RETASTE Conference Abstracts
RETASTE-CFW-1382-Virtual Poster
Rethymno, September 16-18, 2026
© Author(s) 2026 CC BY 4.0 License
DOI:10.5281/zenodo.23678457

Beyond Effort: Food-Management Practices as Enablers of Household Food Waste Prevention

Theofanis Zacharatos and Prokopis Theodoridis

School of Social Sciences, Hellenic Open University, Greece

ACCEPTED

Abstract

Household food waste remains a major challenge for sustainable food systems, despite growing public awareness and repeated policy efforts encouraging consumers to reduce waste. Many interventions implicitly assume that greater individual effort will translate into stronger food waste prevention. However, food waste is not only a matter of motivation; it is also shaped by everyday household routines related to planning, shopping, storage, portioning and leftover use. This study examines whether perceived household effort to reduce food waste is associated with stronger self-reported food waste prevention behaviour, and whether this relationship depends on the presence of food-management practices. The analysis is based on survey data from 1,021 consumers in Greece. The study distinguishes between food waste awareness, food waste knowledge, general environmental knowledge, perceived household effort and food-management practices. Hierarchical multiple regression models were estimated to examine the antecedents of perceived effort and the predictors of self-reported food waste prevention behaviour. Socio-demographic variables were included as controls. To test the conditional role of household practices, perceived effort and food-management practices were mean-centred and an interaction term was included in the final regression model. The results show that food waste awareness is positively associated with perceived effort to reduce food waste. However, perceived effort does not operate as a straightforward positive predictor of food waste prevention. In the final prevention model, food-management practices emerge as the strongest predictor of prevention behaviour ($B = 0.522$, $p < .001$), while perceived effort has a small negative direct association once practices and knowledge-related variables are controlled for ($B = -0.068$, $p < .05$). Most importantly, the interaction between perceived effort and food-management practices is positive and statistically significant ($B = 0.216$, $p < .001$), indicating that the relationship between effort and prevention becomes more favourable as household food-management practices become stronger. The final model explains 34.7% of the variance in self-reported food waste prevention behaviour. These findings suggest that “trying hard” is not enough on its own. Effort appears to be conditionally effective: it matters more when embedded in practical household routines that enable consumers to manage food effectively. The study contributes to household food waste research by showing that food-management practices are not only direct predictors of prevention behaviour, but also shape whether perceived effort can translate into better outcomes. For policy and intervention design, the results imply that awareness-raising campaigns should be complemented by practical support for everyday food-management routines, including meal planning, shopping-list use, proper storage, portion management, date-label understanding and leftover use.

Keywords: household food waste, food-management practices, perceived effort, consumer behaviour, food waste prevention

ACCEPTED