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THE FOOD WASTE SCORECARD

An assessment of supermarket
action to address food waste

**FEED
BACK**

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KEY FINDINGS

We ranked the UK's top ten supermarkets based on publicly available information on their work to reduce food waste. Our ranking assessed the supermarkets against the food use hierarchy which requires that prevention be the priority towards tackling waste.

Tesco currently leads on food waste efforts. Tesco's laudable initiatives include:

- The first supermarket to publish third party audited food waste data.
- The first supermarket to sign up to the Sustainable Development Goal of halving food waste from farm to fork by 2030.
- Committed to extending transparency to include measurement of food waste in its supply chain.
- Significantly increased quantity of food redistributed to people in need; donated 7975 tonnes in 2017/17 representing a 40% increase on the previous year.
- Working to help suppliers reduce food waste through initiatives such as marketing seasonal produce, creating a food waste hotline for suppliers and whole crop purchasing.

Waitrose are currently the worst performing supermarket:

- Provides no public data on food waste figures.
- Redistributing small quantities of food in comparison to other retailers
- Limited work with suppliers to reduce food waste.
- No programme for sending permissible food surplus to animal feed.

No supermarkets are currently adequately addressing the ways that the supermarket model causes food waste in the home due to:

- Confusing, over-cautious and unnecessary date labels.
- Marketing strategies that encourage over-purchase and ultimately waste.
- Failure to conduct analyses of their customer's food waste data and use this as a baseline for household food waste strategies.

Supermarkets are failing to significantly reduce food surplus in their operations. Aggregate data from UK supermarkets shows that despite some initial success at reducing food waste, progress has now plateaued.

Food fit for human consumption is not being redistributed in sufficient quantities; research by WRAP (2017) showed that the amount of food currently redistributed from retailers and manufacturers to feed people could be increased approximately four-fold.

Tesco, Sainsbury's and Iceland are the only supermarkets sending permissible food surplus to be converted into animal feed.

Large quantities of food suitable for human consumption is being sent to Anaerobic Digestion (AD) to be converted into energy. Tesco's latest food waste data (the most substantial data publicly available) show that 19,898 tonnes of food fit for human consumption went to AD in 2017/18.

INTRODUCTION

In the decades since the first UK supermarket opened its doors in 1948 (Carter 2015), a handful of major food retailers have come to dominate almost every aspect of how the public interacts with food. Standing between producers and customers, supermarkets' dominant position in the food supply chain conceals to many of their shoppers the very real and worrying problems that exist within our food system. Producing our food costs our planet dearly, with Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) from agriculture, forestry and fisheries doubling over the past 50 years (FAO 2014) to nearly 20% of emissions resulting from human activity. Globally, around one third of all food produced is wasted (FAO 2011): wasted food, if it were a country, would rank as the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases after China and the US (FAO 2013). In the UK, the waste body WRAP estimates that across all food sectors and households we waste around 10 million tonnes of food a year, 60% of which could have been avoided (WRAP 2017a).

Supermarkets have over 85% of the market share of grocery stores in the UK (McKevitt 2017), we fear this concentration of power is likely to be exacerbated by the upcoming Sainsbury's and Asda merger (Feedback 2018). Unlike the first supermarket, a London cooperative, today's major food retailers are mainly shareholder-owned, driven by their fiduciary responsibility to maximise shareholder profit, with the delivery of food that is healthy for both people and our planet a secondary concern, if a concern at all. They are so dominant in our food market that it would be difficult to feed oneself without them – 98% of British shoppers say they have used a supermarket for some of their grocery shopping every month (IGD 2017) - or, if you're a food producer, to stay in business without trading with them. Supermarkets have enormous power throughout food's lifecycle, from farm to fork, and a direct bearing over how much food is wasted at each stage of the cycle, be it on fields, in stores, or in customers' homes.

Amongst food producers, our research on international supply chains shows a concentration of power in the groceries sector that has allowed supermarkets to dictate the terms and conditions by which food is grown, harvested, and transported, and that this concentration of power has given supermarkets the power to force suppliers to waste food (Colbert 2017; Bowman 2018).

On the side of customers, supermarkets shape how much food we buy, how we store and cook it, and what food products are available to us, in what form. It is no overstatement to say that supermarkets shape the UK's food culture - and the enormous amounts of food waste generated by British households. And while media interest has recently been focused on plastic waste driven by supermarket packaging, there is less public awareness of the implications of supermarket marketing on buying too much, and subsequent wasting, food in homes. The latest figures from WRAP (2017b) show that £15 billion worth of edible

METHODOLOGY

We assessed the top 10 major UK supermarkets, excluding online retailers such as Ocado, on their efforts to implement the food use hierarchy. The food use hierarchy is enshrined in UK law in the form of the waste hierarchy stipulated in the Waste Regulations 2011. The diagram on this page shows Feedback's application of the waste hierarchy to the specific case of food waste. It holds that the priority in addressing food waste is to reduce and prevent surplus from occurring in the first place. After efforts to reduce food waste, redistribution of surplus food to people is the next priority, followed by recycling which as a first priority should include converting surplus food to animal feed, followed by Anaerobic Digestion, composting or biogas, with landfill at the bottom of the pile.

We established key indicators for each aspect of the food use hierarchy. Supermarkets were scored one point for each key indicator they successfully implemented. The full list of indicators and scoring is available in the Appendix.

