Understanding Food Waste in Low-Income Communities: A Household Study in Harare, Zimbabwe

Presentation by Sharon Mada
Doctoral Student: Agricultural Sciences
Goettingen University & Thuenen Institute
Introduction

• 17% of global food is wasted at the retail and consumption level (UNEP, 2021)

• Consideration of diverse socio-cultural contexts is essential for a comprehensive understanding of household food waste

• Need for localised solutions due to varying framework conditions

• Food waste data gaps in low-income countries
The Case of Hatcliffe: Materials and Methods

• **Area of study:** Hatcliffe – a low-income suburb in Harare, Zimbabwe

• **Target** – Households (HH)

• **Data collection methods and sample size**
  - 7-day Waste Composition Analysis: 103 HH
  - 7-day Kitchen Diary Surveys: 74 HH
  - Face-to-Face Questionnaire Surveys – 400 HH
Preliminary Findings: Household Food Waste Composition

- **329.53 kg** of food waste sorted and weighed
- **3.17 kg** average food waste per Household per week

Source: own data

Food Waste Composition by Product Group

- **83%** Unavoidable
- **15%** Starchy Foods
- **1%** Fruits
- **1%** Vegetables
- **9% ‘potentially’ avoidable**
- **59% avoidable**
Avoidable Food Waste

- Consists mainly of leftovers from cooked food
- **Starchy Foods:** sadza 71% (thick maize porridge), rice, bread & baked goods, pasta
- **Vegetables:** tomatoes, African kale, cabbage, onions
- **Fruits:** Bananas
- **Others:** sugar beans, meat

How it starts...
# The Reasons for Household Food Waste

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage where FW is generated</th>
<th>Stocking</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Consumption</th>
<th>Storage of leftovers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons</td>
<td>• Bought too many</td>
<td>• Prepared/cooked too much</td>
<td>• Served too much</td>
<td>• Spoilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor quality from the retailer</td>
<td>• Accidents e.g. burnt</td>
<td>• Personal preferences</td>
<td>• Improper storage practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Spoilt</td>
<td>• Not well prepared</td>
<td>• Lack of adequate side dishes</td>
<td>• Electricity shortages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: own data*
What the households are doing

- Changes in shopping practices - reducing perishable items
- Food Preservation: drying, salting, smoking
- Reusing leftovers e.g. fermented drinks from Sadza
- Solar/gas-powered refrigeration – own/neighbour’s
- Sharing excess food items – family/friends
What can be done in Hatcliffe?

- Establishment of platforms to share best practices: e.g. the Local Council facilities
- Educational and awareness campaigns – collaborations with schools, universities, research institutions
- Integration of Indigenous Knowledge in Food Waste reduction initiatives
Think Global, Act Local!

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