

Associate Professor Dejan Miljenović, PhD

CSR Against Food Waste: Creating a culture that values food — not wastes it

Food waste is one of the greatest challenges to sustainability — not only from an environmental and economic perspective, but also from an ethical one. More than 10% of the world's population is undernourished, while 1/3 of all food is lost in the supply chain or wasted in retail shops, restaurants and households. This paradox represents an unbalanced and unfair distribution of food resources and calls for responsible action in which corporate social responsibility (CSR) plays a key role.



CSR stands for a company's long-term commitment to making a positive impact on society and the environment — and reducing food waste is one of the most concrete ways to do this. Companies typically implement food waste reduction measures to identify their food waste and the impact on stakeholders. Stakeholders across the food supply chain - from food manufacturers and retailers to restaurants and catering service providers - have the power to manage food waste efficiently. This can include smarter inventory management, donating surplus food, consumer education campaigns or partnerships with local food banks. The efficiency of the entire food supply chain depends on everyone involved taking steps to minimise food waste. Fair food prices are an important element, especially in light of current inflationary trends. Relationships between large retailers and food producers in recent inflationary periods have been identified as unfair behaviour by large retailers that threatens

the sustainability of global food supply chains. Due to price issues for the end consumer, problems with food waste have sometimes taken a back seat.

A particular responsibility lies with food companies, such as seafood producers, who interact directly with fragile biological systems on a daily basis. In addition, food retailers, supermarkets and restaurants should develop business strategies to minimise food waste. There is also a problem with freshness quality standards in the fresh produce industry. This means that any food that is below these standards is already wasted, even though it is still fit for consumption. This is a major problem, especially in the fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain. Waste and loss management in the food retail sector play a particularly important role in CSR. In a recent study on this topic, David Grand identified three main problems: 1) the lack of a holistic approach to the management of food loss and waste; 2) the lack of sufficient transparency of stocks and 3) the inaccuracy of forecasts. It can also be proposed to integrate new technologies such as AI to improve distribution efficiency, especially in the context of fresh food delivery. Therefore, food waste and losses are interlinked and represent a socio-economic problem that is divided into the pursuit of a more efficient optimisation of food supply and a sustainable management of food waste.



The optimal goal in this area would be to avoid food waste, but in practise this becomes a real challenge. As part of CSR reporting, companies have the opportunity to present real figures on food waste management and responsible actions in this area. Companies should report real measures and achievements in minimising food waste. CSR is a valuable tool for this collaboration because it provides a framework for real, measurable change.

CSR strategies can not only help companies to minimise waste, but also improve their public image, build trust and contribute to a more sustainable future. Reducing food waste is not just an individual responsibility — it is a systemic problem that requires co-operation between businesses, consumers and policy makers. When companies embrace CSR principles, they can move from being part of the problem to being part of the solution: *creating a culture that values food — not wastes it.*