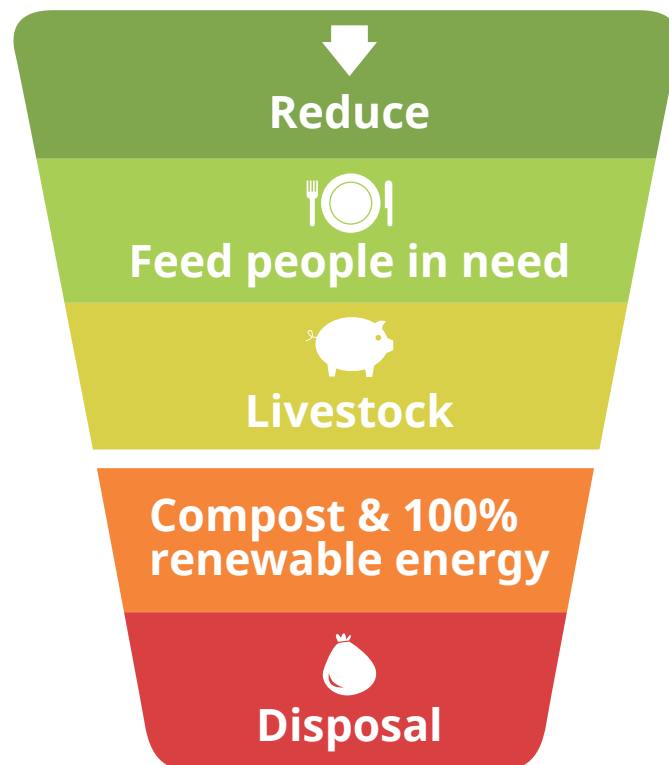
food was thrown away in homes in 2015 – equivalent to wasting one in every five bags of groceries purchased by customers (Recycle for London 2015). This represents a massive 7.3 million tonnes of food waste, which if avoided, would have the environmental benefit of removing one in four cars from the road.

Supermarkets drive food waste in the UK at all stages of foodstuffs' lifecycle. It follows that they may be in a position to reduce waste at every stage as well. The question is: are supermarkets actually taking effective action to reduce food waste they produce, directly and indirectly, amongst their suppliers, in their stores and in their customers' homes?

On one level, the answer would seem to be 'yes'. Responding to public pressure, supermarkets are tripping over themselves to come up with media-friendly ways to show they are tackling this issue, from wonky veg boxes (Quinn 2016) to 'banana rescue stations' (Rodionova 2017). On a deeper level, as illustrated by a recent report on US supermarkets, the action supermarkets are taking is in many cases not meaningful given the scale of the food waste challenge, especially with regards to waste generated in supply chains (Molidor, Feldstein and Figueiredo, 2018).

To tackle the food waste mountain and help build a sustainable food system, supermarkets need to make radical changes to their current ways of doing business. This report ranks the efforts of the top 10 supermarkets in the UK to address food waste across the supply chain, in-store and in customers' homes.

