

**Review: Food Loss and Food waste: Causes and Solutions**

By M. Blakeney

**Reviewed by Yves Laberge**

Québec, Canada

Blakeney, Michael. *Food Loss and Food waste: Causes and Solutions*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019; 224 pp. Hardcover. The eBook version is priced from US\$31 from Google Play, ebooks.com and other eBook vendors, while in print the book can be ordered from the Edward Elgar Publishing website.

Evidently, the best way to preserve our common resources is to avoid wasting them. The persisting problems of food loss and waste and global food insecurity are not only disturbing and unfair, but they both could be avoided if decision-makers agreed on a common strategy; according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), “we actually produce enough food for every person in the world to have approximately 2700 calories each day” (FAO document from 2013, quoted by Michael Blakeney, p. 3).

Taking from a variety of experts on food loss and waste production, Michael Blakeney’s *Food Loss and Food Waste: Causes and Solutions* argues the main reasons behind food loss and waste are malfunctioning distribution systems, mismanagement, and specifically “the general influence of the global trading system” (p. 2), but also “the acquisition practices of the large supermarket chains which dominate the food markets in industrialized countries” (p. 2). One must also consider the disturbing fact so many comestible products are discarded by sellers for disputable reasons and unjustly wasted, even though these disqualified aliments could nevertheless be redistributed for those in need: “food is often rejected which does not meet the cosmetic standards imposed by retailers” (p. 2).

Solidly documented and efficiently organized, *Food Loss and Food Waste* is divided into eight chapters, going from a general diagnostic assessment, to micro-level and macro-level causes of food loss and waste, to environmental impacts and solutions. A comparison of initiatives according to countries (mostly European governments) is proposed in Chapter 6 (on Regulatory Options). Among a variety of topics, Michael Blakeney discusses with authority core concepts such as “the waste hierarchy” (p. 55),

“Biodiversity Loss” (p. 57), “ethical consumption” (p. 104), and also “sub-cultural responses” (p. 106), which are alternative ways to coin citizen movements that can counteract overproduction and overconsumption: the freegan movement, dumpster diving, food sharing organizations (p. 106).

Perhaps the most inspiring, Chapter 7 (about strategies for avoiding food loss and fostering waste reduction) presents a series of advice and strategies for individuals and families to avoid food loss and waste production. For example, a better understanding of the real implications of the “use by” labels on fruits and raw meat sold in grocery stores: “a number of studies have indicated that date labels often influence consumer perception of the safety of food products by making implicit references to the safety of the product” (p. 158). Other suggestions include “reusing leftovers” (p. 159) and prevention; some Asian governments have launched large advertising initiatives such as the “empty plate campaign” in China (p. 165) and the “half bowl campaign” in South Korea (p. 165). In the case of food loss and waste, recycling and composting are neither the first nor the most efficient ways to resolve this complex problem: preventing waste by buying less and consuming less is more logical and should come first.

Because of its relevant topic and abundance of concepts, definitions, and constructive ideas related to everyday life, *Food Loss and Food Waste: Causes and Solutions* is an important book not only for scholars and experts in agriculture, environmental education, environmental sociology, administration studies, and even politicians (see remark, p. 191). Blakeney’s *Food Loss and Food Waste* encompasses many disciplines and is the most useful book in English about sustainability released in 2019. Because it touches so many different fields, this clearly written synthesis is essential for university and public libraries in English-speaking institutions.

---

Yves Laberge, Ph.D., <ylaberge@uottowa.ca>, Centre ÉRE, Québec, Canada

***Electronic Green Journal, Issue 43, 2020, ISSN: 1076-7975***