

Food Waste | From Excess to Enough



Save near-expired food via messages in supermarkets

Many people are hesitant to buy food that is close to its expiration date. To encourage consumers to buy these items, supermarkets have started communicating with consumers about how buying near-expired food helps reduce waste. However, this message is often paired with discounts, and its impact on its own has been understudied. In addition, we do not yet fully understand how consumers use near-expired food at home when they buy it after seeing the message

To explore these questions, we conducted four experiments with 1,196 participants in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Participants were asked to imagine they were shopping in a supermarket, where some saw a message about food waste avoidance and others did not. They then reported their willingness to buy near-expired bread rolls and what they would do with them at home regardless of their willingness to buy.

We find that a message about food waste avoidance can make people more willing to buy near-expired food, as it enhances their moral satisfaction. We also found that

people tend to avoid wasting near-expired food, like eating it sooner or freezing it, whether or not they saw the message in the supermarket. These findings suggest that messages about food waste avoidance can help decrease the waste of near-expired food.



Source

Zhang, Y., van Herpen, E., Van Loo, E. J., Pandelaere, M., & Geuens, M. (2022). Save near-expired food: Does a message to avoid food waste affect food purchase and household waste prevention behaviors? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 384, Article 135555.

