

## Cold shock: Aussie cold chain food waste study



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A government- and industry-sponsored **study** has revealed that food waste attributable to failures in the cold food chain costs the Australian economy nearly \$4 billion at farm gate values. The study, an in-depth examination of the cost of food waste because of deficiencies in the cold food chain, was undertaken by the Melbourne-based **Expert Group**, for the **Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment**, and **Refrigerants Australia**.



The Australian Food Cold Chain Council (**AFCCC**) has labelled the report as a wake-up call,

demanding an urgent response by governments and businesses. The study highlights problems with temperature control and food handling practices in refrigerated transports, loading docks and cold rooms across the country.

"It is almost criminal that one-quarter of Australia's production of fruit and vegetables is never eaten. This loss alone accounts for almost two million tonnes of otherwise edible food, worth \$3 billion. Meat and seafood waste in the cold chain costs the country another \$90 million and dairy losses total \$70 million," said Mark Mitchell, AFCCC Chairman.

AFCCC field studies highlight the shortcomings in the cold chain, and it has embarked on an educational campaign to try to improve standards, down to the basics of temperature measurement with properly calibrated thermometers, and how to pack food pallets in a refrigerated space.

This new study also provides a range of practices that would cost-effectively reduce perishable food waste. These include simple, but logical, food handling processes such as reducing the time food spends outside refrigerated environments during transfer, more accurate measurement of food temperatures, and more transparent monitoring of food in transit, so failures can be quickly identified and solved.

"An Australian Cold Food Code could be a game changer for food producers and consumers. It is all very well to implore cold storage facilities, trucking companies and supermarkets to redouble their efforts to reduce food waste, but they need the support and guidance of an updated and practical code, combined with an education campaign for cold chain practitioners. The AFCCC is working on this, in cooperation with the many Australian food and transport groups who share our concerns," Mitchell said.

The AFCCC was formed in mid-2017 by a cross-section of industry leaders, covering manufacturing, food transport, refrigeration and cold chain services. The council encourages innovation, compliance, waste reduction and safety across the Australian food cold chain.

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