

Food Waste in the Sharing Economy

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Why did we select this research?

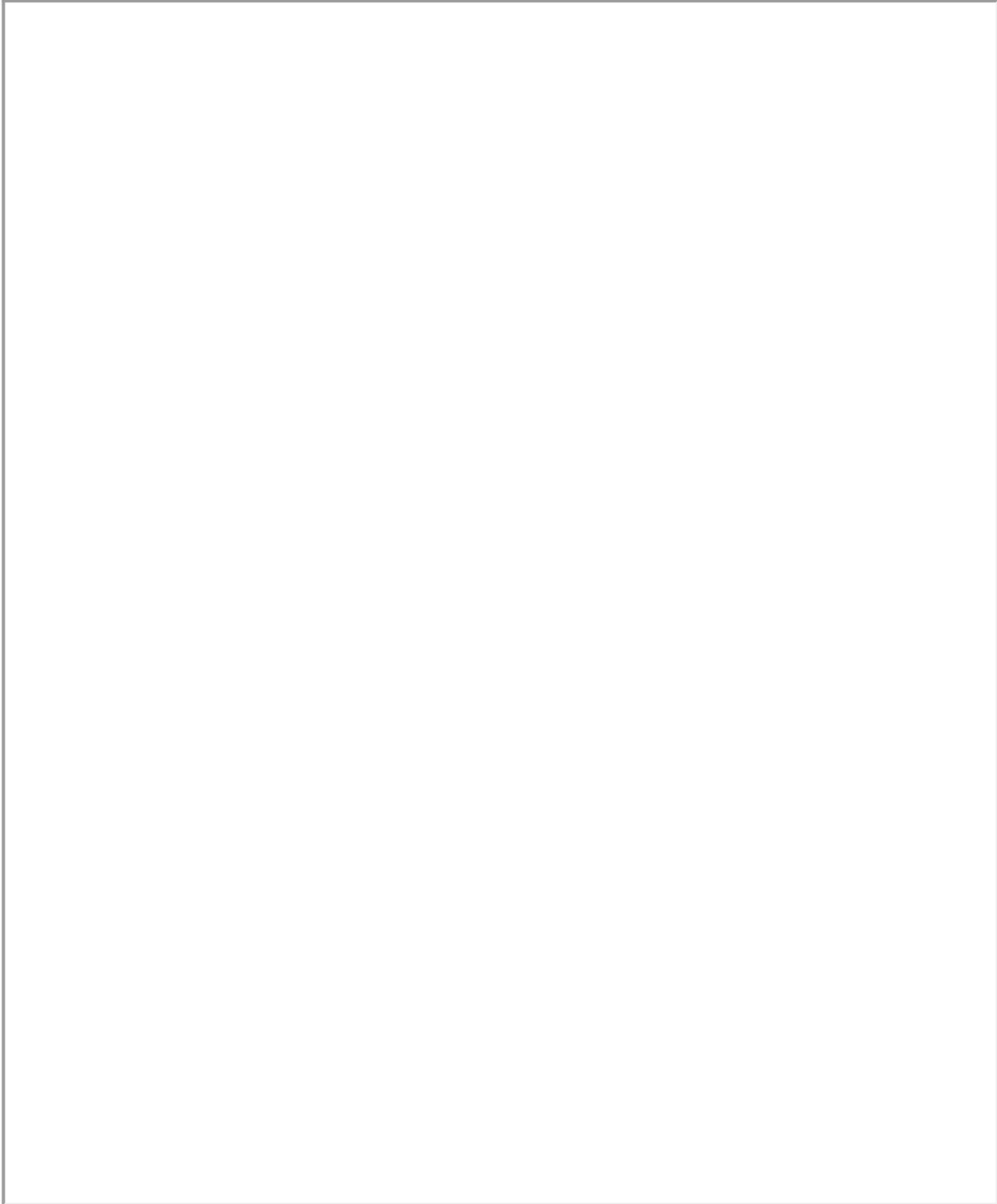
Wasting food is one of the rare problems that affect our ability to achieve economic goals in terms of food security, environmental sustainability, and farm-financial security. Most of the ideas proposed to this point involve either behavioral nudges or administrative regulations that are either too paternalistic or piecemeal to represent viable solutions. In the upstream stages of the food economy, commercial peer-to-peer mutualization systems (CPMSs), that seek to match farmers and distributors to consumers for fresh produce items, represent a potentially important market-based solution to more efficiently allocate food at higher levels of the food system by stimulating price realization for products that are edible, but contain defects in size, color, shape and size; the so-called market for “ugly food”.

Key findings

- Controlling for prices and the attributes of the items they are purchasing, consumer demand for deliveries through the Imperfect Produce website rise in the variety of items they offer.
- There may indeed be a market solution to an issue that has otherwise been regarded as largely intractable, resulting from behavioral errors by millions of agents in the economy, each with limited ability to solve the errors-in-planning that result in either surplus harvest, or food that perishes before it can be used.

In the case of Imperfect Produce, users of the food surplus website are attracted

by the variety of items on offer, and suppliers are attracted by the number of consumers on the site. If the fundamental economics of two-sided markets continues to work as we have shown here, then greater expansion of the concept beyond surplus harvest to leftover perishables from retail stores, household compost and restaurant-waste are indeed possibilities.



References

Richards, T. J., & Hamilton, S. F. (2018). Food waste in the sharing economy. *Food Policy*, 75, 109-123. Retrieved from:
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