



DESK RESEARCH REPORT

FOOD WASTE IN POLAND



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CONTENT

Summary.....	2
GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD EDUCATORS Project	2
Legislation actively addressing food waste reduction and food (re-) distribution	2
National strategies on food waste prevention	3
Statistics.....	4
Food waste education and research in Poland – GOOD PRACTICES	7
The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) – GOOD PRACTICES.....	7
Conclusions and recommendations.....	8
EXTRA RESOURCES.....	9
Link to CREATE creative commonS licenses for this publication	9
Disclaimer to use in all communication materials	9

SUMMARY

This research provides an overview of food waste, including policies, systems in Poland.

GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD EDUCATORS PROJECT

The project aims to educate the consumers in food waste prevention by preparing informative toolkits and training materials. Project is needed, because there is no extended consumer education to prevent food waste at European level.

The project wants to change the consumer attitudes and behaviours to more sustainable ones.

LEGISLATION ACTIVELY ADDRESSING FOOD WASTE REDUCTION AND FOOD (RE-) DISTRIBUTION

Till August 2, 2019 In Poland, there was no legislation specifically addressing food waste reduction.

On 2019, the Senate adopted the Act on Counteracting Food Waste (*2).

The Act provides for the imposition on outlets fitted with a total surface of more than 250 square metres will be required to donate such food to charity organisations, with intentional discards punishable by financial penalties. The Act regulates fees for food waste and penalties in the event of non-conclusion of such agreements.

For every kilo of unallocated but wasted food, the seller will have to pay 0,10 pln (1/4 of one euro cent) to the account of the NGO he works with. According to the estimates of The Polish Food Banks Federation, the entry into force of the new provisions will save up to 100,000 tonnes of food more than before and will provide important support for around 2 million Poles in need.(2)

*(2) Act on Counteracting Food Waste.

The 2019 Act relates to the donation to NGOs of food that may end up in the bin due to an end-of-life date, an approaching minimum durability date or because of concerns about the substandard appearance of food products or their packaging. In the first two years, only shops or wholesalers with a surface area of more than 400 m² were covered by the legislation, now more than 250 m².

On the basis of a contract, shops donate unsold food products to a selected NGO that meets the requirements of the Act. In practice, this means that the food only goes to specific charities; it cannot be donated to, for example, orphanages or social welfare homes.

One of the organisations to which vendors can donate unsold products are food banks (FOBs). The NIK inspected 10 of the 31 existing ones.

The Chamber has no objections to the banks' use of public funds to carry out their food waste prevention tasks.

Food banks, on the other hand, signalled problems in obtaining public funding for what they consider to be a necessary expansion of the network to more effectively prevent food waste, e.g. by building more warehouses.

Source: PREVENTING FOOD WASTE <https://www.nik.gov.pl/plik/id,25262,vp,28013.pdf>

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NATIONAL STRATEGIES ON FOOD WASTE PREVENTION

Legislation to be amended - still too much food ends up in the rubbish.

The existing legislation is not enough - despite the enactment of a law to prevent food waste, it has not been possible to create a comprehensive system that is fully effective in reducing the scale of the problem in Poland. The period from January 2019 to July 2021 was studied.

According to the NIK (National Audit Office) , the reason is that the regulations introduced in September 2019 only apply to trade, meanwhile. As the results of a recent study show, most food goes to waste straight from our homes, as much as 60%. Processing and agricultural production are next in line (around 16% each), and only in fourth place are shops responsible for 7% of wasted food. **This means that in addition to legal regulations, the following are necessary: education and social campaigns on rational planning of purchases or principles of proper food storage.**

The adoption of the law was a positive, but only a first step towards introducing institutional solutions to significantly reduce the scale of wastage. Legal and organisational problems reported during inspections by representatives of food banks and the Chief Inspector of Environmental Protection show that **in order to be effective in preventing food waste and its negative social, environmental and economic consequences, it is necessary to change the law and introduce further regulations.**

The Act on Counteracting Food Waste obliges both sellers and those who receive food products from them to jointly conduct information and education campaigns on rational food management and preventing food waste. One of the organisations to which sellers can donate unsold products are food banks (FBOs). NIK audited 10 out of 31 existing food banks.

Meanwhile, more than half of the inspected Food Banks (6 out of 10) did not conduct such information and education campaigns, and in the case of the others, cooperation usually consisted in preparing and providing vendors with materials to be used in the campaigns organised.

Significant differences between individual food banks, both in terms of the number of agreements concluded on the free donation of food products, regulating the issue of participation of shops in the costs of transport and distribution of food, and actual participation in educational and informational campaigns, result from different conditions in which B operates and uneven practices in this area. **Food banks operating in larger cities with more retail chains can, for example, count on more food products than those located in smaller towns.**

The contracts established, for example, the issue of vendors' participation in the costs of transporting and distributing the donated food.

Some of the contracts did not provide for the vendors to subsidise the cost of collecting the food, and in individual cases the vendors themselves took the food with their own transport to the partner organisations designated by the bank.

It is also not without significance that, as it stands, the regulations refer only to the stage of food distribution and regulate relations between private entities, which does not favour the transparency of the whole process and makes it difficult to verify it on an ongoing basis. **For example, municipalities, which have the greatest number of obligations related to social assistance, such as feeding the needy, are left out.**

Source: PREVENTING FOOD WASTE <https://www.nik.gov.pl/plik/id,25262,vp,28013.pdf>

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STATISTICS

A recent study in Poland shows that almost 5 million tonnes of food are wasted in our country every year, more than half of which ends up in the rubbish not from trade and catering, as you might think, but from our homes.

