



Rabobank

**Media Release
June 21, 2021**

New Zealanders' food waste bill continues to grow despite improvements in household food behaviours

Results at a glance:

- New Zealanders are now wasting less of their food than in 2019 with the estimated percentage of food waste falling to 8.6 per cent from 10.2 per cent previously.
- But the estimated value of food waste across all New Zealand households has grown to \$2.4 billion per year as a result of higher food prices, increased spend on household food and a greater number of households.
- Fruit and vegetables are the most frequently-wasted food items, while 'wasted money' is New Zealanders' most pressing food-waste concern
- The proportion of food wasted by Kiwis differs markedly across age groups, with younger New Zealanders wasting a significantly-higher proportion of their household food spend than older Kiwis.

The new Rabobank-KiwiHarvest Food Waste Research has found that while New Zealanders are taking positive steps to reduce food waste, the estimated value of food thrown away by Kiwi households continues to increase and is now estimated to total \$2.4 billion per year.

The research also found Kiwis estimate they waste 8.6 per cent of their weekly food spend, down from 10.2 per cent in the previous survey in 2019.

Despite this drop, the estimated value of food waste per household rose to \$1259 per year (up from \$1,121 in 2019) and the total value of food waste across the whole New Zealand population increased to an estimated \$2.4 billion per year (from \$2 billion previously) due to food price inflation, increased spend on household food and a greater number of households.

Rabobank partnered with KiwiHarvest early last year as part of the bank's wider commitment to work alongside its rural customers to support sustainable food production and its global vision around global food security. This new research is the next step in that partnership.

With the value of wasted food continuing to grow, Rabobank New Zealand CEO Todd Charteris said it was encouraging to see Kiwis making positive behavioural shifts to address the issue.

"In comparison to 2019, Kiwis are now more likely to be eating leftovers, considering portion size, freezing uneaten food and eating food past the 'best before' date," he said.

"We're also seeing more Kiwis using worm farms or composting, and all these changes have helped to reduce the portion of household food spend that goes to waste."

While the changes were a step in the right direction, Mr Charteris said the research identified opportunities to turn New Zealanders' concerns about food waste into meaningful action.

"Seventy-nine per cent of New Zealanders say they care about reducing food waste, however there remains a significant disconnect between New Zealanders' attitudes towards food waste and the actions they're taking," he said.



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“The survey found nearly half of all New Zealanders have thrown away unopened or untried food in the last 12 months, while only a third of New Zealanders consistently plan their meals in advance. And it’s clear that if we want to make further progress on this issue, Kiwis need to look more closely at what they’re buying, how much food they’re preparing, and what they actually eat.”

Rabobank and KiwiHarvest

Mr Charteris said as New Zealand’s only specialist food and agribusiness bank, Rabobank had identified food waste as a key challenge in achieving the bank’s vision towards global food security.

“Here in New Zealand, we’re contributing to this goal by raising awareness of food waste and helping to minimise its negative financial and environmental impacts,” he said.

“This includes looking at food waste at the consumer level – which is the focus of the recent research – as well as considering how we can reduce food waste through the whole food supply chain.”

“New Zealand’s farmers and growers produce some of the best food in the world, and a key driver for us is seeing less of the top-quality food they produce go to waste.”

Mr Charteris said the bank’s partnership with KiwiHarvest had enabled the organisation to invest in much-needed resources to expand the capacity of their operations.

“It’s also provided our employees with valuable opportunities to contribute to food-waste reduction through community volunteering and team building with KiwiHarvest and their partners,” he said.

KiwiHarvest CEO Gavin Findlay said demand for KiwiHarvest’s services had grown strongly over the past year.

“The lingering impacts of Covid-19 have resulted in more and more Kiwi families facing financial hardship and the need for our services has never been greater. With the support of Rabobank and our other partners, we’ve recently been able to ramp up our capacity and we are now redistributing approximately 200,000 kilograms of food per month,” he said.

“In addition to this, we’ve continued our work to improve New Zealanders’ awareness of food waste and to provide them with information to help tackle the issue. Our partnership with Rabobank has created new opportunities to do more of this, and last week we were there with them at their National Fieldays marquee to share tips and tricks on how to reduce food waste.”

What’s being wasted and why?

