Addressing food waste reduction in Denmark

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Highlights

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We examine the barriers and solutions to food waste prevention and reduction.

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We examine the major efforts to address food waste in Denmark.

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Multi-stakeholder collaboration can create more sustainable solutions to food waste.

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Holistic, systems-thinking may optimize the utilization of food and reduce waste.

Abstract

Global food demand is driven by population and economic growth, and urbanization. One important instrument to meet this increasing demand and to decrease the pressure on food production is to minimize food losses and food waste. Food waste and loss is a major societal, economic, nutritional and environmental challenge. Using the case of Denmark, this paper analyses causes of food waste, and discusses how different stakeholders address the prevention and reuse of the €1.18 billion of annual edible food waste. Currently, the majority of food waste is still incinerated with energy recovery. However, improvements in technology have made it more efficient to utilize food waste for biogas and compost, which improves nutrient cycling through the food system. Major efforts to address food waste in Denmark have mainly been promoted through civil society groups with governmental support, as well as by industry. In order to better understand food waste and loss more research must be conducted on the total amount of food waste at every level of the food supply chain. Solutions can be found through improved communication, more efficient food packaging, and better in interpretation of food labels by consumers. Likewise, systems thinking may support an integrated agricultural and food system where food utilization is optimized and loss and waste of resources is reduced. In conclusion, sustainable solutions to the reduction of food waste in Denmark must include multi-stakeholders collaboration, especially public–private partnerships at the global level.