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Agriculture.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Nutrition Service

Agency Information Collection

Activities: Proposed Collection; 60-Day Public Comment Request for the Study Classifying and Measuring Household Food Waste

AGENCY: United States Department of
Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition
Service (FNS) Center for Nutrition
Policy and Promotion (CNPP).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the
Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this
notice invites the general public and
other public agencies to comment on
this proposed information collection.
This collection is a new collection for
identifying and describing the sources
of food waste; identifying and
describing how much food waste can be
attributed to these different sources in
U.S. households overall and by food
category; identifying and describing
how estimates of food waste attributable
to each source, overall and by food
category, are associated with household
characteristics including household
income and per capita food-at-home
expenditure; identifying and describing
how estimates of food waste attributable
to each source, overall and by food
category, are associated with adherence
to best practices in minimizing
household food waste; identifying and
describing the minimum level of food
waste by source, overall, and by food
category, observable in a nationally
representative sample of U.S.
households; and using information
collected from objectives 1–5 to develop
updated food waste estimates and a
predictive model that estimates the
proportion of food waste at the
household level for varied household
types.

DATES: Written comments must be
received on or before March 24, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be sent to:
Michael Schwarz, Economist, Nutrition
and Economic Analysis Branch,
Nutrition Guidance and Analysis
Division, Center for Nutrition Policy
and Promotion, Food and Nutrition
Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture,
1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA
22314. Comments may also be

submitted via email to
michael.schwarz@usda.gov. Comments
will also be accepted through the
Federal eRulemaking Portal. Go to
<http://www.regulations.gov>, and follow
the online instructions for submitting
comments electronically.

All written comments will be open for
public inspection at the office of the
Food and Nutrition Service during
regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:00
p.m.), Monday through Friday at
Braddock Metro Center II, 1320
Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314.

All responses to this notice will be
summarized and included in the request
for Office of Management and Budget
approval. All comments will be a matter
of public record.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Requests for additional information or
copies of this information collected
should be directed to Michael Schwarz
by email at michael.schwarz@usda.gov
or by phone at (703) 605–4314.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Comments
are invited on (a) whether the proposed
collection of information is necessary
for the proper performance of the
functions of the agency, including
whether the information shall have
practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the
agency's estimate of the burden of the
proposed collection of information,
including the validity of the
methodology and assumptions that were
used; (c) ways to enhance the quality,
utility, and clarity of the information to
be collected; and (d) ways to minimize
the burden of the collection of
information on those who are to
respond, including use of appropriate
automated, electronic, mechanical, or
other technological collection
techniques or other forms of information
technology.

Title: Classifying and Measuring
Household Food Waste.

Form Number: Not Applicable.

OMB Number: Not Yet Assigned.

Expiration Date: Not Yet Determined.

Type of Request: New Collection.

Abstract: This is a new information
collection request. The Thrifty Food
Plan (TFP) outlines costs associated
with foods and beverages that can be
purchased on a limited budget to
support a healthy diet at home; the TFP
is the least costly of four nutritionally
balanced food plans developed by the
USDA. The average monthly TFP food
cost estimates for a standard four-person
household¹ are used to set maximum
monthly benefits for the Supplemental
Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

¹ One adult man aged 20–50, one adult woman
aged 20–50, one child aged 9–11 and one child aged
6–8.

Understanding the amount of food
wasted at the household level is an
integral part of the TFP because even
the thriftiest households generate some
food loss or waste.² This study aims to
provide data-driven estimates of the
amount of food waste households create
and the minimum level of food waste
generated by U.S. households (with a
focus on four-person households). This
study will use household surveys,
digital food waste diaries, wastebins
audits, and indepth interviews to
update estimates of household food
waste and develop a new predictive
model to estimate household food waste
for the foreseeable future. FNS has
identified six objectives for this study:
(1) Identify and describe the sources of
food waste, (2) identify and describe
how much food waste can be attributed
to these different sources in the U.S.
households overall and by food
category, (3) identify and describe how
estimates of food waste attributable to
each source, overall and by food
category, are associated with household
characteristics including household
income and per capita food-at-home
expenditure, (4) identify and describe
how estimates of food waste attributable
to each source, overall and by food
category, are associated with adherence
to best practices in minimizing
household food waste, (5) identify and
describe the minimum level of food
waste by source, overall, and by food
category, observable in a nationally
representative sample of U.S.
households, and (6) using information
collected from Objectives 1–5, develop
food waste estimates and a predictive
model to estimate the proportion of food
waste at the household level for varied
household types.

Affected Public: Members of the
public affected by the data collection are
individuals who live in the contiguous
U.S. and have a USPS mailing address.

