Press release from the University of Bedfordshire

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Bedfordshire's Business School given funding to tackle food waste across Europe

The University of Bedfordshire's Business School is leading European efforts to tackle food waste by gaining funding for an innovative new project that uses technology to improve food supply chains.

Currently 88 million tonnes of food are wasted a year in Europe, and of that 88 million tonnes approximately a third has rotted, or become otherwise inedible while in transit. Fruit, vegetables, meat and fish are all lost in vast quantities on the roads of Europe heading from the farms to the supermarkets, which not only costs money but also increases CO_2 emissions.

The 'REAMIT' project, which is coordinated by the University of Bedfordshire, is funded by the Interreg North West Europe (NWE) programme and aims to reduce food waste in NWE by adapting and applying existing Internet of Things and Big Data technologies to food supply chains.

REAMIT will focus on fruits, vegetables, meat and fish as these are often wasted in large quantities. Sensors fitted to the inside of trucks and in other locations in the food supply chains, backed up by supporting technology, will be able to determine if food is in danger of rotting, allowing the driver to divert to a supermarket or foodbank closer to them than their planned destination.

The project, which will take place over three and a half years, is supported by six universities, five SMEs and a large food logistics provider, and will be carried out in Ireland, Germany, France, UK and the Netherlands due to the amount of interconnected food supply chains and huge food waste in these countries.

Professor Ram Ramanathan, Director of the Business & Management Research Institute (BMRI) at the University of Bedfordshire, and REAMIT project leader, said: "We are excited about implementing this project, which will bring a real difference in saving food waste.

"It is hoped the project will prevent the loss of 1.8 million tonnes of food a year in North-Western Europe and avoid 5.5 million tonnes a year of unnecessary CO_2 emissions. Once the project is complete and the technology has been tested, our plan is to roll out the detection system more widely and reduce the amount of food waste over the long term.

"Since significant resources such as energy, water, labour, and fertilisers are needed in producing food, saving food waste helps improve sustainability, which resonates with the fundamental values of the University of Bedfordshire."

Dr Tahmina Ajmal, Senior Lecturer in Engineering, at the University of Bedfordshire, has been Engineering involved in developing the new sensors and serves as technology expert on REAMIT. Dr Ajmal said: "Sensors and related digital technology has progressed so much in the past decade, now is the time to look for new applications to bring their benefit to our daily life."

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Notes to editors:

The full name of the project is "Improving Resource Efficiency of Agribusiness supply chains by Minimising waste using Big Data and Internet of Things sensors" or REAMIT. It began in January 2019.

 The six universities involved in the REAMIT project are:

University of Bedfordshire, UK
Nottingham Trent University, UK
Ulster University, UK
University College Dublin, Ireland
The Institute of Technology in Tralee, Ireland
Université de Nantes, France

More details are available in the project website: www.nweurope.eu/reamit.

To arrange an interview with Prof Ram Ramanathan or Dr Tahmina Ajmal, please contact the University of Bedfordshire press office on 01582 743373.

Find out more about our latest news & events: www.beds.ac.uk/news

Did you know?

- More than 92 per cent of our graduates are either in work and/or further study (Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education 2013).
- We are continually investing in industry-standard teaching and learning facilities.
- We have won the Queen's Award for Enterprise: International Trade 2011.

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