Policies against consumer food waste

REFRESH final conference May, 10 2019, Barcelona

Stephanie Wunder, Ecologic Institute
Categories of policy instruments

How can policy makers influence consumer behaviour?

1. Information
2. Regulation
3. Economic instruments
4. Nudging/change of consumer’s choice architecture and
5. Voluntary agreements
Suitability of instruments

Hardly any knowledge about the effectiveness of policy instruments!

No clear picture about effectiveness:
Due to a lack of monitoring the effectiveness of tools is hardly known
1. Information

All attempts by public policy makers to influence people through the transfer of knowledge, education and counselling

1. Information and awareness raising campaigns
2. Social norm campaigns
3. Education/skill training
4. Prompts
5. Feedback
6. Commitment
1. Information and awareness raising campaigns
   - Most widely used instrument – but not necessarily the most effective!
   - Varieties of campaigns
   - Impacts hardly studied!
To improve:

- **Positive messages**: messages that blame consumers for waste tend to have backfiring effects
- **Address abilities** (rather than awareness)
- Impact of different **narratives**? stronger drivers for action like social justice & health?
Information

2. Social norm campaigns

REFRESH survey showed that social norms/tendency of individuals to conform to majority has big influence

How to do this?

- **Modelling** (observational learning/imitation) – example: waiter proactively offering doggy bag
- **Demonstrate desired behaviour** in video
- **Comparative feedback** about recycling behaviours
- Work with existing **social influencers**
- Impact of **contests**? (emphasize positive behaviour of others)
Information

3. Education/skill training
   Improve abilities, e.g. in schools (planning, storing, cooking precisely...)

4. Prompts
   Verbal or written messages that remind people (e.g. buffet: „come back as often as you want“), „Store me in the fridge“
5. Feedback
Information about frequency of waste or consequences
(e.g. printed sheet on FW amounts per household)

6. Commitment
→ pledge to change behaviour
(works best if given in public/oosted online)
Economic Instruments

- **Price of Food**/
  (include external costs)
- Fees and taxes
- Waste collection: Pay-as-you throw schemes?

![The Food Waste Iceberg](image-url)
Regulation – potential areas

- **On pack information**, e.g. date marking
- Requirements for **packaging**
- Requirements consumer **education** (e.g. school curricula)

**Influencing consumer behaviour** through regulation targeted towards other actors
- Prohibition for **supermarkets** to waste edible food
- Requirements within **public procurement** regulation
- Regulation about **waste collection** and recycling
- Impact of **laws/regulation** on social norms?

French supermarkets banned from throwing away and spoiling unsold food

'Supermarkets will be obliged to sign a donation deal with charities'

Matt Peyton | @paytey99 | about a year ago | 1383 comments

1176K shares
Nudging

- modification of choice architecture, as large part of our behaviour is unconscious
- Gentle “push” for better choices, non-forced

Examples within **public procurement**:
- plate size,
- availabilities of trays
- placing surplus food products in more visible and salient places
- Sliced fruit/vegetables – smaller portions...
Voluntary Agreements

→ **self-regulations**, developed by the industry and/or other stakeholders to implement or complement public policies with regard to *(indirectly) avoid consumer food waste* e.g.:
  - Relaxing marketing standards
  - Increasing availability of new products from surplus food

⚠️ **Role of policy makers!**
  - Have power to **bring all actors together**, motivation: exchange good practices & avoid regulation
  - Can help to set up the **process** incl. **financial** support
Needed! System perspective on food behaviour

- lack of evaluation of waste reduction interventions

→ need to integrate monitoring requirements early in campaign/intervention
Needed! System perspective on food behaviour

- Address competing goals of consumers, increase synergies reduce trade-offs, e.g.

- Design policies towards sustainable food systems
Thank you!

Stephanie.wunder@ecologic.eu
www.eu-refresh.org