Understanding Attitudes to UK Household Food Waste: A Case Study of Robertsbridge, East Sussex

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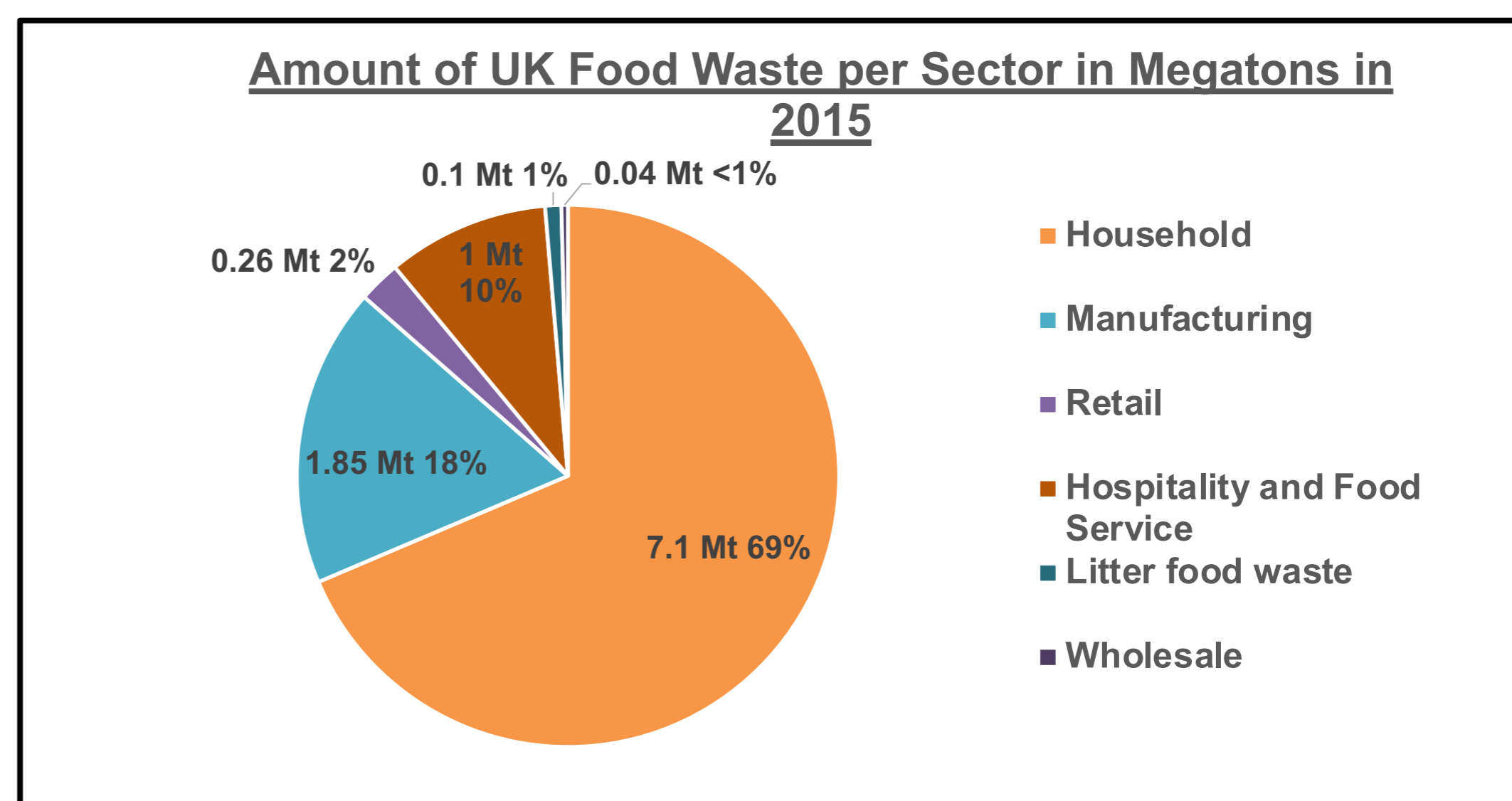
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1. Introduction

Household Food Waste refers to perishable items intended for human consumption that are discarded without consumption at the household level through composting and/or landfill. This topic is a serious concern in the UK due to the sheer volumes of food being wasted (see **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). Individuals are to blame as they physically buy the food and waste it (Sheffield, 2017). This is alarming because 8 million people are in food poverty in the UK in 2018. Therefore, it is an unethical situation that urgently needs to be addressed (Diaz-Ruiz, Costa-Font, and Gil, 2018).

