



Food Loss and Waste: An Economist's Perspective

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Goals of My Research Program Related to FLW

1. Develop an understanding of when it might be rational, or even optimal, for consumers to waste food
 - ▶ Most economists will argue that some amount of food waste is optimal
2. Quantify the trade-offs involved in consumers' food waste decisions
3. Identify FLW policies and/or reduction strategies that are palatable to consumers

Summary of Research Findings to Date

- ▶ Most consumers do *not* want to waste food, but there are conditions in which they are willing to incur it. For example, when:
 - ▶ There is not enough food leftover for a full portion
 - ▶ Food is inexpensive
 - ▶ Food is from a restaurant (vs. at home)
 - ▶ There are food safety concerns
 - ▶ More shopping trips are required
- ▶ In these instances, economists would argue that the costs of avoiding waste outweigh the benefits...
 - ▶ BUT consumers often only consider private costs/benefits (ignoring societal level)

Consider the following two shopping routines for purchasing your groceries next week:

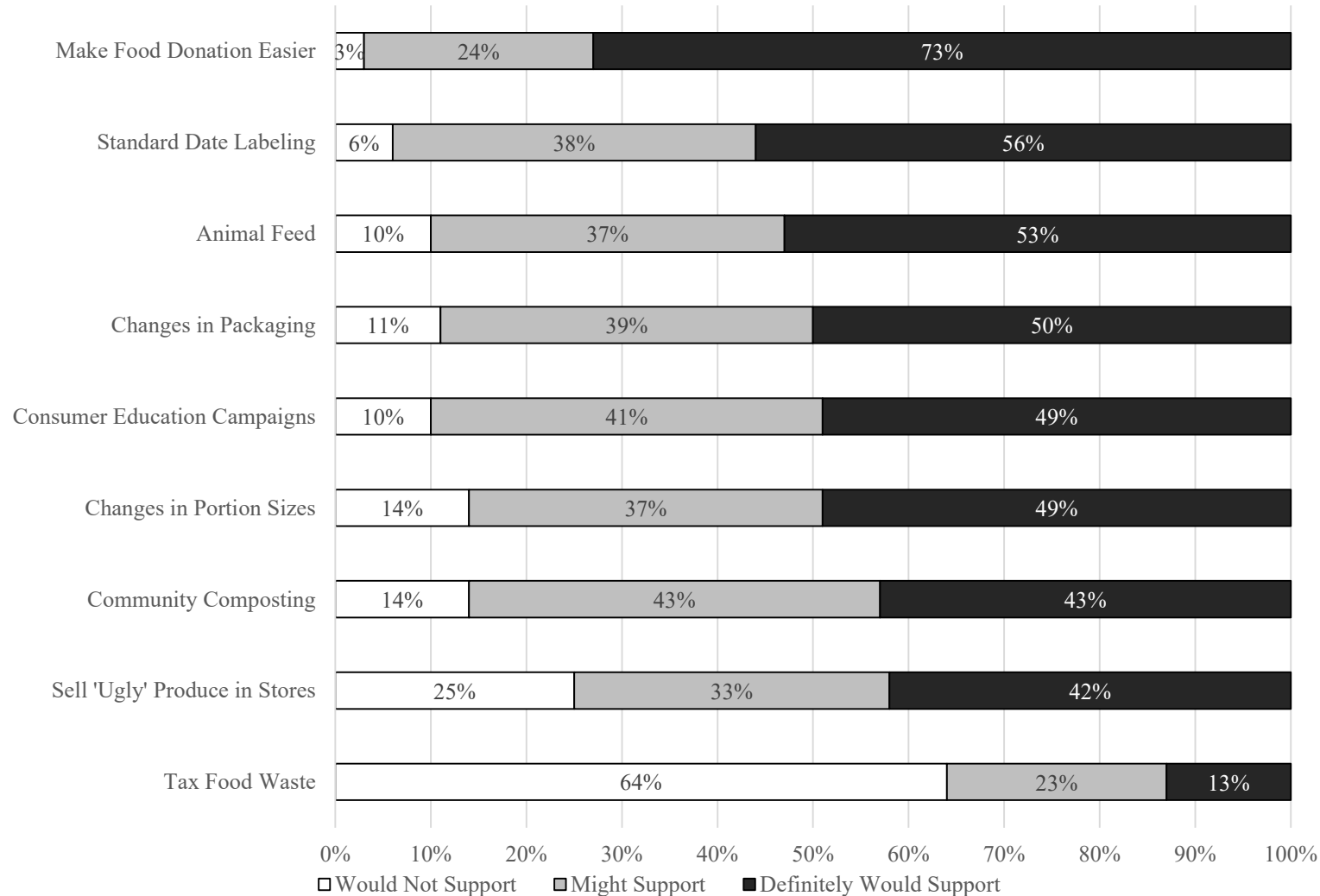
		Shopping Routine A	Shopping Routine B
Number of Shopping Trips		3 trips	1 trip
Likelihood of an Extra Shopping Trip		Not Very Likely (25% chance)	Not Very Likely (25% chance)
Amount of Food Eaten and Uneaten		90% of food eaten 10% of food uneaten	70% of food eaten 30% of food uneaten
Dollars Spent (The type and amount of food you buy stays the same)		\$80	\$80

Which of the two shopping routines would you prefer?

