

Reactive Learning about Food Waste Reduction in a Food Processing Plant in Gauteng Province, South Africa

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Abstract : This paper presents reflective learning as an opportunity commonly available and used for food waste learning in a food processing company in the transition to sustainable and just food systems. In addressing how employees learn about food waste during food processing, the opportunities available for food waste learning were investigated. Reflective learning appeared to be the most used approach to learning about food waste. In the case of food waste learning, reflective learning was a response after employees wasted a substantial amount of food, where process controllers and team leaders would highlight the issue to employees who wasted food and explain how food waste could be reduced. This showed that learning about food waste is not proactive, and there continues to be a lack of structured learning around food waste. Several challenges were highlighted around reflective learning about food waste. Some of the challenges included understanding the language, lack of interest from employees, set times to reach production targets, and working pressures. These challenges were reported to be hindering factors in understanding food waste learning, which is not structured. A need was identified for proactive learning through structured methods. This is because it was discovered that in the plant, where food processing activities happen, the signage and posters that are there are directly related to other sustainability issues such as food safety and health. This indicated that there are low levels of awareness about food waste. Therefore, this paper argues that food waste learning should be proactive. The proactive learning approach should include structured learning materials around food waste during food processing. In the structuring of the learning materials, individual trainers should be multilingual. This will make it possible for those who do not understand English to understand in their own language. And lastly, there should be signage and posters in the food processing plant around food waste. This will bring more awareness around food waste, and employees' behaviour can be influenced by the posters and signage in the food processing plant. Thus, will enable a transition to a just and sustainable food system.

Keywords : sustainable and just food systems, food waste, food waste learning, reflective learning approach

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