

Forum: General Assembly

Issue: Reducing Global Food Waste

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Introduction

World Hunger is on the rise yet an estimated 1/3 of all food produced globally is lost or goes to waste. Reducing food loss and waste is critical to reaching the world's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 (End Hunger) and SDG 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns). For many people on the planet, food is a given, but for 821 million people in the world, it is not a guarantee.

Food loss and waste have many negative economic and environmental impacts. Economically, they represent a wasted investment that can reduce farmers' incomes and increase consumers' expenses. Environmentally, food loss and waste can lead to unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions and inefficiently used water and land, which in turn can lead to diminished natural ecosystems and the services they provide.

Definition of Key Terms

Food Waste

Refers to the discarding or alternative (non-food) use of food that is safe and nutritious for human consumption.

Food Loss

Refers to any food that is lost in the supply chain between the producer and the market.

A Circular Economy

Is a regenerative system in which resource input and waste, emission, and energy leakage are minimized by slowing, closing, and narrowing energy and material loops; this can be achieved through long-lasting design, maintenance, repair, reuse, remanufacturing, refurbishing, recycling, and upcycling. This is in contrast to a linear economy which is a 'take, make, dispose' model of production

The FLW Standard (The Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard)

Allows companies, countries, cities and others to develop an inventory by quantifying and reporting on food loss and waste, in order to understand their specific needs and goals to then develop targeted reduction strategies and realise the benefits from tackling this inefficiency.

Background Information

General Overview

Food is wasted in many ways: Fresh produce is often removed from the supply chain during sorting operations due to criteria such as shape, size and colour that has nothing to do with edibility and security criteria. Foods that are close to, at or beyond the “best-before” date are often discarded by retailers and consumers, when the “best-before” dates are actually often much earlier than the real date. Large quantities of edible food are often unused or wasted in eating establishments (restaurants etc.). It is not only important to reduce food waste on a macro and individual level, but also to reduce food loss, which is often due to pre-harvest problems, such as pest infestations, or problems in handling, storage, packing or transportation. Some of the underlying causes of food loss include the inadequacy of infrastructure, markets, price mechanisms or even the lack of legal frameworks. The main actors in the issue of reducing global food waste include: governments, international bodies (such as the FAO), farmers, handlers, processors, traders, and consumers.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

Is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. It acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate arguments and debate policy. It helps countries modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security.

UN Involvement

The UN has a number of sub-organisations that work on reducing global food waste such as the FAO, the UN Environment, UN development Program, but also the World Bank.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- September 25 2015 Sustainable Development Goals
- Global Green Growth Forum (3GF) 2016 Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

World Resources Report: *Creating a Sustainable Food Future* set four installments in 2013 with a menu of solutions to fight the issue of global food waste. This is a program produced by the World Resources Institute in partnership with the World Bank, UN Environment, UN Development Program, and the French agricultural research agencies CIRAD and INRA. (The list of installments/solution programs can be found online, link below)

Possible Solutions

Working on a macro level: collaboration with governments and other international bodies to promote awareness and advocacy on the issues and to develop policies to reduce food waste.

Working on communication to facilitate coordination among food supply chain actors (ex: farmers) in collaboration with the public and private sectors and civil society.

Working on a micro level: changing consumer attitudes, behaviours, and shopping habits related to food, through education with information on safe food handling, proper food storage in households and understanding “best before” dates etc.

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