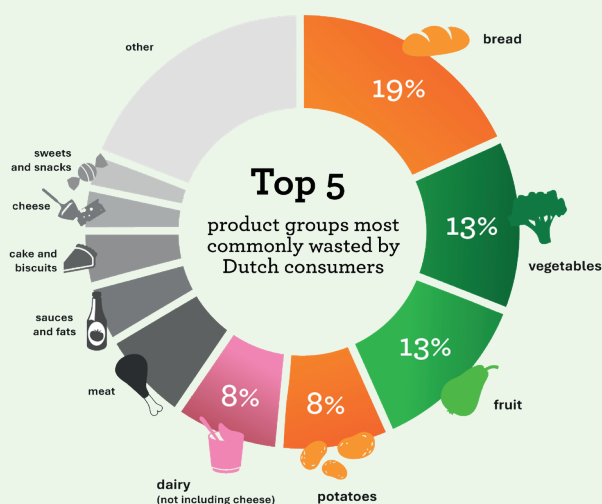


Household food waste by Dutch consumers in 2022

Summary

Reducing food waste is one of the key strategies to fight climate change and feed the growing world's population. For this reason, the European Union and the Dutch government have committed to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.3, which sets a target of halving per-capita food waste at the retail and consumer levels by 2030 compared to 2015. The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality granted a subsidy to the Netherlands Nutrition Centre to coordinate the present study, which provides insight into household food waste by Dutch consumers to monitor the progress on achieving SDG 12.3.

Food waste by Dutch consumers in 2022



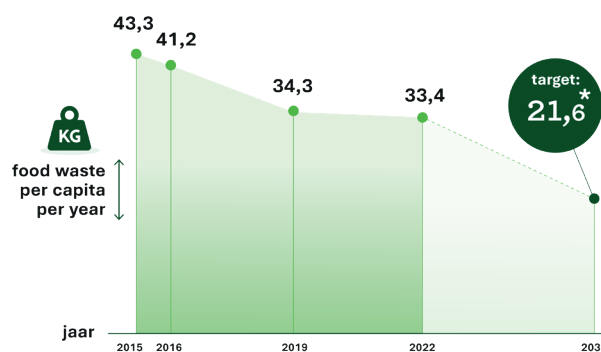
In 2022, household solid food waste by Dutch consumers averaged 33.4 kg per capita per year.

This was 8.9% of the total amount of all purchased food. The percentage of purchased food that is wasted has been declining steadily.

The five most commonly wasted product groups are bread (6.2 kg), vegetables (4.4 kg), fruit (4.3 kg), potatoes (2.8 kg) and dairy (2.8 kg). Compared to 2019, waste of bread and dairy had decreased, while fruit and vegetable waste had gone up.

Current situation

At the halfway point towards the deadline for halving food waste (SDG 12.3), we have achieved a 23% reduction compared to 2015. Whereas the estimated amount of solid food waste was 43.3 kg in 2015, this had fallen to 33.4 kg in 2022. However, the marked decline measured since 2013 appears to have stabilised. In 2022, the actual amount of food waste was only 0.9 kg lower than in 2019. If this stabilisation is confirmed and continues into 2025, the chance of meeting the 50% reduction target by 2030 becomes very small.



*As an indicator of the SDG 12.3 target to halve food waste compared to 2015

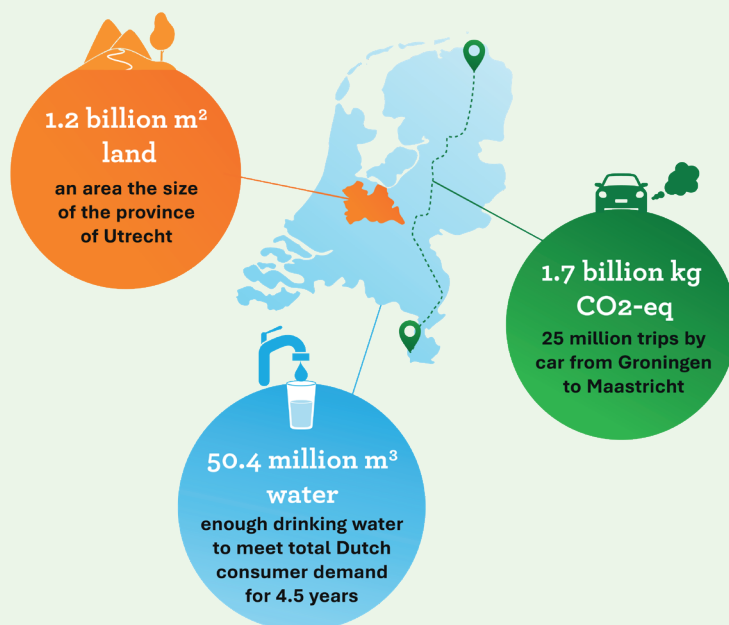
Possible explanations for the apparent stabilisation

One possible explanation for this apparent stabilisation is that it is becoming harder for consumers to reduce food waste. It may be that consumers found it relatively easy to make a big difference in the years between 2013 and 2019 and are struggling to make further reductions now that less food goes to waste. Further reduction may require more complex changes to their behaviour. Another explanation may be that consumers made few or no changes to their behaviour between 2013 and 2019 and that the sizeable reduction in food waste over that period was a result of developments in society or food environment instead.

Impact of food waste

By the time food is wasted, it has already made an environmental impact. This occurs during every step of production, transport, packaging and preparation at home. Eliminating household food waste by Dutch consumers entirely would result in considerable benefits in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and land and water use, as well as significant cost savings.

Anticipated annual savings if household food waste by Dutch consumers were to be slashed to zero:



Opportunities to reduce food waste

The problem of household food waste has proven difficult to eradicate. We need to step up our collective efforts if we want to meet the SDG 12.3 target. Below, we provide a brief explanation of three opportunities to do so:

- 1. Do not put the responsibility for finding solutions on consumers alone, but look for opportunities in the food chain as a whole.** Although this report is about household food waste by consumers, the cause cannot be attributed to that group alone. Household food waste by consumers can be tackled more effectively if consumers, producers, retailers and the authorities all work together. For instance, retailers and producers could discharge their responsibilities more fully by offering smaller portion sizes and packages, but also by communicating more clearly about food preservation methods and the right way to interpret best-before or use-by dates on packaging.
- 2. Implement policies to reduce food waste.** The Dutch government already helps parties like Samen Tegen Voedselverspilling (the United Against Food Waste Foundation) to take action against food waste. Among other things, this has resulted in the Food waste-Free Week and various other campaigns against food waste in the Netherlands. It is vital that this work continues. That said, the government could do more to combat food waste, for example by investigating options for legislation and regulations and exploring measures that could have a significant impact, such as fiscal measures.
- 3. Make things easy for consumers.** Food waste prevention is a complex endeavour, as it requires a combination of numerous minor behavioural changes. That is why making these changes should be made as easy for consumers as possible. One way to do this is by promoting the use of tools in the kitchen. In addition to facilitating the desired behaviour, they are in the right spot at the right time – which is meal preparation time. This will help consumers break undesirable habits.

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