# Earth & Wheat exposes hidden waste crisis in UK bakery sector with 600 tonnes rescued



Earth & Wheat has significantly highlighted an ongoing issue within the UK bakery sector concerning the wastage of bread deemed ‘too ugly’ to sell. Founded four years ago by James Eid, this subscription service seeks to rescue imperfect baked goods that would otherwise be discarded. Eid asserts that the bakery industry's tendency to reject products based solely on aesthetics represents one of its major blind spots, contributing to an ongoing "hidden waste crisis."

Since its inception, Earth & Wheat has focused on redistributing these ‘wonky’ items from independent bakeries, beginning with surplus products from Eid's family business, Signature Flatbreads. Now, five years later, he aims to raise awareness about the significant waste produced in bakeries before most products even reach store shelves. This issue is compounded by a consumer demand for perfection; products that might be safe and edible—such as pitta breads that are slightly undersized or crumpets with minor bubbles—are often rejected.

Eid states, “Despite being fresh and fully safe to eat, thousands of bakery items are discarded each day for failing to meet strict visual standards imposed by retailers.” According to Earth & Wheat, their efforts have rescued over 600 tonnes of food from waste and provided more than 300,000 meals to food banks. However, it’s estimated that millions of tonnes of bread still end up in landfill, where it contributes to harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) reports that baked goods are among the most commonly wasted food products in the UK, with approximately 900,000 tonnes discarded annually. Though a portion of this waste arises from consumer behaviour and supermarket overproduction, a troubling amount occurs before the bread even leaves the bakery. Eid describes the fate of surplus bread: “Bread that doesn’t meet cosmetic specifications and isn’t rescued typically ends up in low-value or waste streams such as animal feed, through composting or anaerobic digestion. The waste ultimately contributes significantly to climate change.”

Eid advocates for a new approach in the bakery sector, emphasising that sustainability should be a top priority. He envisions that measures to reduce upstream waste will evolve into a critical aspect of business strategy. He adds, “Earth & Wheat’s model isn’t just about saving bread—it’s about changing how bakeries and food producers think about surplus.”

In concurrent discussions about bread waste, experts highlight the broader context of the UK's food waste challenges. Recent studies show that up to 32% of the bread purchased by UK households is wasted, amounting to 680,000 tonnes of "avoidable" bakery waste each year, costing British consumers £1.1 billion. Factors contributing to this alarming statistic include overproduction, consumer purchasing habits, and a misplaced assurance of freshness.

The scope of the problem extends beyond bakery waste as well, with approximately 20 million slices of bread thrown away daily, equating to hundreds of thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions. Campaigns such as ‘Use Your Loaf’ are striving to mitigate this issue, encouraging consumers to improve their purchasing and storage practices to reduce waste.

In light of these challenges, Earth & Wheat's commitment to changing consumer perceptions about the aesthetic qualities of bread could play a vital role in reshaping the bakery industry's waste management. By promoting the idea that imperfection can be beautiful, Eid and his company are challenging ingrained habits and perceptions—both in bakeries and among consumers—essential for reducing waste and promoting sustainability within the food system.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://grocerytrader.co.uk/four-years-on-earth-wheat-highlights-hidden-waste-crisis-in-uk-bread-supply-chain/), [[3]](https://butterandcrust.com/blogs/the-crumb-edit/the-uks-bread-waste-problem-how-to-fix-it)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://grocerytrader.co.uk/four-years-on-earth-wheat-highlights-hidden-waste-crisis-in-uk-bread-supply-chain/), [[2]](https://www.mybox.earthandwheat.com/post/the-environmental-impact-of-bread-waste-why-every-slice-matters)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-17353707), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/22/one-in-five-uk-households-dump-a-loaf-of-bread-in-the-bin-survey-reveals)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/food/2019/jan/29/campaign-launched-to-curb-the-waste-of-12bn-uk-bread-crusts), [[7]](https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/tackling-food-waste.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://grocerytrader.co.uk/four-years-on-earth-wheat-highlights-hidden-waste-crisis-in-uk-bread-supply-chain/), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/food/2019/jan/29/campaign-launched-to-curb-the-waste-of-12bn-uk-bread-crusts)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://grocerytrader.co.uk/four-years-on-earth-wheat-highlights-hidden-waste-crisis-in-uk-bread-supply-chain/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.mybox.earthandwheat.com/post/the-environmental-impact-of-bread-waste-why-every-slice-matters> - Earth & Wheat discusses the environmental impact of bread waste in the UK, highlighting that 12.8 million tonnes of food are wasted annually, with bread being a significant contributor. The company rescues surplus and 'wonky' bread, saving over 600 tonnes from waste and donating more than 300,000 meals to food banks. They emphasize the importance of reducing food waste to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and resource depletion.
3. <https://butterandcrust.com/blogs/the-crumb-edit/the-uks-bread-waste-problem-how-to-fix-it> - Butter & Crust addresses the UK's bread waste crisis, noting that approximately 20 million slices of bread are discarded daily, leading to 292,000 tonnes of waste annually and generating about 584,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions. The article explores causes such as overproduction and consumer habits, and suggests solutions like repurposing stale bread and freezing it to reduce waste.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-17353707> - BBC News reports that 32% of bread purchased by UK households is discarded, amounting to 680,000 tonnes of 'avoidable' bakery waste each year, costing £1.1 billion. The article discusses factors contributing to this waste, including overproduction, consumer habits, and the perception of freshness, and highlights the environmental impact of bread waste.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/22/one-in-five-uk-households-dump-a-loaf-of-bread-in-the-bin-survey-reveals> - The Guardian reveals that nearly one in five UK households admit to discarding an entire loaf of bread before opening it, with 24 million slices thrown away daily. The article discusses the 'Use Your Loaf' campaign aimed at raising awareness and encouraging consumers to reduce bread waste through better planning and storage.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2019/jan/29/campaign-launched-to-curb-the-waste-of-12bn-uk-bread-crusts> - The Guardian reports on a campaign launched to reduce the waste of 1.2 billion edible bread crusts annually in the UK. The initiative includes workshops and recipes to help consumers repurpose leftover bread, aiming to shift the culture of discarding crusts and reduce food waste.
7. <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/tackling-food-waste.html> - The British Dietetic Association discusses the global and UK food waste situation, highlighting that 74% of households cite food costs as a concern. It notes that globally, food production accounts for up to 37% of greenhouse gas emissions, with up to 40% of food being wasted. In the UK, over 70% of food waste comes from households, equating to over £14 billion annually and 25 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.