



uring last year's Expo Milano in Italy, the European Commission organised an international conference dubbed "Fight Food Waste, Feed the Planet". The title neatly summed up the principal challenge that lies ahead for the food industry, but it also exposed an uncomfortable truth, one that can be distorted by the frequent media discussions on the challenge of growing more and the pros and cons of genetic modification: we already produce enough food for every single person on the planet; we simply fail to get it to the right mouths, or indeed to any mouth at all.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, around one-third of all food produced globally for human consumption is lost or wasted, be that a staggering 1.3bn tonnes a year. The carbon footprint of food that is produced but not consumed is close to 3.3 giga-tonnes of CO₂.

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OPPOSITE—Campaigns highlighting the issue of food waste are multiplying
ABOVE—Awareness is rising about the environmental dangers of landfills

equivalent, making food waste the biggest emitter after the US and China. An estimated 100m tonnes of food is wasted annually just in the EU, and that figure is forecast to rise above 120m by 2020 if no action is taken.

Inaction is, of course, not an option. EU Member States are committed to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in September 2015, including a target to halve per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030, and reduce food losses along the food production and supply chains. The European Commission states that it is taking the issue of tackling food waste very seriously. "Reducing food waste has enormous potential for reducing the resources we use to produce the food we eat," it states. "Being more efficient will save money and lower the environmental impact of food production and consumption."

According to the European Commission, the legally binding targets in EU waste legislation have been key to improving »



JANNY MT PLAYS ITS PART

French controlled atmosphere specialist Janny MT believes such companies have an important role to play in reducing waste in the fresh produce supply chain. The firm's controlled atmosphere units (pictured below) give growers great flexibility when storing their produce, allowing them to transform losses into real benefits, according to the firm's Céline Kuentz (above).

"When production is high and demand low, producers can expect to sell at a better price by storing produce and selling it later," she says. "This reduces the amount that is thrown away or sold at a heavy discount."

During production peaks, she says, vegetable producers can pick their salads and other items and store them rather than letting them go to seed. Likewise, for fruit, instead of leaving a surplus on the tree, the producer can store the fruit and sell it later when the market picks up, thereby boosting the value of the product while maintaining its quality.

Janny MT's units come in equally handy during times of inclement weather. "Leek producers, for example, can anticipate frosts and continue to sell even when the earth is frozen. If a cherry grower knows the weather will destroy the crop, he can pick the fruit before the rain comes, thereby saving part of the crop."

