

# Regulating Food Waste in the City

Problematizing municipal organic recycling initiatives in Cape Town, South Africa

Dr Suzall Timm

7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Food Studies, Rome, Italy

27 October 2017



**FOOD POLITICS & CULTURES PROJECT**

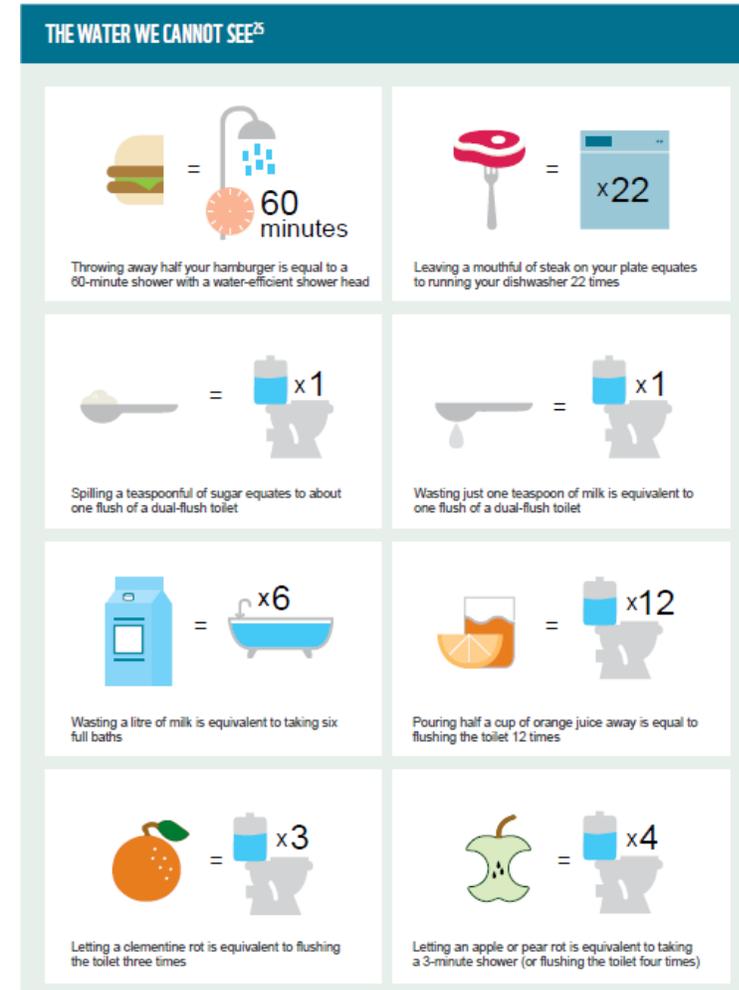
An Observatory & Knowledge Commons through Text, Creativity & Action

# City of Cape Town



# Background of Food Waste in South Africa

- Approximately 10 million tonnes of food waste goes to waste every year in South Africa (WWF, 2017)
- 96% of food wastage occur at pre-consumer level and 5% occur at post-consumer level (Oelofse and Nahman, 2013)



# Regulating Food Waste

- South Africa does not have specific food waste legislation
- Food waste is controlled by legislation that covers waste management
- Key waste management legislation
  - The National Environmental Management: Waste Act 59 of 2008
  - National Environmental Management: Waste Amendment Act 26 of 2014
  - National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS)
- Municipal government is the key regulatory agent of solid waste management - co-ordinating, implementing, incentivising and monitoring the minimisation and diversion of food waste from landfill

# Overview of waste management landscape

- The City of Cape Town – most effective and innovative waste management practices in South Africa
- Main responsibility: the collection and disposal of waste, area cleaning, preventing waste and pollution, and minimising waste in Cape Town. This includes the following:
  - Cleansing
  - Planning
  - Waste disposal activities
  - Collections – refuse collection section and drop-off section

# City of Cape Town Waste Management Regulation

<b>Who regulates? /Key regulators of waste management practices</b>	<b>City of Cape Town</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Solid waste management</li><li>- Waste minimisation unit</li><li>- Law enforcement units – for e.g. Copperheads</li></ul>
What is regulated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) regulate and control waste management</li><li>b) to reduce generation and environmental impact of waste</li><li>c) to ensure access to services from legitimate waste management service providers</li><li>d) to regulate waste generation, cleaning, separation, storage, collection, processing, treatment, recycling, re-use and disposal of waste</li></ul>
How is it regulated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Bylaws, policies, standards – Integrated waste management policy, integrated waste management bylaw</li><li>b) Waste management infrastructure – landfills, composting facilities, drop-off centres, material recovery facilities</li><li>c) Public-private partnerships</li><li>d) Incentives</li></ul>

# Home Composting Programme



- Phase one of the initiative took place in April 2016
- Aim: help residents deal with organic household waste and to create a good compost system
- Home composting enables residents to compost food waste (fruit and vegetables waste, eggshells, teabags etc.)
- 5000 free home composting bins were issued to homeowners on first come first serve basis
- Applications process involved the following: adhering to the qualifying criteria – be a home owner of a single residence or a tenant of a single residence, property needs to include a secure garden
- February to June 2017 – another 5100 residents received free composting containers in suburbs like Mitchells Plain, Khayelitsha, Philippi, Manenberg, Gugulethu, Kuils River and Delft etc.

# Some preliminary reflections on home composting programme

- Met by lots of enthusiasm from Cape Town residents
- Advertising home composting as an integral part of green living and eco-friendly living
- ‘rosy reception’ – residents who were eager to participate in this project – have previously benefited from waste minimisation initiatives in the city
- Inaccessible to majority of Cape Town residents - Informal households in various parts of Cape Town not able to participate

# Conceptions of Food Waste

- Food waste only becomes valuable for community and environment if it is regulated – if it falls outside this scope it is considered as ‘unwanted or unusable and has no value
- Zero waste logic that underlies the organic recycling initiatives is yet another way of ‘managing the problem’ through diverting waste from landfills
- Municipal conceptions of food waste appeals to green living and does not address issues of consumption
- A fundamental shift in thinking about food waste regulation at municipal level is required

**Thank You**