2. Objectives

As such, this research has two key objectives:

a) To understand why people waste food at the household level, and;

b) How to reduce HFW quantities.

3. Methods – Literature Review and Survey

- HFW Implications
- Current Policy
- Why Do People Waste Food?
- How to Reduce HFW
- Online Survey Based on Literature Review Findings

Amount of UK Food Waste per Sector in Megatons in 2015

- 0.1 Mt 1%
- 0.04 Mt <1%
- 0.26 Mt 2%
- 1 Mt 10%
- 1.85 Mt 18%
- 7.1 Mt 69%

- Household
- Manufacturing
- Retail
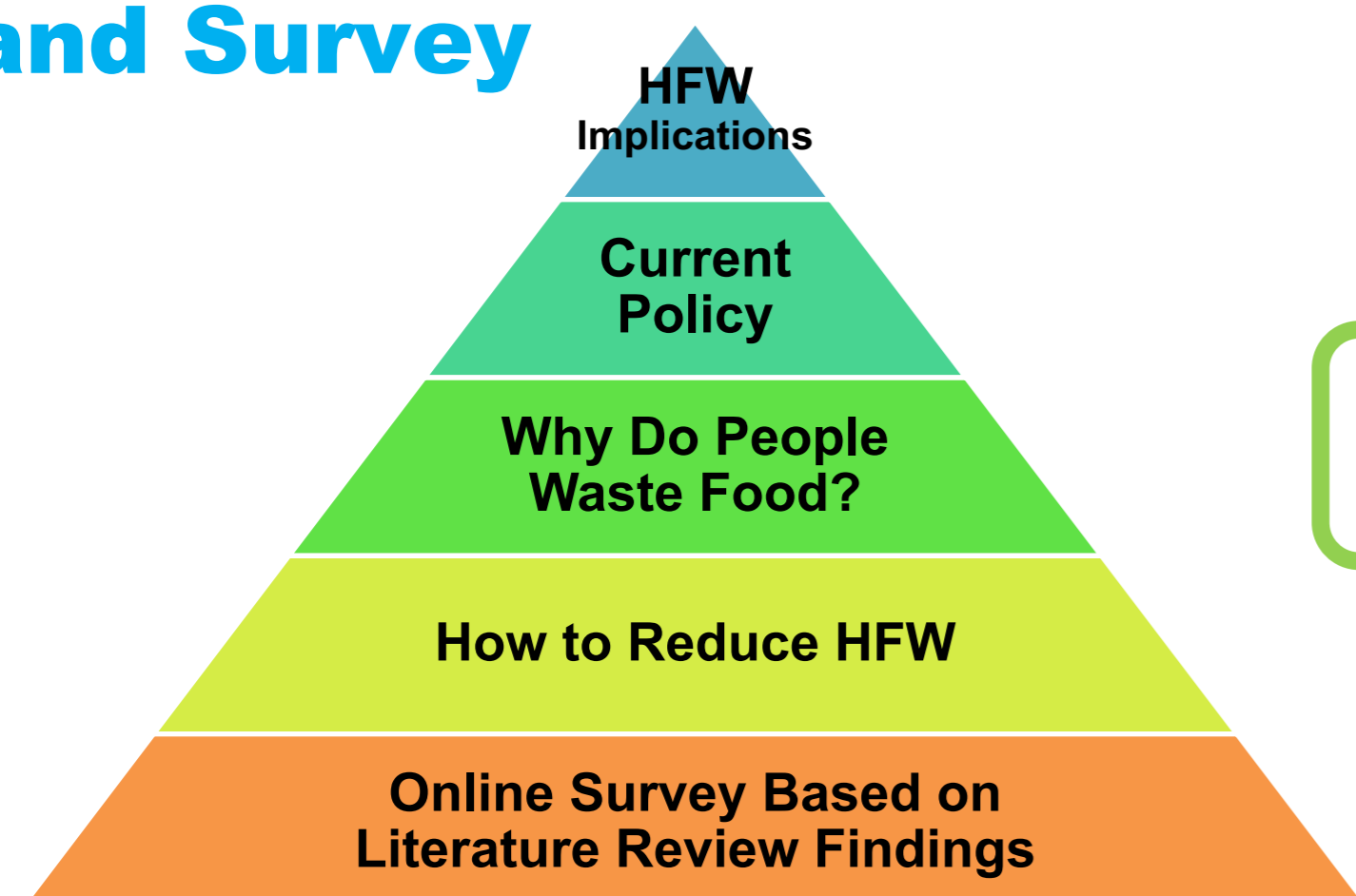- Hospitality and Food Service
- Litter food waste
- Wholesale

