



A Food Waste Measuring Tool



**Good practice for Sustainable Food
Systems in a circular economy
perspective**

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 Finland
 Business-led &
 Research Institute-led



THE CHALLENGE

In Europe, it is estimated that around 88 million tonnes of food are either lost or wasted. This takes place while 33 million people are unable to afford quality food globally.

According to the organisation Paulig, family-owned international company, headquartered in Finland, “(...) a third of all the food produced in the world goes to waste and if food waste was a country, it would be the third largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world” (source).

In Finland, the food waste generated by households every year amounts to 107-137 million (around 25 kilos per person and 500 million euros thrown away).

Therefore, food waste has a great impact both on the economy as precious work and resources go to waste (ie. land use, energy, water resources etc.) and on the environment as it contributes to climate change and biodiversity loss (source).

THE CONCEPT

In order to tackle the above challenge, Paulig, together with the Natural Resources Institute in Finland (Luke) launched a free-of-charge calculator, which allows Finnish households to estimate their food waste in a holistic manner ie. the amount, the climate impact, and the monetary value of such waste.

Such endeavour aims to reduce food waste and therefore lessen the burden it represents for both the economy and the environment. Indeed, reducing food waste leads to financial gains and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.



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THE PRACTICE - TOOL

The Natural Resource institute in Finland carried out an extensive study on food waste in the dairy sector (2010-2012). As part of this research, Finnish households were surveyed over a period of two weeks and asked about their shopping and consumption behaviour as well as the food they waste. The results obtained served as the basis to build the free of charge calculator.

The accuracy and precision of the calculator - both the questions asked and predictions - are attributed to the wide breadth of material and statistical methods upon which the tool rests.

The estimated prices are based on the study and on consumer price data from Statistics Finland.

As per the estimated impact on the environment, it is based on “several studies on the climate impact, or carbon footprint, of various food chains by Natural Resource Institute Finland, their client assignments, and similar international studies and their research materials. The carbon footprint estimates were made on the product group level.”

The tool also offers alternatives, recipes, ideas and suggestions such as: “Think about what you actually need and buy accordingly. If you’re not sure if and when you need it, leave it on the shelf. Read the date labels. If it’s past ‘best before’, it doesn’t mean it’s bad.

You can tell by smelling and tasting. ‘Expiration date’ tells you that the product should be used by that date.

Clean the fridge often to see what expires next.

Freeze your leftovers and be sure to put them to use later. Prepare for example a delicious leftover tortilla!

Check out recipes. Stop perfectly good groceries from going to waste and save money by buying products with red best before tags or ‘30% off’ labels.”



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ACTORS

The main actors are :

- The [Natural Resource Institute Finland \(Luke\)](#) is a research organisation “operating under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland. Luke’s task is to promote competitive business based on the sustainable use of renewable natural resources, as well as wellbeing and the vitality of the countryside.” Luke has 22 locations and its headquarters in Helsinki, Finland.
- [Paulig](#) is an international food company, family owned and founded in 1876. Their portfolio includes the following brands: Paulig, Santa Maria, Risenta, Poco Loco and Zanuy. The company is well known for their high-quality product offers i.e coffee, plant-based products, spices etc. It employs 2,300 employees in 13 countries and is headquartered in Helsinki.

REGULATORY ASPECTS



Although developed in part by the Natural Resource Institute Finland (Luke), which operated under the Ministry of Agriculture of Finland, the application and its use is on a voluntary basis and not mandatory for Finnish households to use.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE



Finland covers an area of 304 316 square kilometres (130,678 sq mi) with a population of 5 548 241 million ([source](#)).

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VOLUMES / OUTCOME / IMPACT GENERATED/ QUANTIFICATION



The 'less Food Waste Project' and its tool have been designed to inform Finnish households and draw attention to food waste with the aim to reduce it and therefore reduce the carbon footprint.

It is not known, to this day, by how much the tool has contributed to a decrease in food waste in Finland. However, such initiatives impact citizens' behaviours and the yearly and estimated 107-137 million food waste in Finland.

BARRIERS TO PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION

As with most tools, its use and success are based on information: knowing that such a tool exists as well as time and incentive to use it.

WINNING ASPECTS OF THE PRACTICE



The calculator was developed by a National Research Institute and an international food company. This means that the instrument is accurate and can reach a large panel of consumers.

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