

Ex Trader Joe's President Rallies Against Food Waste

Institute of Food Technologists

Food waste that is unused, yet nutritionally viable, may help to feed a growing and nutritionally "insecure" world population and minimize the impact of food production on the environment, according to Doug Rauch, former president of Trader Joe's, Inc. and current CEO of the nonprofit Conscious Capitalism, Inc. Rauch was the keynote speaker during the opening session at the 2014 Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) Annual Meeting & Food Expo® in New Orleans.

By 2050, the world population is expected to grow to more than nine billion. Currently, one out of every eight people in the world is hungry, and one out of six Americans is "nutritionally insecure," or not receiving an optimal level of healthy nutrients.

Hunger used to be equated solely with a lack of sufficient calories, said Rauch. However, in the U.S. and other developed countries, a focus on food quantity and unhealthy eating choices are resulting in a "tsunami" of obesity and related health conditions.

"In the developed world, it's no longer a shortage of calories, but a shortage of nutrients," said Rauch.

At the same time, "food waste is staggering," said Rauch, who estimated that between one-third and 40 percent of all of the food grown in the world is never consumed. In the U.S., an estimated 25 percent of all food is wasted.

In developing countries, a lack of infrastructure and refrigeration is the leading cause of unused food. In the U.S. and other developed countries food often spoils before it is eaten, or rejected because of imperfections.

In addition, confusing "use by" or "best by" code dates, stamped on food products, result in an estimated nine out of 10 American consumers throwing out food long before it has expired or become unsafe to eat. IFT developed an infographic on how much food is wasted because of expiration dates.

"We have done a horrible job of making things clear to customers on what the terms 'sell by' or 'best by' dates really mean," said Rauch. Once that date passes, consumers assume that the food or produce is unsafe to eat, "when of course it's not. The display date code is being taken as an expiration date.

"It's critical that we reframe our thinking about this excess food; that up to 40 percent of what we grow we're not consuming and for reasons that make no sense," added Rauch who is working to open The Daily Table, a restaurant and food store in

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Dorchester, Mass., that will offer expired but viable produce and home-cooked meals at reduced prices.

The Daily Table, scheduled to open this fall, will provide "a dignified way" for low-income, working families to purchase fruits, vegetables and low-sodium healthy meals at substantially reduced prices.

Rauch said the challenge of feeding nine billion people in 35 years will require creative ideas and new technologies. He cited the recent creation of biodegradable, compostable and recyclable bags, infused with spices, which help to extend the life of fresh fruits and vegetables, as an example of innovation that is helping to help to reduce food waste.

"We've got one planet, we've got a lot of people to feed and we have to do so sustainably," said Rauch. "We should be able to do this in a manner that provides true health, and that allows for the planet to flourish. We can do this through the proper application of smart technologies, good public policies and putting human ingenuity to work."

About IFT

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Institute of Food Technologists. Since its founding in 1939, IFT has been committed to advancing the science of food, both today and tomorrow. Our non-profit scientific society—more than 18,000 members from more than 100 countries—brings together food scientists, technologists and related professionals from academia, government and industry. For more information, please visit ift.org [1]

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