Assessment of household food waste in Hungary

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Abstract:

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to determine and quantify the most dominant types of food waste in Hungarian households and to analyse the effect of demographic background and income as influencing factors.

Design/methodology/approach

Data related to solid and liquid food waste were recorded from 100 households for one week. The study primarily focussed on avoidable food waste, however, unavoidable and potentially avoidable food waste were also measured. Appropriate tools and manual were provided to the households to ensure data consistency.

Findings

Estimated quantity of total food waste (including liquid waste) per capita is 68.04 kg/year. In all, 48.70 per cent of total food waste would have been avoidable (equals to 33.14 kg/capita/year). Most frequently wasted food categories were meals and bakery products. In case of some demographic categories, different wastage levels were observed. It was also confirmed that income has effect on food waste production that varies by foodstuff categories: bakery product waste was mainly dominant for middle income consumers and fresh fruits were typically wasted by more affluent households. Apart from that, higher income resulted in higher food waste production in general.

Practical implications

This primary data set about avoidable food waste in Hungary contributes with relevant information to the refining of international estimates. Having specific data on food wastage and the most affected target groups, as well as information on the impact of the income can be applied in planning awareness raising campaigns.

Originality/value

The research is based on measurement of food waste categories in households resulting in detailed data sets. This study is one of the first investigations based on primary data collection from the eastern part of Central Europe and the very first related to Hungary. The study draws attention also to the influence that household income exerts on the issue of food waste.

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