



# Less waste – more food

## A lot of food is thrown away unnecessarily

Every year at least 1 million tons of food waste is thrown away – in Sweden alone. A lot of this is food that could have been eaten. In global terms, around one third of all food produced for human consumption is lost, equivalent to about 1.3 billion tons per year, according to a study by the UN body FAO.

## Food affects the environment

All food production affects the environment. World food production accounts for about 15 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions, and causes eutrophication and acidification of soil and lakes. It spreads hazardous substances and requires huge quantities of water. Producing food that is then thrown away is not sustainable – it means that all the energy, water and land required to produce the food was used unnecessarily.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN UNAVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE AND AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE

Food waste includes both avoidable and unavoidable food waste. Avoidable food waste is food that is thrown away, but that could have been sold or eaten if it had been handled differently. Unavoidable food waste are things that can't be eaten, such as egg shells and bones.

## Reduced food waste saves billions for society

If food waste in Sweden was reduced by 20 per cent, society would save around SEK 10-16 billion a year. The greatest gain – more than 80 per cent – could be achieved by reducing household food waste. This is because households represent the greatest food waste in relative terms, and the social cost of each kilo of food waste increases the further down the food chain we go.

Just over 35 per cent of household food waste is food that could have been eaten. If households reduced unavoidable food waste by 50-60 per cent, the total amount of food waste would fall by 20 per cent.

## Biogas is good but less food waste is much better

From a climate perspective, it is about 10 times more effective to prevent food waste at source than to use food waste for biogas production. The benefits of reducing climate emissions from food production are much greater than the gain of dealing with the food afterwards. For the food waste that still occurs, we need to get better at dealing with the material and the energy in the waste in an effective way.

# National campaign to reduce food waste

Between 2013 and 2015, we are focusing on reducing food loss in Sweden. We provide consumers with tips about what they can do to throw away less. We also work to ensure that everyone who cultivates, manufactures, sells and serves food is doing what they can to reduce food waste.

We throw away a lot of food that could have been eaten, so-called 'avoidable food waste'. The production of this food causes extensive environmental impact and the use of limited resources. In order to achieve our environmental goals, we need to reduce food waste. At EU level, the goal is to halve food waste by 2020.

Sweden's National Food Agency, along with the Swedish Board of Agriculture and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, have been asked by the government to implement a number of measures to reduce food waste. A final report on this assignment will be presented no later than 31 March 2016. As most of the food that is thrown away is in households, we will be focusing on communication with consumers.

**Read more about reduced food waste at [www.livsmedelsverket.se](http://www.livsmedelsverket.se)**

## THE ASSIGNMENT INCLUDES:

- implementing targeted information campaigns for consumers
- analysing opportunities and any obstacles to reduced food waste
- working for increased cooperation between various stakeholders who can help to reduce food waste
- spreading information on best practice
- stimulating increased use of unavoidable food waste for biogas production

