

# Cosmetics and Food Waste: Does our Food Need to Be Pretty?

## What can be done?

- Go to a farmer's market and buy "ugly" produce (Why We Waste, 2018)
- *Imperfect Produce*, *Hungry Harvest*, and *Fresh Harvest* are organizations that delivers the rejected produce to your door so it doesn't go to waste (Why We Waste, 2018)

Cosmetic quality standards of food, both personal and industrial, lead to food waste.

1/3

of all food produced for human consumption is wasted globally

## Pros of cosmetic standards

- **Promotes trade:** Individuals are more likely to buy food if it looks more appealing (Roels K. & Van Gijsegem D., 2017)
- **Optimizes packaging:** Cosmetic standards of food may be used to make produce/other food products easier to transport (Roels K. & Van Gijsegem D., 2017)
- **Differentiation on the shelf:** diversity on the food shelf makes consumers more likely to buy items if they have a comparison (Roels K. & Van Gijsegem D., 2017)

## Cons of cosmetic standards

- **Food waste:** 20% of produce gets thrown out for cosmetic reasons where the produce is still edible (scratches, blemishes, etc) (Why We Waste, 2018)
- **Detracts from trade:** While the standards promote trade, the amount of food wasted is more significant than just the waste from throwing out food. It is compounded by the amount of food consumers reject plus what retailers reject (Roels K. & Van Gijsegem D., 2017)
- **Food at home is rejected:** even after food has been purchased in good condition, it may still contribute to waste at home over time if not used before expiring (Dusoruth & Peterson, 2020)

## Personal Impacts

- **Household food waste** accounts for 42% of 63 million tons of food wasted (Dusoruth & Peterson, 2020)
- This food loss can be translated to **1% of household disposable income** or equivalently consumer-level losses of food valued at **\$1.07 per day** per household (Dusoruth & Peterson, 2020)
- **Responsibility of consumers:** be mindful of the reasons you are purchasing/rejecting different produce. A variety of organizations exist will deliver rejected produce to your door which aids in reducing food waste

## Systematic Impacts

- **"Squander sequence":** points in the food supply chain where consumers cause waste, beginning with the grocery store point of sale (Beckett, 2017)
- **Farmers** are responsible for up to 20% of food waste by rejecting 1/5 of their yield due to cosmetic reasons (Insistence on cosmetically perfect fruits & vegetables 2022)
- **Where does it go?** Produce that does not meet the farmer's standards, may be cycled back into the soil through composting, but is often disposed of in landfills as a cheaper alternative. (Insistence on cosmetically perfect fruits & vegetables, 2022)

## Global Impacts

- **1/3** of all food is wasted globally (Beckett, 2017)
- in 2016, **6.7 billion pounds** of fruits and vegetables went unharvested or unsold by growers in the United States (Beckett, 2017)
- **Flanders, Belgium:** 2/3 of all farmers are not able to sell part of their products in the intended sales channel, since the required cosmetic quality standards were not met (Roels K. & Van Gijsegem D., 2017)

## Conclusion

- A significant amount of produce is wasted in a top down formation, starting with farmers, then grocers, then consumers.
- Household food waste has a significant impact on household retained income
- Not all blemished produce and food products are bad, hence why organizations exist to sell rejected produce in an attempt to reduce food waste

# Bibliography

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