



WasteLess 2017
Policies, Practices and Partnerships: Reducing Food Waste Symposium
May 30, 2017
Country Heritage Park, Milton

EVENT SUMMARY REPORT

Funder, Partners, Supporters, Facilitator

The event was hosted by the [Halton Food Council](#) in partnership with [Country Heritage Park](#), the [Ontario Food Collaborative](#) and [Sustain Ontario](#); supported by the [Ontario Produce Marketing Association](#), [The Printing House](#), [Riverstone Branding](#), and funded by the [Ontario Trillium Foundation](#). The symposium was facilitated by [Eco-Ethonomics](#).

Goals

The goals of the symposium were multi-fold: to increase awareness about food waste, highlight projects across multiple stakeholder groups that are addressing this societal problem, as well as explore potential future steps of the Halton Food Council to address the issue. The council was also interested in providing an opportunity for various actors and stakeholders to network and seek potential partnerships.

Attendees

The event was attended by a broad spectrum of 60 people from several sectors that reflected the social, environmental, and economic implications of wasted food. The attendees included representatives from regional and municipal governments; non-profit organizations (emergency food providers, environmental groups, the food and nutrition sector, food marketing association), the agricultural sector, industry (food service, food waste recycling, consulting), post-secondary educators, individuals involved in communications (branding, food website, social media).

Speakers

The speakers were experts from various backgrounds including government, consulting, not-for-profit organizations, the food industry, the food waste industry, academia, and education (see agenda below). The event handout, including speaker bios and a summary of presentations, is available at [Reducing Wasted Food](#).

Agenda

- 8:00 Registration
- 8:30 Introduction
- 8:35 **Keynote speaker: Dr. Martin Gooch CEO/Partner, VCM International**
- 9:30 **Cher Mereweather, Provision Coalition**
- 10:15 Break

stories of companies that have used technology-based tools to reduce food waste. The attendees took home information about best practices, new technologies and research techniques for measuring food waste.

During the Q&A sessions, participants were particularly interested in learning about the specifics of programmes and policies.

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS



Keynote Speaker: [Dr. Martin Gooch](#) CEO/Partner, [VCM International](#)
Food Waste in Canada: Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. Gooch began the day with a sobering presentation about the situation of food waste in Canada. Value Chain Management International has estimated that \$31 billion of food is wasted annually in Canada, 47% of which is wasted by consumers. Gooch emphasized that food loss/waste (FLW) is a symptom and that it is important to determine the root causes. Canada is an affluent nation and we have an abundance of food that is inexpensive: we waste food because we can afford to do so. Businesses are losing 20-40 percent of their revenue to FLW (food loss and waste), creating market failure.

Drawing on his experience working with agri-food and seafood industries to enhance profitability and sustainability, Dr. Gooch pointed out that many do not realize the extent of the cost of wasted food. For example, packaging has the potential to play a large role in extending the shelf life of produce from 3 to 10 times longer. However, businesses are currently not thinking critically and are hindered by a lack of collaboration between industry and government.

Dr. Gooch said that governments have a role to play in food waste reduction, but there are adversarial relationships at higher levels that reduce innovation. This needs to be fixed. There are three policy options for addressing food loss and waste, including partnering with industry in order to create descriptive targets and enable focused legislation/regulations. Questions from the audience prompted a discussion about some issues in the food system: how best before dates are confusing and create avoidable food waste, that industry mistakenly sees the reduction of waste as the reduction of sales, and the inefficiency of certain NGOs and governments in dealing with the issue.

**Cher Mereweather, founder and Executive Director, [Provision Coalition](#)
*Canadian Food Loss + Waste: Focused on Solutions***

The Provision Coalition was formed by and for industry with a focus on reducing FLW by developing on-line tools. Like Dr. Gooch, Mereweather pointed out that businesses are not aware of the extent of the problem. The Provision's working group has created an online Food Loss and Waste tool kit for businesses to help them to quantify their avoidable food waste and to create cost effective reduction strategies. The tool kit was piloted with seven companies, and was able to reduce food waste at various points during the production stage. For example, using the tool, Campbell's found six food waste reduction opportunities, which were projected to increase the plant's yield by 938 tonnes/year, valued at \$706,000 annually. The companies who participated yielded \$14 for every \$1 invested.

Provision's plans for the future include demonstrating the business case through workshops and case studies, quantifying facility reductions for FLW (Version 2.0 of the toolkit) and supporting the national strategy on food waste reduction.

During the Q&A following the presentation, Mereweather also elaborated on the social role of the Provision Coalition: helping to fight food insecurity by helping food companies to work and collaborate with emergency food providers.

