



International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste 2024

Press release

Solveig Langsrud

The **September 29th** was the **International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste 2024**. This day aims to draw the attention to how food loss and waste threatens our society, emphasizing the need for collective action to reduce it.

Food waste at the consumer level has significant impacts on our planet. When food is wasted, all the resources used to produce it—such as water, land, energy, and labour—are also wasted. This contributes to environmental degradation and economic loss. Notably, food waste in landfills generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas that worsens climate change. Actually, 58% of methane emissions released into the atmosphere are from food waste.

Dr Solveig Langsrud, coordinator of Horizon Europe-funded project MICROORC, emphasizes the significance of reducing food waste from high-impact foods like fish and meat.

“For you as a consumer, the most important contribution would be to avoid wasting fish and meat: These foods have a high environmental footprint and are relatively expensive. In other words, you can make a positive impact on the environment and at the same time, save money”, explains Dr. Langsrud.

An important reason for waste of fish and meat is growth of bacteria that produce bad smell and taste. MICROORC will develop technologies for better informing consumers about eating quality and safety of fish and meat products, and reduce bacterial growth.

“Fish and meat may be wasted because they get spoiled, or consumers are concerned about their safety. By following some simple rules on storage temperature and cooking consumers can keep such products longer and still feel safe”, adds Dr. Langsrud.

By making simple adjustments in cooking and storage practices, consumers can play a pivotal role in reducing food waste, protecting the environment, and improving food safety.

- 1) Plan your purchase
 - Don't buy more than you know you are able to eat within the due-by date
 - Select products with preservatives when possible (e.g sliced ham, sausages)
- 2) Cold storage
 - Store meat, fish and left overs in the refrigerator – and check that temperature keeps below 5C
 - Freeze down fish and meat you will not be able to eat before spoiled or due-by date
- 3) Thorough cooking
 - Cook pan-fried meat and fish on all sides

- Check that raw minced meat and fish products (e.g. burgers) are cooked to the center (70 °C)
 - Cook ready-to-heat foods (e.g. dinner sausages, grilled chicken) according to label
- 4) Serving and eating
- Eat ready-to-eat fish and meat (e.g. cold smoked fish, cooked meat) within due-by date and leftovers within three days. After that it must be cooked well before eating
 - Be aware that small children, elderly and people with serious health issues are more vulnerable to foodborne infection

The advice are based on work done in an earlier European Project (SafeConsume, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2023.01.018>).