



# Food waste: much happening, much to do

The Save Food Packaging & Food Waste session at this year's Australian Institute of Packaging virtual conference, highlighted the inroads being made while stressing the scale of what needs to be done to achieve the goal to halve food waste by 2030. **Kim Berry** writes.

**THE** Save Food Packaging & Food Waste panel featured FIAL manager food sustainability Sam Oakden, Fight Food Waste CRC Reduce program leader Dr Karli Verghese, AIP executive director Nerida Kelton, and Natural Evolution managing director Krista Watkins.

FIAL manager food sustainability Sam Oakden highlighted that the generation of food waste is not evenly dispersed across the supply and consumption chain. Primary production accounts for 31 per cent, manufacturing 24 per cent and households 34 per cent.

While there is a social imperative for tackling food loss and waste – at least once a week, three in 10 food insecure Australians go a whole day without eating – there are bigger macro trends also demanding action. These include increasing global population, a growing middle class, increased urbanisation, climate risk to the food system and the goal to alleviate poverty.

Within the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, number 12 is

sustainable consumption and production, with one of its targets to halve global per capita food waste by 2030.

From a local context, Oakden outlined the critical steps in achieving that goal, including the feasibility study and investment strategy already underway. A voluntary commitment program can act as a vehicle to encourage collaboration throughout the

**ROUGHLY**  
**24%**  
**OF FOOD WASTE COMES FROM THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR.**

whole food value chain, provide new data and insights and also drive the pace and scale of change.

For Associate Professor Dr Karli Verghese, the last two years have been significant and

encouraging – from the formation of the Fight Food Waste CRC (Verghese is the program leader of its Reduce project) to having a portfolio of products up and running.

She outlined a range of research projects currently being undertaken, including Direct Commercialisation, a business-ready, digital, cloud-based food waste tool to assist industry reducing food loss and waste.

Verghese also spoke about the need to understand the perception and use of packaging by consumers.

This was reiterated by AIP executive director Nerida Kelton, who talked about the need to look at total life cycle assessment of the product and the packaging.

She spoke about the optimum pack design, which was a balance between under and over packing and negative or minimal environmental impact.

Kelton talked about the Save Food Packaging Design Project and how it looked at primary, secondary and tertiary supply chains and the five design goals

that cover product safety and integrity, convenience, inform and meet sustainability targets.

Krista Watkins spoke about how her business started with an idea and now encompasses four businesses and enviable growth.

Watkins discussed the trajectory of developing several businesses that focus on repurposing food that would otherwise go to waste. There is a design business Evolution Industries and three brand businesses – Natural Evolutions (baking products), Plantation Brew Co (alcohol) and Guthealth (functional nutrition).

She spoke about the challenges in developing products in entirely new market categories, educating consumers, and managing labour, energy and transport costs to ensure the end product is affordable let alone viable.

The result is a company very good at taking excess product and using innovative solutions to make a product to then bring to market.

Watkins said they always wanted their technology and learnings to help other horticultural industries, and that is now occurring.

The panel said several reports and lots of resources will be released in the next couple of months.

Kelton said conversations at all stages of the supply chain have to align and come closer together to deliver lasting solutions. \*

ABOVE: The Natural Evolutions' product range was developed in a bid to repurpose food otherwise destined for waste.