

Food, waste and climate crisis

Dr Rachel Marshall

LancsCAN Webinar Sept 24



What is FoodFutures?

- North Lancashire's silver award winning Sustainable Food Places Initiative (www.foodfutures.org.uk)
- We are a cross-sector place-based food partnership that works together to realise our shared vision: “a thriving local food system that is healthy, resilient and fair.”
- Part of a wider national+ network of ‘Sustainable Food Places’ (www.sustainablefoodplaces.org)
- A partnership formed of working groups that any individual, group, organisation and business that shares the vision can join.
- Worked guided by ‘Our FoodFutures’ a 10 year community food strategy



CLOSING loops

A FoodFutures Project



Delivery Partners



With thanks to funding from the National Lottery Community Fund

Closing Loops

- National Lottery funded five year project (2022-27)
- Community composting network
- Gleaning and surplus food redistribution
- Community cooks network promoting and sharing skills around the 'Tastes of North Lancashire' menu
- Growing a regenerative economy including funding, training and feasibility work
- Pots of Possibility fund



Partnership
projects

Visit:

foodfutures.org.uk/closing-loops/





The aubergine journey

Intercepted this food and here's the journey that it's been on;

- Grown in the Dominican Republic (using land and water)
- Non-organic - so sprayed with pesticides that come from petroleum chemicals
- Harvested - massive amounts of diesel
- Packaged - cardboard and plastic
- Transported to a doc - big van, lots of diesel
- Popped on a shipping container - huge amounts of diesel
- Put on another lorry at the other end - diesel
- Put in a commercial walk in fridge at the wholesale market - energy and refrigerant chemicals
- Then not sold because the wholesaler constantly over orders because it's more profitable.... So the food goes in the bin, but the waste is the land, water, chemicals, diesel and energy embodied within that food and the journey that it's been on.

Story and image courtesy of Corin at Open Kitchen: www.openkitchenmcr.co.uk/

Why is food waste a problem?

If food waste was a country it would be the third largest emitter after the US and China

Around 15 million tonnes of food is wasted in the UK every year, and the vast majority of that is perfectly edible.

Perceived conflict between need to increase food production, biodiversity, climate impact. But we waste around a third to a quarter produced.

Food waste in landfill contributes directly greenhouse gas emissions and leachates



It's estimated that the UK's total food waste could feed upwards of 30 million people a year

Why does food waste happen?

In UK most waste happens after farm gate

- Food industry in particular supermarkets bear large responsibility for over-ordering, cancelling orders, product specification
- Incorrect use of expiry dates
- Catering and restaurants - customer unknowns, stock rotation
- Households - meal planning, knowledge around food safety

In reality food waste is written into the industrial food system and part of business model - just in time models, multipack buys



Sustainability 101: The Waste Hierarchy

The lowest carbon thing we can do with food that will otherwise go to waste is put it in a belly, any belly, rather than a bin

For every tonne of food that we save from going to waste, around 4.2tonnes of CO₂e is saved

Short term mission:

Intercept food from going to waste

Long term mission:

Fix our broken food system



Food industry actions

- Relaxing cosmetic standards
- Selling 'damaged' produce or produce that may not be aesthetically pleasing instead of throwing it away.
- Reducing products that may be close to their sell-by date.
- Changing labelling policy on best before
- Donate surplus waste to charities or organisations.



Surplus food redistribution is neither a solution for food waste issue nor for food poverty

Actions when hosting events

- Plan for not creating food waste at events - menu design, food storage
- Avoid pre-plating up and consider using smaller plates
- Plan where leftover food can go - boxes to take it home, advice, email out to colleagues, community fridge
- Compost any residual food waste



What about us as individuals and households?

Images

It feels weird to throw food away

Skills

Recipes, knowledge of food safety, experience, preserving skills



Stuff (Infrastructure)

Equipment, energy, time, headspace, storage space

Images, skills and stuff is a Theory of Change model - used to design Closing Loops

Actions that individuals and households could take

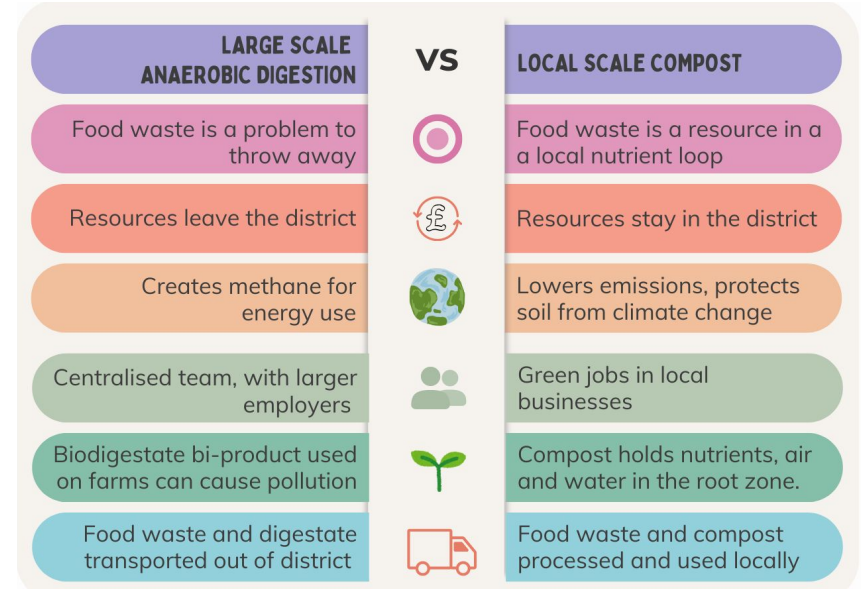
- Buy local and seasonal to reduce supply chain waste
- Pre-planning meals - know exactly what to buy
- Cooking larger meals in bulk and freezing any leftovers
- Ignore best before - skill up in knowing when it's fine to eat something
- Share, ferment, preserve your surplus
- Eat your pumpkin, broccoli stalks and more
- If you really can't eat it...compost it
- Take a tupperware to events!

Visit lovefoodhatewaste.com



What to do with the waste that's left?

- Avoid putting food waste into landfill
- Separate business food waste collection mandatory from 2025 or 2027 depending on size
- Domestic food waste collection from 2026
- Large proportion of food waste likely to be used in anaerobic digestion (AD)
- Composting should be in the mix and valuable local solution and resource
- Perverse AD incentives have led to idea of energy from food



foodfutures.org.uk/case-studies/feasibility-study-composting-sme-food-waste/

Collectively work to create a regenerative food economy

- A regenerative food system is one that builds back the health of people and ecosystems
- Predominantly local, seasonal, produced using organic methods
- Reduction in animal products - focus on high welfare standards
- Fairly traded products - direct connection between producers and food eaters
- People have access to their own means and choice in accessing food - agroecology



What does FoodFutures do?

- **Building connection**

[Working groups](#), Food Champions network, producer and chef network, partnership projects ([Where the Wildings Are](#))

- **Building capacity**

Collaborative funding bids (for example [Closing Loops](#)), local funding pots ([Pots of Possibility](#), Microgrants), training opportunities, The Plot market garden, community farm, Gather food hub

- **Celebrating local food and community**

[Seasonal markets](#), community events and meals, citizen journalism, [THRIVE magazine](#), local food column, Local Food Directory

- **Education and development pathways**

'[Where the Wildings Are](#)' schools project, [Farmstart \(training for small scale commercial growers\)](#), food skills training

- **Campaigns** [Good Food Manifesto](#), [Share the Harvest](#)



Find out more at
foodfutures.org.uk

rachel_CL@lessuk.org

foodfutures.org.uk/closing-loops

