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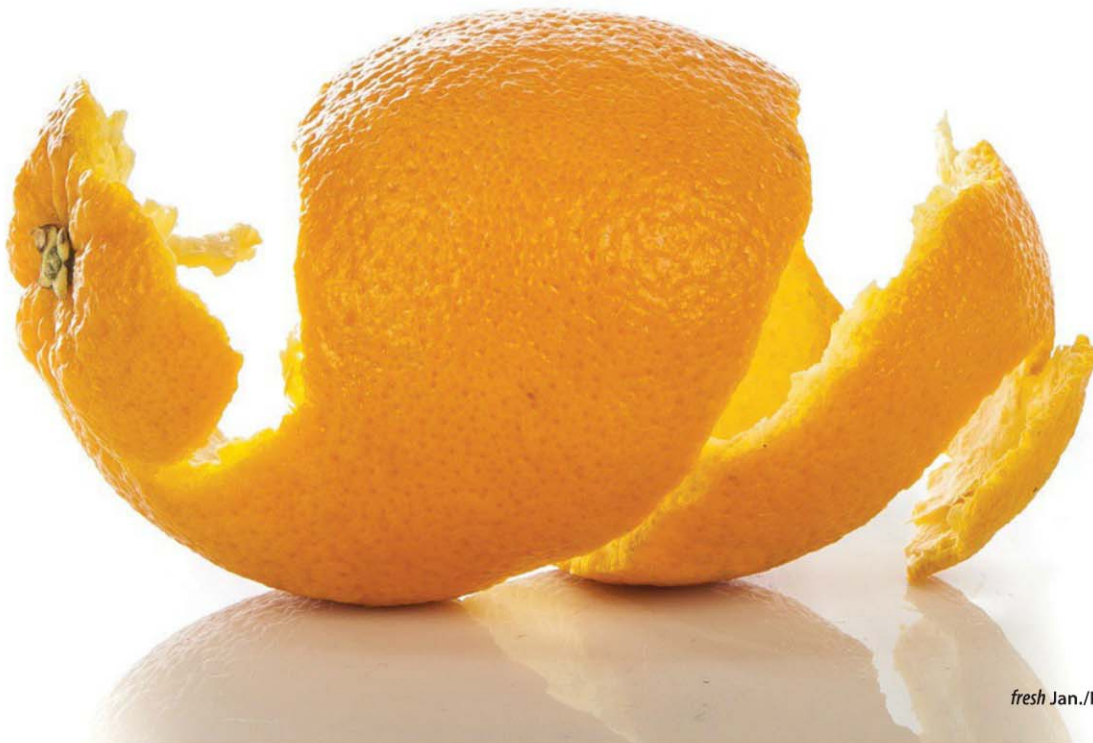
# Reducing Food Waste

## The Next Revolution

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In order to feed the growing global population by 2050, we have two choices:

**We can grow 60 percent more food, or  
we can stop wasting half of our edible food.**



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***The biggest food story this year revolves around what we we're not eating.***

We are growing more food than we can manage. Yet there are nearly one billion hungry people in the world. According to Mark Bittman, Food Editor of *The New York Times*, the world produces 2,700 calories per person per day – plenty for the complete nourishment of every living human being – but besides the obvious distribution problem, ***there is the issue of waste.***

In the United States people have become preoccupied with the aesthetics of food, an estimated 20 percent\* of edible – but not necessarily pretty – fruits and vegetables go to waste.

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**Globally, food waste is rising to 50 percent.**

Excessive waste is found in processing and packaging. Lyle Olson, a food processing and packaging expert, says that the general rule is that 50 percent of every processed potato goes to waste. He is working to develop a method whereby this waste is converted into animal feed.

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**Reducing food losses by just 15 percent would provide enough food to feed more than 25 million people.**

In developing countries, nearly half of food loss happens near the beginning of the cycle, due to inefficient processes in harvesting, processing, transportation, or simply product spoilage.

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**Of the millions of tons of food we waste in America each year, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates 96 percent ends up in a landfill.**

One quarter of the items in the average American refrigerator right now will go in the trash, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

\*Natural Resources Defense Council.

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### Where there is data, there is hope

Experts believe that scarcity of good numbers on actual food waste explains why the topic hasn't been front-and-center sooner. But many organizations have sprung up of late that use data to inform – and transform – the world's food waste habits.

Andrew Shakman of LeanPath of Portland, Oregon – one such company – says, “Data drives behavioral change.” And that statement is proving true. His customers, which include University of California at Berkeley dining halls and the MGM Grand Buffet in Las Vegas, have seen waste drop by 80 percent after installing his system. The system works by weighing food that is to be tossed, and showing companies, in real time, how much and what types of food are being wasted.

