Are Extension Staff & Volunteers Ready to Tackle Household Food Waste Reduction Education?
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Overview
Californians throw away nearly 6 million tons of food waste each year, contributing 18% of the total material that goes into landfills. This food waste produces methane, a greenhouse gas (GHG) that contributes to the climate change crisis. In September 2016, California rolled out SB 1383 to reduce organic waste disposal by 75% by 2025.

Households contribute the greatest amount of food waste in the US and consumer education is one strategy needed to divert this waste from landfills. Cooperative Extension programming can play an integral role in reducing consumer food waste. However, there is a lack of data on California Extension staff and volunteers’ food waste knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and readiness to provide food waste reduction education.

Aims
- To assess UCANR staff and volunteers’ awareness, attitudes, motivators, barriers, and practices related to household food waste.
- To assess the readiness of UC ANR staff and volunteers to provide household food waste reduction education to their participants.

Methods
- An online Qualtrics survey link was emailed to consumer-facing Extension program staff and volunteers in the fall of 2022. Programs represented included the statewide CalFresh Healthy Living, UC and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Programs, in addition to the UC ANR Master Gardener, Master Food Preserver, and 4-H programs.
- Preliminary survey data results were obtained from Qualtrics.

Results
1566 Extension staff and volunteers completed the survey

- 80% are aware of the issue of food waste
- 81% are not currently teaching food waste reduction strategies to their participants
- 31% are very interested in taking action to reduce their household food waste
- 45% feel they are fairly knowledgeable about how to reduce their household food waste
- 80% think they waste less food than the average American
- 60% have not heard of CA SB1383 (to reduce organic waste disposal)

Conclusion
Study confirmed there are great needs in developing food waste reduction trainings and education materials for consumer-facing statewide programs.

Future Direction:
- More research with program participants
- Develop and field test food waste reduction messaging and educational material
- Develop training for consumer-facing staff and volunteers to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate food waste reduction education

References:
1. CalRecycle. https://calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/food/?emrc=e3f6ba4807b1a
   https://calrecycle.ca.gov/nav/organics/