

Students turn food into non-perishable powder

By: , Smithsonianmag.com

Next time you toss rotten lettuce or moldy berries you should think about this. Globally, we waste more than a third of the food we produce. That is according to the Food and Agriculture Organization.

A group of Swedish graduate students is working to fight that fact. They are in the Food Innovation and Product Design program at Lund University and have come up with a way to use produce that is about to go to waste. It may help people who have limited access to food.

They are calling it FoPo Food Powder. It is exactly what it sounds like. It is dried, powdered, shelf-stable fruits and vegetables. The powder can be dropped into relief efforts after natural disasters. Or it can be given out in low-resource areas where fresh food and refrigeration are hard to come by.

"When we found out that one third of the food produced was going to waste while people in the world were starving, we could not back out," says Kent Ngo. He is one of the students who developed it.

Ngo says they are not making something ground-breaking. Powdered food has been around since the early days of astronauts. But they are rethinking the waste and delivery channels. Their development team reached out to farmers and retailers to source fruit. The food scientists experimented with different drying and powdering methods. They settled on spray-drying it. The process then included grinding it up. From there, the students looked at ways to give it out, through commercial and government supported sites.