

Media release
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Shift from attitude to action needed to reduce food wastage in New Zealand

- New Zealanders estimate they waste on average nearly an eighth of their weekly food purchases.
- Estimated food waste is equivalent to \$1071 worth of food per household, per year.
- Those who eat out more than three times per week are the most likely to waste food, wasting ~ 21 per cent of the food they purchase.

New research has found that while New Zealanders have a positive attitude towards reducing food wastage, we estimate that we waste approximately an eighth of the food we buy each week – adding up to a staggering \$1.8 billion per year.

The research – commissioned by online savings specialist RaboDirect New Zealand, a subsidiary of Rabobank New Zealand – found that despite 79 per cent of New Zealanders admitting they don't like to waste food, 94 per cent of us do. We estimate that we waste an average of 12 per cent of the food we buy each week, or \$1071 worth of food per household, every year. Over the whole New Zealand population, this adds up to \$1.8 billion.

Rabobank New Zealand CEO Daryl Johnson says while New Zealanders are increasingly well aware that food wastage is a problem, they largely underestimate the scale at which it occurs and are most likely unaware of the large associated financial cost.

“New Zealanders are very aware of food waste on an individual level, but are less aware of the bigger impact. Seventy per cent of Kiwis underestimate how much we waste as a nation, which currently equates to 122,547 tonnes.”¹

“It's hard to visualise that amount of food, but it's equivalent to the weight of around 350 Boeing 747 'jumbo' jets or around 29 kilograms per person per year.”

“We've got the right attitude in that Kiwis want to reduce food wastage, but it's a matter of putting that mindset into action.”

Mr Johnson said as a global specialist in food and agribusiness banking – and entirely focused on supporting the agricultural sector in New Zealand – Rabobank had identified food wastage as a key challenge in achieving the goal of global food security. Addressing food wastage is one of the fundamental elements of the bank's Banking for Food vision towards global food security and of Rabobank's recently-announced Kickstart Food global activation program to accelerate the transition to a sustainable world food supply.

¹ <http://www.wasteminz.org.nz/projects/love-food-hate-waste/>

“The demand for food is set to rise considerably as a consequence of a growing and wealthier global population, with the world population forecast to increase by two billion people to more than nine billion by 2050. To meet this demand, world food production will have to increase by at least 60 per cent, while at the same time arable land and natural resources are nearing their limits. On a global scale, part of the solution to this challenge is to reduce wastage so that the food that we already produce reaches where it is needed,” Mr Johnson said.

“But even at a local level, for the benefit of the environment and our back pockets, this research shows New Zealanders need to look more closely at what food they buy each week, what they actually eat, and what’s left over at the end.

“New Zealand farmers and agribusinesses work hard to produce what is among the best food in the world, and we need to do more to ensure it is not thrown away.”

The research showed the leading contributor to wasted food was food going off before it could be eaten. This accounted for 55 per cent of food wastage. A further 15 per cent was from unfinished food on our plates, while insufficient planning and food not tasting as good as expected each accounted for seven per cent.

As far as behaviours that could reduce waste, the survey found that just 33 per cent of New Zealanders always plan meals in advance, and only 22 per cent freeze leftovers; and while 63 per cent say they are likely to buy imperfect fruit and vegetables, only 26 per cent ever have.

Jenny Marshall of Love Food Hate Waste, which provides information to help Kiwis cut the waste, says awareness of how much we waste has grown.

“When we started the Love Food Hate Waste campaign in 2014, New Zealanders estimated that they wasted around 5 per cent of food they bought, but our bin audits showed that people actually wasted far more.

“It’s clear that Kiwis now recognise the scale of their own contribution, but until we repeat our bin audit research in 2019 it won’t be clear if this increased awareness of food waste has led to behaviour change,” says Ms Marshall.

Eleven per cent of those surveyed by RaboDirect admitted to wasting more than 20 per cent of the food they purchased each week, with younger generations being more likely to waste food than older generations.

Millennials, or Generation Y, wasted the most food (15 per cent), closely followed by Centennials (Generation Z; 14 per cent). Baby boomers wasted the least at eight per cent. Millennials were also the generation that most underestimated the scale of New Zealand’s annual food wastage.

Mr Johnson said lifestyle and age clearly looked to be playing a role in food budgeting.

“It’s often presumed that younger generations are more environmentally conscious, and therefore conscious of wastage. However, the survey found younger generations were more likely to eat out, were cooking meals from scratch less often, and were less likely to eat

leftovers, compared with the older generations; all behaviours that are likely to contribute to the increased rate of food wastage amongst these age groups,” Mr Johnson adds.

The research found that people who ate out more than three times per week wasted on average 21 per cent of the food they purchased as part of their grocery shopping. Wasting food was also linked to other wasteful behaviours such as buying clothes and never wearing them, and taking longer showers.

