarkets?*



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### ***Fareshare***

Website: [www.fareshare.org.uk](http://www.fareshare.org.uk)  
 Address: FareShare, Unit 7 Deptford Trading Estate, Blackhorse Road, London, SE8 5HY  
 Tel: 020 7394 2468  
 Email: [enquiries@fareshare.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@fareshare.org.uk)

### ***WRAP – Love food, hate waste***

Website: [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)  
 Contact through their website:  
[www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/content/can-we-help](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/content/can-we-help)

### ***FoodCycle***

Website: [www.foodcycle.org.uk](http://www.foodcycle.org.uk)  
 Address: FoodCycle, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London, E2 6HG  
 Tel: 020 7729 2775  
 Email: [hello@foodcycle.org.uk](mailto:hello@foodcycle.org.uk)

### ***The Trussell Trust***

Website: [www.trusselltrust.org](http://www.trusselltrust.org)  
 Address: The Trussell Trust, Unit 9, Ashfield Trading Estate, Ashfield Road, Salisbury, SP2 7HL  
 Tel: 01722 580 180  
 Email: [enquiries@trusselltrust.org](mailto:enquiries@trusselltrust.org)

### ***British Retail Consortium***

Website: [www.brc.org.uk](http://www.brc.org.uk)  
 Address: 21 Dartmouth Street, Westminster, London, SW1H 9BP  
 Tel: 020 7854 8900  
 Email: [info@brc.org.uk](mailto:info@brc.org.uk)

### ***The Real Junk Food Project***

The real junk food project is a network of 'pay as you feel cafes', which divert food destined for waste and use it to create healthy meals. Find a café near you:  
 Website: [www.therealjunkfoodproject.org](http://www.therealjunkfoodproject.org)

### ***NFWI PA team***

Website: [www.thewi.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.thewi.org.uk/campaigns)  
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