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Food waste generation at the household level in Argentina. Identifying high waste foods and behaviours

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Introduction

In the year 2020, the Farm to Fork strategy was established intending to approach and mitigate many environmental challenges like food waste. To develop food loss and waste reduction and management strategies, there is a need to correctly diagnose the current situation. Argentina is a country ranked number 10 in global food production, with 214.3 million tonnes of food produced in 2019. A 2018 FAO estimate stated that 16 million tons (7.4%) of food fit for consumption is wasted in Argentina per year. Therefore, gathering up to date data to solve this problem is crucial. There is limited data about how this total tonnage is distributed to different parts of the Argentinian food system. In most countries household food waste is a large contributor to food waste generation (5%-58%), see Flanagan et al 2019. The 2021 "Food waste index" report stated, (with a very low confidence level), that at a household level there are 72 kg/c/y of waste generated (approximately ~3.2 million tonnes). The purpose of this study is to estimate and gain a better understanding of the drivers of household food waste in Argentina.

Methods

In 2020, data was collected from 564 Argentinian based participants. The majority were 25 years of age and older (M:42.6 years old, SD: 17.8, 57.3% male). A cross-sectional online survey measured variables including self-reported dietary patterns, behavioural food waste determinants and perceived food wasted.

Results

The dietary pattern reported by this sample was mainly omnivore (86.4%). The food waste behavioural determinants that had significance with low perceived food waste included: always checking what they have in the fridge before going shopping (54%, $p < 0.005$), never buying food they don't know how to cook (26% $p < 0.005$) and occasionally cooking in advance and freezing (29%, $p = 0.0005$). The foods with the largest percentage of perceived waste were pasta (14% of purchases wasted), followed by bread (13.4%), potatoes (13.4%) and chicken (13.4%). A similar waste pattern was found for food waste coming from cooked foods.

Conclusion

Understanding the types and drivers of Argentinian household food waste is key for developing future policies and educational strategies. We have identified positive behaviours for having low household food waste generation. In the household, policy makers need to encourage smarter choices and behaviours when purchasing and cooking specific foods. This includes developing specific interventions for pasta, bread, potatoes and chicken waste.

Topics

- Food systems: encompasses food production, processing, reformulation; organic; food safety and toxicity; food systems and sustainability issues; functional foods etc.

Additional Info

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