
Tackling buffet waste

Left-over bread rolls after a lunch meeting or buffet — it is a familiar sight for everyone on campus. Perfectly good food sitting there uneaten, which eventually gets thrown away. During the Waste-free Week, the relevant parties discussed how to tackle the issue.

Those relevant parties are the caterers on campus and the scientists working on food waste, says Sanne Stroosnijder, Food Loss and Waste Prevention programme manager. This was actually their first in-person meeting. 'Each caterer deals with this topic in their own way, independently from all the others. So it is good to work on this together.'

Group catering is food that is ordered in advance. That is precisely the problem, says Stroosnijder: what has been ordered gets delivered. 'But the numbers on the form often don't

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match the number of people who turn up on the day. Some cancel or attend the meeting online, and then a lot of food is left over.'

Leftover food sometimes gets handed out to other people or taken by meeting attendees. Stroosnijder: 'But then you need a bag or tray to take it

in. And handing the food out is not always an option, for example because of food safety rules.'

Reducing orders

The best option is to prevent the surplus in the first place. According to Stroosnijder, that means the ordering process needs to be flexible. 'You should be able to reduce your order if it turns out two days in advance that you can expect 80 people rather than 100. But then you get problems with suppliers or contracts that have already been signed.'

An initial step is now being taken by mapping the whole process from ordering to consuming the food. Stroosnijder: 'And everything in between. Who is involved and can we standardize the process for all the caterers? We will start with that.' RK