

Educators increase awareness and motivate consumers to minimize home food waste

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension educators' partner with a City of Boise expert to educate consumers on minimizing the impact of home food waste.

The Situation

It is estimated that one-third of the food produced in the United States is never eaten. This includes food that never reaches consumers and food that is discarded by consumers. Food waste results in negative environmental, financial and social impacts: the emission of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, as it decomposes in landfills; increased household food budgets (a family of four spends approximately \$1,500/year on uneaten food); squandered energy and other resources in food production and distribution. Yet if managed effectively, unused food can be diverted from the landfill and food production can be streamlined, helping to feed the over 44 million Americans who experience food insecurity (including one in nine Idahoans).

Recent industry and consumer studies reveal consumer awareness and frustration about food waste. The findings show that consumers feel frustration and guilt when throwing away food, but they struggle to reduce food waste. A survey conducted in 2019 by the City of Boise on waste provided insight and feedback for waste prevention. Of the 3,000 respondents, 93% believed that reducing their waste "often" or "every day," but cited a lack of waste reduction options, inconvenience, lack of knowledge and cost as barriers.



Catherine Milner, City of Boise material management environmental analyst, co-presenting at UI Extension, Ada County.

Our Response

A multidisciplinary team of UI Extension educators, specialists and an analyst with the City of Boise developed a professional presentation and publications on the impact of home food waste. The publications included four items: a tip sheet and food inventory tool, a display poster and Extension bulletin. The professional presentation was developed to engage and educate participants, using real life examples of home food waste and highlighting ways to reduce waste. The tip sheet and food inventory tool were developed as handouts to reinforce information provided in the presentation but also to be used as stand-alone information for the public. The UI Extension bulletin (BUL 1080) was created to provide additional resources and

education on the topic in an online, open-source format for both professionals and the public.

Program Outcomes

The team has delivered the presentation seven times to over 200 Extension faculty, staff, volunteers and community members. Following the presentations, participants were asked to complete a survey to evaluate knowledge gained and intended behavior change. The survey showed that only 11% of participants were very aware of the impact of home food waste on the environment before the presentation (Table 1), and 95% after attending. The survey results also showed that 95% of attendees planned to use the presentation information and tools (Table 2).

Approximately 95% of participants responded that they “Strongly” or “Somewhat” agree they would share the information with others. This was reflected in qualitative data collected from participants; educators stated that they would include the information in their classes and other attendees stated they would share the information with family and friends.

The Future

The team will continue to present and disseminate the information and educational materials to adult and youth audiences throughout Idaho, regionally and nationally. The team will also continue to collect survey data to evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation and educational tools.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Funding for this program was provided by University of Idaho Extension and the City of Boise.

Table 1. Awareness of home food waste

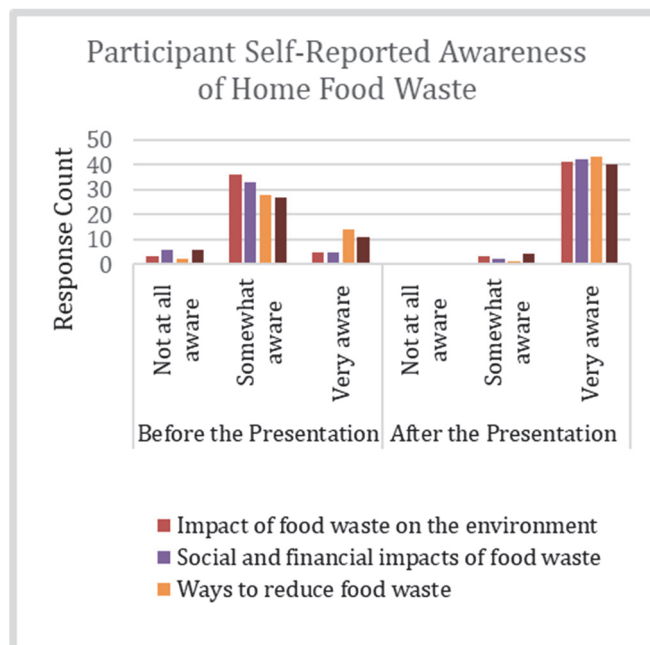
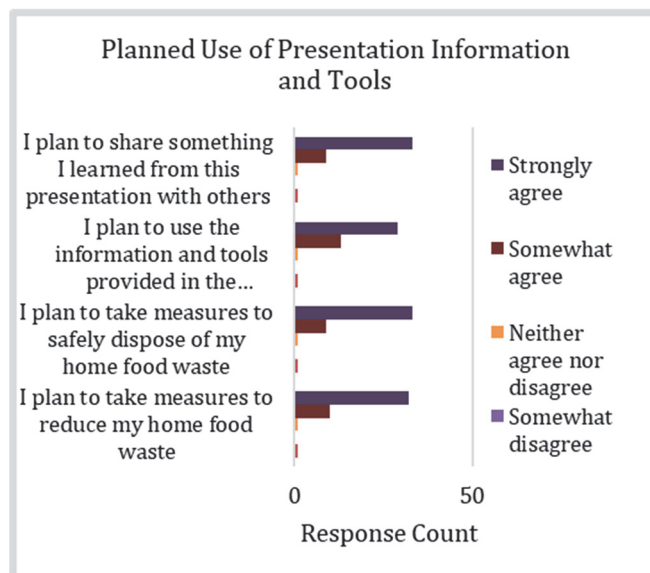


Table 2. Planned use of information and tools



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Bridget Morrisroe, FCS Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Ada County • 208-287-5900 • bridgeta@uidaho.edu

Catherine Milner, Materials Management Environmental Analyst • City of Boise • 208-608-7555 • cmilner@cityofboise.org

Annie Roe, Extension Specialist • University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences • 208-885-1709 • aro@uidaho.edu

Ariel Agenbroad, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Ada County • 208-287-5900 • arial@uidaho.edu

Julie Buck, FCS Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Bingham County • 208-785-8060 • jhbuck@uidaho.edu

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