

Biffa Press Release

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Food Waste

Government waste agency WRAP has stated that UK homes throw out around 7 million tonnes of unwanted food every year at a cost to the economy of £8bn. Most of this is fruit and vegetables, which ends up in landfill sites where it decomposes and generates greenhouse gasses such as methane.

Dr Richard Swannell, Director of Organics at WRAP believes that people are largely unaware of the scale of the problem.

“We don’t store food properly and so it goes out of date and we throw it away because it has gone off, or we cook too much and it gets thrown away at the end of a meal, so we don’t get the portion control right. I think the key thing is that we are not aware we are doing it and we have got ourselves in the habit of treating food like this.”

Amongst the vast quantities of food thrown away by British homes every year are 4.5 million apples, more than 5 million potatoes and 1.5 million bananas.

Biffa’s Peter Jones said, “Most people think that throwing away food is beneficial to the planet, it rots, it biodegrades, what’s the problem? Well, landfill is the problem.

We have got 60m people consuming about 30m tonnes of food a year and it has been calculated that each tonne of that food consumption is absorbing as much as 20 tonnes of the planet’s resources.”

Dr Michael Warhurst of Friends of the Earth says, “It is very clear that the best thing to do from a climate point of view and trying to be as efficient as possible with the world’s scare resources is to make sure we are recycling as much as possible and preventing waste.”

The best way to reduce the rubbish mountain is to be less wasteful about what we’re throwing out and the Government’s waste strategy prioritises waste minimisation. Biffa is also investing in technology that can recover greenhouse gas emissions at landfill sites and compost waste food.

“There are many things we can do with this waste,” Peter Jones added. “But by far the most important thing is for UK households to be more mindful of the issues and reduce the amount of food waste they throw away.”

- The issue of food waste and sustainability was featured on BBC Two’s Newsnight programme on 15 April, 2008 and on the Newsnight website. The programme is also available for viewing online via BBC iplayer.

Further press information from
Biffa on 0121 661 6713.

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Waste**

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