

Food Waste Index Report 2024

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Context:

The Food Waste Index Report 2024 was released jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), a UK-based non-profit organisation, stressed the importance of expanding and strengthening data infrastructure to enable the tracking and monitoring of food waste.

Background:

Contrary to popular perception, food waste was not a 'rich country problem', the report stated, with observed average levels of household food waste for high-income, upper-middle, and lower-middle-income countries differing by just 7 kg per capita.

The Key Highlights of the Report:

1. In 2022, the world wasted 1.05 billion tonnes of food, amounting to one-fifth (19%) of food available to consumers being wasted, at the retail, food service, and household level. That is in addition to the 13% of the world's food lost in the supply chain, as estimated by FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization), from post-harvest up to and excluding retail.
2. Food loss and waste generate 8-10% of Global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions – almost five times the total emissions from the aviation sector. It occurs while a third of humanity faces food insecurity.
3. Since the release of the 2021 Food Waste Index Report, there has been a significant expansion in data coverage, resulting in a notable reduction in disparities in average per capita household food waste. Across high-income, upper-middle-income, and lower-middle-income countries, the observed average levels of household food waste differ by just 7 kg per capita per year.
4. Hotter countries appear to have more food waste per capita in households, potentially due to increased consumption of fresh foods with substantial inedible parts and lack of a robust cold chain. Higher seasonal temperatures, extreme heat events, and droughts make it more challenging to store, process, transport, and sell food safely, often leading to a significant volume of food being wasted or lost.
5. Middle-income countries display variations between urban and rural populations, with rural areas generally wasting less. Possible explanations include greater diversion of food scraps to pets, animal feed, and home composting in rural areas.
6. Many low- and middle-income countries continue to lack adequate systems for tracking progress to meet Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 of halving food waste by 2030, particularly in retail and food services. At present, only four G-20 countries (Australia, Japan, the UK, and the US) and the European Union have food waste estimates suitable for tracking progress to 2030.
7. Countries like India, Indonesia, and South Korea have only subnational estimates regarding food waste, highlighting a gap in comprehensive national data. The report suggests that this

variance necessitates more inclusive studies to capture a clearer picture of the food waste landscape.

Key Recommendations of the Food Waste Index Report 2024:

1. Encourage G20 countries to take a leading role in international cooperation and policy development to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.3, leveraging their influence on global consumer trends to promote awareness and education about food waste domestically and internationally.
2. Encourage the embrace of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to reduce food waste and its impacts on climate and water stress, bringing together governments, and regional and industry groups to collaborate and deliver a shared goal through a Target-Measure-Act approach.
3. Advocate for countries to use the Food Waste Index to consistently measure food waste, develop robust national baselines, and track progress towards SDG 12.3. This includes addressing the lack of comprehensive food waste data collection, especially in the retail and food service sectors.
4. Highlight the necessity for representative national food waste studies in key countries such as India, China, South Africa, Indonesia, and Mexico to address the variance in data and effectively tackle food waste at both individual and systemic levels.
5. There is a need to urge governments, cities, food businesses, and researchers to collaborate in efforts to reduce food waste, emphasising the importance of accurate measurement, innovative solutions, and collective action to achieve SDG 12.3 by halving global food waste by 2030.

