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Computers combat food waste mountains

New software system for commercial kitchens allows firms to track how much food is being wasted and identify areas for savings

Danny Bradbury, *BusinessGreen* 04 Dec 2008

As wholesale food prices rise even more sharply than consumer ones, some companies are seeking to save money by cutting food waste.

Portland, Oregon-based [LeanPath](#) is battling the problem of commercial food waste by offering large food producers a software and service combination to help them tighten their belts and waste less food during preparation.

The firm's ValuWaste system includes a scale – the ValuTracker – with a touchscreen terminal. Workers in high-volume food industries such as casinos, cruise ships and educational establishments can weigh any food that they discard and select the type of food and the container it is in using the terminal.

The customisable solution then generates a report for managers detailing information such as how much food was discarded on a per-day and per-employee basis.

LeanPath chief executive Andrew Shakman said that the system would help managers in large kitchens and canteens ensure that food waste-reduction policies are followed. "Even in operations with the most talented culinary leaders, you can have great policies but still have broad deviations," he explained.

Based on the information gathered, LeanPath offers training for its customers, including incentives for employees and the creation of employee teams to encourage front-line food workers not to subvert the system by secretly not using the scale.

The combined software and service saves an average of three per cent of food purchase costs by cutting waste, according to Shakman.

He added that consequently any large firm with food purchase costs of \$500,000 (£344,000) or more could generate a significant return on investment from the product.

"There's a classic french culinary saying that you use everything on the pig including the squeal," Shakman said, adding that the software helps large culinary operations ensure that waste reducing best practices are adhered to.

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