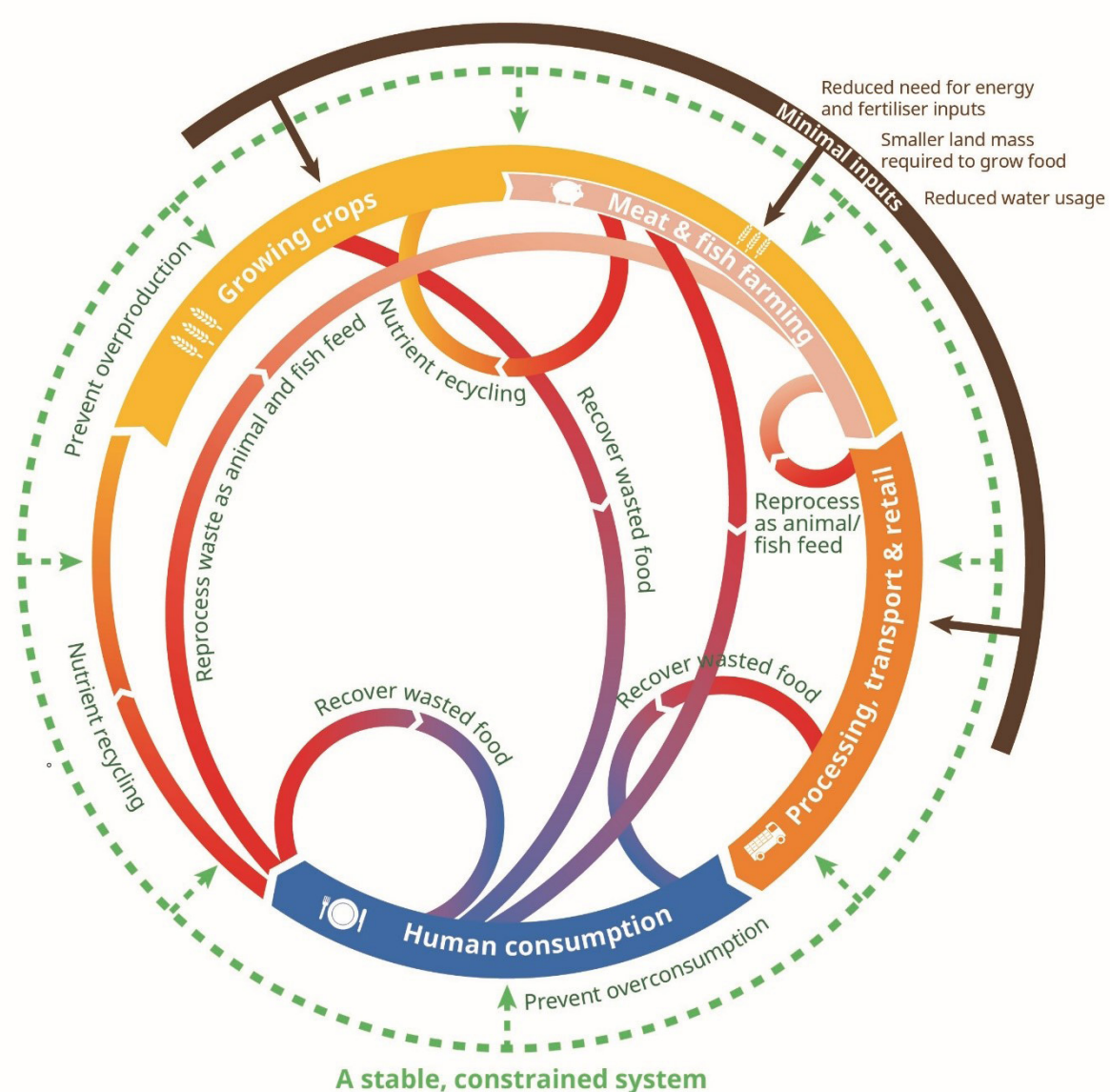
THE FOOD USE HIERARCHY



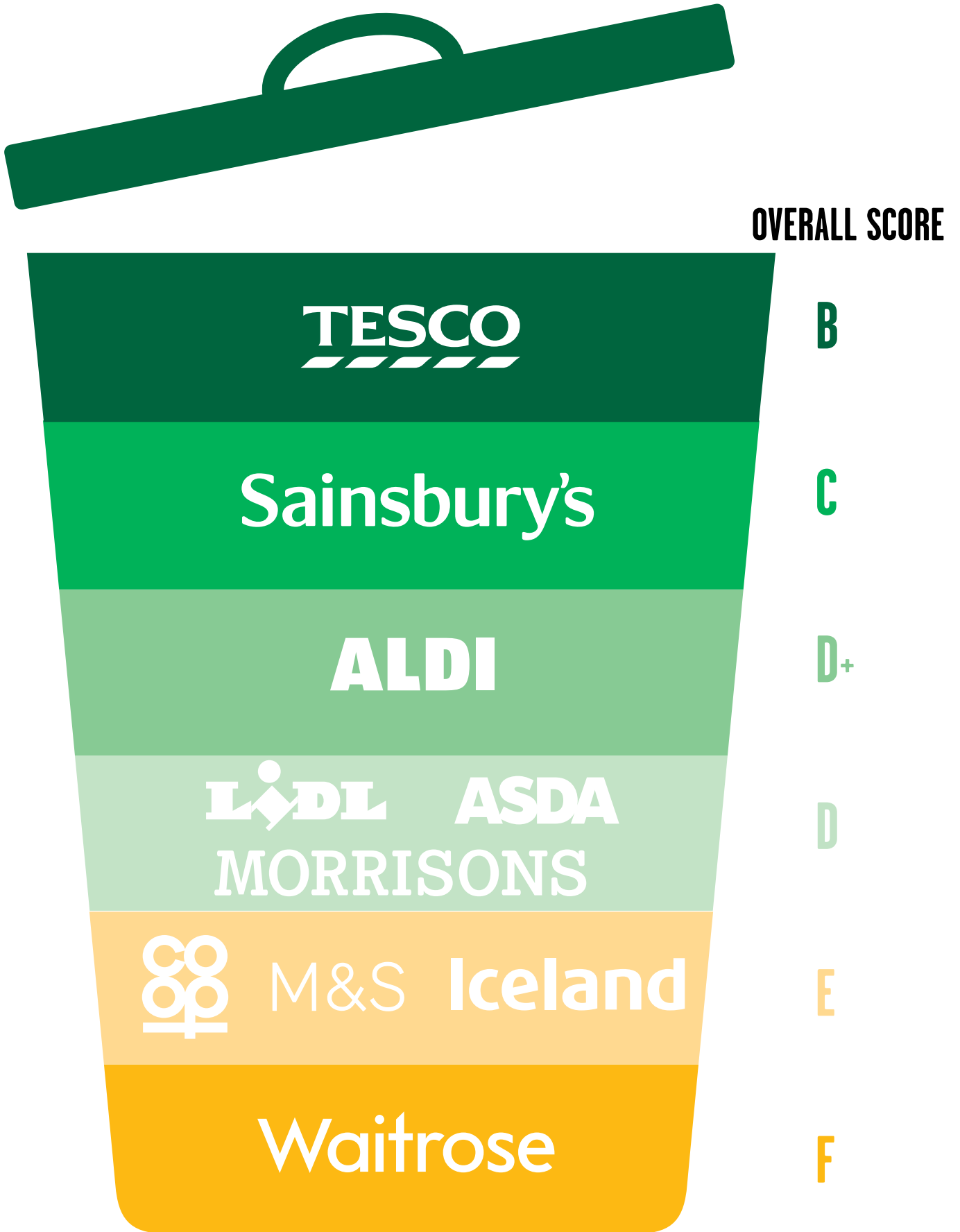
Supermarkets' efforts were assessed against this hierarchy on the basis of publicly available data, mainly from their websites (information available on their website as of 6 June 2018) or news articles.

The food use hierarchy is one key set of principles to follow in building a more sustainable food system. As well as thinking about how we prevent and best reuse or dispose of waste, a future-proof food system will consider how to use fewer scarce environmental resources in the production of our food in the first place. In fact, a defining principle of Feedback's circular food system (Feedback 2018a) is that food that was previously seen as 'waste' has value and can be used as a resource. Ideally this surplus food should be used for the purpose it was originally intended, as per the food use hierarchy. As what was formerly seen as 'waste' is reused, less waste pollution through landfill disposal is created, and less resources are needed to produce food in the first place. This stable, constrained system, requiring less land mass, since resources are more efficiently used within the food system, will leave more of nature free to flourish, as well as providing healthy and sustainable diets for all.

FEEDBACK'S MODEL FOR A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM



THE FEEDBACK FOOD WASTE SUPERMARKET SCORECARD



STEP 1. FOOD WASTE REDUCTION



Targets and policy for food waste reduction

All supermarkets who are serious about addressing food waste ought to have a corporate policy on food waste which covers their reduction targets and how they aim to achieve them. For a policy like this to be effectively implemented, it should also designate a senior member of staff who is responsible for its implementation. Different supermarkets have adopted different targets on food waste. Courtauld 2025 is the UK's national voluntary agreement, covering food waste as well as associated sustainability issues such as water use in the supply chain and greenhouse gas emission intensity of products. Courtauld 2025 commits signatories to a 20% reduction in their food and drink waste arising in the UK between 2015 and 2025. All the supermarkets we assessed for this report are signed up to Courtauld.