Figure 1 – Total Household Food Waste in the UK in 2015 in Megatons. Source: Author, adapted from information by WRAP (2018b).
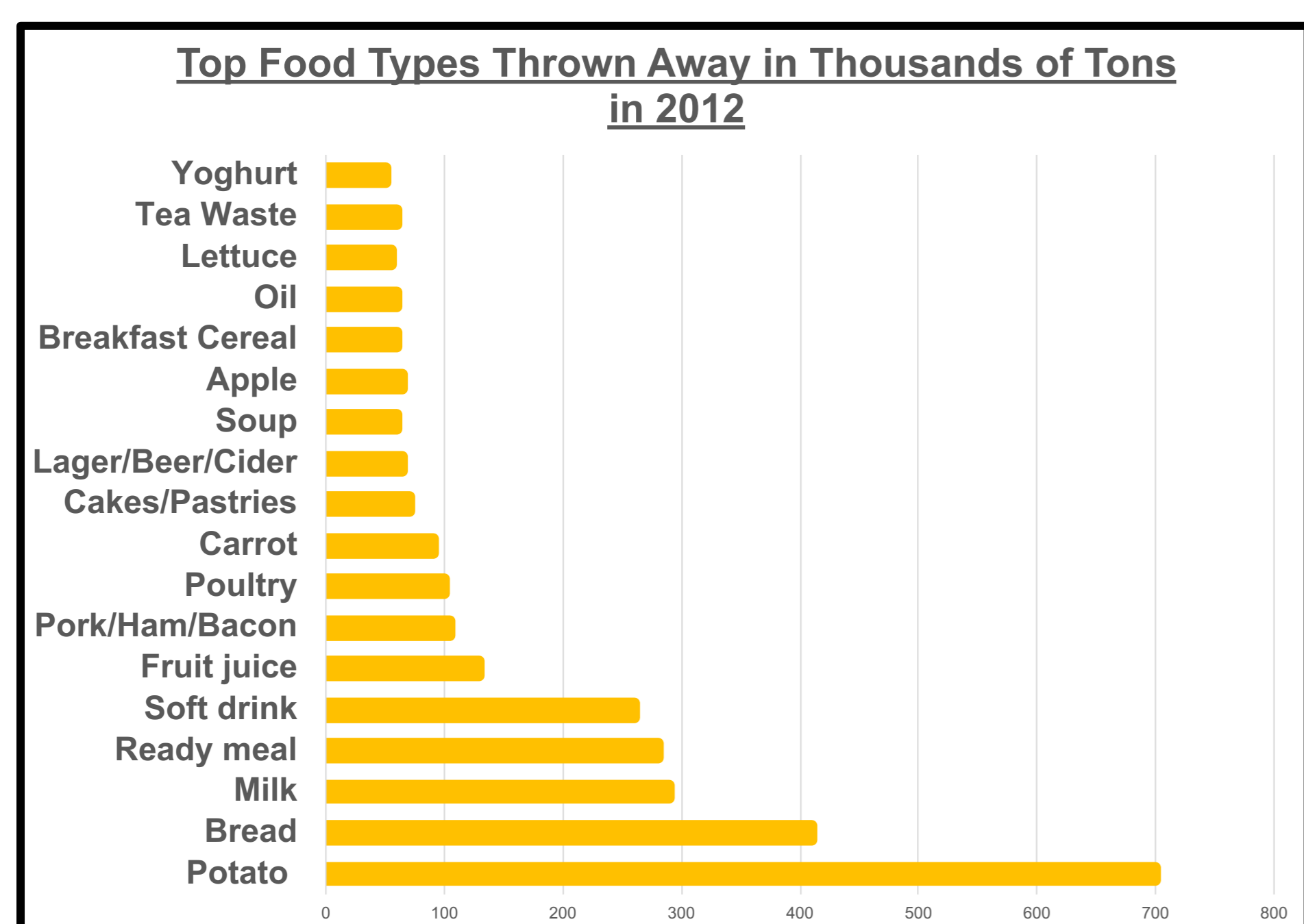
5. Why Robertsbridge?

