

**Callton Young, FDF Director of Sustainability & Competitiveness
Speech at the Launch of WRAP's Report on the Food We Waste
8 May 2008**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen

I would like to start by congratulating WRAP on this important study which significantly improves the evidence base for a key part of the food chain. To state the blindingly obvious, waste is a drain on resources. It costs the planet and hard earned cash too. Preventing waste must be a priority for all of us - and where it cannot be avoided, recovering or treating it in line with the Government's waste hierarchy is preferable and more sustainable than disposal.

Last October, the Food and Drink Federation - a premier trade association representing food and drink manufacturers - decided to be bold about making a difference to the environment. With help from Secretary of State, Hilary Benn, we launched our Five-fold Environmental Ambition. One of our ambitions is to seek to send zero food and packaging waste from food manufacturing sites to landfill from 2015.

We know achieving this will be a challenge given the current lack of waste infrastructure. But food and drink manufacturers recognise that it is important to act now particularly given that methane emissions from food waste in landfill are 21 times more damaging to the environment than CO₂ emissions. We have therefore teamed up with WRAP and others to help deliver our goal. Waste prevention is a priority and where waste cannot be avoided, then waste recovery and treatment will be our aim.

Food waste arising elsewhere in the food chain, including at the consumer end, is equally important. I am therefore pleased to have been invited by WRAP to offer my reflections and comments on its timely report on this important issue.

The first thing that jumps out is the finding that one third of all food purchased is thrown away. This statistic is indeed staggering - along with the volume at 6.7m tonnes. The fact that the largest single component of food wasted is fresh fruit, vegetables and salad is itself interesting and, I believe, requires greater analysis and explanation of the root causes.

Is it thrown away because there is an intention-action gap between consumers buying fresh fruit and vegetables in response to Five-A Day messages which they do not fully follow through to consumption? Or is it, for example, because consumers are simply too busy to always prepare and eat the fresh fruit and vegetables that they buy? Maybe complications such as the weather come into play and are an influence waste?

Is it the case that consumers rely too much on fresh fruit and vegetables when buying canned, frozen or dried for example, would give them more flexibility and control over when they are eaten and help avoid waste?

Whatever the answers, where food waste cannot be prevented, ensuring that it is recovered or treated instead of being thrown away is always next best. This will require changes in behaviour - and improved waste infrastructure. I was particularly encouraged therefore is where it says in WRAP's report that consumers are showing willing from an environmental perspective to change their behaviour and the food that they waste.

To close, WRAP is to be congratulated on its report and the impetus it has given to this important and understated dimension of the sustainability debate. The Food and Drink Federation, for its part, has forged a close working partnership with WRAP. We want to build on that as we work to deliver our zero food and packing waste to landfill ambition. Preventing waste, and where that is not possible treating it, should be a principle by which we all abide.

Thank you.