

Food Waste: Failure of 2015 Food Waste Policy

- Akash Tayade (MS Information, UW MADISON)

Food and Numbers:

15th Nov marked an important day in mankind as human population crossed the 8 billion mark. As the population growth continues it is time that we use the available resources carefully and reduce the waste. Over 800 million people live in hunger for their entire life. On the other hand, **35% of food goes uneaten or unused in the US annually** which is worth \$418 billions. In order to curb the waste US Department of Agriculture (USDA) joined hands with US Environmental Protection Agency (UEPA).



2015 Food Waste Policy:

On 16th September 2015, USDA and UEPA announced the U.S. 2030 Food Loss and Waste Reduction goal, the first-ever domestic goal. The goal is to reduce food loss by 50% by the end of 2030. To be specific, 2010 was selected as a baseline at **218.9 pounds** of food loss per person and the aim is to reduce this to **109.4 pounds**. On the other hand, for food waste the target is set to **164 pounds** per person compared to **328 pounds** per person in year 2016. By achieving this goal, the U.S. can improve food security and save money while reducing climate and environmental impacts associated with food waste.

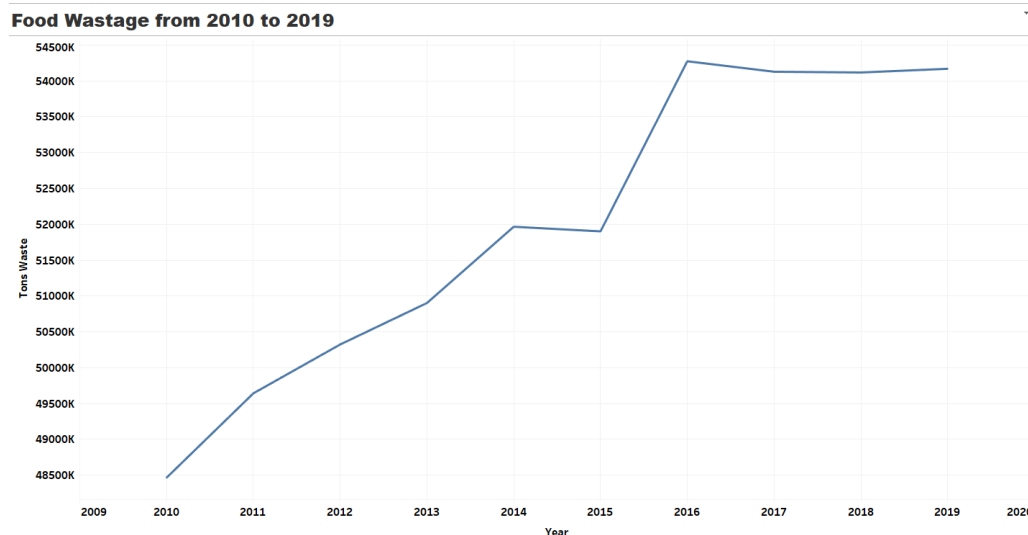
The policy also announced and invited businesses to 2030 Food Lost and Waste Competition. The championship is to award the businesses who would reduce food waste by 50% by 2030. The policy also focuses on educating communities on minimizing the food waste.

Food Waste stabilized but not reduced:

