



## Sustainable Practices in Culinary Programs: Views of Chef Lecturers Regarding Food Waste Management

\* Kutay Arda YILDIRIM <sup>a</sup> , Yenilmez Ufuk YILMAZ <sup>a</sup> , Hamed REZAPOURAGHDAM <sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Turizm Fakültesi, TRNC, Via Mersin/Türkiye

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### Abstract

This study investigates the extent to which corporate social responsibility (CSR) and more specifically, food waste management is incorporated into a university's tourism faculty's practical courses, with a focus on sustainability methods used in food production procedures. The study looks into the crucial issue of food waste, an essential part of sustainable practices, by drawing on the concepts established in the Sustainable Development Goal 12 of the United Nations; Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns. The research reveals various viewpoints on CSR and food waste implementation through qualitative research including 11 instructors. The results show a variety of techniques for reducing food waste in practical classes, from careful control to acknowledged flaws in waste management. Notably, the study draws attention to the lack of a specific CSR curriculum for students enrolled in culinary education practical training. In order to provide a more comprehensive knowledge of CSR integration in culinary schools, the paper finishes by outlining possible directions for future research.

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\* Corresponding Author

E-mail: kutayarda94@gmail.com (K. A. Yıldırım)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

CSR is a construct in which firms, on a voluntary basis, incorporate social and environmental issues into their company activities and interactions with its stakeholders (European Commission, 2001). This concept consists of working in coordination with the employees and their families and at the same time with the society and the local community to improve the life quality of all (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 1999). Various researchers state that CSR is a practice of management to decrease the indirect and direct impacts of a company/firm which are negative on environmental and social dimensions (Davis, 1967; Davis & Blomstrom, 1966). According to other researchers, CSR is a voluntary work or moral obligation of responsibility alongside the minimum level of regulations and law (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). Another set of researchers defined CSR as a company's commitment to engage in a wide range of activities, including economic, environmental, social, charitable, and legal doings (Carroll, 1979; Devinney, 2009; Van Marrewijk, 2003). Numerous factors have been researched in the food sector as well with the integration of multiple variables (Covin, Slevin & Heeley, 2001; Lee, Park & Pae, 2011; Maloni & Brown, 2006). However, when it comes to the CSR initiatives of hospitality and tourism schools worldwide, there are a number of gaps in the literature.

One of these gaps is the shortcomings in terms of who the stakeholders that universities consider themselves responsible are and what kind of CSR activities they carry out with this sense of responsibility as Moscardo (2015) stated the focus on sustainability education has been rather limited in the literature of tourism. What kind of expectations universities have due to CSR activities is another area that remains unclear. According to Ali, Murphy, and Nadkarni (2014) and Camargo and Gretzel (2017) the current state of sustainability education in tourism faculties needs more extensively analyzed and investigated. There has been research regarding sustainability education in Universities (Kim, 2023; Rezapouraghdam, Alipour, Kilic & Akhshik, 2022; Rezapouraghdam & Akhshik, 2021) but the same statement cannot be stated for the practical kitchen classes of culinary arts. As the industry and our planet demand more individuals with sustainable practices (Karatepe, Rezapouraghdam, & Hassannia, 2020; Rezapouraghdam et al., 2023) the same can be expected for F&B departments. Food waste in universities, especially in tourism faculties, is an important issue. One of the issues that needs to be investigated is to reveal the CSR activities of these faculties. These deficiencies, noticed by the authors, were found worthy of research and it was decided to investigate these deficiencies.

The aim of the paper is to analyse and evaluate the level of CSR that is committed in practical courses of a University's Faculty of Tourism. The paper focuses on general sustainability guidelines and key concepts regarding sustainability in the food production areas.

The researchers focused on the principles created by the United Nations (2023) number 12 of their 17 sustainable development goals which is "Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns". Goal no.12 consists of 3 aspects: water, energy, and food. The main aspect that can be linked to the study is food wastage.