Feedback does not consider Courtauld to be ambitious enough to tackle the scale of the food waste problem we are facing. The Courtauld Commitment (CC) has not attracted sufficient support among food suppliers (Quinn 2017) and the voluntary nature of the commitments make them vulnerable to insufficient action to achieve the targets. A more ambitious global target is available in the form of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of halving food waste from farm to fork by 2030. Tesco and Aldi are so far the only UK supermarkets to sign up to the SDG, and Tesco has called for businesses to go beyond Courtauld and to meet this 50% reduction in food waste from farm to fork by 2030 (Quinn 2017a).

Monitoring of food waste reduction

Tracking the effectiveness of supermarket action on food waste requires accurate and transparent data. Transparent data is important as it enables citizens, business and policy-makers to compare the best and worst performing retailers. Transparency also enables government, social entrepreneurs and charities to create data driven solutions: for example, FareShare, the food redistribution charity, has partnered with FoodCloud, an Irish charity, to use an app to give a large range of smaller charities access to data on what surplus food is available where, to increase the likelihood they will be able to collect and redistribute it. Additionally, without clear and detailed data, it is difficult to take seriously supermarket claims that they are implementing targeted action to prevent waste.

BOX 1: INCREASED FOOD WASTE DATA LEADS TO INCREASE IN FOOD DONATIONS

Tesco's decision to publish their food waste data led to a massive increase in donations due to public and corporate awareness of the level of waste. Lindsay Boswell, CEO of FareShare, a major food redistribution charity, has said:

"We work with 450 food manufacturers and most big supermarkets and they all initially protest that they have no waste. Four years ago, Tesco gave us no food, now they give us five million meals a year and are our largest supplier." (Cohen 2016).

Supermarket food waste data should include:

- Waste occurring at all stages of the supply chain, from the farm up until the point of sale;
- Type of food being wasted;
- Quantities of different types of wasted food;
- Stage in the supply chain where waste occurs;
- Action taken to cause or avoid food waste;
- For fresh produce, the cosmetic specifications applied to the crop;
- Progress since last reporting;
- Trading practices adopted that have an influence on food waste;
- Data on how much food is sent to AD and the type of food sent i.e. avoidable vs. unavoidable waste and edible vs. inedible;
- Data should be independently audited and should be made available publicly in an accessible format, with data for previous years available together with more recent data.

All supermarkets report in-store food waste data to WRAP under the CC. However, the data reported is not audited and when published by WRAP or the British Retail Consortium it is aggregated and anonymised. We consider this reporting to be the minimum standard as it does not provide detail on which supermarkets are successfully reducing waste compared to their peers. The latest data covers 2014/15, where it shows 261,000 tonnes of food waste arising in the retail sector, and that more than half of the food waste generated by the UK manufacturing and retail sectors was avoidable (WRAP 2017b). It is important to note this figure does not include waste generated in supermarket supply chains.

This data highlights that levels of food waste have remained at 2013 levels (around 200,000 tonnes)– it appears that efforts to reduce food waste have plateaued (BRC 2016). While it is no accident that Tesco, the supermarket which provides the most comprehensive publicly available data, also leads the field in terms of efforts to address waste, even this supermarket has struggled to maintain a steady reduction. Tesco's ambitious target of zero in-store food



"We recommend that the incoming Government requires food businesses over a particular size to publicly report data on food waste. This would create much more transparency."



Environment Food and Rural Affairs committee, 2017.

waste has not been met (Tesco 2018), despite many initiatives, in particular to improve the distribution of surplus food to charities and to give Tesco staff access to surplus food that cannot be redistributed. Marks & Spencer's in-store waste figures show that in 2016/17 their UK retail food waste was 4.06 tonnes per 1,000 square feet of food salesfloor (Marks & Spencer 2017), similar to the previous year. The discrepancies in the format of publicly available data – waste as volume of sales versus in relation to floor space are an example of why consistent transparent reporting is needed across the sector.

Sainsbury's provide data on how much food they redistribute from stores and how much food is sent to animal feed and AD, however they do not provide a figure for their overall surplus and waste, nor do they address waste in their supply chain in their publicly available data (Sainsbury's 2016). Morrisons publish their in-store food waste data, revealing that 11,000 tonnes of food went to waste from its stores in 2017/18. As Morrisons have not previously published data, we cannot track any progress on food waste reduction (Quinn 2018). The National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) has rightly highlighted that Morrisons needs to provide better data; extend the scope to include supply chain waste, publishing the information on their website in an accessible format and providing a full breakdown of the data beyond a single headline figure (Stubbings 2018).

The remaining supermarkets do not make their food waste data publicly available, we therefore assume that they are also failing to significantly reduce waste. It was reported in The Grocer in 2017 that supermarkets would publicly report their food waste data either independently or through the IDG, but there have been no further reports on progress (Quinn 2017b).

Reducing food waste in supply chains

Supermarkets frequently claim that there is very little waste at retail level – pointing to figures which put retail waste at around 2% of the UK's total (WRAP 2017a). What these figures fail to reflect are the ways in which supermarkets' trading practices drive waste in their supply chains.

Our research and investigations in supply chains, both in the UK and around the world, have consistently shown that supermarkets' business practices drive waste (Colbert 2017, Bowman 2018). Trading practices, including order cancellations, last minute changes to forecasts, retrospective changes to supply agreements and the use of cosmetic specifications to reject produce, all cause food to be wasted. Some of these trading practices are deemed to be unfair under the Groceries Supply Code of Practice (2009), while some practices not technically classed as unfair trading still cause waste. An example is cosmetic specifications; the standards supermarkets use to grade produce and reject produce that does not meet requirements. Cosmetic specifications in themselves, while a major cause of food waste, do not constitute unfair trading. However, the inconsistent use of cosmetic specifications as a front for rejecting produce which has been ordered but is no longer wanted, does constitute unfair trading practice, as our research has highlighted.

