Policies against consumer food waste

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Influencing factors consumer behaviour

general framework of factors that influence household practices as developed by REFRESH
Influence of socio-demographics

Influence of age, household size and composition, gender, education level, income?

→ do not directly cause food waste, but most likely influence motivation, ability or opportunity

= correlated with food waste, but not causal factors
Food management practices with an impact on food waste

REFRESH survey:
planning of food shopping and use, impulse buying, overview of the food in stock, cooking precisely, and using leftovers very influential
Categories of policy instruments to influence consumer food waste

- **Information** and awareness raising campaigns
- **Regulation**
- **Economic** instruments
- **Nudging**/change of consumer’s choice architecture and
- **Voluntary agreements**

No clear picture about effectiveness:

Due to a lack of monitoring the effectiveness of tools is hardly known
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

(Crosscutting: Apps and ICT tools)
Information

1. Information and awareness raising campaigns
   - Widely used instrument
   - Wide 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?
2. Social norm campaigns

- exploit tendency of individuals to conform to majority

REFRESH survey showed, that what others do (descriptive social norms) have 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”), on pack: “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/posted online)
Regulation – potential areas

- **date marking**
  Requirements consumer **education** (e.g. school curricula)
- Requirements for **packaging**
- Prohibition for **certain practices** (e.g. BOGOF ban)

- **Influencing consumer behaviour** through regulation targeted towards **other actors**
  - Relaxing marketing standards
  - Increasing availability of new products from surplus food
  - Prohibition for **supermarkets** to waste edible food
  - Requirements within **public procurement** regulation
  - Regulation about **waste collection** and recycling
Economic instruments

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

→ modification of choice architecture

Examples within public procurement:
- plate size,
- availabilities of trays
- placing surplus food products in more visible and salient places
Voluntary agreements

→ self-regulations, developed by the industry and/or other stakeholders to implement or complement public policies (e.g. with regard to avoid consumer FW)

Roles of policy makers:

- Have power to bring all actors together, motivation: exchange good practices & consumer communication (& regulation only if no voluntary action is taken)
- Setting up the process
- financial support
- development of guidelines
Needed! Evaluation of impacts

- lack of evaluation of waste reduction interventions → need to integrate monitoring requirements early in campaign/intervention

1. Set **objectives** and indicators for monitoring
2. Use **comparable** methods/definitions
3. “**Measuring**” food waste
4. Short and **long term** effects
5. Consider **competing** impacts
6. Understand **unintended** consequences
7. Understanding **cost effectiveness**

Using the REFRESH survey in China:
„While you try to find out more what they think, they try their best to know what you think“
(…be aware of social desirability of answers…)
Needed! System perspective on food behaviour

- Address competing goals of consumers, increase synergies reduce trade-offs:
  - Health
  - Resource use (e.g. packaging)
  - Regional food production and consumption
  - Sales
  - Price and social inequality
  - Time availability
Thank you!

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