



Addressing Food Waste in Malaysia

Executive Summary

Food waste is a significant issue in Malaysia, with approximately 17,000 tons wasted daily¹. This represents a loss of resources and economic potential and exacerbates environmental problems, including greenhouse gas emissions from landfills. Effective policies are needed to reduce food waste and promote sustainability towards improving food security. In 2023, 86,177 tonnes were wasted during the month of Ramadhan alone and 243,095 tonnes of solid waste have been disposed².

The National Agrofood Policy 2021-2-2030³, launched in 2021 and the National Food Security Policy Action Plan 2021-2025⁴ have emphasised reducing food loss and wastage along the entire food value chain, driving the wider use of sustainable agriculture with the use of bioresources, encouraging the protection and conservation of biodiversity and natural resources towards sustainable agriculture and developing a healthy and sustainable food system.

This policy brief addresses issues of economic impact costing RM 36bn/year, seeking to reduce methane emissions from landfill, alleviating hunger in vulnerable communities and recognising the need for cultural awareness in seeking to reduce food waste.

Policy Recommendations

- **Introduce stricter regulations on food waste disposal** and incentivise businesses to donate excess food, through government intervention to make food waste reporting compulsory for large food businesses and food retailers.
- **Establish a national food recovery network** connecting food businesses with charities and food banks. Facilitate partnerships between the government, NGOs, and private sectors to improve food redistribution efforts.
- **Launch nationwide campaigns to educate consumers on food waste** and encourage responsible consumption practices. MARDI has launched MySaveFood⁵. Integrate food waste into curricula, encourage meal planning and nutrition-based restaurant portion sizes.
- **Provide business tax incentives** that implement waste reduction strategies or food donations. Support food preservation and waste reduction technologies research.
- **Establish a framework for monitoring food waste reduction efforts** and their impact. Regularly assess the effectiveness of policies and initiatives, allowing for data-driven adjustments.

Professor Asgar Ali is Director of the Signature Strength for Food Resilience and the Centre of Postharvest Biotechnology (CEPB). He champions innovative solutions to reduce food losses, protect the environment, and build resilient food systems for future generations.



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Current and Previous Initiatives

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security through the MySaveFood⁵ programme by the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management (SWCorp), Pertubuhan Pemuda GEMA Malaysia (Pemuda GEMA), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF Malaysia) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation (UNFAO) aims to promote a comprehensive and effective measures to reduce food loss and waste especially during Ramadhan.

The Solid Waste Corporation (SWCorp) promotes food recovery programs and awareness campaigns at national and local municipalities.

“Waste to Wealth” initiative by Bioeconomy Corporation under the Ministry of Science and Innovation and SWCorp was designed to encourage recycling and upcycling through the Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (3R) initiatives which aims to transform solid waste for a valuable

commodity, and can be implemented as an effective way in managing solid waste and food waste by prioritising preventive actions to reduce waste and considering the impact on our carbon footprint.

To support sustainability practices and encourage household food waste management, the Malaysian Government Budget 2026 Initiative has extended the scope of tax measures to also include the purchase of household food waste grinders for up to RM2,500. This incentive, which is to be claimable once within a period of two assessment years, will encourage Malaysians to invest in technology that helps reduce the amount of food waste sent to landfills, thus supporting the national initiative towards greener residential practices."

The government, businesses, and consumers must collaborate to develop effective strategies for reducing food waste. Immediate action is required to ensure a sustainable future for Malaysia.

Project Benefit

Addressing food waste in Malaysia is crucial for economic sustainability, environmental health, and social equity. By implementing comprehensive policies and engaging all stakeholders, Malaysia can significantly reduce food waste, improve food security, and promote a culture of sustainability. This research supports multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by enhancing local food security (SDG 2), addressing diet-related health inequalities (SDG 3), reducing inequalities (SDGs 10 and 11), and promoting skills and local capacity (SDGs 4 and 8).

Researchers

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Further Reading

1. [Food Waste: A Call to Action](#)
2. [\(Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 2023 Statistics\)](#)
3. [National Agrofood Policy 2021-2030 \(NAP2.0\)](#)
4. [National Food Security Policy Action Plan 2021-2025](#)
5. [MySaveFood](#)



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