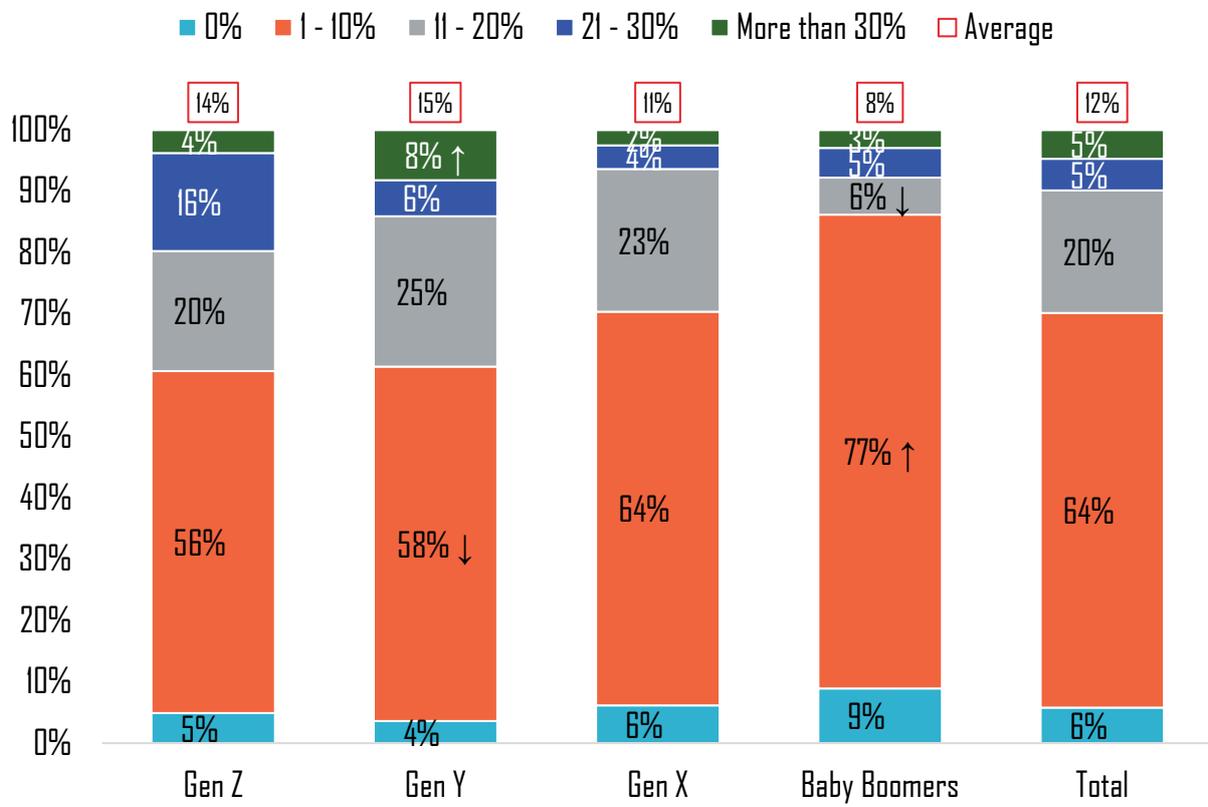
“We’re all looking for ways to reduce unnecessary expenses, and one of the study’s objectives was to find opportunities for reduced spending and to encourage savings that are easy to achieve,” Mr Johnson said.

“On average 16.8 per cent of New Zealand’s household spending goes towards food.² Making savings in this area could significantly impact both individual households and collectively on food wastage as a nation. Being aware of the scale of food wastage in New Zealand is a start, but this needs to extend to our own individual behaviour too,” concludes Mr Johnson.

As an online savings specialist, RaboDirect has a particular interest in sustainable food production and consumption because 100 per cent of money deposited with RaboDirect is used to fund New Zealand food and agribusiness.

² Statistics New Zealand, Household Economic Survey, 02 December 2016;
http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/Households/HouseholdExpenditureStatistics_HOTPYeJun16/Commentary.aspx

Thinking about how much your household spends on food each week, what proportion do you estimate goes to waste?



About RaboDirect

RaboDirect is an online banking service designed to complement customers' existing banking arrangements. RaboDirect offers New Zealanders a high-interest, no fees, on-call savings account as well as term deposits.

RaboDirect is a division of Rabobank New Zealand, part of the global Rabobank Group, the world's leading specialist in food and agribusiness banking. The Rabobank Group has nearly 120 years' experience providing customised banking and finance solutions to businesses involved in all aspects of food and agribusiness. The Rabobank Group is structured as a cooperative and operates in 40 countries, servicing the needs of approximately 8.6 million clients worldwide through a network of more than 1000 offices and branches. Rabobank

Rabobank New Zealand is one of New Zealand's leading agricultural lenders and a significant provider of business and corporate banking and financial services to country's food and agribusiness sector. The bank has 33 branches throughout New Zealand.

About the survey

Between March 16 and March 24, 2017, 1003 New Zealanders aged between 18 and 65 years old completed the online survey. The demographics of the participants included a 50% split between male and female respondents, with 13% of respondents from Auckland, 13%

from Wellington, and 13% from Canterbury, with the remainder spread throughout the country.

Love Food, Hate Waste, Save Money

There are many simple things that you can do to reduce how much food ends up in the bin.

<https://lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz/reduce-your-waste/>

Media contacts

David Johnston

Rabobank New Zealand

+64 (04) 819 2711

david.johnston@rabobank.com

Simone Rosentreter

Network Communication

+64 (0)21 137 4137

simone.rosentreter@networkcommunication.co.nz