Do you want the food to be wasted before it gets to the supermarket or afterwards? [1]

Written by **Tim Worstall** [2] | Saturday 12 January 2013

We've another report telling us that just much too much food gets wasted and that we all must do something about it. The important something we must do being resolutely ignored by those who would comment on the report. This time the report comes from the mechanical engineers and here's the essential precis [3]:

> 1. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) works with the international engineering community to ensure governments of developed nations put in place programmes that transfer engineering knowledge, design know-how, and suitable technology to newly developing countries. This will help improve produce handling in the harvest, and immediate post-harvest stages of food production.
>
> 2. Governments of rapidly developing countries incorporate waste minimisation thinking into the transport infrastructure and storage facilities currently being planned, engineered and built.
>
> 3. Governments in developed nations devise and implement policy that changes consumer expectations. These should discourage retailers from wasteful practices that lead to the rejection of food on the basis of cosmetic characteristics, and losses in the home due to excessive purchasing by consumers.

One is telling us that we people who know how to do these things should be aiding the poorer countries in building efficient food harvesting, collection, transport and distribution systems for food. You know, exactly the things that Tesco's, Sainsbury's, Morrissons etc know how to do and do: run supermarket supply chains.

Two is telling us that the poor countries have to let the supermarkets in to run these efficient supply and logistics changes. And three, well, three is telling us in the rich world that we've got to stop being oiks now that we've got reliable and efficient food supply and logisitics chains.

No prizes for guessing what Rose Prince went with [4]:

> We wasted far less food when there was no supermarket culture, when what we bought was the food we needed ? as opposed to what is now skilfully marketed to us. It does not shock me so much as provoke anger to hear that, according to the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, we are throwing away half the food sold to us by supermarkets, worth some £480 a year per family. Put in context, there is even something obscene about the situation.

As that wise boat, Raedwald, pointed out, there something hinky about that waste number [5]:

> In fact the IME acknowledge that only a tenth of the £480 'worth' of food thrown away by each family is edible. That makes £48 a year. Or about a pound a week. But I guess the headline "British families throw away £1 a week each of edible food" isn't what they're after.

But that's not what is obscene. Nor even her delusion that £480 is half an annual food bill. No, the obscenity is focusing on the triviality of minor waste from the supermarket system when what the report is really saying is that the starving can and would be fed if only they had access to supermarkets. It is the very lack of this developed world food distribution system that is the problem for them.

Let's get everyone suffering from the problems of cornucopian wealth before we start worring about those problems of cornucopian wealth, eh? The time to worry about us being oiks is after they all have the opportunity to be oiks.

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