Our report on food waste on UK farms highlighted that supermarket practices, both fair and unfair, may drive farmers to waste around 10-16% of their crops (Bowman 2018). Our investigations in international supply chains also showed that supermarket power dictated how food was grown and ultimately wasted (Colbert 2017). WRAP conservatively estimates that 2.5 million tonnes of food is wasted on UK farms every year, representing a lost produce

BOX 2: TREATING SUPPLIERS FAIRLY - THE ROLE OF THE GROCERIES CODE ADJUDICATOR

In 2001, the UK's Office of Fair Trading responded to concerns from the Competition Commission in relation to unfair trading practice by the major grocery retailers, by drawing up the Groceries Supply Code of Practice. This Code was amended in 2009 to reflect continuing concerns, and in 2013 an ombudsman was established, the Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA), to oversee compliance with the Code, with Christine Tacon appointed as Adjudicator.

Supermarket communications state they have good relationships with their suppliers and work hard to minimise supplier waste. However, the annual survey of the GCA and our research with farmers suggest otherwise. A 2017 GCA survey of suppliers shows that 20% of respondents had experienced variation of supply agreements and received no compensation for forecasting errors (Groceries Code Adjudicator 2017).

The GCA's annual surveys have consistently found that suppliers operate within a 'climate of fear' due to highly imbalanced market power between retailers and suppliers, which prevents them speaking out: in 2017 nearly half (47%) of suppliers said fear would prevent them raising an issue with their buyer (Groceries Code Adjudicator 2017).

Co-op is currently being investigated by the GCA. The adjudicator, Christine Tacon, expressed she had "reasonable suspicion" the supermarket had breached a legally binding industry code of practice and therefore failed to treat suppliers fairly. In response, the Co-Op apologised and admitted it had "fallen short". It stated it had repaid £500,000 to 110 suppliers regarding quality control and "benchmarking charges" and is working to ensure these issues are not repeated (Butler 2018).



Imagine a supermarket will say it wants 10,000 packets of strawberries. On Monday and Tuesday the food is accepted. On Wednesday the food is rejected. When produce is not selling well – perhaps it’s been raining and nobody is buying strawberries – the supermarket rejects the consignment, but there is no difference in the actual strawberries. Believe me, I have seen it happen time and time again...



An anonymous European strawberry producer, supplying UK supermarkets (Colbert, 2017)

BOX 3: MARKETING SEASONAL PRODUCE

Certain weather conditions can lead to gluts. A cauliflower glut occurred in the UK in 2017 which resulted in large amounts of cauliflowers going to waste: Geoff Philpott, a farmer, reported 100,000 cauliflowers going to waste after his buyer dramatically reduced their order (Feedback 2018). Another farmer, Trevor Bradley, reported wasting 25,000 cauliflowers a week because there was no market for them (Allen-Mills 2017). Following a Feedback campaign to bring Geoff’s story to public attention, several supermarkets, including Tesco and Aldi, committed to marketing cauliflowers during the glut, to absorb some of the surplus produce. Tesco sold 220,000 extra cauliflowers at 79p each (Gault 2017) and Aldi sold 500,000 extra cauliflowers at 29p each (Gault, 2017a) – a total of 720,000 cauliflowers saved.

value of £0.8 billion (Quinn 2017c). Supermarkets need to take tangible action to reduce food waste in the supply chain as an urgent step towards meeting their obligations under the food use hierarchy. This could include:

- Whole crop purchasing: this involves buying an entire crop from producers, and then incorporating lower quality food into their processed product lines, (a practice recommended by WRAP).
- Guaranteed orders for suppliers.
- Improved forecasting, as recommended by the Groceries Code Adjudicator, Christine Tacon (Quinn 2017d).
- Marketing seasonal produce (see Box 3).
- Efforts to ensure less food goes to waste because of cosmetic specifications – relaxing cosmetic specifications on mainlines and introducing more product lines with lower specifications.

Acting on cosmetic specifications to reduce food waste

Supermarkets dictate strict cosmetic specifications to suppliers, meaning they will buy fresh produce that fits exacting size, shape and colour specifications – regardless of the nutrition, taste and value of the food. Cosmetic specifications vary between retailers, with some adopting the General Marketing Standards required for some produce types under EU law, and some requiring more exacting standards.

In our report on food waste on UK farms, produce rejected for cosmetic reasons, such as being the wrong shape, size or colour, was the biggest reason for food waste identified by farmers (Bowman 2018). The National Farmers Union (NFU) gave evidence to the House of Lords in 2014 that retailers demanded that Gala apples had to be at least 50% red in colour. This resulted in 20% of the crop being wasted. The rejected apples could not go to the juice market because prices were too low to justify processing costs (House of Lords 2014).

To address this issue many supermarkets have launched ‘wonky veg’ lines, from wonky chillies (Chan 2018) to small avocados (Butler 2017). This is a step in the right direction but there is a concern that these are tokenistic measures rather than substantive action. A report by the NFWI showed that ‘90% of WI members said that they would be happy to buy fruit and veg which is blemished or misshapen, irrespective of whether or not the product was cheaper’ (Roberts 2017). However the NFWI’s supermarket survey showed that in many supermarkets the choice to do so did not exist: only 29% of supermarkets surveyed carried a dedicated wonky fruit and veg range, with 68% of these stores offering only one or two products.

Real action to address waste driven by cosmetic specifications should include:

- Relax cosmetic specifications for standard lines, not just ‘wonky’ or ‘imperfect’ lines;
- Extend cosmetically ‘imperfect’ ranges;
- Include produce that cannot be included in wonky ranges in processed food products;

- Publish cosmetic specifications and crop utilisation percentages to enable comparisons to be made between retailers.

