



## Spotlight on **FareShare**

**In recent years, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors have become critical components of the customer experience (CX). A significant shift in consumer behaviour highlights this change, with 49 percent of our Customer Experience Excellence Report UK 2024/25 research respondents willing to pay more for goods and services from companies that give back to society. One of the most pressing ESG issues today is food waste, which not only has severe environmental consequences, but deep social implications. In fact, food waste contributes to over 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. If food waste were a country, it would rank third behind the US and China in terms of its environmental impact. Leading the charge against this growing issue in the UK is FareShare, the country's foremost**

**organisation dedicated to combating food waste. We spoke with George Wright, Special Advisor, FareShare, to understand the organisation's mission and the systemic challenges it faces in tackling food waste and food insecurity.**

FareShare works to reduce food waste by redistributing surplus food to charities and organisations across the UK. These organisations then use the food to provide meals for people in need, such as homeless shelters, community groups, school breakfast clubs, and all manner of services. The food provided by FareShare helps frontline charities to address the root causes of hunger and poverty. This includes families facing food insecurity, the elderly, people with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness.

Through its 35 distribution centres, 8,500 charity partners, and a dedicated network of 26,000 volunteers, FareShare redistributes 55,000 tons of food annually, providing 130 million meals to those in need, and avoiding the needless waste of 105,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions.



## Rising food insecurity in a cost-of-living crisis

“The scale of food insecurity in the UK is staggering,” says Wright. “We’ve seen the number of people suffering from food insecurity rise from 6 million to 13 million during the cost-of-living crisis. That’s nearly 20 percent of the UK population needing help to put food on the table. This isn’t a small problem, but it’s one we’re steadfastly addressing by bringing healthy food to vulnerable people every day. That said, we can’t solve food poverty – that’s a wider socio-economic issue – but we can support organisations which deal with some of the root causes.”

FareShare’s model operates almost like a franchise system, in which it sources and supplies food to its charity partners, who then ensure it reaches those in need. Wright explains that FareShare manages the infrastructure and logistics while also working to change the narrative around food waste through advocacy and influence.

## The complexity of the food waste problem

Food waste is a multifaceted issue that permeates various stages of the supply chain, from manufacturing and retail to wholesale and hospitality. Wright points out that while supply chains are incredibly sophisticated in ensuring food is available in the right place at the right time, the challenge lies in managing the unintended consequences – waste – that occur outside of this system.

“We are striving to achieve structural change in how the country perceives food waste. It’s not just a social issue; it’s an environmental one as well.

“This is a multidimensional problem with many participants and stakeholders involved. Like most intractable issues, there’s no silver bullet. It requires everyone to play their part — from the government and manufacturers to retailers and consumers. If everyone did a little bit, we could create a positive force capable of moving mountains.”

## The scale of food waste in the UK

The numbers are sobering. Each year, the UK generates 12.5 million tons of food waste. More than half of this – 6.5 million tons – occurs in households, where purchased food often ends up in landfill. Surprisingly, only 5 percent of

food waste is generated by retailers, a figure that has been declining year after year. Over the past 15 years, retailer food waste has dropped by 30 percent, thanks to improved supply chain optimisation driven by advanced computing power and algorithms.

Another 3 million tons of food waste is lost at the farm and fishery level, where it either returns to the ground or never enters the supply chain. An additional 3 million tons is lost during the manufacturing process or in the food service sector, where reclaiming waste is a complex challenge.

Despite these challenges, Wright emphasises that the UK still lags behind some other countries in managing and resolving food waste. To address this, FareShare has created an alliance within the food industry, engaging companies, the government, and even working with King Charles III on the Coronation project to raise awareness and build momentum for change.

“Our goal is to galvanise those who can help, to first see and understand the problem, and then find innovative ways to address it.

“At FareShare, we view ourselves as an environmental and social multiplier. For every £1 invested in our work, we create £6 worth of social value. Each tonne of food we save mitigates the waste of 2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e,” he says.

## Collaboration is key

As FareShare continues its mission, the organisation remains committed to not only reducing food waste but also ensuring that surplus food reaches those who need it most. Through collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast focus on both social and environmental impact, FareShare is making a tangible difference in the fight against food waste and food insecurity.

FareShare relies heavily on volunteers and donations to carry out its work. Volunteers help with tasks such as sorting food, driving vans, and coordinating food deliveries. Donations, both in-kind services and financial, are vital to sustaining FareShare’s operations.

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