

Evento: XXV Seminário de Iniciação Científica

FOOD WASTE: THE ABUNDANCE THAT KILLS BY STARVATION¹ **FOOD WASTE: THE ABUNDANCE THAT KILLS BY STARVATION**

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INTRODUCTION

Professor Per Pinstrup-Andersen quoted by Caroline Hepker (2014, n.p.) says that “If food was as expensive as a Ferrari, we would polish it and look after it.” This is a profound phrase because it brings a provocative and reflexive bias so that it demonstrates how important and valuable food should be in our society.

Nevertheless, in the developed countries what usually happens is an overestimated production when compared with the necessary nutritional requirements. In other words, “[...] consumption in developed countries far outweighs the caloric requirements recommended by international organizations, placing excess weight and obesity [...]” (BCFN, 2012, p.20). And the consequence of it is while one side of the world is trying to get rid of fat, the other side is dying by starvation.

Out of curiosity, there’s a phrase that became very popular on the social networks that says: “The world’s hunger is getting ridiculous. There is more fruit in a rich man’s shampoo than in a poor man’s plate”. (SHARMA, 2014, n.p.). Whether this phrase is true or false, we may be able to know through the statistics that something is really wrong about food waste in some countries (especially the richer ones) and lack of food in others countries (especially on the poorer ones).

Yet, it is estimated that “the quantity of food wasted in industrialized countries matches the food production available in sub-Saharan Africa.” (BCFN, 2012, p.20). So there is indeed a clear disproportionality when it comes to food production and food access.

Nevertheless, the right to food is protected under the article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, n.p., our griffin): “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food [...].” So the States have to

Evento: XXV Seminário de Iniciação Científica

work on it to guarantee the minimum access to food which is a recognized fundamental human right.

METHODOLOGY

This article comes from a bibliography analysis through books written by reputable authors over the subject discussed and all sorts of material and instruments available on the Internet. Its aim is to debate the food waste issue on our world nowadays. In addition, we bring up news and alternative ways to cope with the problem of food waste demonstrating how the law can have an effective and beneficial role.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In some countries around the world, food waste has been tackled by the law. A good example is what has been done in Italy, where the law has encouraged the firms to donate food in a try to curb the food waste. So, it basically stimulates the companies to donate food as a way of charity and, of course, it saves what has been a calculated about one million tone of food per year (KIRCHGAESSNER, 2016).

In this sense, “[...] the Italian law has [...] focused on incentives that make it easier for companies to change their behavior. It is estimated that Italy wastes about 5.1m tones of food a year.” (KIRCHGAESSNER, 2016, n.p.). Therefore,

The law, which was passed overwhelmingly in the Senate, has essentially relaxed regulations that made such donations cumbersome. It has clarified that food may still be donated even if it is past its sell-by date, and allows farmers to transfer produce to charities at no extra cost if it has not been sold. The law also opens the door for companies to donate food that has been mislabelled as long as it does not pose a safety risk. (KIRCHGAESSNER, 2016, n.p.).

On this context, “France has become the world's first country to ban supermarket waste and compel large retailers to donate unsold food [...]” (FRANCE..., 2016, n.p.). Differently from what has been happening in Italy, the new French legislation has the goal to reduce food waste and also tries to rethink the consumption practices. Therefore, it will provide a greater quantity of food and as a consequence, more people will be fed. Yet, according to the new French law “[...] all larger supermarkets and hypermarkets in France are obliged to give all of their surplus food to the local charities - if not, they will be fined 75,000 Euro - or even face a jail sentence.” (JUUL, 2016, n.p.).

In 2001, Japan also created a special law for wasting food in order to build a more sustainable society through the reutilization of wasted food with the main goal of reducing the amount of food waste that is generated each year, applying it as animal feed or as organic fertilizer to cultivate crops. This Japanese law is most known as Food Recycling Law (MARRA, 2011-2013). This law was responsible for bringing real contribution on the issue of food waste just

Evento: XXV Seminário de Iniciação Científica

because it “[...] reduced the pressure on landfills and increased energy recovery [...]”. (MARRA, 2011-2013, p. 11).

It just so happens because,

[...] under the slogan “Think Globally, Act Locally,” Japan took a closer and renewed look into its own waste problems, further reinforcing its policy measures by encouraging resource recycling and promoting advancement in infrastructure and technology. The intention was to shift from a linear production-consumption-waste process to a circulatory system, minimizing the consumption of natural resources and turning waste into valuable resources to be exploited [...]. (MARRA, 2011-2013, p. 10).

The food that once would be thrown away, now it has been recycled and so it is also important to raise public awareness since the consumer behavior in Japan seems to be the root cause of this phenomenon as well as a great contributor to this issue. It just so happens because a typical Japanese consumer will always concentrate his sharp eye on that kind of food that in its external appearance looks like perfect, the prettiest, the freshest, the tastiest, and doesn't have any sort of blotch. Additionally, the purchase power and the easy access to food made consumers buy more food that is needed and as consequence what happens is that the food waste increases more and more. Here is why public awareness is so important in order to ensure the campaign against food waste. Likewise, the adoption of more sustainable consumption patterns will undoubtedly reduce food waste (MARRA, 2011-2013).

In Brazil, the creation of new laws has been into discussion. Nevertheless,

[...] a particularly successful recycling program was launched in the city of Curitiba²⁰ within a city environment program: 10,000 families took part in the Garbage that is not Trash program, where they receive 2 kg of food for every 4 kg of recyclables collected and delivered to collection points [...]. (BCFN, 2012, p.107).

Yet, on the United States of America it is calculated that about 40% of all the food produced is wasted or lost. And it is estimated that about 25% of all the water on the United States of America is going to grow food that ultimately never gets eaten (PANEL..., 2017).

Frandsen (2017, n.p.) reports that in the USA's territory,

[...] food is wasted at all levels of the food system. Low market prices, high labor costs, and a market that demands perfect-looking produce prompt farmers to leave food unharvested in the field. Grocery stores and restaurants consistently over-order food. Households waste food because of inefficient shopping and cooking practices, and because they don't have access to programs that collect waste for compost.

Evento: XXV Seminário de Iniciação Científica

However, some States such as California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Vermont are starting to make use of the law in a try to restrict the amount of that is wasted. According to Frandsen (2017, n.p.), "States are offering tax breaks to farmers and small businesses that donate food rather than throw it away, limiting the liability of food donors, and standardizing 'use by' labels so consumers don't toss food that is still edible."

So, when it comes to legal terms, the law has a powerful role in helping to diminish all that food that is wasted or lost.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Food waste is a moral tragedy when we think about all the food that is produced and ends on the garbage. Selina Juul quoted by Zlata Rodionova (2017, n.p.) says that "Food waste is the lack of respect for our nature, for our society, for the people who produce the food, for the animals, and the lack of respect for our time and your money".

As we pointed out it was possible to realize that the legal initiatives that some countries are adopting are having really nice results and are helping to prevent food waste considerably. However, the responsibility for this issue doesn't only come to the consumer, producer, State, law etc. We all are responsible to food waste, and so we have to find new ways to deal with this problem.

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Evento: XXV Seminário de Iniciação Científica

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