How to fight food waste with your mobile phone

Discount food app Too Good To Go, which sells surplus food from restaurants and shops, has partnered with GPS navigation app Waze for 30 days to tackle food waste. The Waze for Good project, which runs throughout August 2021, flags 100 Too Good To Go partner businesses across selected US metro areas on the Waze map. (The Spoon)

Temps de lecture : minute

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Why does this matter?

An estimated one third of all food worldwide is _wasted_. This equates to using land mass the size of China to grow food that is never consumed.

The simple act of throwing food away not only wastes the food itself but also the resources, labour and transportation required to produce it. Water, for example, is used at almost every level of food production and represents one of the most staggering statistics as roughly _170 trillion litres_ are wasted each year — costing $172B.

These factors all contribute to food waste's carbon footprint, which makes up _6%_ of global greenhouse gas emissions. It's an issue that needs addressing, but thankfully consumer-facing solutions like Too Good To Go could offer new life for abandoned produce.

There's an app for that

Over the last few years, apps have been developed to help connect individuals and businesses with food that would otherwise go to waste. _OLIO_, for example, allows users to take a photo of the food they want to offload and arrange a pickup location for someone else to make use of it. This approach is suitable for neighbourhoods where people can walk or cycle, but it's important to remember that travelling in vehicles to collect small amounts of produce comes with its own environmental impact.

Alternatively, _Too Good To Go_ offers customers a "magic" box of groceries containing products that would otherwise end up as waste. After choosing a store and paying through the app, users are given a time slot for when they can collect their items. Switching one meal a day for a week with a Too Good To Go option could save a customer over £100, the company _claims_. It also suggests each meal purchased prevents 2.5 kg of CO2e emissions that would otherwise be caused by food waste.

Elsewhere, Germany-based _FoodSharing_ provides a free service focusing on surplus food from supermarkets and businesses, allowing individuals to gather food from designated collection points. These initiatives are locally effective, but can _struggle_ to put a dent in the larger issue.

Smart supermarkets

It's easy to place the blame on wasteful consumers, however retail stores deserve scrutiny too – UK supermarkets alone throw away _190 million_ meals each year.

Technology is also now on offer to help grocery stores manage this issue. _Wasteless_, for example, uses artificial intelligence to adjust product

prices based on their expiry dates, giving an incentive for consumers to purchase food that would otherwise end up in the supermarket skips. Being able to automatically alter prices could be a promising solution that takes the onus off staff manually reducing items.

To tackle the issue holistically means addressing wastage in all parts of the supply chain, but thankfully technology is becoming more sophisticated to allow everyone to play their part. Food for thought.

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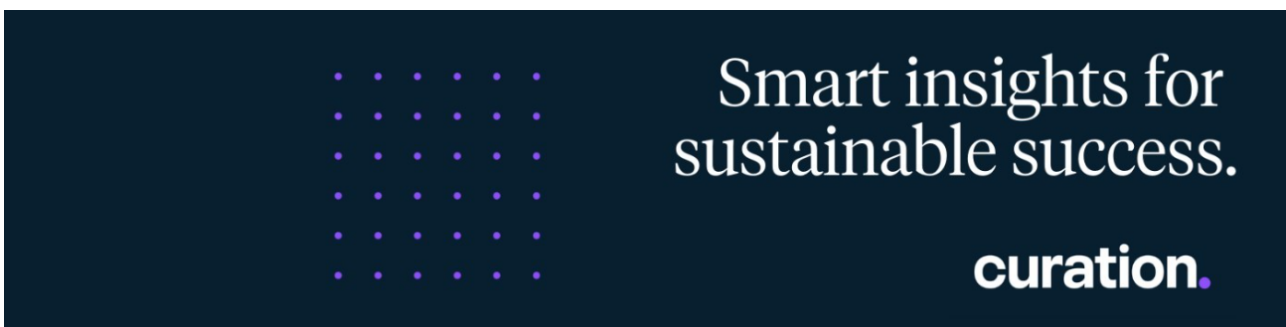
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