



EURO  
CITIES



Schad dröm - it's a pity

## Avoiding food waste

Every year, consumers in Europe throw away over 80kg of food per person, most of which is still safe to consume. It's time to make people aware of how to avoid wasting food. Cologne's 'schad dröm' project ('it's a pity') is targeting young people.

Over 40% of all food is wasted in private households, 17% in restaurants and canteens as well as in industry, and another 5% is thrown out by retailers. Astonishingly, about two thirds of food waste from private households could be avoided.

Young people are considered to be one of the most relevant target groups for education on food waste. The majority of people throwing out food are in the under 40 age group. In 2011, the film maker Valentin Thurn produced 'Taste the Waste - why do we throw our food away?' which led to widespread discussion on the subject in the German media.

### Working with young people

Since October 2012, the city of Cologne has been running an educational project called 'schad dröm' in schools, where young people explore the reasons behind food waste and ways of avoiding it. With building blocks around themes such as 'shopping and meal planning', the 'ecological/carbon footprint of food' and 'reasons for food waste', the project currently reaches out to 30 schools.



If consumers were more aware of the difference between the 'best before' and the 'use by' dates, this would already help in reducing food waste.



*Valentin Thurn, filmmaker*

cities in action

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Over three months, 14-17 year-olds learn all about how food gets from the manufacturer to the supermarket. They learn about storage and shelf life and questions such as: what happens to the cheese that we do not eat? Can I plan my shopping better? Students keep a 'waste diary' at home to make them more aware of how the subject is treated in their own family.

Having fun was also part of the project and students from one of the participating schools got together with a dance group to produce music video ([bit.ly/RedC7D](http://bit.ly/RedC7D)) which used flash mob action on a public square in Cologne city centre. The video has in the meantime been watched several thousand times and has been shown on the German youth TV channel KIKA.

Meaningfully saving food begins at home. Of the food thrown out, 26% are vegetables and 18% fruit. We have come to expect fruit and veg to be perfect, crunchy and without any blemishes.

Through schad dröm's awareness-raising programme young people learn that it is quite often only a question of cutting away a small part to be able to eat the rest.

## Financial impact

The financial impact of avoidable food waste is estimated to be around €235 per person, meaning that consuming safe food that would otherwise have been thrown away can bring potential savings of nearly €1,000 per year to a four person household.

But of course the subject is a lot wider than just Germany. In a 2011 study by the United Nations FAO, the total of global food loss and waste was estimated to be around one third of the edible quantity of food produced for human consumption, amounting to about 1.3 billion tonnes per year.

In industrialised countries, more than 40% of losses occur at the retail and consumer levels. The total food waste by consumers in these countries is almost equal to the entire food production in sub-Saharan Africa.

The schad dröm project is part of a wider anti food waste movement. Industry is starting to take up the challenge, with supermarket chains

collaborating with food sharing platforms. Apps are appearing with recipes for leftovers and online portals are helping make best use of food reserves you won't be using.

And Cologne hopes to widen the network of participating schools to include partner schools in other countries.



We need to learn to value food more again.

**Rosi Hoepfner,**  
Cologne's environment agency

