Waste Can Become Business

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There’s a kernel of wisdom in that old parental admonition: clean your dinner plate because there are children starving in Africa. By 2050, we’ll need to increase world food production by about 70 percent to feed an estimated 9 billion people, according to a recent report by the Food and Agriculture Organization [1].

Yet what’s rarely discussed is that more than a third of the food produced in the world — 1.3 billion tons per year — never finds its way into anyone’s stomach. It can rot in the field, go bad during processing, spoil at the grocery store or get tossed in the garbage by the consumer. For food producers, processors and manufacturers with the foresight and ingenuity to tackle this problem, there is more than a cautionary tale here — there is real business opportunity.

Most of the world’s arable land is already in production, so avoiding food waste from farm to fork will be a lynchpin in meeting global food security challenges. And packaging has a key role to play as food exporting becomes ever more ubiquitous.

In the not-too-distant future, the center of gravity of world food demand will move from the U.S and Europe to the increasingly richer consumers in China and India in particular, and smart, lightweight packaging will have a key role in tapping those markets from abroad.

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