



Food wastage

White Paper – Food wastage in health care

Wageningen UR's measurement method: practical and effective Tackling food wastage in health care

More than 25% of the food that hospitals and health care institutions purchase ends up in the waste container. Much can be gained from this. Scientists of Wageningen UR have thus developed a practical method of identifying food wastage and then addressing the problem areas.

Examples include patients who do not clear their plates, food that is left over in the kitchen after portioning and meals that are not touched because the patients have already been discharged and gone home. More than 25% of food in Dutch hospitals and health care institutions is thrown away. Reducing food wastage is therefore high on their agenda. The resultant savings could be invested in healthier and better meals for patients, which would increase patient satisfaction.

Sound approach

Reducing food wastage starts with insight into food provision and wastage. Wageningen UR's measurement method offers a practical and sound approach for this purpose. Each organisation can also decide for themselves beforehand which components of food provision will be taken into account and how detailed it will be measured. For example, will the measurement only involve hot meals or bread-based meals as well? And will meals be seen as a whole or will components such as meat and fish be weighed separately? By using this method, wastage can be determined at different moments, for example when meals are being portioned in the kitchen, the untouched meals on the ward and the remains on a patient's plate.

Detailed insight

The measurement method provides detailed insight into food wastage. The hospital or health care institute receives clear answers to questions such as:

- How many meals are thrown away each year, in terms of weight and money? What percentage is this of the total food purchase?
- How much is wasted during the different steps in the process? Where are the greatest losses made?
- In which product category is the most food thrown away?
- What improvements are possible and what will they produce?

Once it is clear how much food is being thrown away, the amount of food that a patient consumes on average can also be calculated.

Solutions

Research into food wastage has shown that particularly vegetables from hot meals are thrown away. Many meals

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Benchmark

Wageningen UR has applied the method in 15 Dutch hospitals and healthcare institutions, making it possible to compare the results with each other. In this way, the organisations do not only know precisely how much they waste themselves, but also whether that is relatively more or less than the anonymised average of other hospitals.

are also returned on a Thursday and Friday because many patients are discharged before the weekend.

Reducing food wastage is possible with small operational steps, such as using portioning scoops or wide-edged plates. Large strategic steps can also be taken, for example by broadening the range and offering better quality food.

Gains can also be made if patients only have to order their meals just before eating. The researchers have found that patients will then order precisely what they feel like eating in terms of taste and portion size. This not only puts a significant reduction in food wastage within easy reach, it also improves patient food intake and satisfaction.

Wageningen UR's food wastage measurement method

Questions and answers

Wageningen UR's method for identifying food wastage seems like an interesting proposition for my organisation. How can I find out more about this method?

This white paper contains the most important information. If you would like to know more, please contact the experts:



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They will be able to answer all your questions.

Can I apply this method myself or do I need help?

You can apply the method independently. In practice, many hospitals and health care institutions choose to receive some coaching from Wageningen UR. Our experts' expertise and experience can help you identify any food wastage quicker and in a more focused manner. Cooperation with Wageningen UR also facilitates a comparison with the benchmark of other health care institutes.

How does a Wageningen UR study work?

If you decide to investigate food wastage with Wageningen UR, we will arrange the allocation of tasks with you. In most cases, our experts will help you with the study design, give practical tips on how to quickly and smoothly implement the measurement process and guide you through the first measurements. Once the results are in, they will also assess and compare them to the benchmark. Lastly, we will discuss the measurement results with you and look at possible improvements.





What must I arrange myself if I start to work with you?

If you start to work with us in reducing food waste, we will go through the various steps of the method with your project manager before the start of the study. We will jointly look at what you can do yourself in each step. In practice, we see that the hospital normally measures the food waste itself. If required, we will support you during this part in managing your employees, temporary workers or students.

Why is Wageningen UR the right cooperation partner?

Wageningen UR developed the food waste measurement method itself, which is meanwhile being used in

15 hospitals and health care institutes. We are also knowledgeable about meal concepts, patient satisfaction, nutritional value and food perception. You can quickly take major steps forward with our guidance.

What do other hospitals and health care institutes think about Wageningen UR's measurement method?

Without exception, the organisations are enthusiastic about the insights that they have gained with this method.



Leonie Braskamp from UMC Utrecht:

'We intentionally chose Wageningen UR's method because it determines food waste in relation to our total meal production and the size of the hospital or ward. We compare those figures with other hospitals to see where we can make improvements.'