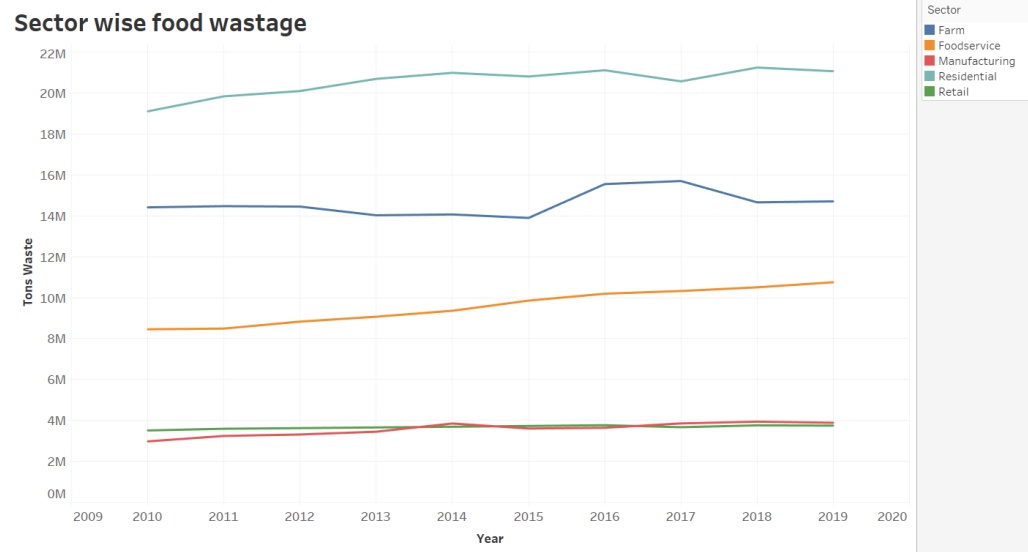
Food waste from 2010 raised gradually from 2010 to 2015 and then there was a **massive leap** in the numbers from 2015 to 2016. After 2016 the food waste has somewhat stabilized but there is no sign of reduction in overall waste. This is an alarming indicator that policy which is set to reduce waste has not been able to reduce it for past 5 years even by a small margin.

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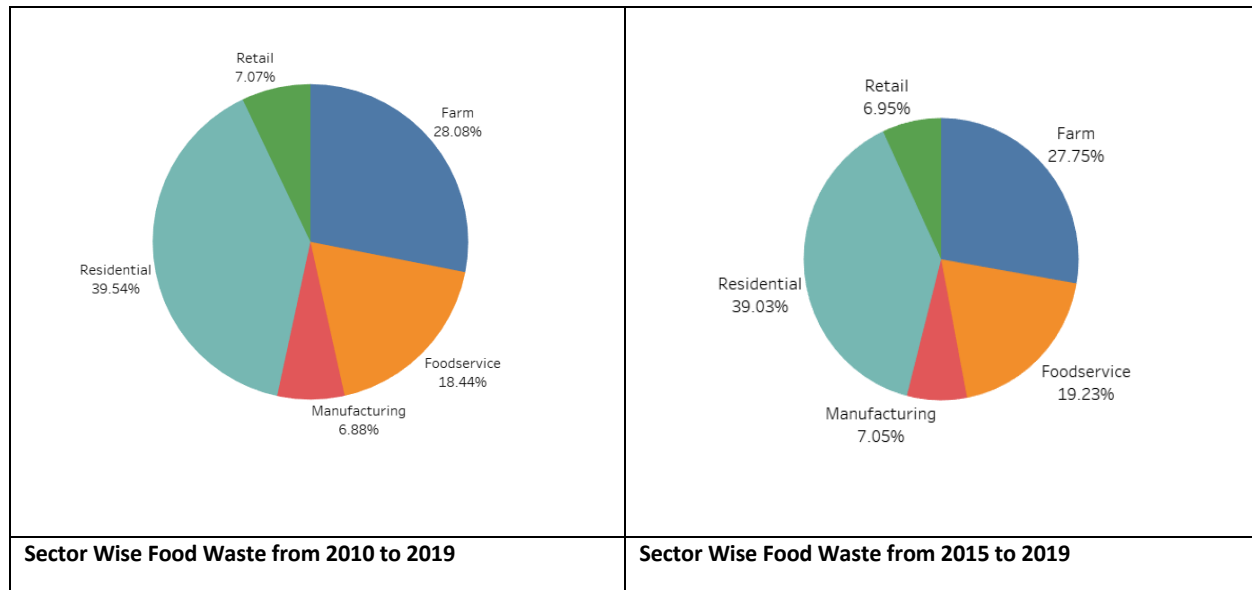
If we analyze further, food waste in all the sectors has **increased or remained same**. Foodservice has seen a gradual growth even after from 2010 to 2019 and there is no sign of the food waste going down in this sector. Although data for 2020, 2021 and 2022 is not yet available it is evident that the waste has increased in this sector as covid resulted in fluctuation of the number of customers.