Looking in more detail at the research, Rabobank’s Head of Sustainable Business Development Blake Holgate said it found fruit and vegetables were the most likely to be wasted by Kiwis, accounting for around two-thirds of all food waste. These were followed by bread, which made up a little over a quarter of all wasted food, and meat, which contributed just six per cent.

As for as the key reasons Kiwis threw away food, the survey found ‘food going off before you can finish it’ continued to be the major contributor. ‘Food going off before the use by or best before date’ and ‘food not tasting as good as expected’ were the next most significant reasons for throwing away food.

Food waste concerns and impacts



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Mr Holgate said the squandered money associated with food waste continued to be New Zealanders' most significant food waste concern.

"This was identified as a key factor by more than three quarters of respondents. Next-most-frequently cited was 'feelings of guilt that there are people around New Zealand going without' at 37 per cent, while a further 30 per cent cited guilt about 'people starving around the world'," he said.

"New Zealanders are also concerned by the wasted time and effort linked to the issue, with many respondents highlighting the wasted effort of farmers in New Zealand and overseas as a concern, and others noting their own wasted effort to buy and prepare food that doesn't get eaten."

Kiwis identified 'landfill' as the biggest perceived impact of wasted food, with this cited by close to two-thirds of survey respondents. This was nearly double that of the next-most-frequently-cited food waste impacts which were pollution (37 per cent) and greenhouse gas emissions (35 per cent).

The generation gap

As with earlier surveys, the research identified significant differences in food waste behaviours across age demographics.

"While attitudes towards food waste are broadly similar across all ages, the survey found food waste behaviours, and the resulting proportion of food spend wasted, were markedly different," Mr Holgate said.

"Older Kiwis were found to be much more likely than younger generations to be practising household food behaviours that reduce food waste. And, as you'd expect, this translates through to older generations having a lower percentage of their household food spend wasted."

"The research found Baby Boomers estimate they throw away just five per cent of their household food spend with Gen X not far behind at six per cent. Then comes a sizeable jump to Gen Y at 12 per cent with Gen Z estimating they waste the largest proportion of food spend at 16 per cent."

Mr Holgate said with Kiwis in Gen Y and Z wasting a much higher proportion of food spend than other age groups, improving younger New Zealanders' knowledge of food waste would continue to be a key focus of the bank's efforts to address the broader issue.

"The survey found younger New Zealanders view climate change and the sustainability of natural resources as key long-term concerns – with both Gen Y and Z ranking these as their second and third biggest concerns over the next 10 years."

"And this creates a real opportunity to drive positive change within these groups by highlighting the connection between reducing food waste and these issues."

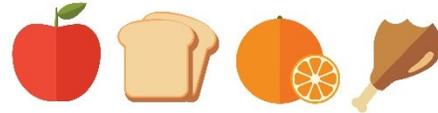
The Rabobank/KiwiHarvest Food Waste survey was administered by independent research agency KANTAR and involved interviews with 1509 New Zealanders between April 6 and April 19, 2021.



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THE GOOD NEWS



Estimated food waste, as a % of New Zealand household spend, *has reduced*

2019:
10.2% wasted

2021:
8.6%wasted

MORE GOOD NEWS

New Zealanders are now more likely to:

- *Eat leftovers*
- *Be mindful of portion size*
- *Freeze uneaten food*
- *Eat food that is past best-before date.*



BEST BEFORE:

More New Zealanders:

Use worm farms, grow their own fruit and vegetables
Buy local because it supports our farmers and growers.





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THE NOT-SO-GOOD NEWS

We're still wasting significant amounts of food!

- **\$1,259 worth of food** per New Zealand household per year is wasted
- **42% of New Zealanders** threw away unopened or untried food in the last 12 months
- **Generation Y and Z** continue to waste a significantly higher proportion of food than other generations



Rabobank New Zealand is a part of the global Rabobank Group, the world's leading specialist in food and agribusiness banking. Rabobank has over 120 years' experience providing customized banking and finance solutions to businesses involved in all aspects of food and agribusiness. Rabobank Group is structured as a cooperative and operates in 38 countries, servicing the needs of about 8.6 million clients worldwide through a network of close to 1000 offices and branches. Rabobank New Zealand is one of the country's leading agricultural lenders and a significant provider of business and corporate banking and financial services to the New Zealand food and agribusiness sector. The bank has 31 offices throughout New Zealand.

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