

Alternative Food Networks and Household Food Waste: Evidence from an Italian Case Study

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Abstract

Food waste reduction is an important component of the EU action for waste management and one of the sub-goals highlighted in the SDG 12. Its importance has been growing rapidly since 2008, with about 3,000 scientific papers published in the past 11 years. Of these studies, many have identified consumer behavior as a significant cause of food waste. Therefore, policy actions have focused largely on communication campaigns and donations, and less on sustainable production. Large retailers and final consumers are the most blamed and targeted for any intervention at policy level. Despite the growing number of publications, literature has not assessed the waste reduction potential of alternative food networks on the food consumption side. For this purpose, our preliminary study - testing a food waste quantification methodology in the municipality of Pavia - focused on a sample of 24 households that adhere to Community Supported Agriculture or are active in local environmental associations, i.e. are active or aware of alternative food networks. A waste compositional analysis provided a weekly food waste quantity that was almost half any previous result obtained with the same methodology in Italy (573 VS 1058 g/family/week). The methodology has been set up based on the framework established in the Annex III of the Delegated Decision of the European Commission 2019/1597 of May, the 3rd 2019. Given the small sample size, the external validity of these results should be explored in further studies. Nevertheless, our preliminary results show that policy makers should take into account the role of alternative food networks in the strategy to achieve the SDG 12.3, thus revising the approach currently practiced in the sector.

Keywords: Household food waste, Quantification, EU methodology, Alternative food networks, SDG 12.3

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