

## **Food waste in a Greek Higher Education institution: Students' attitudes and compositional analysis**

<sup>1</sup>Charis Gkikas, <sup>1</sup>Christina Marouli and <sup>2</sup>Harry De Brown

<sup>1</sup>*Environmental Studies, Deree - American College of Greece*

<sup>2</sup>*Science and Mathematics Department, Deree - American College of Greece*

### **Abstract**

According to various studies and estimates, nearly one-third of all food produced intended for human consumption is lost or wasted. This observed inefficiency of the global food system poses significant threats to the environment, societies and the global economies. Following the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the European Union has adopted policies and strategies to limit food wastage, with the aim to halve per capita food waste by 2050. This requires a variety of approaches, including changes in behaviours. Values and attitudes correlate with food wastage. Several psychological theories have been proposed to explain the relation of knowledge, values, attitudes, motives, norms and other parameters with environmental and wasting behaviours. Other theories look into the impact of social factors to such behaviours as well. In the effort towards the EU's goal to significantly limit food waste and in light of the aforementioned theories, it is important to both monitor food waste generation, as well as to identify social practices and behaviours that contribute to it. This study aims to document the composition of the food waste generated in the main dining facility of a higher education institution in Athens, Greece at the dining facility (at the consumer level), as well as the students' attitudes towards food waste. Through a waste measurement campaign, the quantity of food waste generated at the dining facility, as well as its composition, were documented in late January through the middle of February 2020, collecting 111 samples in a total of 9 days. The method used to measure the food waste was direct weighting, and the aim was to fully capture every consumer-derived food waste. The measurement campaign was complemented by a survey of students' values, attitudes and perceived behaviours related with food purchasing and wasting, based on a self-administered structured questionnaire containing 35 questions. 117 questionnaires were collected. The results of this study will be presented and the relation of demographic characteristics, like gender, on the one hand, and guilt, perceptions and attitudes relating to food purchasing and handling of food leftovers on the other, with food waste generation will be investigated.

**Keywords:** Food waste, avoidable and unavoidable food waste, student attitudes, higher education, Greece