Supermarkets should provide transparent data, verified by third parties, to demonstrate whether 'wonky' lines are having a significant impact on reducing waste. For example, Aldi provided the following data 'Since introducing our Everyday Essentials potatoes in January 2014, we have sold over 34,000 tonnes of potatoes which would have otherwise fallen outside of our specifications. This has increased our potato suppliers crop utilisation by over 17 per cent' (Bowden 2016).

In-store and at home food waste reduction

Ultimately, the cause of wasted food in the home is simple: buying too much of it in the first place. Every month, 98% of the UK's population shop in a supermarket (IGD 2017).

Supermarkets dominate our experience of buying food and their marketing practices influence what we buy and how we use it. Take their displays of fruit and vegetables, typically positioned near the entrance to the supermarket, or the strategy of stocking the aisles with far more food than will be bought at any one time, giving the illusion of an endless abundance of food. Bread is one of the worst example of this - figures from Tesco's food waste hotspots data shows that 47% of their bakery production was wasted, and only one quarter of that waste occurs in homes (Tesco 2014).

A supermarket that was truly committed to reducing in-store food waste would be prepared to change how they market their products: this would mean empty shelves at the end of the day, marketing seasonal produce and reducing the promotion of food products with low nutritional benefit but high environmental impacts, such as highly processed foods.

Supermarket marketing strategies cause citizens to over-spend, both exacerbated by supermarket promotions and deals as well as the gradual move away from loose produce towards pre-packed portions. Supermarkets have worked hard at developing an environment that encourages their customers to buy – and waste - food. Supermarkets should fund household waste analyses of their customers to monitor if their actions are successful at reducing waste at household level. Supermarkets must recognise that for customers to waste less they must buy less and this will be reflected in a reduction in supermarket sales.

'It is clear that retailers must assume a far greater responsibility for the prevention of food waste in the home. Retailers must ensure that incentives and promotions offered to consumers do not transfer waste from the store to the household.'

– House of Lords, Counting the Cost of Food Waste: EU Food Waste Prevention (2014)

Date labelling to facilitate food waste reduction in homes

Around 2 million tonnes of food is thrown away from households due to 'not being used in time', and for a third of this, the date label is cited as a factor (WRAP 2014). WRAP has estimated that changes to products and labelling could prevent around 350,000 tonnes of avoidable food waste - with a value of around £1 billion a year (WRAP 2017c).

Date labels cause confusion in households: there is a misunderstanding of the difference

BOX 4: WONKY VEG AND TRANSPARENT DATA – WHAT DO THE NUMBERS ACTUALLY MEAN?

'By adjusting our requirements for our carrots and taking more splits and misshaped carrots we have helped farmers save over 300 tonnes of carrot waste per year! But, most importantly we had no increase in complaints from customers. In 2017 we looked at this again and by relaxing our specifications on carrots even further allowed our farmers to save another 690 tonnes of carrots.' – ASDA (nd.)

690 tonnes sounds like a lot of carrots, but before we congratulate ASDA we need to look at that number in context. In our report on food waste on UK farms (Bowman 2018) one anonymous farmer reported that they waste on average 25% of their carrots, mainly at packhouse level. Some carrots are rejected because of rotting or pest damage, but a large amount are simply too small, large, or wonky. This amounts to 1,750 tonnes of their carrots per year, equal to nearly 22 million portions. That's 2.5 times more carrots going to waste on one farm than ASDA has saved across their operations. Data should be provided in a meaningful context.

BOX 5: COMMUNITY FOOD WASTE INITIATIVES

'Sainsbury's set a target to halve household food waste by 50% and trialled their Waste Less, Save More project in Swadlincote over a year-long project, with dismal results. The initiative fell far short of its 50% target, with households believed to have cut food waste by only 9% (Smithers 2018). Instead of focusing on techno-fix such as giving out fridge thermometers, supermarkets need to find ways to help customers buy the right amount in the first place – and with waste so high, this must mean buying less.'

BOX 6: REMOVING MULTI BUY OFFERS

'We know that customers feel some product promotions create more food waste so we stopped "Buy One, Get One Free" on fruit and veg in April 2014. Instead we focus on price cut promotions offering customers great value all year round.' – (Tesco Nd)

When supermarkets gave evidence to a parliamentary committee enquiry on food waste in 2016, the issue of multi-buy offers was raised by MPs. Despite both Morrisons and Sainsbury's claiming to have stopped these practices they were challenged as to why these offers are still available online. They failed to provide a satisfactory answer and Morrisons continue to run multi-buy offers online.

Simon Hart, MP: "I just had a look, and there's five quid off and free delivery for grocery orders over 80 quid and 75 quid, encouraging people who are shopping just to nudge up to a higher figure than they were perhaps intending to spend in order to qualify for a Morrisons offer. There is a three items for 10 quid offer on selected meat—this is Sainsbury's. For milk, it's three for £2. That is the sort of stuff we were told earlier doesn't happen, yet I think some of it is happening while the Committee is meeting."

Steven Butts (Morrisons): I think what we said was that, certainly in store, things like "buy one, get one free" have gone, but from a delivery point of view delivery tends to be, for most people who use it—I don't—they are buying in volume because you are getting it delivered to you. For example, one of the things that we do when we deliver is also provide a very detailed itemised bill that tells you exactly when your food should and could be used by, to help customers with storage. There are a number of mechanisms that you can use online that are different from the way you might purchase if you are purchasing stuff in store.

(House of Commons 2017a)

between 'use-by' and 'best-before', food items such as fresh produce have date labels when they do not require them, and date labels are in many cases overly cautious. The reality is that many thousands of tonnes of food will be thrown away every week, despite still being perfectly safe to eat.

Extending product life by only 24 hours could prevent 250,000 tonnes of food from being wasted, according to research by WRAP (2015). While use-by labels are required for food safety on some products, such as uncooked meats, 'best-before' labels do not add value to a customer's experience, as food will still be safe beyond the date on its best before label, (if correctly stored). While 'best-before' labels may play a role in stock control, we propose that retailers phase out 'best before' in favour of other methods of stock control, which do not have an impact on customer decisions.

