

News Release

For Release: 21 August 2024

Leftovers on the Rise: Australia's Food Waste Dilemma

- Australia generates approximately 7.3 million tonnes of food waste each year.
- Australian households discard about 3.1 million tonnes of edible food annually, equivalent to \$8 billion.
- This includes five million bananas, which if laid end to end, would stretch approximately 1,000 kilometres, almost the distance from Sydney to Melbourne.

From the farm to the household fridge, food waste remains a major issue across the Australian food supply chain.

According to ANZ's latest Food For Thought report, Australian households alone discard about 3.1 million tonnes of edible food annually, equivalent to \$8 billion.

ANZ Head of Institutional Food, Beverage and Agribusiness, Gerry Karam said: "In Australia we continue to have a significant food waste problem, which affects every stage of the food supply chain, from production and processing to retail and consumption."

"The issue has far-reaching environmental, economic, and social implications, demanding urgent action and innovative solutions."

At a farm level, various factors such as overproduction, market fluctuations, harvesting challenges and stringent quality standards lead to substantial losses. It is estimated that over 20 percent of vegetables produced in Australia – equivalent to around one million tonnes annually – never make it to market.

The problem extends beyond farms and into Australian households, where food waste is a pervasive issue, due to causes including over-purchasing, improper storage, and confusion over expiration dates.

"Another example is that Australians throw away nearly 1.3 billion slices of bread each year, which if stacked up, would create a tower over 1,000 kilometres high."

"According to the UN Food Waste Index Report, Australians waste an average of 102 kilograms of food per person each year, placing the country among the highest food wasters globally", said Karam.

"Food waste has a wide range of impacts, including environmentally, such as from landfill methane production, economically, through the cost of wasted food, and arguably most importantly socially, when dealing with Australia's own food insecurity issues," he said.

"Despite the challenges, there are a range of opportunities to reduce food waste, such as organisations who redistribute surplus food to charities, or through innovations in turning food waste into edible ingredients or renewable energy."

"Reducing food waste is not just an environmental imperative; it is also an economic opportunity that can drive positive change across the entire food supply chain," he said.

For media enquiries contact:

Will Watson; +61 403 878 269