

UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2024 Key Messages

The Food Waste Index Report is tracking country-level progress to halve food waste by 2030 (SDG 12.3). First published in 2021, the current report builds on recent and greater datasets and provides an update on the scale of food wasted worldwide, as well as a focus on multi-stakeholder collaboration through Public Private Partnerships (PPP) as a solution.

Key Messages in the Food Waste Index Report 2024:

- **In 2022, the world wasted 1.05 billion tonnes of food.** This amounts to one fifth (19 per cent) of food available to consumers being wasted, at the retail, food service, and household level. That is in addition to the 13 per cent of the world's food lost in the supply chain, as estimated by FAO, from post-harvest up to and excluding retail.
- **Most of the world's food waste comes from households.** Out of the total food wasted in 2022, households were responsible for 631 million tonnes equivalent to 60 percent, the food service sector for 290 and the retail sector for 131.
- **Reducing food waste provides compounding benefits:** Food loss and waste generates 8-10 per cent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – almost five times the total emissions from the aviation sector. It occurs while 783 million people are hungry and a third of humanity faces food insecurity.
- **Households waste at least one billion meals a day:** On average, each person wastes 79kg of food annually. The equivalent of at least one billion meals of edible food is being wasted in households worldwide every single day, using a very conservative assessment on the share of food waste that is edible. This is the equivalent of 1.3 meals every day for everyone in the world impacted by hunger.
- **Food waste is not just a 'rich country' problem.** Following a near doubling of data coverage since the 2021 Food Waste Index Report was published, there has been increased convergence in the average per capita household food waste. High-income, upper-middle income, and lower-middle income countries differ in observed average levels of household food waste by just 7 kg/capita/year.
- **Temperature and Food Waste Correlation:** 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 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 volumes of food being wasted or lost.
- **Urban-Rural Disparities:** 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. The report recommends focusing efforts to strengthen food waste reduction and circularity in cities.

- **G20 Role in Food Waste Reduction:** Only four G20 countries (Australia, Japan, UK, and USA) and the European Union have food waste estimates suitable for tracking progress to 2030. An additional two G20 countries have suitable household estimates (Canada, Saudi Arabia), with Brazil's estimate expected late 2024. G20 countries can take a leading role in international cooperation and policy development to deliver SDG 12.3, can use their substantial influence on global consumer trends to promote awareness and education about food waste at home, and can share their expertise with countries just getting started in tackling this issue.
- **Countries such as the UK and Japan how that change at scale is possible,** with reductions of 18 per cent and 31 per cent respectively. Governments, cities, municipalities, and food businesses of all sizes should work collaboratively to reduce food waste and help householders to act.
- **Public Private Partnerships** to reduce food waste and impacts on climate and water stress are being embraced by a growing number of governments, regional and industry groups. Centred around a Target-Measure-Act approach, they bring stakeholders together to collaborate and deliver a shared goal, overcoming some of the challenges of a fragmented food system, and driving innovation for long-term, holistic change.
- **Countries should use the Food Waste Index to measure food waste consistently, develop robust national baselines, and track progress.** Very few countries have collected robust food waste data, which is essential in understanding the scale of the problem, in targeting hotspots, and in assessing the efficacy of interventions. Despite the wealth of household studies, only a few are suitable for tracking progress to SDG 12.3 at national level, and food waste data coverage in the retail and food service sectors remains poor.
- **Seizing the opportunity of the next round of NDCs and NBSAPs:** As of 2022, only 21 countries have included food loss and/or waste reduction in their national climate plans (NDCs), including Cabo Verde, China, Namibia, Sierra Leone, and the United Arab Emirates. The 2025 NDCs revision process provides a key opportunity to raise climate ambition by integrating food loss and waste. Integrating comprehensive measures to tackle food waste within National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) is another opportunity for fostering sustainable development, actioning target 16 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which specifically calls out halving global food waste by 2030.
- **Food waste must be addressed at both individual and systemic levels,** including targeted efforts in urban areas and international collaboration among countries and across supply chains.