While there is a lot of research regarding the sustainability aspects of the food service industry, there is a lack of literature regarding the CSR values of culinary education faculties. It is important to understand with the sheer number of culinary schools preparing students for the industry with the right knowledge and skills, if they are also paying attention to CSR aspects of the food industry as it can be a direct influence on the students and the way they will work in the future.

The concept of CSR frequently finds its place in the international literature. Currently, it is focused on how businesses will carry out their social responsibility activities (Vlachos, Epitropaki, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2013). On the other hand, current social and environmental practices have become a strategic necessity for businesses (Werther & Chandler, 2005). As a result of this, businesses operating in the tourism sector take some social and environmental initiatives to increase the quality of life of people and announce these initiatives on their corporate websites or present them to the public by including them in their annual reports (Holcomb, Upchurch & Okumus, 2007). On this axis, businesses also try to get concrete feedback from stakeholder groups.

Many studies have been carried out on the strategic benefits of social responsibility practices carried out by tourism enterprises. These studies generally include business performance (Kang, 2010; Lee, Park & Lee, 2013; Young & Pagliari, 2015), employee attitudes and behaviors (Zientara, 2015; Kim & Ham., 2016), customer attitudes and behaviors (Kim & Ham, 2016) and feedback from potentially qualified personnel (Boğan & Dedeoğlu, 2017).

### **CSR in General**

The idea that commercial enterprises have some responsibilities to society beyond providing benefits for shareholders has existed for many years. CSR activities, which began with philanthropic activities of businesses such as charitable donations, have gradually diversified and expanded over the years to include elements such as fair working practices, human rights, the environment, anti-corruption efforts, and consumer protection (Bowen, 2011).

In the most general terms, corporate social responsibility can be defined as "the extent to which businesses meet the legal, economic, ethical, and voluntary responsibilities given to them by various stakeholders" (Vanhamme & Grobбен, 2009). Mohr, Webb and Harris (2001) define corporate social responsibility as "a company's commitment to minimize or eliminate harmful effects and maximize the impact of long-term benefits on society." Although the dimensions of CSR are not included in this definition, it is possible to specify important areas of responsibility such as complying with laws and ethical norms, treating employees fairly, protecting the environment, and contributing to charities.

### **CSR in Hospitality Tourism**

In the early stages, the concept of CSR in the hospitality industry was mostly seen as equivalent to environmental practices (Coles, Fenclova & Dinan, 2013). Energy-water saving, recycling, etc. of enterprises, activities to protect the natural environment are handled within the scope of social responsibility. However, in recent years, in addition to environmental practices within the concept of CSR, studies that include economic and socio-cultural initiatives that increase the quality of life of stakeholders have also been carried out.

Today, many national and international businesses take initiatives that will benefit society and convey these initiatives to their stakeholders through different channels. For example, Hilton hotels announce their social responsibility activities to their stakeholders by creating a separate web page and inform them of their stakeholders with the reports they create every year (Hilton, 2022).

Obesity is an increasing concern globally, according to McCool and McCool (2010). They highlighted that corporations in the food and beverage industry have a critical role in resolving the problem and that the industry should improve its corporate social responsibility efforts. They included inventive advertising campaigns, adjusting portion sizes, and labelling nutritional data as examples of corporate social responsibility measures that corporations

might adopt at this stage.

### **CSR in Culinary Arts Schools**

Cascade Culinary Institute at Central Oregon Community College: The Environmental Centre and Central Oregon Community College are partners with the Cascade Culinary Institute in Bend, Oregon. A certificate in Sustainable Food Systems for Culinary Arts is available from the institution, which includes seminars on sustainable food production systems, harvesting and preservation principles, and farm-to-table sustainable cooking methods. The Jungers Culinary Centre has achieved Earth Advantage Gold status for low-waste, local sourcing, and bio-diesel production from fryer oil, indicating its commitment to truly sustainable methods (Cascade Culinary Institute, 2021).

The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) has Food Studies and Sustainability Programs and Online Master's in Sustainable Food Systems. These programs, cover "climate change, renewable resources, waste reduction, responsible sourcing, regenerative agriculture, and healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries" (The Culinary Institute of America, 2023).

