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What We Think

Food waste – a supermarket rip off

Revelations about food waste in Britain have sparked new attacks on ordinary people. Tesco wasted nearly 30,000 tonnes of food in the first half of this year. Some have concluded that we have too much “cheap” food and that bosses should charge more. In reality food prices have shot up faster than inflation. And official figures show that half the waste happens in supermarkets and warehouses—not in homes. The real problem lies with big supermarkets whose prime concern is profit. Firms compete with each other to grab as much of the market as possible. They produce more than they need in the hope of undercutting competitors, then scramble to sell as much as possible at a profit.

So they create deals designed to sell us things we don't need by fooling us into thinking we'll save money in the long term.

These “buy one, get one free” (Bogof) offers shift goods. They still make money because the goods are overpriced. The problem isn't cheap food. It's a food industry driven by profit.

Supermarkets could simply slash prices in half instead of using Bogof offers. They prefer to manipulate us to buy what we don't need—then blame us for wasting it.

As long as we live in a world based on overproduction and competition there will always be waste—and scapegoating of ordinary people for it.

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