Robertsbridge has been chosen as the case study for this research because it is a village that is omitted from contemporary literature. However, being a rural village means that not all of the findings may be applied to the rest of the UK, for some solutions to reduce HFW may be context-specific.

4. Methodology

- Epistemological Research Strategy — Why do People Waste Food?
- Interpretivism – Researcher Interprets Respondent's Beliefs on Wasting Food
- Inductive Theory – Observation – How to Reduce Household Food Waste Quantities
- Research Design – Case Study and Complementarity of Quantitative Questions with Qualitative Commentary Boxes

Top Food Types Thrown Away in Thousands of Tons in 2012

- Yoghurt
- Tea Waste
- Lettuce
- Oil
- Breakfast Cereal
- Apple
- Soup
- Lager/Beer/Cider
- Cakes/Pastries
- Carrot
- Poultry
- Pork/Ham/Bacon
- Fruit juice
- Soft drink
- Ready meal
- Milk
- Bread
- Potato

(0, 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800)

Figure 2 - Top 20 Food Types Thrown Away in 2012 in Thousands of Tonnes (Source: Author, adapted from information by WRAP, 2018e**).**

6. Predicted Findings

Based upon current literature and research thus far, the following statements are predictions of the dissertation findings:

a) People do not check their food inventory before going food shopping, meaning they may accidentally buy double of a product they already have

b) In order to maintain a reasonably healthy diet, people buy fresh produce (such as fruit and/or vegetables), which expires quickly

c) It is up to the general public to reduce Household Food Waste by checking their food inventory and/or using food subscription services.

7. Research Aspirations

Findings from this research should hope to spread awareness of this pressing issue. Members of the public may apply some potential solutions to reduce HFW for themselves and pass on ideas to friends and family through a 'bottom-up' approach as opposed to reliance on the Local Authorities or Government.

8. References

Diaz-Ruiz, R., Costa-Font, M., and Gil, J.M. (2018) 'Moving ahead from food-related behaviours: an alternative approach to understand household food waste generation', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 172, pp. 1140-1151.

Sheffield, H. (2017) 'How the UK's household food waste problem is getting worse', *The Independent*, 10 January. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/how-the-uks-household-food-waste-problem-is-getting-worse-a7520171.html (Accessed: 31 December 2018).

WRAP (2018b) *Food Surplus and Waste in the UK – Key Facts*. Available at: http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Food-Surplus-and-Waste-UK-Key-Facts-23-11-18.pdf (Accessed: 01 January 2019).

WRAP (2018e) *Household food waste: restated data for 2007-2015*. Available at: http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Household%20food%20waste%20restated%20data%202007-2015%20FINAL.pdf (Accessed: 02 January 2019).