

Household Food Consumption and Disposal Behaviour in Malaysia

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Abstract: The problem of food waste among households in Malaysia is becoming a great concern to the local authorities as enormous amount is spent in disposing food waste. With increased in households income, as a result of good economy in the last two decades and changes in consumption pattern, food waste has grown to alarming figures. Therefore, this study examines food consumption and disposal behaviour among households in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Households were randomly selected from Kajang, Bangi and Serdang with the objective to investigate household food consumption and disposal behaviour so as to achieve sustainable food consumption and food waste management in these areas. Also, what factors influences their consumption and disposal behaviour. Factor Analysis (FA) was used for the empirical analysis. Findings from the result have revealed that over all respondent's attitudes shows that they do not like to waste their food while some of them prefer to eat freshly cook food both at home and restaurants rather than leftover food. However on the other hand, food waste composting and disposal behaviour is influenced by neighborhood attitude towards disposal.

Key words: Household food consumption, sustainable consumption and disposal behaviour, food, food waste management, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Food waste is a general phenomenon in many affluent societies or countries. But, the irony of it all is that while many have much to waste, there are millions out there who cannot afford such to put on their tables. Global food waste is on the increase as thousands tones of wasted food are dumped daily in unsanitary landfills. Of most concern to many stakeholders is the impact food waste has on the generation of greenhouse gas emissions such as methane and carbon dioxide. However, there are also growing concerns about the economic and environmental viability of existing food waste disposal systems, as well as interest in food waste as a resource input to agriculture. This constitute nuisance to the environment and as well endanger the wellbeing of those living where the landfill is located which often times are not properly managed.

According to a recent study by Gustavsson *et al.* (2011) for FAO on global food waste, the results found that roughly one-third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally which amounts to

about 1.3 billion ton year⁻¹. This inevitably also means that huge amounts of the resources used in food production are used in vain and that the greenhouse gas emissions caused by production of food that gets lost or wasted are also emissions in vain.

Generally, food waste mostly occurs throughout the supply chain from initial agricultural production down to final household consumptions. In the medium and high-income countries, food is to a significant extent wasted at the consumption stage, meaning that it is discarded even if it is still suitable for human consumption. Also, a lot of significant losses do occur early in the food supply chains in the industrialized regions. But in low-income countries, food is lost mostly during the early and middle stages of the food supply chain much less food is wasted at the consumer level. In a nutshell on a per-capita basis, more food is wasted in the industrialized world than in developing countries. The same study by Gustavsson *et al.* (2011) for FAO suggests that the per capita food waste by consumers in Europe and North-America is 95-115 kg year⁻¹ worth some \$38.3 billion while for sub-Saharan Africa and