

Avoid food waste, address food poverty 2016 Annual Meeting Resolution

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

Proposed by Snailbeach WI, Shropshire Federation

Why are we campaigning?

Food waste is at odds with the very culture of the WI, which in its early years saw WI members working to increase food production and preserve food in order to ensure that a public coping with the turmoil of war and its aftermath were able to eat. Since then, farming practices have changed significantly and their intensification has seen a huge increase in productivity (and with it, waste).



Photo credit: iStock

83% of delegates voted in support of this year's NFWI resolution to 'avoid food waste, address food poverty.' The resolution calls on supermarkets to sign up to a voluntary agreement to avoid food waste, as well as to pass surplus food on to charities to help address the issue of food poverty in the UK.

What is the issue?

Food waste is all around us; 1.7 million tonnes is wasted at manufacturing level, 0.2 million tonnes by supermarkets, 7 million tonnes in the home. Whilst concerted efforts in recent years have made a significant dent in these figures, the facts are still stark. This is happening at a time when an estimated 8.4 million people in the UK do not have enough to eat, with 4.7 million unable to afford a basic meal a day. It follows the worst economic recession in recent years, during which time food prices have increased by 8%, and food bank use has increased 40 fold. And it is happening against a backdrop of wanton waste; 'BOGOF' deals on perishables and confusing date labelling leading to increased food waste in the home. Cancelled farm orders, and 'appearance guidelines' mean that farmers often have to plough perfectly good food back into their fields or use it as animal feed.



Photo credit: iStock

“The WI is uniquely placed to implement this campaign. It goes to the very origins of the WI which always sought to help people make the most of the harvests available to us – for the benefit of everyone in society.”

*Tristram Stuart,
Founder of Feedback*

What would the NFWI like to achieve?

- ***An enhanced voluntary framework:***

The NFWI believes that existing voluntary agreements have the potential to go much further. The NFWI would like to see supermarkets committing to a range of measures that go above and beyond their current voluntary obligations, such as greater transparency in publicising their food waste statistics and an end to practices that contribute to food waste up and down the food chain, including buy one get one free deals, and appearance guidelines on fruit and veg.

- ***Food to be used to feed people:***

The NFWI is concerned that at present only 18% of food surplus fit for human consumption is redistributed to food charities, with the majority of the remainder being used for energy production. The NFWI believes that *all* good food should be redistributed for human consumption where possible.

- ***The root of food poverty to be addressed:***

The NFWI is calling for an end to hunger in the UK. Whilst emergency food aid such as food banks play an important role in helping alleviate the hardship of those in need, it is widely accepted that they do not address the underlying causes of food poverty or present a long term solution. The NFWI wants to see action at all levels to address both the causes and impacts of food poverty and will be exploring this issue throughout the campaign.

Get involved – some ideas for initial campaign actions.

- ***Contribute to our food waste map:*** Tweet, email, or send in by post a photograph of what food waste means to you, along with your location. It can be a discarded bag of chips, a bin full of food, or something more abstract. We will be populating a map of England and Wales with your photos to use as a powerful visual with MPs and retailers.

- ***Share your food waste stories:*** Are you a farmer who’s had an order cancelled at the last minute, or a consumer who’s noticed a supermarket practice that you feel is contributing to your, or someone else’s, food waste? Share your stories with us using the contact details below.

- ***Contact your local food bank or charity:*** There are foodbanks operating throughout England and Wales. Find out if there is one local to you and get in touch to find out more about the work they do, the services they offer and whether there are opportunities to get involved. We are trying to get a more accurate picture of foodbanks today, so please let us know if your local food bank is offering additional services other than food aid (for example employment advice) or is run by an organisation other than the Trussell Trust.

- ***Sign up for updates to our campaign:*** We will be putting together a campaign action pack for members who want to get involved with the campaign. Get in touch with the public affairs team using the details below to register your interest.

Get in touch!

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