



ZERO FOOD WASTE: ZERO HUNGER

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Abstract:

This paper provides a look at the facts regarding world hunger. There are millions of people in this world who live everyday without food. But if wastage of food is prevented, a lot of food can be saved which can be provided to many hungry people. 'Zero Hunger' is a project taken up by the United Nations to stop world hunger.

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Introduction:

When we scrape off our dishes after a large meal, too full to finish the remaining scraps on our plate, we rarely pause and think about the significance of our action. It seems routine to us: if we have leftover food scraps that are unfit for eating, shouldn't they be thrown in the garbage? Our routine practices, unfortunately, make it difficult for us to conceptualize the magnitude of global food waste. The problem is bigger than we think.

According to a recent report by UNEP and the World Resources Institute (WRI), about one-third of all food produced worldwide, worth around US\$1 trillion, gets lost or wasted in food production and consumption systems. When this figure is converted to calories, this means that about 1 in 4 calories intended for consumption is never actually eaten. In a world full of hunger, volatile food prices, and social unrest, these statistics are more than just shocking: they are environmentally, morally and economically outrageous.

Let's start with some basic statistics about food waste in North America and around the world.

Worldwide Food Waste Facts:

- Every year, consumers in industrialized countries waste almost as much food as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (222 million vs. 230 million tons)





- The amount of food lost and wasted every year is equal to more than half of the world's annual cereals crops (2.3 billion tons in 2009/10)

North American Food Waste Facts

- In the USA, organic waste is the second highest component of landfills, which are the largest source of methane emissions
- In the USA, 30-40% of the food supply is wasted, equaling more than 20 pounds of food per person per month.

Today, the world produces more than enough food for everyone, yet 870 million people are undernourished. Meanwhile, one third of all food produced is never eaten. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, approximately 1.3 billion tons is wasted each year.

That is why the theme for this year's World Environment Day is "Think.Eat.Save". This campaign, spearheaded by FAO and UNEP, is directly in line with UN's Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge, which calls for zero loss or waste of food at all stages of the food chain, from farm to table.

- **Think.** Be a smart shopper and think about what you are buying and when it will be eaten. Wasting food is often a subconscious act – become aware of how much food you throw away. Plan meals and use shopping lists. Bring your leftovers home from restaurants in reusable containers.
- **Eat.** Become a more mindful eater. Eyes bigger than your stomach? Request smaller portions and become a leftovers guru.
- **Save.** Save your food, save your money and save the environment. Donate to food banks and become a conscious consumer.

Hunger can be eliminated in our lifetimes-

This requires comprehensive efforts to ensure that every man, woman and child enjoy their Right to Adequate Food; women are empowered; priority is given to family farming; and food systems everywhere are sustainable and resilient.

At the June 2012 Rio+20 conference, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon unveiled a new plan to tackle food security challenges and ensure access to nutritious food by all.





Inspired by the Fome Zero initiative, which has helped ensure a food and nutrition secure future for millions of Brazilians, Secretary-General Ban launched the UN Zero Hunger Challenge, which calls upon the participation of all people in order to eliminate hunger and malnutrition.

The challenge of Zero Hunger means:

- Zero stunted children less than 2 years
- 100% access to adequate food all year round
- All food systems are sustainable
- 100% increase in smallholder productivity and income
- Zero loss or waste of food

Eliminating hunger involves investments in agriculture, rural development, decent work, social protection and equality of opportunity. It will make a major contribution to peace and stability and to the reduction of poverty. It will contribute to better nutrition for all – especially women from the beginning of pregnancy and children under the age of two.

Zero stunted children less than 2 years-

Ensuring universal access to nutritious food in the 1000-day window of opportunity between the start of pregnancy and a child's second birthday, supported by nutrition-sensitive health care, water, sanitation, education and specific nutrition interventions, coupled with initiatives that enable empowerment of women, as encouraged within the Movement for Scaling Up Nutrition.

100% access to adequate food all year round -

Enabling all people to access the food they need at all times through nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems, marketing, decent and productive employment, a social protection floor, targeted safety nets and food assistance; boosting food supply from local producers; through open, fair and well-functioning markets and trade policies at local, regional and international level, preventing excessive food price volatility.

All food systems are sustainable -

Ensuring that all farmers, agribusinesses, cooperatives, governments, unions and civil society establish standards for sustainability; verifying their observance and being accountable for them; encouraging and rewarding





universal adoption of sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture practices; pursuing cross-sectoral policy coherence (encompassing energy, land use, water and climate); implementing responsible governance of land, fisheries and forests.

100% increase in smallholder productivity and income -

Reducing rural poverty and improving wellbeing through encouraging decent work, and increasing smallholders' income; empowering women, small farmers, fishers, pastoralists, young people, farmer organizations, indigenous people and their communities; supporting agricultural research and innovation; improving land tenure, access to assets and to natural resources, making sure that all investments in agriculture and value chains are responsible and accountable; developing multidimensional indicators for people's resilience and wellbeing.

Zero loss or waste of food -

Minimizing food losses during storage and transport, and waste of food by retailers and consumers; empowering consumer choice through appropriate labeling; commitments by producers, retailers and consumers within all nations; achieving progress through financial incentives, collective pledges, locally-relevant technologies and changed behavior.

Infrastructure and technology can reduce the amount of food that perishes after it is harvested and before it reaches the market. Manufacturers and retailers can minimize the amount of food wasted during processing and storage. Regulators can make sure that product expiry dates reflect the maximum shelf-life possible within the limits of food safety. And individuals can take a tip from a leaflet put out by the United States government in 1917: "Food – buy it with thought; cook it with care; serve just enough; use what is left".

Of course, we cannot end hunger solely by eliminating food waste. The Zero Hunger Challenge calls on all actors to scale up efforts to create a world where everyone can enjoy the right to food and have access to adequate nutrition all year round. It means ensuring an end to childhood stunting, and doubling the productivity and income of smallholders, who grow the vast majority of food in developing countries. It also means





building a world where all food systems are sustainable, particularly in the face of climatic and economic shocks.

This vision cannot be accomplished when we lose almost one-third of all the food we produce, and when resources are wasted in production and processing. When food goes uneaten and is spoiled, everything that went into its production is lost – from a farmer’s time and effort, to the fuel used to transport it to market, and the land and water used to grow it. Besides being an affront to the hungry, food waste is a drain on natural resources and damaging to the environment.

Global hunger and the environment are intricately linked. We must ensure that food systems do not damage the ecosystem services they depend on. Think.Eat.Save encourages us to become more aware of the environmental implications of our food choices and find ways to reduce our ecological “foodprint”. That requires us to think across all sectors. Global food production is the largest single source of greenhouse gases, biodiversity loss and land-use change. It occupies a quarter of habitable land and uses 70 per cent of freshwater -- our most precious resource – often very inefficiently. The consequences include groundwater depletion and the salinization of arable land. Reliance on nitrogen-based fertilizers pollutes lakes, rivers and the marine environment; monocultures and the widespread use of insecticides and herbicides threaten to disturb important ecological systems, such as pollination by bees.

This year’s World Environment Day Think. Eat.Save campaign encourages each of us to make a difference, individually and collectively. Governments, businesses, farmers, civil society, scientists and consumers all have an important role to play. The current global population of seven billion is expected to grow to nine billion by 2050. But the number of hungry people need not increase. By reducing food waste, we can save money, minimize environmental impacts and make food production more sustainable and resilient. Most importantly, we can move towards a world where everyone has enough to eat.





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