



While the issue of food miles illustrates the ridiculous over-production of carbon emissions in the way we distribute food in the world, the issue of food waste is a scandal that is too little regarded.

Every now and then an article crops up on the mainstream media pointing out the amount of food – particularly bread – that is thrown away by the average British household. In January even the Daily Mail was shocked by a report from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers that around half the food produced in the world never gets eaten.

The report, *Global Food – Waste Not Want Not*, said: “Today, we produce about four billion metric tonnes of food per annum. Yet due to poor practices in harvesting, storage and transportation, as well as market and consumer wastage, it is estimated that 30–50% (or 1.2–2 billion tonnes) of all food produced never reaches a human stomach. Furthermore, this figure does not reflect the fact that large amounts of land, energy, fertilisers and water have also been lost in the production of foodstuffs which simply end up as waste. This level of wastage is a tragedy that cannot continue if we are to succeed in the challenge of sustainably meeting our future food demands.”

As someone to whom the adage in the title was very much part of childhood homespun wisdom, I find the amount of food wasted beggars belief. As much as £1bn of the estimated £10bn-worth of food wasted in the UK each year is perfectly edible. And it's no good just blaming the supermarkets and buy-one-get-one-free deals. A great deal of the waste by households is down to just not thinking about food and its importance – particularly to someone who hasn't got any!

- The binning of large amount of unsold food is another matter. Sell-by dates and other over-zealous bits of legislation must shoulder some of the blame.

Which brings me to the admirable Feeding the 5000 campaign, which will be staging its highly effective free lunch events in Bristol and Manchester in June. The lunch consists of a hot vegetarian meal made with food that would otherwise have been wasted.

- One of the biggest issues in the environmental build sector is retrofit. A series of conferences and seminars will be taking place around the country this year following the opportunities presented by Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation. While strolling around the floor of Greenbuild Expo in Manchester I spotted a stand from my alma mater in nearby Salford (the university's logo now actually calls it the University of Salford Manchester, which is anathema to anyone who remembers the days of rivalry between the two cities – we used to call Manchester University 'Owen's College').

Salford is one of the academic institutions that have joined with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, professional bodies and big firms to form Retrofit 2050. Retrofit aims to facilitate the systemic retrofitting of urban areas between 2020 and – appropriately enough – 2050, in particular Greater Manchester and Cardiff/South East Wales. In essence it sounds like a kind of urban renewal with sustainability and long words.

Chris Stokes