

Gaps in refrigeration across the nation prove costly

Issues with the Australian cold food chain lead to massive food wastage every year.

Faults in the Australian cold food chain result in \$3.8 billion in food wastage each year. That's an estimated 2,183,500 tonnes of fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, seafood and dairy products spoiled due to breaks and deficiencies in the cold food chain.

So says a report prepared for Refrigerants Australia and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. Unsurprisingly, the report indicates that poor temperature management is the greatest risk for perishable food.



If wasted food was viewed as a country, it would be the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter on the planet

ASTONISHING NUMBERS

“The numbers in this report are truly astonishing,” says Refrigerants Australia executive director Greg Picker. “We always thought there were issues, which has now been confirmed for us in a big way. And it’s alarming as the faults are mainly behavioural, which could be changed through educating those involved. Leaving food on the loading dock for too long, not closing truck doors, incorrectly stacked crates – these are small things that are resulting in temperature changes and food being spoiled.”

The report says that during transportation and handling between mobile and stationary refrigeration points, there are sometimes huge temperature variations



Refrigerants Reclaim Australia GM
Kylie Farrelley

between truck or trailer, loading docks and storage facilities.

THIRD LARGEST EMITTER

The estimated \$3.8 billion in waste comprises 25 per cent (1,930,000 tonnes) of annual production of fruit and vegetables worth \$3 billion; 3.5 per cent of annual production of meat (155,000 tonnes) worth \$670 million, and seafood (8,500 tonnes) worth \$90 million; and 1 per cent (90,000 tonnes) of annual dairy production valued at \$70 million.

Globally, the report says, if wasted food was viewed as a country, it would be the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter on the planet.

“The refrigeration industry is a crucial part of the cold food chain which, considering the volume of food that moves through it, has been extraordinarily successful,” says Refrigerants Reclaim Australia GM Kylie Farrelley. “However, there is room for improvement, both in how refrigeration technology is used and improved practices in the cold food chain. If everyone in the cold food chain works together, we can reduce the amount of food that is wasted, which will have positive impacts on everyone involved – from farmers, to the end consumer and the environment.” ■

Would you like to know more?

To read the full report “A Study of Waste in the Cold Food Chain and Opportunities for Improvement”, go to www.environment.gov.au/protection/ozone/publications