

Food Waste as a Problem of Unsustainably institutionalized Resource Use

21 % of all food that is bought by German consumer ends up in the garbage can (see Stefan Kreuzberger, Valentin Thurn: Die Essensvernichter. Warum die Hälfte aller Lebensmittel im Müll landet und wer dafür verantwortlich ist. Kiepenheuer & Witsch Verlag, Köln 2011). On average, every year each German citizen puts food for 300 Euro into the garbage. Nearly one third of all food disposed of in this way enters the garbage can unpacked. Worldwide app. one third of all food is wasted or lost (Jenny Gustavsson, Christel Cederberg, Ulf Sonesson, Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology (SIK), Gothenburg, Sweden: Cutting Food Losses and Food Waste. FAO Rome, 2011).

Biomass is becoming increasingly scarce, and this equally applies to those natural resources which can be used for producing biomass. This is not only true for natural resources used for food production. To secure their land basis for becoming self-sufficient in food provision, some countries are even buying land outside their own borders. In addition to this, more and more natural resources are used for producing bio-energy, for example maize land in Germany or palm oil plantations in Indonesia. The question arises why this does not reduce food waste and losses as such “uses” have increasing opportunity cost? Economically this is a contradiction.

There may be biological, technological, political and institutional reasons behind this phenomenon. The way how the value chain of resource use, food production, processing and marketing and finally consumption is institutionalized may imply a high amount of food waste. If this is the case, food waste and food losses could be de-institutionalised. The working hypothesis of the master thesis is that food which could be eaten by humans is ending up as waste because existing rules and forms of organization produce such food-wasting behavior. The thesis would develop a general framework and an empirical methodology for structuring and exploring this problem. It would be necessary to select appropriate cases of food waste for illustrating the relationship between und institutional reasons of food waste.

If you are interested, please contact:

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Konrad Hagedorn – Email: k.hagedorn@agrار.hu-berlin.de

Phone: 0049(0)30-2093-6305

Office: 1.07, Philippstraße 13, Haus 12 – Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin