

Production of Food Waste by Consumers in the Netherlands

Paper written during the course: Sustainable Food Security: Food Access.

This paper is about the enormous amount of food waste produced in the Netherlands. This is not only a problem for the individual, it is a problem affecting the world, because it has big effects on the environment and also on our access of food in the future. The problem is that in the Netherlands on average 135 kilograms of food waste is thrown away per person each year [1]. People, but also producers and companies throw away food on a daily basis. The problem is occurring in the world, but mostly in more developed countries, where people can easily spend a lot of money on food.

The consumers in the Netherlands are the group who produce most food waste (9% of the total 20% of the avoidable food waste) [2]. In 2010 they produced around 73 kilograms of food waste per person per year is, of which 44 kilogram (60%) was still eatable [3]. Consumers who do not use a grocery list when doing groceries, throw away 40% more food. Also, when people have food that passed the expiration date, 48% of the people will throw away this food directly. Next to that, 48% of the consumers prefer to have more food at home than really is needed, and throw away food for this reason.

The Netherlands score highest on the ranking of best country to eat [4], this is tested on four questions; if people can afford to eat, have enough to eat, the quality of the food and the unhealthy outcomes of people's diet. So, the Netherlands is a prosperous lands, in which most of the people have access to food and can afford to spend a lot of money on buying food. When people have a lot of money to spend, it is easy to buy too much and to throw it away again when they do not want to eat it anymore.

The enormous amount of food waste is a long-term problem. When people buy more food, more food is produced and more waste is created. For the production of food land area is needed. Our population is growing, and thus even more food is needed, and more waste will be formed. Because of this, also more food need to be produced, and more land area is needed for both the production of food and for the growing amount of people to live. In the Netherlands, there is already a shortening in places to live for people, creating more space for production and for processing the amount of food waste is difficult.

Furthermore, there are innovative production ideas for producing food sustainable, but still the production of most of our food is very harmful for our environment. When having a look worldwide, the current food system is responsible for 25% of the total emission of greenhouse gases, and 60% for the loss of biodiversity [5]. Also, the food production is responsible for the worldwide water scarcity. The emission of greenhouse gases has climate change as its consequence. Already negative effects of the climate change are visible, farmers have to deal with bad productions because of the changing weather conditions. When this trend continuous, in 2050, 50 million more people will have to deal with hunger [6].

To conclude, when throwing food away, all energy and raw materials which were needed for the production of food are wasted. Also, more food waste is produced, and some of the food waste is not thrown away separated, this need to be processed. This causes that the environment is unnecessary harmed, which has negative effects on the long-term. If no changes are made, less people will have access to food in the future.

References:

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