**Denise Philippe, MA, Planner, [National Zero Waste Council \(NZWC\)](#)
*National Food Waste Reduction Strategy***

The NZWC is a cross-sector national leadership initiative focused on waste reduction. Denise Philippe presented the organization's National Food Waste Reduction Strategy which incorporates three pillars:

- Policy change within all levels of government including establishing a national target, tax incentives for food producers, suppliers and retailers to stimulate donations of nutritious foods to those who need it, changes which reduce confusion in food labelling, and the implementation of an organics disposal ban.
- Innovation in technology and infrastructure, including innovation in processing and packaging to reduce food waste, innovation in the recovery of clean energy and compost from organics as well as innovation in infrastructure and web-based technologies to help charities manage donated food.

- The NZWC plans to encourage behavioral change from production to retail and consumption through the national rollout of a Love Food Hate Waste campaign, educational materials supporting an organics disposal ban, as well as guidelines that facilitate the donation of safe and nutritious foods.

In response to an audience member’s question, Philippe also elaborated about how the NZWC council’s food donations tax incentive will create more accessibility to healthy nutritious food for those in need, but is not an anti-poverty strategy in itself.

WORKSHOP

Sharing the Responsibility: Fishing for Solutions

The fishbowl exercise was designed to understand the experiences of the different stakeholders in the room. Attendees were asked to write one question on a Post-it note, and then they were divided into four groups. Most of the participants were asked to sit at the table, while the rest stood behind, hence the “fishbowl” effect. When a person who was standing wanted to participate, they would switch with somebody sitting down.

The workshop was designed to allow large groups to participate in the conversation. Most of the attendees’ questions centered around promoting education and awareness, consumer engagement as well as on emerging technologies. Despite the knowledge and expertise in the room, some participants felt that the exercise raised more questions than answers, evidence that there is still much to learn about best practices to reduce food waste.



SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS (cont'd)

Municipal Food Waste Reduction and Auditing Practices

Alison Schatz, Communications and Education Coordinator, Metro Vancouver, [Love Food Hate Waste Campaign](#) and Joanne Gauci, MA, Senior Policy Advisor, [National Zero Waste Council](#)
Love Food Hate Waste: Metro Vancouver experience and the National Zero Waste Council proposal for a national campaign

Schatz introduced the audience to Metro Vancouver's Love Food Hate Waste (LFHW) campaign which was launched in May 2015 and replicates a similar program from the United Kingdom. Prior to the launch, Metro Vancouver conducted 80 household waste audits and asked 500 residents to keep food waste diaries to understand food waste behaviour in the region.

The campaign's strategy is to promote awareness about the issue and encourage residents to reduce food waste through simple, actionable tips, starting with just one small change. The campaign uses the website, social media and outreach in the grocery store to reach audiences.

Gauci spoke about the national rollout of the program, which will be done in partnership with the National Zero Waste Council. The campaign will be a multi-year initiative of building partnerships and revenues to realize efficiencies and cost-savings, a Canadian website and campaign materials, as well as media and consumer engagement. When asked about the national business model for LFHW, Schatz explained how the program will be on a cost recovery basis: the partners coming into the project cover the cost of delivery on a 3-year basis. Another attendee asked about the impact of LFHW in Metro Vancouver, to which Gauci explained that they have been using social media analytics, website tracking and Google trends to see how many people have joined the movement. A comprehensive study will be done next year, and the Region is working with WRAP (UK) to develop a methodology that can measure food waste reductions and awareness.



**Julie Hordowick, [Ontario Food Collaborative](#) and [York Region Good Food Program](#)
*York Region Food Waste Reduction Strategy***

York Region's SM4RT LIVING plan looks to the next 25-40 years to reduce waste, reuse and make the most of their facilities. The Region has a successful Green Bin program but opted to introduce the Good Food Program for several reasons: with the projected increase in population, this initiative would allow them to accommodate more people; the diversion rate had stalled and was becoming more expensive; and the environmental impacts of the Green Bin program. The target is to reduce food waste by 15 percent by 2031.

Launched in 2015 with the Public Health Department, the Good Food Program promotes the idea that planning and preparing home-cooked, good food will produce healthier meals, save time and money and reduce waste. The project's impact is tracked through waste audit results, follow up surveys, green bin waste generation per capita, web activity, online contest results, outreach comments and media uptake. Hordowick also touched on the Ontario Food Collaborative, a group launched in 2014 and originally based out of York Region, to promote behavioral change surrounding food waste. The Collaborative's working groups are working to identify strategic partnerships across the value chain, to develop a municipal food waste audit guide, and to design a communications strategy.