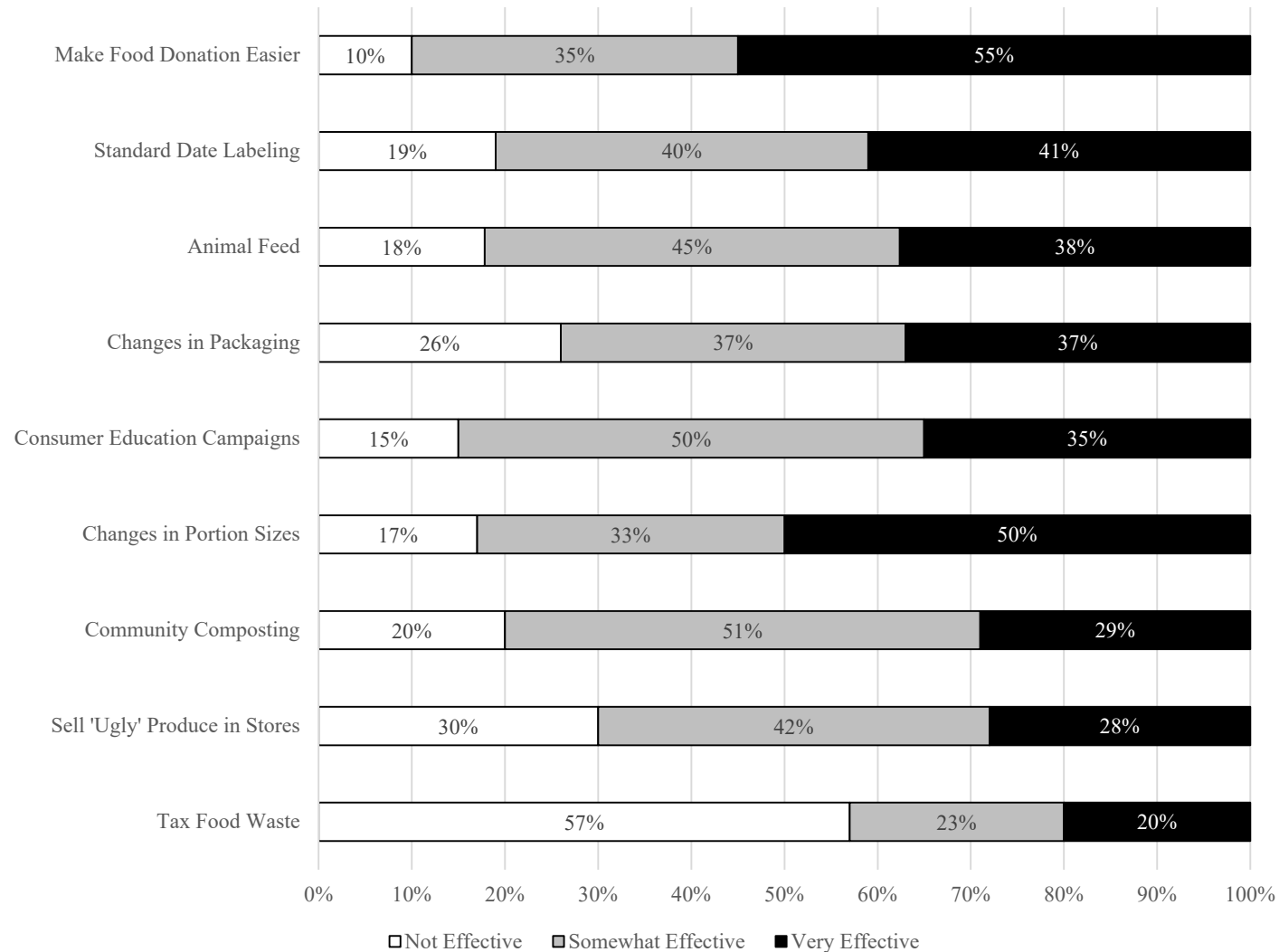
- ☐ Shopping Routine A
- ☐ Shopping Routine B

The average consumer would need to see approximately a **12 percentage point reduction** in food waste before they are willing to take one extra trip to the store.

