

Food Loss and Food Waste

Food loss and waste reduction

Hunger is still one of the most urgent development challenges, yet the world is producing more than enough food. The FAO-led Save Food initiative is partnering with international organizations, the private sector and civil society to enable food systems to reduce food loss and waste in both the developing and the industrialized world.

This video will change the way you see food. #ZeroH...



FAO's role in food losses and waste

Up to one third of all food is spoiled or squandered before it is consumed by people.

It is an excess in an age where almost a billion people go hungry, and represents a waste of the labour, water, energy, land and other inputs that went into producing that food.

What is food loss and food waste?

Food loss and food waste refer to the decrease of food in subsequent stages of the food supply chain intended for human consumption. Food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain, from initial production down to final household consumption.

The decrease may be accidental or intentional, but ultimately leads to less food available for all. Food that gets spilled or spoilt before it reaches its final product or retail stage is called food loss.

This may be due to problems in harvesting, storage, packing, transport, infrastructure or market / price mechanisms, as well as institutional and legal frameworks.

Harvested bananas that fall off a truck, for instance, are considered food loss. Food that is fit for human consumption, but is not consumed because it is or left to spoil or discarded by retailers or consumers is called food waste. This may be because of rigid or misunderstood date marking rules, improper storage, buying or cooking practices. A carton of brown-spotted bananas thrown away by a shop, for instance, is considered food waste.

Bringing the stakeholders on food loss and waste together

Reducing food losses and waste is gathering increasing global interest and action. Governments, research institutions, producers, distributors, retailers and consumers have all different ideas about the problem – the solutions – and the ability to change.

As an intergovernmental organization, FAO is in a position to play the role of a neutral and independent facilitator.

FAO can coordinate, at global level, the initiatives, activities and projects on food losses waste reduction by partnering with UN agencies, other international organizations, and worldwide stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society.

Save Food

FAO and Messe Düsseldorf are collaborating with donors, bi- and multi-lateral agencies and financial institutions and private sector partners (the food packaging industry and others) to develop and implement the programme on food loss and waste reduction. The operation for this global initiative is founded on four pillars:

- Awareness raising on the impact of, and solutions for food loss and waste.
- Collaboration and coordination of world-wide initiatives on food loss and waste reduction.
- Policy, strategy and programme development for food loss and waste reduction.
- Support to investment programmes and projects, implemented by private and public sectors.

The SAVE FOOD approach works within international framework such as the Millennium Development Goals, the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals, the Post 2015 Agenda, and the Zero Hunger Challenge.

For more details see the Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction and Technical Platform on the Measurement and Reduction of Food Loss and Waste.

More on this topic

- SAVE FOOD: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction
- Technical Platform on the Measurement and Reduction of Food Loss and Waste
- Sustainable food consumption and production
- INPhO, the Information Network on Post-harvest Operations
- Post-Harvest management
- Global Food Security and Nutrition FORUM

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