The amount of food wasted is 4.8 million tonnes per year:

- 1.17% gastronomy
- 6.96% trade
- 15.50% agricultural production
- 16.60% processing
- 0.65% transport
- 60.00% households

AMMOUNT FOOD WASTE in POLAND

Ilość marnowanej żywności w Polsce



- **Gastronomia** Gastronomy / Food Service
- **Produkcja rolnicza** Agricultural Production
- **Przetwórstwo** Food Processing
- **Handel** Trade / Retail
- **Gospodarstwa domowe** Households

These are the findings of the "Programme for Rationalisation of Food Loss and Reduction of Food Waste" (PROM). These are the first studies of this kind conducted in Poland indicating the directions of actions that should be taken to counteract food waste effectively.

Reasons for discarding food products and food components in households.

- 65.2% Food spoilage
- 42.0% Oversight of expiry date
- 26.5% Preparation of too much food
- 22.2% Buying too much food
- 19.7% Ill-considered purchases
- 17.00% Over-packaging
- 14.2% Improper storage
- 10.8% Purchases of low-quality products
- 10.3% Lack of ideas on how to use the products to prepare meals.

REASONS FOR DISCARDING FOOD PRODUCTS AND FOOD COMPONENTS IN HOUSEHOLDS.



Zródło: Opracowanie własne NIK na podstawie danych z „Straty i marnotrawstwo żywności w Polsce. Skala i przyczyny problemu”.

We dispose of food products primarily because they have gone bad, or we have missed their expiry date.

This is because not everyone knows the difference between the term 'best consumed before' and the term: "should be consumed by". The former simply means the date the food is guaranteed by the manufacturer, the latter the date it is fit for consumption.

Research conducted as part of the PROM programme shows that almost 337 thousand tonnes of food are wasted annually in the trade in Poland. In turn, according to information from the Chief Inspector of Environmental Protection, in 2020, within the framework of the Act on Counteracting Food Wastage, non-governmental organisations received a total of just over 18.5 thousand tonnes of food products from vendors, which they almost entirely donated to the needy. This means that last year, these organisations received about 5.5% of food wasted in trade and about 0.4% of all food wasted in Poland (out of nearly 5 million tonnes).

According to the Research Body, these figures clearly show that legislation to prevent food waste should cover many more beneficiaries than just the strictly defined charities in the

Act. They should also apply to a wider range of food retailers - today it is only the big-box stores.

So much for theory. In practice, as the audit has shown, the data provided is incomplete and inconsistent,

Source: "Programme for Rationalisation of Food Loss and Reduction of Food Waste" (PROM), 30.11.2020, <https://bankizywnosci.pl/prom/> 12.02.2024

Source: PREVENTING FOOD WASTE <https://www.nik.gov.pl/plik/id,25262,vp,28013.pdf>
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FOOD WASTE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN POLAND – GOOD PRACTICES

The Polish Food Banks Federation is supporting "zero waste food" idea and food waste education.

The Polish Food Banks Federation is the only Polish organization that comprehensively examines the level of food waste throughout the food chain. According to the idea - it is easier to manage what we can measure - they are currently conducting the first extensive research of this type on the phenomenon of food waste at every stage of the chain.

Banks are supporting the 'zero waste food' idea and food waste education.

Source: The Polish Food Banks Federation

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) – GOOD PRACTICES

BASED ON THE INFOGRAPHIC: "PERCENTAGE SHARE OF FOOD RECEIVED ANNUALLY BY NGOS RELATIVE TO THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF WASTED FOOD IN POLAND"

On an annual scale, Non-Governmental Organizations receive:

- **5.49%** of food wasted in the **Trade/Retail** sector.
- **0.38%** of the **Total** amount of food wasted in Poland.

Sources:

- Supreme Audit Office (NIK) based on the report "FOOD LOSS AND WASTE IN POLAND. SCALE AND CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM."
- PROM and GIOŚ (Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection) data.

Procentowy udział żywności otrzymanej w skali roku przez organizacje pozarządowe na podstawie upmż, w całkowitej ilości żywności marnowanej w Polsce



Zródło: opracowanie własne NIK na podstawie danych PROM i GIOS.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to representatives of food banks, in order to prevent food waste more effectively, the law should also extend to food producers, companies that package food or import it, as well as prioritising the donation of food products to charity, and only secondarily to animal feed or biofuels.

Food bank representatives also point to the need to increase the charge for wasted food and to clarify the costs that retailers can deduct from the charge. This is because some chains claim that the costs exceed the fee. It would also make sense to standardise the way in which the costs of collecting/transporting/distributing food are calculated or to introduce a fixed fee for retailers, lower than the fee paid for wasted food.

Reducing the problem in economic, environmental, and ethical terms by:

- **Take cross-ministerial action:** to establish a comprehensive and effective system for monitoring and preventing food waste along the food chain, in particular by taking the necessary legislative action to achieve the above objectives, in cooperation with all stakeholders.
- **Undertake cross-departmental activities:** to build public awareness of the need to counteract food waste, using a nationwide information campaign on, among other

things, the scale of the phenomenon and its negative social, environmental and economic consequences.

EXTRA RESOURCES

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