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Stop Food Waste Day on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019 will be greeted by more food waste warriors than ever before. We are witnessing growing enthusiasm and consciousness of the food waste issue. The main driver is recognition of food waste's big business potential - coupled with an increase in public awareness of the issue and its broader impact on food poverty and climate change. The announcement of Defra's £15m pilot fund to reduce food waste in the latest Resources and Waste Strategy published in December 2018 has generated further momentum for innovation in the food waste redistribution space. With food waste redistribution apps booming, we have taken this opportunity to explore who they are serving, what is on offer, and the implications that various apps are having. As a result, we aim to shed light on the technologies that are building momentum in the fight against food waste.

Typically, food outlets and retailers deploying apps as part of a broader strategy to minimise food waste add leftover items or meals onto an app towards the end of the trading day. These platforms can support businesses to gather data on patterns of use that help assess where food waste occurs across the business. Increased awareness of operational waste can also reduce costs on food waste collections whilst opening up new revenue streams - giving app users the opportunity to purchase ready-to-eat food items at discount prices. This offers businesses new ways to connect with discerning and eco-conscious customers, tapping into an emerging customer base that want readily prepared, healthy and indulgent options at all times of day<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, food outlets and retailers are able to take advantage of changing consumer eating habits – particularly with the rise of 'off-peak' eating<sup>2</sup>.

It is clear that food redistribution apps have a role to play in tackling the overall food waste agenda – recognising that beyond prevention, redistribution of edible food for human consumption is the next best option<sup>3</sup>. But who is the target customer and where is this food ending up?

As more apps with a mission to tackle food waste arrive on the food redistribution scene, it will be vital for them to work in harmony with each other. Food waste is undoubtedly a significant multifaceted issue that requires numerous solutions, but it will be the apps that have identified a niche that will really have the biggest impact. Each of the apps needs to demonstrate where their models can support businesses of different sizes and types. Where large retailers and food manufacturers can meet the requirements of contracts with food

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<sup>1</sup> The Grocer, 2018 <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/consumer-trends/premium-is-the-new-watchword-when-it-comes-to-snacking-npd/569882.article>

<sup>2</sup> Bidfood, 2019 <https://www.bidfood.co.uk/inspiration/2018-food-trends/>

<sup>3</sup> WRAP <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/why-take-action-legalpolicy-case>

redistribution charities, such as [FareShare](#), smaller restaurants with more variable streams of waste may be better suited to food redistribution apps, including [Too Good To Go](#) and [Karma](#), targeting savvy consumers looking for a half price meal at closing time. Other apps, for example [Olio](#), are targeting consumer to consumer food waste exchange in recognition that household food waste makes up 70% of the UK post-farm-gate total<sup>4</sup>.

Apps offering ‘random’ packages dependent on specific leftovers sits well with eco-conscious consumers that [‘love food, hate waste’](#) – of any kind. However, for those consumers wanting to know exactly what they are eating and where it has come from, consideration of other models is needed. The importance of food provenance isn’t going away and while saving ‘wasted’ food is a win-win for the consumer pocket and the planet, food businesses trading via apps will need to keep ingredient provenance, as with dietary demands, at the top of their agendas. Specific preferences for plant-based, vegetarian and vegan options is a growing opportunity<sup>5</sup>. Recent research also suggests that this consideration has become particularly important for tech-savvy millennials and GenZ-ers<sup>6</sup>.

This rapidly changing space offers a significant opportunity to revolutionise current urban food systems. However, as dependency on food banks continues to increase<sup>7</sup>, it remains to be seen if redistribution to charities and redistribution to paying customers can co-exist or will lead to shortages in supply for food banks supporting those desperately in need. The general sentiment of collaboration over competition in the food waste space indicates this is not likely to be an issue but an overarching strategy would be beneficial to ensure streams of waste do not get missed or misallocated.

## How can Sancroft help your business?

- Establish an action plan that supports your organisation in tackling food waste volumes
- Identify what benefits tackling food waste could have for your business – for example reducing costs and creating new revenue streams, or improving brand visibility and perception and therefore consumer recruitment
- Ensure initiatives around plastics and packaging are aligned to commitments on food waste
- Conduct stakeholder mapping and engagement to build understanding of best practice in managing food waste across your supply chain, and identify potential partners
- Develop educational resources for internal and external communications
- Pinpoint segments in your supply chain at high risk of producing food waste and develop collaborative actions with suppliers to mitigate identified risks

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<sup>4</sup> WRAP, 2018 <http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Food-Surplus-and-Waste-UK-Key-Facts-23-11-18.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Mintel, 2018 <https://www.mintel.com/press-centre/food-and-drink/more-than-half-of-all-meat-free-new-product-launches-in-the-uk-carry-a-vegan-claim-1>

<sup>6</sup> Mintel, 2018 <https://www.mintel.com/press-centre/food-and-drink/mintel-announces-five-global-food-and-drink-trends-for-2018>

<sup>7</sup> The Independent, 2018 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/food-bank-uk-benefits-trussell-trust-cost-of-living-highest-rate-a8317001.html>