Regarding 'use-by' labels, we suggest retailers reconsider overly cautious 'use-by' dates and relax these labels in combination with clear labelling and customer education about correct storage methods, such as fridge temperature.

"We looked at products where we could remove best before dates altogether. As a result, we removed dates from apples and onions, so our customers know that there's no rush to enjoy them." – ASDA website 'It's a date' (nd).

"We choose not to print any 'best before' dates on much of our fresh produce, allowing and encouraging customers to assess certain products themselves and helping to prolong product shelf-life." – (Jarvis 2018).

"We know some customers may be confused by the difference between best before and use by dates on food and this can lead to perfectly edible items being thrown away before they need to be discarded. We have made this change to fruit and vegetable packaging as they are among the most wasted foods." – Mark Little, CEO of Tesco (BBC News 2018)

Co-op guide to dating

Co-op was the first supermarket to sell food past its best before date. Furthermore, Co-op made headlines last year when it announced it would dramatically reduce the price of items coming to the end of their shelf life, sometimes to as little as 10p. (Cullen 2017).

Food waste savings for citizens

Asda developed a citizen food waste reduction initiative with the University of Leeds which led to their customers saving on average £57 per year (Ogleby 2016). We commend Asda for recognising their role in reducing citizens' food waste and monitoring their actions. However, WRAP data shows that on average UK households waste £470 worth of food per year (Smithers 2017a) - there is still much more work to be done.



STEP 2. REDISTRIBUTION



The food use hierarchy holds that surplus food that is fit for human consumption should be sent to charities and organisations that redistribute food. However, redistribution is not a solution to food waste. Redistribution is a pragmatic response to an inherently wasteful food economy and is necessary to avoid massive losses of food from the system while it remains in its current state. Reducing how much food becomes surplus in the first place, by altering farming and buying practices so that waste is designed out of the system, should be the priority as explained under Step 1.

Every major supermarket in the UK has a policy on food redistribution and food redistribution organisations have greatly expanded their operations in the last decade. However, despite this relatively well-developed food redistribution landscape, the current level of food surplus redistributed is only a fraction of the surplus food available, showing opportunity for a significant scaling up of current redistribution. The national redistribution charity FareShare redistributes approximately 17,000 tonnes of surplus food every year, but its annual target is 100,000 tonnes (Smithers 2018b). Research by WRAP (2017) showed that the amount of food currently redistributed from retailers and manufacturers to feed people





FUNDING FOR FOOD REDISTRIBUTION ACTIVITIES

Asda recently announced it will donate £20 million to FareShare and the Trussell Trust to the value of £15 million, in order to make redistribution financially attractive to retailers (FareShare 2018).

Morrisons have announced they are donating £45,000 to the Community Fridge Network, a food surplus initiative run by environmental charity Hubbub. Community fridges are stocked with edible surplus food from local businesses and households and are open to everyone (Hegarty 2018).

| Supermarket | Food redistributed (amount in tonnes unless otherwise stated; most recent data available) |
|-----------------|---|
| Tesco | 7,975 |
| Sainsbury's | 2,935 |
| Waitrose | £1,445,088 worth of food Waitrose's website also states that 21,949kg of food was donated to FareShare in 2016 equating to 22 tonnes |
| Asda | 1,333 |
| Co-op | Co-op website states 50 tonnes in September 2015 FareShare website states that Co-op distributed 494 tonnes of surplus food to FareShare in 2016 |
| Marks & Spencer | 757 |
| Aldi | 112 |
| Lidl | 561,100 meals donated – according to Neighbourly website |
| Iceland | No data available |
| Morrisons | 3.4 million items since 2016 |

STEP 3. TRANSFORMING FOOD WASTE INTO ANIMAL FEED



BOX 7: OVERLOOKING THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT OF CONVERTING SURPLUS FOOD TO ANIMAL FEED

Waitrose's website fails to include sending food surplus to animal feed, stating the next best use after redistribution is AD. Co-op has a diagram of the hierarchy on their website that does not include transforming food waste into animal feed. Neither of these distortions reflect the 'recycling' stage of the hierarchy which is enshrined in the UK Waste Regulations (2011).

Food surplus that is unfit for human consumption should be used to feed animals, namely pigs and chickens. This is currently a very limited practice in the UK. Currently, it is only legally permissible to send certain food products, such as bread, dairy, fruit and vegetables, to be turned into pig feed. Feedback's campaign 'The Pig Idea' calls for the ban on feeding safe and treated meat-containing food surplus to pigs to be overturned, and for the implementation of a new safe system for transforming food surplus into animal feed. This is currently practiced in other countries in the world, in particular Japan and United States. 75% of pig farmers surveyed for a study published in 2018 reported supporting lifting this ban (zu Ermgassen et al. 2018).

Tesco, Sainsbury's and Iceland are the only major UK supermarkets to send legally permissible food waste to animal feed. Research shows that using food waste as animal feed scores better than AD or composting on 12 out of 14 environmental and health indicators (Salemdeeb et al. 2017). Research by Cambridge University concludes that changing the law and feeding our food waste to pigs could save 1.8 million hectares of global agricultural land, including hundreds of thousands of acres of South America's biodiverse forests and savannahs – and provide a use for the 100 million tonnes of food wasted in the EU each year (zu Ermgassen et al. 2016).



STEP 4. RECOVERING VALUE FROM INEDIBLE FOOD WASTE: ANAEROBIC DIGESTION



We recommend that Government intervention in particular industries, such as anaerobic digestion, does not discourage the best possible use of food waste, as set out in the food waste hierarchy.



Environment Food and Rural Affairs committee (House of Commons 2017).

Most supermarkets have a zero waste to landfill commitment, and in general supermarkets send little or no waste to landfill. We consider zero waste to landfill as the minimum standard.

