

Canadian Whole of Chain Food Loss and Waste Study

Project Overview and Industry Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Second Harvest and Value Chain Management International (VCMI) are working together on a ground-breaking food loss and waste (FLW) project, funded by the generous support of The Walmart Foundation.

A world first, the project is researching FLW from a whole of chain perspective – from primary production to consumer. With FLW never occurring in isolation (the associated costs of FLW including energy, labour, packaging, water, etc.), the extent to which businesses can benefit financially from reducing FLW can be significant.

The project will encompass Canada’s farming, food and beverage industry (including fruit, vegetables, dairy, meat, grains and oilseeds, sugars and syrups, beverages and seafood). The purpose of the study is to establish a framework and metrics that businesses operating in the farming, processing, retail and foodservice sectors can use to understand where losses are likely to occur and identify ways to improve their performance and profitability by reducing losses and waste. The team will achieve this by collecting data that will allow an accurate estimate of FLW occurring at discrete points along the value chain and evaluating the comparative impact of root causes. The study will also develop solutions to reduce the percentage of Canadian food sent to landfill, by having improved redistribution, reuse and recycling practices. While the measuring of FLW from an environmental perspective is not part of the current study, the framework developed during the project could be used for this purpose.

To test the accuracy of data on FLW occurring at key points along the supply chain (gathered through online surveys and through other research activities) and to help quantify the relative impact of root causes, the researchers are engaging industry stakeholders in a series of interactive sessions across the country. These sessions will also guide the development of effective sustainable FLW solutions that will benefit industry and the environment.

The industry engagement is occurring in two forms. The first series of industry engagement activities will be held during June and July. These will occur in the form of concise sessions focused on testing the accuracy of data gathered to date and the validity of assumptions drawn from the initial analysis. Each session will last approximately one hour and be delivered in conjunction with a larger industry event.

The second series of industry engagement activities will take the form of three stand-alone focus groups delivered in October, in Eastern Central and Western Canada. Lasting approximately half a day each, the sessions will help ensure the development of pragmatic solutions for enabling industry to benefit by preventing FLW at source and improving the redistribution, reuse or recycling of food and beverages that would otherwise go to landfill. Solutions proposed during the data analysis will be presented to stakeholders to identify potential weaknesses that need to be addressed. FLW solutions will be designed to reflect urban, rural and semi-urban environments.

The project will conclude in December 2018 in the form of a roadmap that will identify the overall framework and proposed solutions. Research results and supporting materials will be shared with industry in printed and electronic form. The materials and findings that result from the project will establish a means for Canada to both directly inform and learn from international FLW initiatives. It will also enable the future needs of FLW research and FLW implementation efforts to be identified.