

Expiration law may cut food waste

By Tara Duggan, San Francisco Chronicle

Food waste is a hot topic quickly moving into the political mainstream, largely because it touches so many issues at once – the environment, hunger, household budgets and the overall economy.

Now, proposed legislation from Assemblyman David Chiu, D-San Francisco, aims to address the issue by changing one simple but crucial thing: the expiration dates on food.

As of now, shoppers see myriad versions of expiration dates indicated on packages of food, be it fresh ground beef or a can of chili. Common verbiage includes “best by,” “freshest by,” “sell by” or any number of other similar phrases.

With the exception of infant formula, none of these dates is federally regulated, and all are determined by the manufacturer. In the majority of cases, the dates indicate the manufacturer’s best guess as to when product is at best quality – and don’t have anything to do with safety, even with that suspect carton of milk.

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