This kind of tracking system works at the farm level, too. One farmer saw that 20 percent of his strawberries were being left to rot in the field. Now that farmers' profit margins have become tighter, that kind of loss has become unacceptable. So he began putting his imperfect fruits into jams and jellies, thereby transforming his net loss into a gain.

Data can even help diminish supermarket waste. Based on the results of a first-ever self-generated report on food waste released by a combined task force of the National Restaurant Association, the Grocery Manufacturers Association and the Food Marketing Institute, knowledge that the retail sector produces more than four billion pound of food waste annually was a wake-up call for change.

### Technology to the rescue

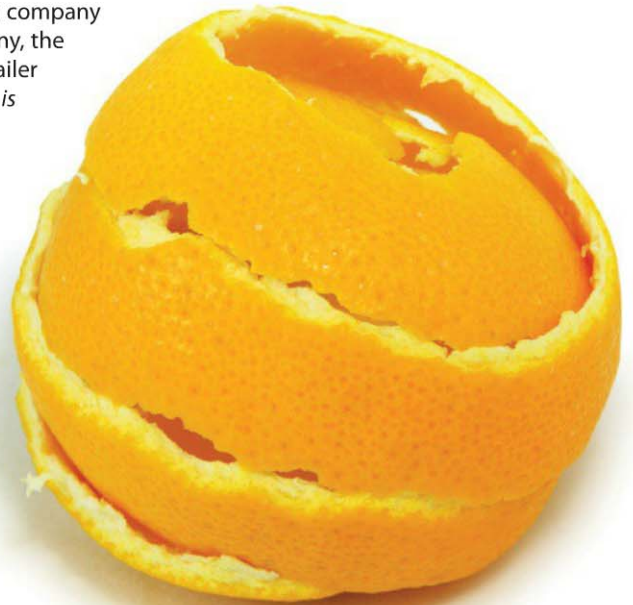
From smart refrigerators that alert you to food that's about to go bad, to anaerobic digesters that break down enormous amounts of organic waste (using the same principle as the human stomach), to mobile applications that promote more efficient shopping, technology is doing its part to help us reduce food waste.

### Creative strategies for reducing waste

In Europe, some businesses are promoting the appeal of imperfect or downright ugly produce. Culinary Misfits is the name of a catering company in Berlin that uses only *ugly* vegetables; elsewhere in Germany, the Rewe Group has a line of *nonconformist* produce; and the retailer Edeka has tested the selling of produce branded as *nobody is perfect*.

Executives at the UK food retailer, Tesco, are looking at ways to encourage consumers to buy ugly or misshapen fruits and vegetables, including what they call the Wonky Carrot. This is in response to recent national statistics that revealed that up to two-fifths of produce is wasted because it is ugly. Other initiatives include the end of multi-buy savings to discourage consumer over-buying and working with apple and grape growers to develop products that are resistant to pests and have a longer life.

While the statistics are startling and humbling, they represent an opportunity to bring about real change. It is only through this new transparency that we can examine the ugly truth of food waste and actually begin doing something about it. 🌱



Sources: ModernFarmer.com, FoxBusiness.com, BBC.co.uk, FarmersGuardian.com, The New York Times.

## Four New Food Waste Solutions Already at Work

**Matching overabundance with need** A new mobile application, Food Cowboy, based in Berkeley, California, seeks to reduce food waste by linking trucking companies and food businesses with need-based organizations. Its website gives an example: A food bank manager gets a text saying a distributor rejected three tons of carrots because they weren't straight enough. The food bank manager clicks "OK," and the match is made.

**Containment issues** In developing nations, food loss often results from a lack of the most basic necessities, such as adequate crates for tomato transportation or coolers to prevent spoilage. Small grants have enabled these countries to dramatically reduce waste by providing this basic equipment.

**Second chance food stores** Grocery veteran Doug Rauch, former CEO of Trader Joe's, has plans to open a large market in a disadvantaged neighborhood outside of Boston where he'll sell food that's past its shelf date, but still within the window of being good. Numerous studies have shown that shelf dates are arbitrary, with little connection to safety and taste. Similar stores across the globe have been met with success.

**Buffet for pigs** The excess at Las Vegas buffets provides just the right opportunity for putting the good use of leftovers to the test. Bob Combs, a pig farmer north of Vegas, drives his pickup truck into the city every night to collect free leftovers from 12 restaurants. He processes the food to be in compliance with livestock feeding laws, and feeds it to his 2,500 pigs.

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