Improving Shelf Availability and Reducing Food Loss in Guatemala

Product availability and food loss prevention are closely connected priorities for retailers and suppliers. Two studies presented in 2026 offer complementary evidence to guide collaboration in Guatemala: GS1 Guatemala's 22nd On-Shelf Availability Study (FMG) and the Fifth Retail Food Loss Study, developed jointly with WWF Mesoamerica.

Together, their findings support an ECR agenda focused on meeting consumer needs while improving inventory management and preventing avoidable losses.

Understanding availability through the consumer's experience

The 2026 FMG study comprised 179,796 measurements across 817 brands, collected through 259 visits to 97 stores belonging to six participating chains. It covered food, beverages, personal care and household care products.

On-shelf availability reached 93.56%. Out-of-stock products accounted for 5.43%, while delisted products, classified as VOID, represented 1.01%. General supply issues contributed 1.77 percentage points to the out-of-stock result, followed by shelf management at 1.52 percentage points.

These findings highlight opportunities to coordinate deliveries, inventory accuracy and replenishment. Products recorded in inventory or held in storage must reach the shelf to serve consumers.

The accompanying consumer survey illustrates the commercial consequences: when a product is unavailable, 54% of respondents look elsewhere, 24% switch brands and 22% abandon the purchase.

Identifying opportunities to prevent food loss

Published in 2026, the Fifth Retail Food Loss Study analysed 2025 data from two supermarket chains operating approximately 500 outlets across Guatemala's 22 departments.

Reported food loss represented 0.62% of sales value, compared with 1.32% in 2024—a decrease of 0.70 percentage points within the study's scope.

Fruit and vegetables accounted for 33.22% of recorded losses, followed by meat at 23.96% and dry groceries at 21.80%. This concentration supports prioritising interventions by category, including purchasing decisions, stock rotation, handling and storage.

However, 50% of recorded losses lacked an identified cause because one participating chain did not provide this information. Improving incident recording and traceability is therefore essential to establish targeted corrective actions.

Regional differences also warrant closer investigation. Supply distances, cold-chain infrastructure and local consumption patterns may influence results and should inform locally tailored prevention plans. Partnerships with food banks can complement these efforts by rescuing products that remain suitable for consumption.

Turning evidence into coordinated action

For the ECR community, the opportunity is to translate measurements into shared action. Retailers and suppliers can exchange information, validate underlying causes and agree on interventions by category and store, with clear responsibilities, deadlines and comparable performance measures.

The studies cover different periods, samples and calculation bases, so their indicators should be interpreted as complementary perspectives. Used together, they can guide better decisions about ordering, replenishment and loss prevention, helping products fulfil their purpose while protecting resources and retail performance.

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