

Potato loss and waste in the UK supply chain and at home

Potato waste in the UK supply chain

The main causes of potato loss and waste in the supply chain:

- Field loss: 1-2% - harvest damage, affected by the weather – eg, if too dry then more bruising for some varieties; or small potatoes left in the field
- Grading loss: 3-13% - out graded potatoes
- Storage loss: 3-5% - due to water loss, defects, and skin damage
- Packing loss: 20-25% - rejected due to not meeting prescribed specifications
- Retail waste: 1.5-3% - greening in store, customer damage, poor forecasting

Potato waste in UK households

Potatoes are one of the items most often wasted in the home:

- 770,000 tonnes, comprising uncooked fresh potatoes, cooked leftover potatoes and potato peelings, are thrown away each year, of which:
 - 480,000 tonnes of potato waste comprise potato peelings, which are deemed to be 'possibly avoidable'
 - 290,000 tonnes of 'avoidable' potato waste is also thrown away, which costs £230 million per year. It includes:
 - 98,000 tonnes of cooked leftover potatoes per year
 - 180,000 tonnes of uncooked fresh potatoes per year, thrown away before they have had any preparation at all

Estimation of proportion of potato purchases that are wasted at home:

- 1,700 tonnes purchased per year in UK, of which:
 - 770 tonnes wasted per year (45% of the fresh potato purchased)
 - 290 tonnes are avoidable waste per year (17% of the fresh potato purchased)

Notes

All the figures are for fresh potato, which includes those which have been prepared at home: potatoes, peel; baked, boiled, chips, mashed, roasted, uncooked. Processed potato such as readymade chips are not included.

Definitions

- Avoidable waste: food that could have been eaten if it had been better managed but is thrown away because it is no longer wanted or has been allowed to go past its best.
- Possibly avoidable: food that some people eat, and others do not (e.g. bread crusts), or that can be eaten when a food is prepared in one way but not in another (e.g. potato skins).

References

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