Which policy options are palatable to consumers? (Would Support)



Which policy options are palatable to consumers? (Believe Effective)



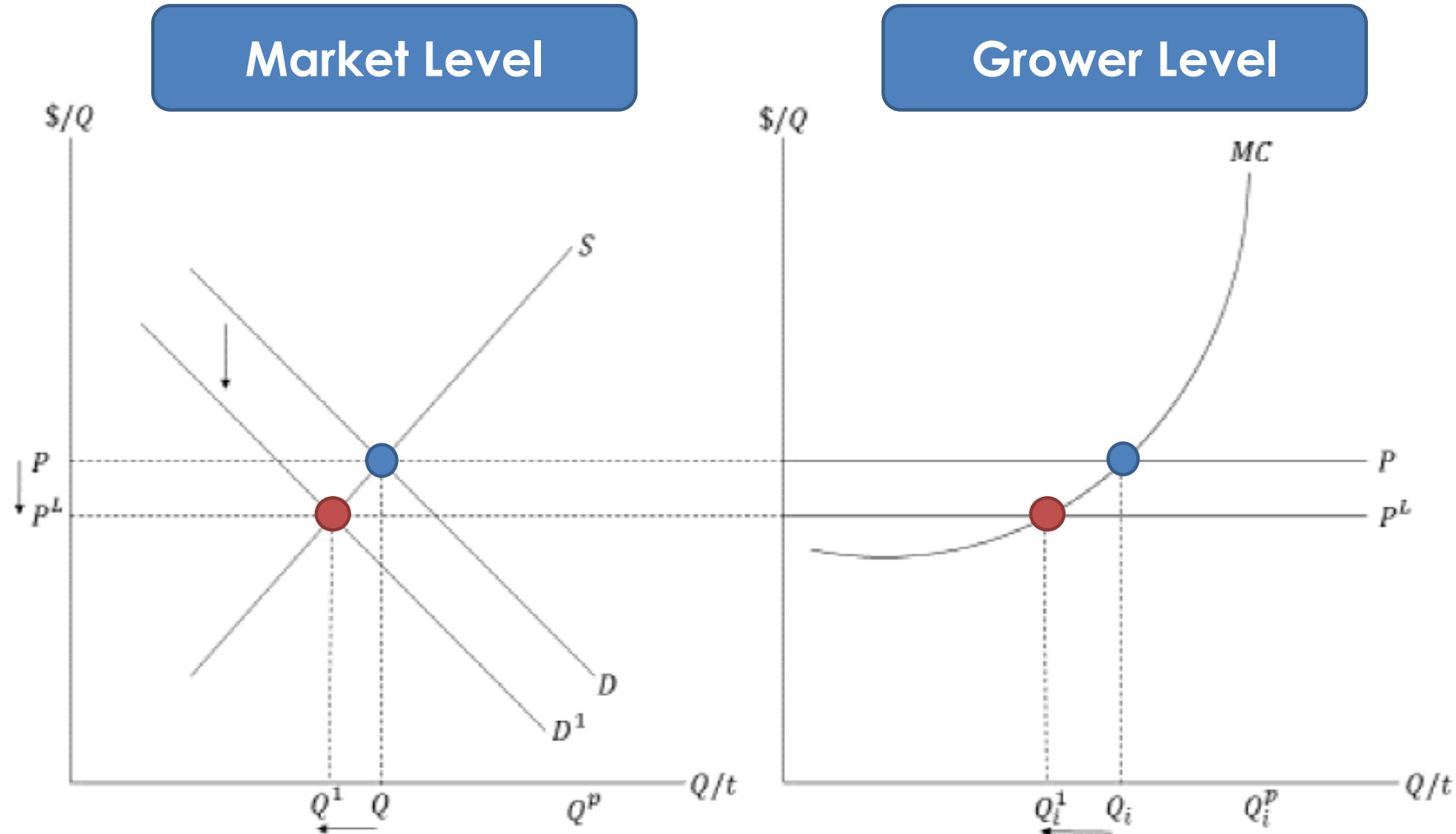
Questions to Consider Going Forward

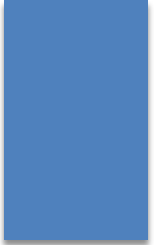
- ▶ We know waste is high in households. Which tools should we use to target waste?
 - ▶ What are the costs and benefits (private AND social) of our tool options?
 - ▶ Are there unintended consequences or spillover effects that need to be considered?
 - ▶ How is the larger supply chain impacted?

These questions should be considered for **ALL** FLW reduction strategies in the supply chain

Example: Education Campaigns Reduce Household FLW

(Source: Minor & Kuchler, 2019)





Thank you!
Questions?
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