The University of West London shared 2 articles under the name of Sustainable Food Policy and Environmental Performance on their website. Their Sustainable Food Policy covers 6 main titles which are Sourcing; Changing weekly menu, creating sustainable supply chain with seasonal produce, and local from local people. With the Circular Model, their goal is to minimize environmental impact, including achieving zero food waste by 2030. With Animal Welfare, All UWL's suppliers must adhere to UK and EU animal welfare requirements. With Sustainable Seafood they request from all suppliers to follow the Good Fish Guidelines of the Marine Conservation Society (MCS). Another section is Operation which is to reduce trash output, they undertake waste inspections in kitchens and food service facilities. All garbage, including cardboard, glass, paper, plastic, cooking oil, and food, is recycled to the fullest extent possible. They also provide a carbon reduction objective for all of UWL by decreasing power, gas, and water usage in kitchens. Lastly, they are monitoring food waste and utility use on a regular basis (UWL, 2023).

### **Food Waste**

Sachs (1994) stated that Food Waste (FW) has an emphasis on multiple sustainability dimensions (economic, social, and environmental), and in order to change existing facilities into sustainability, one should pursue the public's well-being in an ecological environment. The possible implications of FW from the industry of food services on sustainability parameters, on the other hand, have not been widely investigated in the literature (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019). Considering the sustainability features, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2014) calculated the global cost of FW to be around to 2.6 trillion dollars in losses each year.

FW is a serious social issue, and the need to avoid and minimize it has been acknowledged at the highest levels of world government (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). From the standpoint of more efficient use of natural resources and pollution reduction, FW mitigation and prevention are required (Scherhauer, Moates, Hartikainen, Waldron & Obersteiner, 2018). It is also necessary from the standpoint of long-term commercial viability, as FW reduces the revenue of food producers, processors, retailers, and food service providers (Martin-Rios, Demen-Meier, Gössling & Cornuz, 2018). Given that a considerable portion of the world's population suffers from food poverty and malnutrition, preventing and mitigating FW is morally imperative (Thompson & Haigh, 2017). Knowledge of FW's incidence throughout varied industries of the food value chain is required for effective FW

treatment (Eriksson et al., 2019). Identifying the FW preventive and mitigation strategies still in place within certain industries is also necessary for effective management (Papargyropoulou et al., 2016). This is to identify instances of "best practices" and assess the potential for intra-sectoral implementation (Hennchen, 2019).

Although the threat of FW in global food service is well understood, precise numbers to measure its incidence are lacking. The research does not provide composite global numbers, instead relying on local evaluations to demonstrate the global extent of FW (Filimonau, 2021). When discussing the amount of food discarded in the worldwide food service business, numbers from WRAP (2020) and FUSIONS (2016) are frequently quoted. Services within the UK and EU-28 nations are estimated to create around 1.1 and 11 Mt of FW each year, respectively, based on these numbers.

Large volumes of food are thrown away due to poor demand forecasts caused by seasonally (Hennchen, 2019). Although some demand trends may be seen across a company circle, predicting them remains challenging (Filimonau, Krivcova & Pettit, 2019). Due to errors in demand forecasts, food is overproduced, or components are underutilized. The culinary staff's talents are also linked to the human component. Customers reject food orders due to poor cooking and plating abilities, while inadequate trimming skills harm food and lead to waste (Heikkilä, Reinikainen, Katajajuuri, Silvennoinen & Hartikainen, 2016).

## **Methodology**

In this study, qualitative research was employed (e.g., Rezapouraghdam et al., 2018). Qualitative research is a type of study that aims to better understand and analyze people's lives, and opinions on events, actions, and societal developments (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In brief, when we don't know the qualitative research variables, we define them based on the examinations and find the answers to the research questions at the same time. This looks to be the most suitable and widely utilized approach (Creswell & Hanson, 2007).

