

Media Release

21 February 2020

New research finds Australian families need strategies to reduce food waste to ensure they get value for money

New research commissioned by the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) has found that Australian families are focussed on the hit to the hip pocket from food waste.

Research participants estimated that they are throwing away 5-10% of their fresh produce purchases weekly. This is at a time when only 5.4% of Australian's are eating the recommended intake of fresh fruit and vegetables.

The AFPA recently commissioned an in-home study of 38 households across different life stages, incomes and ethnicities to better understand the relationship between fresh produce packaging, food waste and recycling in the home.

“What this study has demonstrated is that consumers who particularly live in the outer suburbs and have young families are looking for ways to reduce the financial burden of food waste in their households and that they need better advice on how to do this” said Michael Rogers, CEO, AFPA.

The research identifies three key themes of meal planning, convenience formats, and storage and use of fresh fruit and vegetables.

“A really key finding of this research is that the greater the level of meal planning undertaken by a household, the greater their reduction in food waste. This can save Australian families money every week and farmers and retailers can support this through seasonal meal ideas and meal plans which use all of the weekly fruit and vegetables purchased” said Mr Rogers.

This consumer research was undertaken as in-home interviews, which provided an opportunity to observe consumers fridges, pantries, kitchens and bins. The findings indicate that despite most consumers expressing a desire to reduce packaging, packaged produce was observed in the majority of fridges and kitchens.

“We’re seeing Australian families utilise packaged product for the benefit of portion control and keeping product fresher for longer. This ensures that consumers have the maximum amount of time available to use fresh produce which is an overwhelming positive. Keeping product as fresh as possible is critical in both reducing food waste and ensuring Australian's are able to access quality, fresh and nutritious fresh produce” said Mr Rogers.

“Ultimately, the goal for the fresh produce supply chain should be to work with Australian families to reduce the financial and environmental burden of food waste, while increasing access to fresh fruit and vegetables for the overall health of Australians” said Mr Rogers.

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Full report available to download: www.freshproduce.org.au/resources

About the AFPA - The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) is made up of Australia's key fresh produce growers and suppliers. The AFPA represents half the industry turnover of the Australian fresh produce sector - \$4.5 billion of the \$9.1 billion total; 1,000 plus growers through commercial arrangements and more than 15,000 direct employees through peak harvest, and up to 25,000 in the grower network.

The relationship between fresh produce packaging, food waste and recycling in the home

Key Findings

From the consumer interviews, three key themes across consumers purchase, use and disposal of fresh fruit and vegetables have emerged:

- **Planning:** the relationship between spending, planned meals, and food waste
- **Convenience:** access to fresh fruit and vegetables
- **Storage & Use:** management of fresh fruit and vegetable quality at home

Planning: the relationship between spending, planned meals and food waste

- The more meal planning undertaken the lower the food waste
- At a high level, households that are more conscious of their expenditure planned all meals in advance.
- The majority of consumers interviewed as part of this research indicated a desire to reduce food waste to save, and/or not waste money.
- Consumers by their own admission are buying fresh produce regardless of whether it is packaged or not.

Convenience: access to fresh fruit and vegetables

- Despite most consumers expressing a desire to reduce packaging, packaged produce was observed in the majority of fridges.
- In every household, where fruits or vegetables had been cut or semi-prepared, the cut product was refrigerated and stored in a form of packaging for preservation – indicating a knowledge that product needs protection to extend usable life.
- Appropriate portion sizes will reduce food waste. Portion sizes vary according

to household size; often smaller households are buying packaged item to avoid buying “whole” loose items e.g. lettuce.

Storage & Use: management of fresh fruit and vegetable quality at home

- Consumers **do not know** how best to store product to maintain quality.
- Storage conditions are driving produce use. Poor storage conditions are responsible for early drops in product quality and as a result product value. Consumers are value driven and therefore, as product deteriorates as does their perception of the value of the produce. This is creating a “use up” mentality.

Relationship between packaging and food waste; financial or ethical?

This research concludes that consumers feel differently about food waste than packaging waste. Consumers generally estimated that they only throw out 5-10% of fruit and vegetables weekly.

Consumers reported that they ‘hate’ wasting food as they feel they are throwing away money. This is in stark contrast to when consumers are asked about disposal of fresh produce packaging where they merely feel ‘bad’ or ‘guilty’ about throwing out packaging.

This contrast in consumer sentiment is attributed to the financial value consumers assign to food waste, whereas consumers do not believe they are losing anything when they dispose of packaging. Some consumers when interviewed could estimate the financial value of the food they disposed of; in contrast most consumers were unaware of the volume of packaging they disposed of in the same time period.