**Dr. Mike von Massow, [Guelph Food Waste Research Project](#)
*Food Waste: What we're wasting, why we're wasting it, and what we can do about it***

Dr. von Massow began his presentation saying that the first thing is to get people to start talking about food waste and then provided advice on conducting food waste audits based on his research experience in the City of Guelph. He pointed out that audits give an incomplete picture of household waste. For example, food that is composted or put in a garburator does not appear in curbside bins. Surveys given to residents helped to form a more complete picture of resident attitudes and behaviours. Dr. von Massow pointed out that those who use multiple metrics for deciding whether food is bad (i.e. smell, appearance, best before date) are more likely to discard. He divided households into four groups: "the waste aware", the food aware", "the convenience driven" and "the frantic family". These groups produce varying amounts of food waste depending on their habits and awareness of food and food waste. In response to an audience member's question, he stated that the groups are not mutually exclusive. The sample size in their study was small, but that each group was about 25 percent of the population. In closing, he pointed out that since waste varies depending on the household, doing smaller units of analysis provides more accurate results. He emphasized that striving to have a consistent definitions and terminology will improve comparability. Finally, he pointed out the importance of working to understand the sources of variability in households.

**Paul van der Werf, President [2cg Inc.](#)
*How to Build Accurate Food Waste Disposal Estimates***

Paul van der Werf began his presentation by pointing out the need for solid metrics to help understand the extent of food waste, as well as for policy and intervention strategies. Following on the theme of other presenters, he pointed out the need for a common language and methodology to measure food waste since there is a myriad of different approaches. The existing waste auditing protocol, developed by Stewardship Ontario/Continuous Improvement Fund/Waste Diversion Ontario could serve as the basis for a food waste auditing methodology, but would have to be modified to measure at the household level instead of at the neighbourhood level.

van der Werf presented results from various food waste audits done in Ontario, in municipalities with and without green bin programs. The audit results raised various questions such as do residents with a green bin program throw out less waste than those without? He identified the next steps in food waste audits as the development of a value proposition tool which enumerates the impacts of food waste, as well as the calculation of a national value of food waste for specific parts of the food supply chain.

PANEL DISCUSSION: INNOVATIVE FOOD WASTE REDUCTION PRACTICES



Dr. Michelle Coyne, [Food Systems Lab](#) Research Fellow
Connecting the Loop: A Systems Approach to Addressing Food Waste

The Food Systems Lab is an initiative based out of the University of Toronto that is looking at finding solutions to food waste by thinking holistically from a circular economy perspective. Coyne stated that the agri-food system is broken and disconnected and that it is important to look at closed systems. The Lab is primarily looking at food waste in Toronto, but is Canada's first food waste Social Innovation Lab. Workshops take place in the context of circular

philosophies, Indigenous worldviews (“All My Relations”) and explore best practices for closed loop food systems.

**Allan Nason, Vice-president [Canadian Aquaponics Association](#)
*Implementing Bioreactor Technology into Aquaponic Operations***

Nason is currently building the first aquaponics facility on the Akwesasne Reserve in Cornwall. The facility will produce enough food for the population, as well as extra to sell off- reserve. It will use an aerobic bioreactor, a fermentation vessel used for providing optimal conditions for the efficient breakdown and mineralization of organic fish waste, creating a zero waste system. Using the automated aerobic bioreactor facility at Lethbridge College as an example, Nason demonstrated how a facility with 6 bioreactors has a payback period of 0.7 years. During the Q&A period, Nason cited one of the major barriers to setting up aquaponics facilities is the municipal regulation relating to keeping animals in urban settings, which often include fish. He was able to get a permit to use the fish in a research context.

**Doug Alexander, [Ippolito Group](#)
*Innovative Food Waste Reduction Practices***

Ippolito Group is a multi-unit business with three food-processing facilities as well as operations at the Ontario Food Terminal, in California and an extensive transportation network. Alexander discussed how Ippolito is using technology to reduce food waste in their plant. He introduced food waste as a cultural problem within businesses, which is resulting in 20 percent food waste in manufacturing and processing according to Maclean’s magazine.

At Ippolito, Alexander discovered that the current camera technology used to identify salad materials wastes about a 40-yard container every 2 days per facility. New technology pioneered by P&P Optica (a Waterloo based technology company) will be able to see the chemical makeup, invisible to the human eye. It will make correlations between shelf life and chlorophyll, predicting the shelf life of individual leaves.



EVENT SURVEY

A survey has been distributed to attendees to obtain feedback for similar events in the future.