



Food fuels lives and livelihoods

Yet a striking 30% of food is estimated to be lost or wasted each year. This puts a great burden on our limited natural resources, such as land and water, has negative consequences for food security, and further strains the impacts of climate change.

Rural women play a crucial role in agricultural production and food systems, yet they often face significant challenges. In turn, they are also disproportionately affected by the social, economic and environmental impacts of food loss and waste such as food insecurity, economic loss, and increased vulnerability to climate change.

By understanding and reducing food loss and waste, we can tackle its impacts on climate change, economic downfall and global issues of hunger and malnutrition.

Food Loss

Food loss occurs at any stage in the supply chain from farm to market, including harvesting, storage, and transport.

It results from various factors at each stage, such as environmental challenges affecting harvest, inadequate storage facilities that shorten produce shelf life, or poor trade infrastructure to efficiently move produce to markets, leading to waste.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that the equivalent of 931 million tonnes of food was lost in the supply chain between harvest reaching retail shelves in 2021 ([FAO, 2023](#)).

Addressing these challenges in the supply chain is essential to minimise food loss and its impact on food security to ensure sustainable food cycles that benefit everyone in the process.

Food Waste

Food waste refers to the amount of food that is unused after it reaches its destination in our stores, services and our homes.

In stores and services, waste is driven by limited shelf life, aesthetic standards, and unpredictable demand. At home, it results from poor meal planning, overbuying, misunderstanding labels, and improper storage.

In a recent global food waste report, the United Nations Environmental Programme estimated that a striking 1.05 billion tonnes of food was wasted in retail, food services and homes during 2022 ([UNEP, 2024](#)).

Addressing these issues at a consumption level can significantly cut down the impact that food waste contributes to climate change, putting less pressure on people, resources and the planet.

While an estimated 733 million people go hungry globally, food loss and waste generates 8 to 10 percent of global greenhouse gases that are fuelling the devastating impacts of climate change.

Addressing food waste at home

Food loss and waste impact food security, economy, and environment. They worsen food insecurity, waste money and resources, and contribute to climate change through methane emissions. Reducing food waste can improve food access, save money, and protect the planet.

Shop Kindly

Look out for foods that are irregularly shaped – they are often overlooked and wasted, but still taste the same. Planning meals ahead, writing a shopping list, and avoiding shopping when hungry can also help reduce your chances of buying more than you can use in time.

Smaller portions, longer meals

Cooking or dishing smaller portions makes it more likely for food to get finished. If you do have food leftover, store it in your fridge or freezer within 2 hours of cooking so that they can be used again.

Know your dates

“Best-before” dates indicate that the smell, texture and taste of a product is at its best quality before the date, but if stored correctly it can still be enjoyed after this. “Use-by” dates indicate that food is no longer safe to eat after the date has passed.

Effective Storage

Check the packaging of products to ensure your food is stored in the right place in your cupboard, fridge and freezer can help your food last longer. Regularly checking what you have, and using older food items before newly bought ones, can also help reduce waste.

All is not lost

Sometimes we end up with excess, but it does not need to go wasted. Research your area for initiatives to share extra food with others who may need it. If food has passed its shelf life, look for ways to compost it.



Want to know more? Join ACWW and join a global Association taking action for change!



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