Data has been collected from 11 instructors in North Cyprus which is home to thousands of students around the world and contributes to many dimensions of the region's development (Gursoy, Kilic, Ozturen & Rezapouraghdam, 2017; Rezapouraghdam & Vahedi, 2024)

North Cyprus has been regarded as a key location for tourism education, which brings students from 110 countries abroad. First, in order to lessen the detrimental sociocultural and environmental effects of tourism, it is essential to spread practical information and teach students about sustainable tourism practices. This will ensure the continued viability of the region. Second, students studying tourism are the source of "brain gain" since their commitment to their studies over a lengthy period of time enables them to become absorbed in the community's culture and economy, and some may even decide to remain, live, or pursue employment in Northern Cyprus (Rezapouraghdam, Alipour, Kilic & Akhsik, 2022).

Researchers interviewed the instructors one by one in their office and also with their permission all interviews were recorded. To gather the data for this research, the authors got permission from the Eastern Mediterranean University ethics committee approval in 22.05.2023 with the reference number: "ETK00-20230-0210".

Demographic information regarding participants is shown below in Table 1.

Participants	Position	Age	Gender	Position in the Industry
P1	Full time chef lecturer	49	Male	Head chef
P2	Full time chef lecturer	50	Female	Chef de partie
P3	Full time chef lecturer	56	Male	Chef de Partie, Kitchen manager, restaurant consultant
P4	MA Research Assistant	28	Male	Sous Chef, restaurant consultant
P5	Full time chef lecturer	37	Female	Chef de Partie
P6	PhD Research Assistant	26	Female	Pastry chef
P7	Academic Staff	26	Female	Chef de Partie
P8	Full time chef lecturer	35	Female	Pastry Chef
P9	Part time chef lecturer	40	Male	Chef de Partie, restaurant consultant
P10	Part time chef lecturer	27	Female	Chef de partie
P11	Academic Staff	27	Female	Chef de partie

The following semi-structured research questions were used. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded. The interviews were made in Turkish due to better communication with the participants.

1. Does the faculty of tourism have a policy regarding CSR in their practical courses? If so, what are they?
2. Can you tell us if there is food wastage happening in the practical courses? Can you explain how much and how it is happening if there is?
3. Do you think the curriculum of practical courses happening in the faculty are prepared thinking about seasonality and sustainability? If not, do you think it can applicable?
4. Do you think if there is food waste in the courses, is there any way to use the wastage in some other way?
5. Do you have any ideas or opinions you would like to share regarding improving or sustaining the sustainability in faculty of tourism regarding practical courses?

### Data Analysis

The research data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis approach that examines and analyses the data in terms of concepts and themes (Naeem et al., 2023). The coding of the data, the construction of categories from the codes, and lastly the formation of themes are all part of this analytical approach. When the research subject is current and there is a research gap in the relevant literature, the thematic analysis approach is commonly applied (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

### Results

The authors have interviewed 11 participants. While some of the participants were full-time lecturers in the faculty, dealing with and working towards some administrative and management duties, some were just part-time lecturers. The participants were all chefs who had worked in the kitchen prior to their academic career. While some of them had experience working abroad (especially in the United Kingdom) most of them also have work experience in North Cyprus. From the whole participants group, only 2 chefs were pastry chefs, the rest of the participants were standard chefs de parties or higher positions before they started their academic careers. The gender of the sample group consisted of 4 male and 7 female chef lecturers. The results of the interviews have been categorized into 7 different themes which are showcased below in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Themes of the interviews with their descriptions.

Headings	Description
Food waste - Final Product	Views on how to recycle or use finished products.
Food waste - Ingredients	Views on how to recycle or use food products during the cooking process.
Supplier	Views on food product suppliers regarding food quality and provenance.
Food Sustainability Curriculum	Views on Food sustainability related classes students take.