AD is one of several technologies used to recover energy from food waste. The process produces biogas and digestate (which can be used as fertiliser) through the breakdown of organic matter by micro-organisms in the absence of oxygen. AD should only be used to process food waste which is unsuitable for either redistribution for consumption by people, or for use as animal feed. However, although AD is the at the bottom of the food use hierarchy the reality is that edible food waste does get sent to AD because it easier and cheaper than redistributing food or turning it into animal feed. Feedback's investigations have uncovered large quantities of edible food which never reached supermarket shelves being sent straight to AD due to problems in the supply chain. The AD industry, who's growth has been subsidised by government green energy incentives, also drives the use of crops such as maize grown specifically for use in digesters rather than to be eaten – a shocking waste of our soil's finite resources (Soil Association 2015).

Helen Sisson, group technical director for Greencore, a producer of convenience foods has remarked: "waste food for AD can be transported in a tipper truck, like any other waste, but if it's going to be eaten it has to be packaged, possibly kept chilled, stored, labelled for any allergies, shelf life and so on, and transported safely. At every stage there is a cost." (Rayner

2017). Waitrose admitted to the House of Lords enquiry into food waste that “there is a clear temptation, on economic grounds, to prioritise energy recovery over redistribution” (House of Lords 2014). FareShare is asking the government to create a £15 million fund to make it cost effective for redistribution to compete with AD (Rayner 2017).

Tesco’s latest food waste data show that 19,898 tonnes of food fit for human consumption went to AD in 2017/18 (Tesco PLC 2018). Tesco is one of the few supermarkets which clearly recognises that the use of an AD to process food waste is not a ‘reduction’ of waste in the same ways as redistribution or use as animal feed.

CONCLUSION

Despite many laudable initiatives to tackle food waste, supermarkets are so far failing to successfully reduce waste in their stores, supply chains and customers’ homes. This report has revealed that despite leadership from a few retailers, many lag behind on the most basic steps to further their food waste reduction, such as publishing transparent data and converting food surplus to animal feed. In addition, none of the supermarkets are truly getting to grips with how their marketing and sales tactics cause waste in their customers’ homes.

This begs the question - is a ‘waste-free’ supermarket possible? The current evidence suggests that supermarkets’ business models, ownership structure and market clout inherently lead to waste generation from farm to fork. This report is a challenge to supermarkets to show us that their business model is not synonymous with food waste and that they can be part of a less wasteful food system that nourishes the planet.



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APPENDIX IN-DEPTH SUPERMARKET SCORES

| | TESCO | ASDA | MORRISONS | SAINSBURY'S | ALDI | CO-OP | WAITROSE | LIDL | ICELAND | M & S |
|--|------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| FOOD WASTE REDUCTION | | | | | | | | | | |
| Targets and policy for food waste reduction | | | | | | | | | | |
| Corporate policy | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Sustainable Development Goal | • | | | | • | | | | | |
| Courtauld Commitment | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Monitoring of food waste reduction | | | | | | | | | | |
| Publicly available food waste data | • | | • | • | | | | | | • |
| Detailed break-down of food waste data publicly available | • | | | • | | | | | | |
| Reducing food waste in supply chains | | | | | | | | | | |
| Marketing seasonal produce | • | | | | • | | | • | | |
| Whole crop purchasing | • | | • | | | | | | | |
| Guaranteed order for suppliers | • | | | | | | | | | |
| Improved forecasting | • | • | | • | | | • | • | • | • |
| Acting on cosmetic specifications to reduce food waste | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data on how much produce is rejected because of cosmetic specs | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wonky veg line | • | • | • | | • | • | • | • | | |
| Using wonky produce in prepared, pre-cut foods or other product lines | • | | | • | • | | | | • | • |
| Data showing whether relaxing cosmetic specs has significantly reduced food waste | | | • | | • | | | | | |
| Publishing cosmetic specifications | | | | | | | | | | |
| In-store and at home food waste reduction | | | | | | | | | | |
| Removing special offers that promote over-purchasing* i.e. multi-buy offers | | | | • | • | | | • | | |
| Significantly altering store layout to reduce over-purchasing i.e. not over-stocking shelves | | | | | | | | | | |
| Detailed analysis of customers' household waste | | | | | | | | | | |
| Date labelling to facilitate food waste reduction in homes | | | | | | | | | | |
| Removal of 'Best Before' dates on fresh produce | • | • | | | | | | • | | |
| Selling food past 'Best Before' Date | | | | | | • | | | | |
| Relaxing date labels: making them more realistic | | | | | | • | | | | |
| REDISTRIBUTION | | | | | | | | | | |
| Policy on redistribution of food | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Quantity of food redistributed (up to 3 points) | ••• | •• | • | •• | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Funding to redistribution organisations | | • | • | • | | | | | | |
| Data monitoring food donations as a proportion of total surplus | • | | | | | | | | | |
| ANIMAL FEED | | | | | | | | | | |
| Support 'The Pig Idea' | | | | | | | | | | |
| Programme for sending permissible food surplus to animal feed | • | | | • | | | | | • | |
| Data on food sent to animal feed | • | | | • | | | | | | |
| DISPOSAL | | | | | | | | | | |
| Only sending inedible food to AD | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zero waste to landfill commitment | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| Data on food waste sent to AD | • | | | • | | | | | | |
| TOTAL SCORE (OUT OF 32) | 21 | 10 | 10 | 15 | 11 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| AS A % | 66% | 31% | 31% | 47% | 34% | 25% | 22% | 31% | 25% | 25% |

*Based on in-store investigations and supermarket's online offers

Feedback enables the regeneration of nature by reducing the demands placed on it by the food system. To do this, we challenge power, catalyse action and empower people to achieve positive change.

From 2025 we are

FOODRISE

**This document uses
our old branding**

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**FEED
BACK**
FOR FOOD THAT
NOURISHES THE PLANET