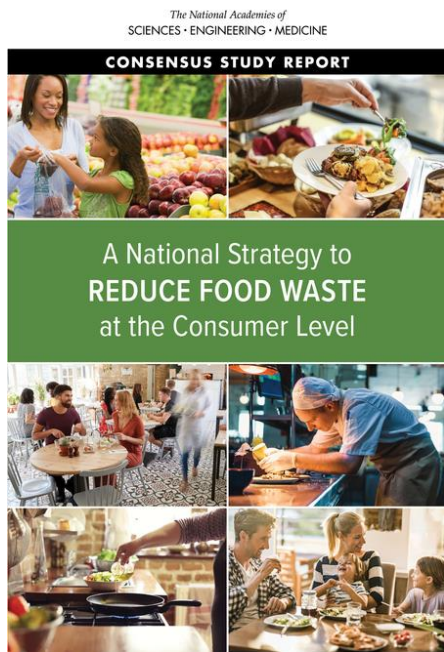


Lessons Learned from the NASEM Food Waste Report about the Role of Communication in Changing Behavior



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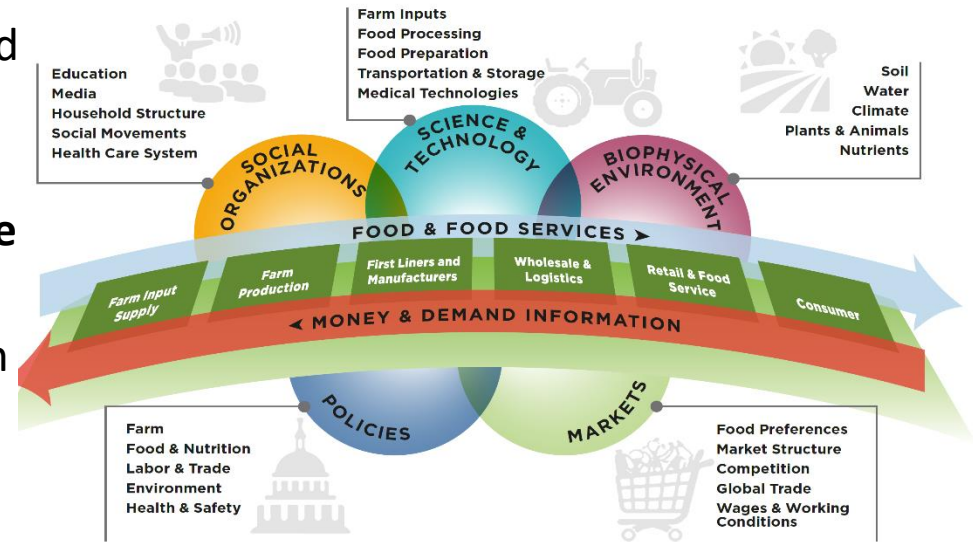
Lessons Learned: Systems Thinking

Food Waste Report

- The task was to focus on a systems-based strategy to reduce food waste at the consumer level

Potential Relevance for Standing Committee

- If a behavior persists, it's because it benefits multiple members in the system
- Systems exert pressure to restore equilibrium – the larger the system, the stronger the pressure
- Systems thinking is a key component for consumer to develop strategies that improve food choices



Example

- Retailers have incentives to promote quantity purchasing
- Families have norm about signaling abundance
- Communities may face budgetary constraints processing/measuring waste



Lessons Learned: Multiple Decision Points

Food Waste Report

- Many non-consumer decisions at other points in the food system result in food waste at the consumer level (e.g., packaging, promotion strategies, portion sizes, bias toward fresh, recognizing spoilage vs not as fresh, etc.)
- Long before the disposal decision is made, the consumer has been set up to waste or not waste

Potential Relevance for Standing Committee

- Anything that influences nutrition-related decisions points prior to and in the context of the individual's food consumption can have strong downstream effects:
 - Pre-acquisition marketing efforts
 - Acquisition of food
 - Consumption contexts, habits and norms
 - Disposition (storage, disposal) tendencies and their effects
 - Event-related habits and triggers



