

THE FOOD WASTE PILOT PROJECT “SAA SYÖDÄ!” – “LICENSE TO EAT”

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ABSTRACT

The aims of the project were to find out whether sharing food with other consumers could reduce food waste to a point where it could make a difference in terms of sustainability and to find out how much and what kind of food people are ready to share with their neighbors. This pilot experiment was conducted during winter 2012-2013 in Helsinki, Finland. During the experiment we found out that accepting other people's food was easy but sharing own food was more difficult.

INTRODUCTION

Food constitutes over a third of the environmental impact of Finnish overall consumption (Seppälä et al 2009). It is ecologically and economically unsustainable to waste edible food because the environmental impacts of producing the raw materials for food processing have been pointless.

In Finnish households, the annual amount of avoidable food waste is approximately 120-160 million kilos, worth around EUR 500 million (Silvennoinen et al 2012). The main reasons for disposing of food are spoilage, e.g. mould 29% and passing the “best before” date 19%. More than 40% of food is unspoiled when discarded. In the whole food chain, the households produce the largest amounts of food waste, about 20-30 kg per person per year, which means that there is significant potential for reducing it. The main discarded foodstuffs are vegetables, home cooked food, milk products, bakery and grains, and fruits and berries. (Silvennoinen et al 2012)

The aims of the project were to present people the value of food, to raise their awareness on the wasted food problems, and to help them pay attention to their food buying habits. Other aims was to find out whether sharing food with neighbours could reduce food waste in terms of sustainability and to find out how much and what kind of food people are ready to share. The aim of the pilot experiment was to get the food exchange system started and help people to share their extra edible food instead of discarding it.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The pilot experiment was conducted from November 2012 to February 2013 in a housing company located in Roihuvuori, Helsinki, Finland. The housing company has about 200 occupants with different age range and backgrounds. The food sharing point was set up in the

housing company`s cold storage cellar, where the occupants could bring fresh vegetables and fruits, unopened food packages that had not reached their “best before” or “last usage” date, and dishes that were prepared on the same day. All the occupants could take food home from the food sharing point. Information about the food left in the food sharing point was communicated through notebook, Facebook and the housing company`s own blog. Also the local retailer participated to the experiment by bringing aging food from his store to the food sharing point.

RESULTS

Occupants visited the food sharing point more than hundred times during the three-month-long experiment. There were at least 30 different occupants who took food from the food sharing point. Most of people visited the food sharing point more than once and took more than one item at the same time. Occupants brought food 19 times, mainly tea, pasta, chocolate, vegetables and fruits, but also home cooked meals. The retailer brought food six times, mainly vegetables, bread and milk products, but also meat and other meat products and ready meals. All the food brought to the food sharing point was taken away. Figure 1 represents the picking up times of different foods which changed hands during the three-month-long experiment. In addition to food, also candles changed hands through food sharing point.

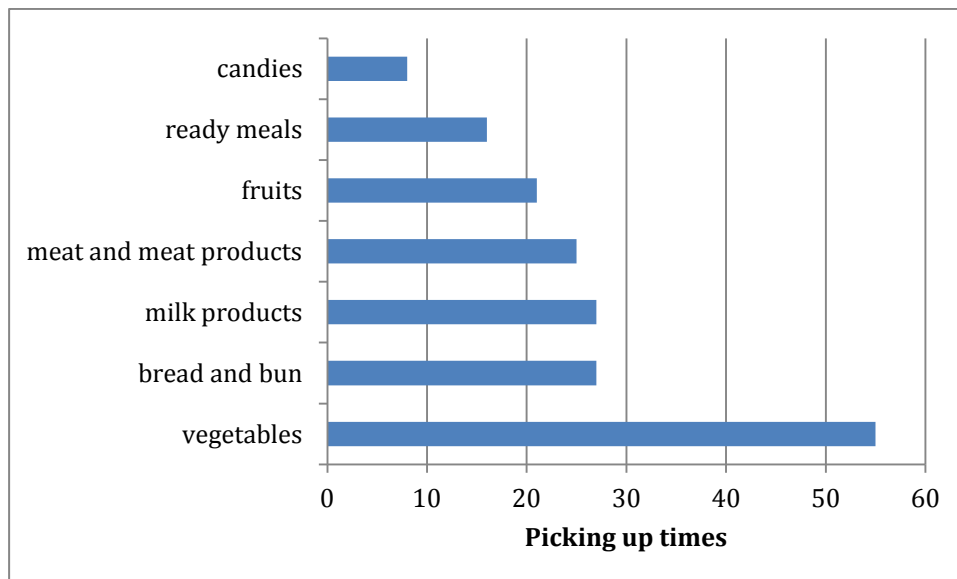


Figure 1. Picking up times of different foods during the three-month-long experiment.

As the result, contrasting with our presumption, the accepting of other people`s food was easy but sharing one`s own food was more difficult. At the end, occupants were really enthusiastic about the experiment and they intend to continue food sharing in their housing company.

CONCLUSIONS

In this project we executed a pilot experiment where there was a food sharing point in the housing company`s cold storage cellar. The aim of the pilot experiment was to get the food exchange system going and help people to share their extra edible food instead of discarding



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it. More than 30 of 200 occupants participated in the experiment. Occupants were enthusiastic of the experiment and they intend to continue food sharing in their housing company.

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