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If we see the breakdown of the waste from year 2010 to 2019, the **residential sector** is the **main source** of food waste. When we reduce the timeline from 2010 to 2015 the food waste in the foodservice sector has increased while the other sectors remained the same. The Farm and the residential sector results in almost **70%** of total food waste.



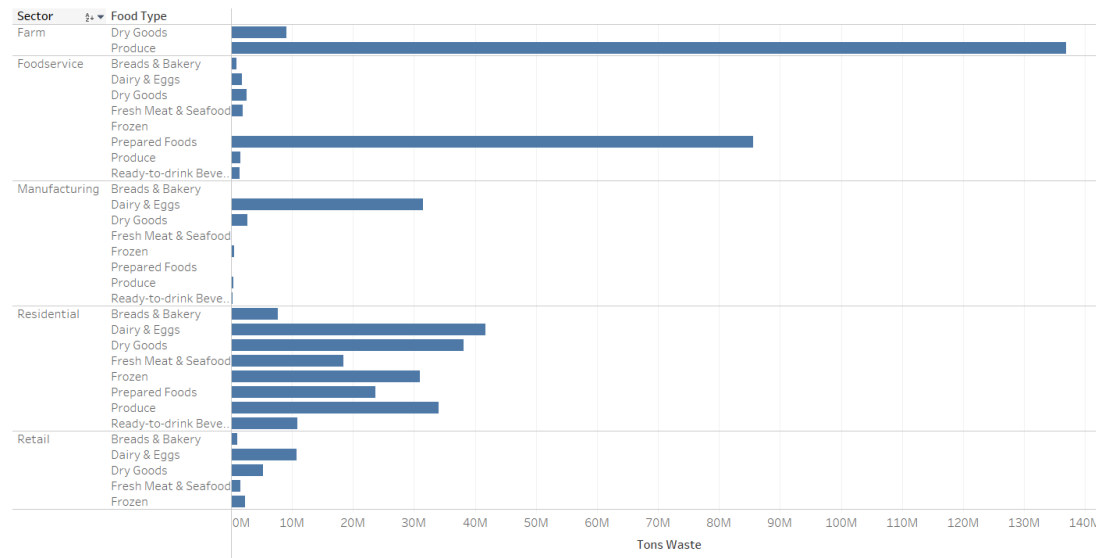
Major food types that are wasted:

For Food Waste Policy to be successful, USDA need to focus on the major food types that are wasted. Farm produce accounts to nearly **140M tons** of waste followed by prepared foods in the foodservice sector. Dairy and eggs, frozen food, dry goods and produce results in more than **60%** of food waste in residential sector.

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Food Types and Wastage



Conclusion and Recommendations:

Trend shows that there is **no sign** of reduction in food waste even after 4 years of the Policy. All 5 sectors are either on the same level or have increased rates of food waste. Food service saw **27% increase** in food waste which is far more than any other sector. At this rate it is difficult for the policy to be successful. To achieve the goal till 2030 it is necessary that the policy focus on the food types that constitute large portion of food waste. USDA and UEPA should do following interventions to get the policy on track and make an impact:

- **More focus on residential sector as it is the largest source of food waste. Educate communities and show them the impact of food waste**
- **Closely monitor Foodservice sector. Regularly check if the fast-food chains and restaurants practice minimum food waste methods**
- **Plan the farming patterns according to the need.**
- **Impose penalties on responsible organizations for exceeding a certain limit of food waste. Penalties should be in the form of investing more money to implement food waste reduction techniques**
- **Educate children in schools to reduce food waste. This is a long-term solution and will impact a large population**

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