Lessons Learned: Motivation, Opportunity, Ability

Food Waste Report

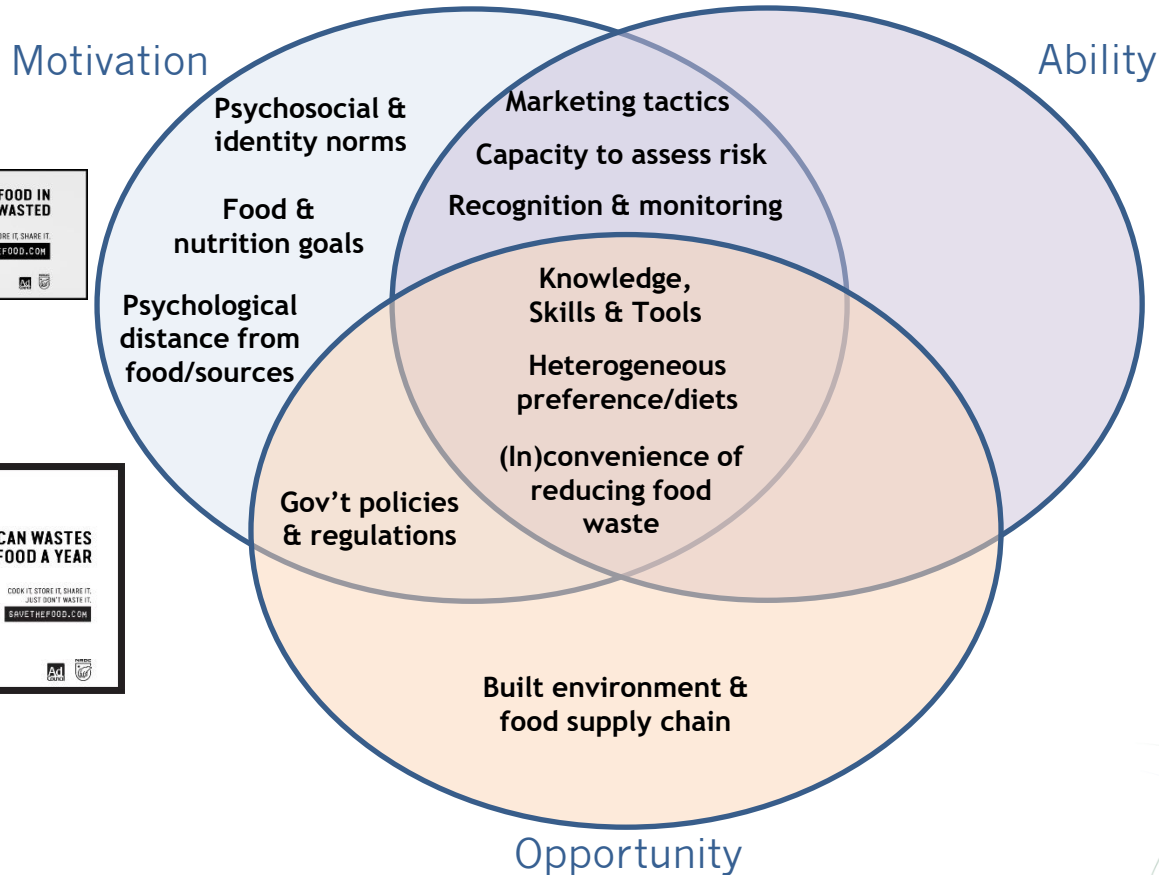
- Too often waste reduction strategies are based on awareness/motivation (e.g. educating consumers about amount wasted and its impact)
- Consumers also need the ability (e.g. cooking and storage skills; understandable date-labeling and fresh vs spoiled) and opportunity (e.g. infrastructure)

Potential Relevance for Standing Committee

- Education strategies—providing information is a frequent strategy. Is it enough and does it differentiate those with knowledge/motivation and those without?
- Is awareness/motivation sufficient to result in behavior change, or are there ability/opportunity factors to consider??
- Has motivation beyond information been considered?
 - Incentives are still valuable tools! (Pay What you Throw)
 - Social norms may also be powerful sources of motivation



Example: Drivers in Peer-reviewed Studies



Lessons Learned: Evidence from other Behavior change initiatives

Food Waste Report

- Limited evidence is available on successful strategies that are systems based and often the evidence available was of low quality from a design perspective. If we only considered the food waste literature, the recommendations may have seemed limited (small plates, no trays, refrigerator magnets etc)

Potential Relevance for Standing Committee

- Most successful interventions across domains bundle together multiple tactics
- Behavior change often encompasses multiple goals but available evidence is more narrowly focused



Some of the Lessons Learned from Related Domains

Multi-faceted Interventions

- Targeting multiple behaviors (diet behavior and physical activity) may be more effective than a single strategy for weight loss
- Linking motivation (communications) with ability (“how-to”) for initiating and sustaining behaviors (weight loss)
- Stimulate different types of cognitive processing

Broad categories for how interventions work

- Appealing to values
- Engaging consumers
- Evoking social comparison
- Providing feedback
- Providing financial incentives
- Modifying choice architecture
- Providing how-to information



Lessons Learned: Myths/Fads

Food Waste Report

- Several myths and fads result in food waste at the household level: Mis-interpretation of date-labeling; bias toward fresh produce; cost of waste; alternative disposal (compost); perceived value of food

Potential Relevance for Standing Committee

- There are incentives to disseminate myths and “quick fixes”
- Myths are difficult to dislodge and a crowded information space may lead to skepticism or confusion



Examples: Myths that impede behavior change



Los Angeles Times

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How to make compost and maybe save the world too



Finished compost is a rich, loamy miracle food for your soil and plants, which you can create for free, with just a little effort, from the food waste, clippings and other organic materials we usually just throw away. (Irfan Khan / Los Angeles Times)

By JEANETTE MARANTOS

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Lessons Learned: The need for coordinated efforts

Food Waste Report: Coordinated efforts by many stakeholders could have multiplier effects and advance solutions and innovations rapidly

Potential Relevance for Standing Committee: the food system is complex and influenced by many stakeholders (industry, government, professional associations); coordination of their work toward improving behaviors may have a greater impact



Examples: Coordination and Partnership

Federal agencies	State and local agencies	Manufacturers, retailers, marketers
The agriculture sector	Food service providers	Food industry organizations
Standards organizations	Nongovernment organizations	Professional associations
Influencers	Schools, colleges and universities	Innovators
Foundations	Researchers and academic institutions	

