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FOOD WASTE IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA: NEED FOR EXTENSION EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS

Abstract:

Food waste has been recognized all over the world and in Saudi Arabia too as one the prime factors limiting food security. The food is wasted through the entire food chain: by farmers, food industries, retailers, caterers and by consumers. The factors responsible and reasons causing such losses include: lack of awareness, lack of shopping planning, left-overs, and losses in households, restaurants, parties and occasions. Roughly about 40-50 % of all food ready for harvest never reaches to the consumers. According to the US environmental protection agency, food leftovers are the single-largest component of the waste stream. Food waste includes uneaten food and food preparation leftovers from residences or households, restaurants, schools, cafeterias etc. By 2075, the United Nation's mid-range projection for global population growth predicts that human numbers will peak at about 9.5 billion people. This means that there could be an extra three billion mouths to feed by the end of the century. The situation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is more crucial and difficult for several reasons; firstly the country imports almost all of its food needs. Secondly since 1990, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has been among the countries suffering from severe water shortage. Despite the country is facing an acute scarcity of water resources and witnesses over growing population yet has successfully managed to achieve the self-sufficiency levels in several food commodities. The kingdom spends a significant portion of its budget on importing huge volumes of food commodities and makes them available to its citizens at the highly subsidized rates. Above all, the Saudis as a nation are very hospitable and food lovers. Also the culture in the KSA is based on festivals and huge quantities of food are being served. All these factors lead to a lot of food waste. At the moment, the wastefulness has reached to a level where food is thought to be the number one contributor to the waste in landfills. There is a great need to reduce the food waste in the KSA by adopting different ways, means and strategies. Although complete prevention seems difficult yet food waste can be reduced significantly by increasing public awareness on the food and water situation in the Kingdom through a national comprehensive campaign and vibrant extension education programs.

Keywords:

food waste, imports, subsidies, dietary behaviors, awareness, extension education,

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