Data collection: Recruitment materials
will be mailed to 12,600 sampled
households inviting them to participate
in the data collection. This mailing will
direct interested households to an
online consent form and pre-screening
questions to assess their eligibility to
participate. Recruited households may
receive up to three reminder mailings
and two phone calls. The study team
anticipates approximately 8 percent
(1,008 households) of the 12,600
households invited to participate will
complete the study consent form and
pre-screening questions. The study team

² Unavoidable food waste occurs at the household
level (though not at the fault of the household)
because of supply chain inefficiencies, such as
dairy spoiling prematurely because it was not
handled properly by retailers (Mercier, et al., 2017).

aims to enroll 900 households (89 percent) from among those completing the consent form and pre-screening questions to participate in data collection. Data collection will include a household survey of all 900 enrolled households, 12 weeks of digital food diaries per household (four 3-week long rounds, wastebin audits for a subset of up to 70 enrolled households, and indepth interviews with a subset of 80 enrolled households. Respondent groups identified for data collection include the 1,008 consented households that initially consent and, from that larger group, the 900 participating households that complete the household surveys and digital food diaries, the 70 households who participate in wastebin audits and the 80 households who participate in indepth interviews, and 11,592 nonrespondents.

Estimated Number of Respondents: The total estimated number of participants is 12,600; 11,592 of these households are estimated to be nonresponsive or be responsive to the consent but not fill out the initial household survey. Of the 12,600 contacted, 1,008 are estimated to be

responsive and of these responsive participants 900 are expected to fill out the household survey. Of these 900 households, 80 will also participate in indepth interviews and 70 will participate in waste bin audits. From the initial sample of 900 households completing the household survey, the study team assumes 70 percent will complete all three weeks of the first round of digital food diaries. For each subsequent data collection period, the team assumes 5 percent attrition (*i.e.*, 65 percent in the second round, 60 percent in the third round, 55 percent in the fourth round). Similarly, from the initial sample of 70 households completing the wastebin audits, the team assumes 5 percent attrition for each subsequent data collection period. The study team assumes they will successfully recruit the full target sample of 80 participants for the qualitative interview sample.

Estimated Number of Respondents: Of the 12,600 households contacted, 1,008 are estimated to be responsive and 11,469 are estimated to be nonresponsive.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 5.11 responses (24.72 for

responsive participants and 3.41 for nonresponsive participants).

Estimated Total Annual Responses: 64,443 responses (24,920 annual responses for responsive participants and 39,523 annual responses for nonresponsive participants).

Estimated Time per Response: 0.22 hours (0.46 for responsive participants and 0.073 for nonresponsive participants).

Estimated Time of Response: From 0.017 to 4.00 hours (1 minute to 240 minutes), depending on the activity, as shown in the burden table below, with an average estimated time of 0.22 hours (13 minutes) for all responses. The average estimated time is calculated by dividing the 14,365 estimated total hours for responses in the burden table below by the 65,443 total estimated responses.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 14,365 hours (11,469 for responsive participants and 2,896 for nonresponsive participants). See the burden table below for estimated total annual burden for each type of respondent by data collection activity including the non-responses.

Type of respondent	Responsive				Nonresponsive				Grand total annual burden estimate (hours)	Total annualized cost of respondent burden
	Number of respondents	Frequency of response	Total annual responses	Annual burden (hours)	Number of non-respondents	Frequency of response	Total annual responses	Annual burden (hours)		
Individuals living in the contiguous U.S. with a USPS address										
Sampled households	6,300	1	6,300	525.00	6,300	1	6,300	105.00	630.00	\$22,680.00
	1,008	1	1,008	252.00	11,592	1	11,592	1,932.00	2,184.00	78,624.00
	5,040	1	5,040	168.00	5,040	1	5,040	84.00	252.00	9,072.00
	3,528	1	3,528	117.60	5,292	1	5,292	88.20	205.80	7,408.80
	2,268	1	2,268	75.60	5,292	1	5,292	88.20	163.80	5,896.80
	2,520	1	2,520	210.00	3,780	1	3,780	189.00	399.00	14,364.00
Enrolled households	900	1	900	450.00	108	1	108	9.00	459.00	16,524.00
	450	1	450	337.50	450	1	450	37.50	375.00	13,500.00
	630	1	630	2,520.00	270	1	270	67.50	2,587.50	93,150.00
	585	1	585	2,340.00	315	1	315	78.75	2,418.75	87,075.00
	540	1	540	2,160.00	360	1	360	90.00	2,250.00	81,000.00
	495	1	495	1,980.00	405	1	405	101.25	2,081.25	74,925.00
	80	1	80	6.67	40	1	40	2.00	8.67	312.00
	80	1	80	80.00	.....	1	.....	.....	80.00	2,880.00
Enrolled households selected for wastebin audit	250	1	250	62.50	125	1	125	10.42	72.92	2,625.00
	100	1	100	75.00	.....	1	.....	.....	75.00	2,700.00
	64	1	64	48.00	36	1	36	3.00	51.00	1,836.00
	58	1	58	43.50	42	1	42	3.50	47.00	1,692.00
	54	1	54	40.50	46	1	46	3.83	44.33	1,596.00
	Households total	1,008	24.75	24,950	11,492	11,592	3.41	39,493	2,893	14,385

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