### Food Waste – Final Product

Regarding CSR in the practical classes, all of the lecturers' first things on their minds were food wastage. Participant 1 stated that there is no food wastage in the lectures and if there is, they have been put to good use. Other participants also supported this answer with their comments, stating although it is not possible to have zero waste, it is minimized, (P6) described as “Whatever you do in the restaurant that works without the most zero waste, there is a little waste, and since you work with students here, waste cannot be avoided.” While several participants stated there is complete and systematic control of food wastage in the kitchen, other participants gave contradicting comments compared to the previously mentioned participants. For instance (P4) said, “There is a lot of food wastage after cooking and we do not evaluate this food waste in any way”. This happens mostly when after the food is cooked, many of the students do not eat all of the food that is cooked especially when they do not like the cuisine (P4, P9, and P10).

### Food Wastage – Ingredients

Participants state that the food is ordered according to the student’s number and the weight of ingredients is also calculated by the estimation of students. Spoilage is also a waste of ingredients during shelf storage. However (P4) stated that the staff working in the kitchens try their best to use the ingredients to reduce wastage; “In order not to waste, student assistants try to cook or, I don't know, if there are too many tomatoes, they dry them, if there are strawberries left, they become jam, we try to reduce it somehow, but we try to reduce it completely from a humanitarian point of view.” (P5) stated they try to use the ingredients left out for stocks and other products to reduce wastage and for some products, they do give it to their pets after work; “when we make broth, we throw a lot of bones and vegetables in the stocks. However, some of the teachers take them to their own pets.” Some participants also explained how lecture kitchens cannot work in the same logic of preparing food to minimize wastage, (P9) described this by saying: “A cream is made in the production kitchen, then used for all desserts, but we do not have such a chance here because then the other group comes, they have to do the same from scratch, this time the waste increases.” As all students need to learn everything from scratch to finish.

### Food Supplier

The authors asked the participants about their relationship with the food suppliers, especially regarding the quality, timing, and provenance of food products were mentioned by the participants. Most of the participants commented on the fixed schedule of a sole supplier, while they prefer always using fresh, having a supplier coming in once a week makes things difficult for them, (P3) summaries their situation by stating: “The faculty always prefers to use fresh products as much as possible. However, as you know, we can't always find everything in Northern Cyprus. Alternatively, we have to use frozen or canned products from time to time. This is not because of preference, but because there is no option. But of course, we prefer to use the freshest of everything as much as possible.” The majority of participants also compare the faculty’s suppliers to European standards, commenting on the quality of

stages the ingredients should go through in the value chain, (P6) describes this by saying: “Now, when we look at the suppliers, when we compare them with Europe, they should at least improve themselves a lot. Because at any moment, everything comes out of the field. For example, when lettuce enters our kitchen, it comes right out of the field, without any processing, without any packaging, without any cleaning process, it comes directly to the table and comes to the kitchen.”

### **Food Sustainability Curriculum**

The authors asked participants if the students who are taking these practical courses are also having courses regarding food sustainability in the kitchen labs. The majority of participants stated that there is not a theoretical lecture regarding the subject but as a subject material in some of the practical lectures due to being vocally taught alongside a sustainability week done in the faculty but the majority of the participants commented that these are not enough nor it is detailed, as (P7) puts it: “Not as a lesson, but as a subject, I know that it is taught as a week, a week. It is not very detailed in terms of wastage in first graders.”

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this study, the perceptions, and views of chef lecturers regarding sustainability in food production lectures, mainly food waste and food sustainability, have been investigated. Because the food industry has a significant impact on food waste and sustainability, the education of the next generation of chefs and managers is of utmost importance for the industry. The paper fills the gap in the literature regarding research on CSR and FW in the faculties of gastronomy (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019).

This study looks into the possibility of integrating corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the context of food waste management within the practical culinary arts programs being offered by the faculty of tourism at a public university in TRNC. The research has established that various lecturers have adopted different sustainable practices, some being quite creative while others show certain weaknesses. Furthermore, there is no specific course outline on CSR which indicates that the institution may need to broaden its teaching methods so as to include a more comprehensive sustainable development approach in their apprenticeship. The results of this study provide valuable information on CSR and food waste management, especially in applied culinary courses at a university's tourism faculty. Data from qualitative interviews with 11 lecturers reveal a variety of approaches and attitudes on how sustainability practices are integrated in line with Sustainable Development Goal 12, particularly in the context of food waste management.

The study acknowledges the point made by Moscardo (2015) regarding the limited amount of sustainability in education in the tourism literature. According to the participants, due to similar reasons, students rejecting food from a specific culture or not sustainably processing food creates FW similar to how customers reject orders in the hospitality industry (Heikkilä, Reinikainen, Katajajuuri, Silvennoinen & Hartikainen, 2016). Although not mentioned through participants, a more effective recycling method for tools used in practical kitchens can be positively effective as its mentioned in UWL (2023). As mentioned by the participants the lectures and teachings regarding sustainability are scarce, but it is possible to create more of an understanding for the students by accommodating more seminars and courses regarding sustainability and FW. The hospitality industry is quite complex regarding FW compared to households FW (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019). Thus, it can be concluded that culinary education is complex by



itself due to the service it provides to its stakeholders and is still being understudied in this regard.

While the implementation of the practicum is still underway, it is observed that the faculty members employed various methods to reduce food waste in the kitchen. The lecturers were described as ‘very good’ because they are able to a great extent, to manage the amount of waste generated in their areas mainly through controlled measures and innovations particularly in practical classes like portioning before cooking, re-using leftovers among others, or introducing waste reduction as a concept in their teaching methods. These activities might reflect an initiative to develop responsible behaviors among learners by ensuring that students become used to not throwing away food anyhow. Although it is appreciated by those who do something about it at this level, it can be also seen that there lacks a uniform system since there seem to be contradictions or omissions here and there which show that this issue has not been taken up as one complete thing.

The absence of an exact CSR sequential curriculum in practical cooking subjects is seen as a major shortcoming. This gap signifies that there are no established regulations to ensure that every student is knowledgeable on sustainability and food waste. Hence, it is suggested that the university introduces a systematic program about these environmental concerns which will include but not be limited to teaching methods of supporting systems so that they can last longer; strategies of dealing with leftovers among other wider roles towards the environment such as conserving energy or water resources. Furthermore, there is no specific course outline on CSR at undergraduate degree which indicates that the institution may need to broaden its teaching methods so as to include a more comprehensive sustainable development approach in their apprenticeship.

Another problem is that instructors may have different priorities when it comes to getting rid of kitchen waste so as to incorporate corporate social responsibility into technical education.

There are lots of limitations regarding this paper. The study focused only on one University in North Cyprus. For further research, more than one University could be sampled to also increase the generalisability of the outcomes. It can be a good source of data to also interview the administrative part of the faculty such Dean and Vice-dean. An observation approach can also create a better idea for future studies to personally observe the wastage that is been created and also see the policies that are taken place by lecturers. Different stakeholders such as students can also be used as a sample to better measure the validity of the research and decrease bias. In the future, more comprehensive research is needed to investigate CSR practices in various departments and colleges. This could also mean creating and testing out standardized courses that teach CSR, and finding ways to help teachers use eco-friendly methods. If these aspects are developed further, institutes of higher education will be in a position to train professionals who have not only mastered their fields but also possess a strong commitment towards environmentalism and sustainable development.

## **Declaration**

All authors of the article contributed equally to the article process. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. Researchers interviewed the instructors one by one in their office and also with their permission all interviews were recorded. To gather the data for this research, the authors got permission from the Eastern Mediterranean University ethics committee approval in 22.05.2023 with the reference number: “ETK00-20230-0210”.

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**Appendix 1.** Ethics Committee Permission



**Reference No:** ETK00-2023-0210

22.05.2023

**Subject:** Your application for ethical approval.

**Re:** Kutay Arda Yıldırım, Assist. Prof. Hamed Rezapouraghdam, Yenilmez Yılmaz

**Faculty of Tourism**

EMU's Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board (BAYEK) has approved the decision of the Ethics Board of Tourism Faculty granting Kutay Arda Yıldırım, Assist. Prof. Hamed Rezapouraghdam, Yenilmez Yılmaz from the Faculty of Tourism to pursue their study titled **"Corporate social responsibility and culinary programs: views of the chef lecturers"**.

Best Regards,