**What Are the Impacts of this Loss and Waste?**

* **$1,600**: The annual amount the average American family of four spends on food that doesn’t get eaten
* **$4 billion**: The value of all the food lost in sub-Saharan Africa each year, where many farmers live on less than $2 a day
* **$32 billion**: The value of all the food lost or wasted in China each year
* **3,300-5,600**: Megatons of greenhouse gases associated with producing food that is ultimately lost or wasted. The upper end of this range is roughly equivalent to U.S. carbon dioxide emissions from energy consumption in 2011
* **198 million**: The number of hectares used to produce food that is lost or wasted each year. This is about the size of Mexico
* **173 billion**: Cubic meters of water used to grow lost or wasted food. This represents 24 percent of all water used for agriculture

#### How Much Food Is Lost or Wasted?

* **24 percent**: The global share of all produced food that is lost or wasted annually, when measured by calories
* **53 percent**: The amount of all food lost or wasted that is comprised of cereals, such as wheat, maize, and rice
* **1,520**: The per capita number of calories lost or wasted each day in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand
* **64 percent**: The share of loss or waste in the developing world that occurs before the food is even processed or sent to market
* **51 percent**: The share of loss or waste in the developed world that occurs at the restaurant, caterer, or household level

**“Food loss”** refers to food that spills, spoils, incurs an abnormal reduction in quality such as bruising or wilting, or otherwise gets lost before it reaches the consumer. Food loss typically takes place at the production, storage, processing, and distribution stages in the food value chain. It’s usually the unintended result of an agricultural process or technical limitation in storage, infrastructure, packaging, and/or marketing.

**“Food waste”** refers to food that is of good quality and fit for consumption but does not get consumed because it is discarded―either before or after it is left to spoil. Food waste typically, but not exclusively, takes place at the retail and consumption stages in the food value chain. It’s usually the result of negligence or a conscious decision to throw food away. Although both food loss and waste happen all over the world, food loss tends to be more prevalent in developing countries, while food waste tends to be more prevalent in developed countries.

# **Key facts on food loss and waste you should know!**

* Roughly one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year — approximately 1.3 billion tons — gets lost or wasted.
* Food losses and waste amounts to roughly US$ 680 billion in industrialized countries and US$ 310 billion in developing countries.
* Industrialized and developing countries dissipate roughly the same quantities of food — respectively 670 and 630 million tons.
* Fruits and vegetables, plus roots and tubers have the highest wastage rates of any food.
* Global quantitative food losses and waste per year are roughly 30% for cereals, 40-50% for root crops, fruits and vegetables, 20% for oil seeds, meat and dairy plus 35% for fish.
* Every year, consumers in rich countries waste almost as much food (222 million tons) as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (230 million tons).
* Per capita waste by consumers is between 95-115 kg a year in Europe and North America, while consumers in sub-Saharan Africa, south and south-eastern Asia, each throw away only 6-11 kg a year.
* Total per capita food production for human consumption is about 900 kg a year in rich countries, almost twice the 460 kg a year produced in the poorest regions.
* In developing countries 40% of losses occur at post-harvest and processing levels while in industrialized countries more than 40% of losses happen at retail and consumer levels.
* At retail level, large quantities of food are wasted due to quality standards that over-emphasize appearance.
* Food loss and waste also amount to a major squandering of resources, including water, land, energy, labor and capital and needlessly produce greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to global warming and climate change.
* In medium- and high-income countries food is wasted and lost mainly at later stages in the supply chain. Differing from the situation in developing countries, the behavior of consumers plays a huge part in industrialized countries.

What We Can Do:

**Over-preparation or excessive cooking:**  
Cooking too much means more food ending up in your fridge. After a day or two, the urge to eat again decreases, and after a while it ends up in the trash. Try to cook less or in smaller quantities and keep the leftover in a visible place in your fridge. Try eating it quickly the next day.  
  
**Poor planning:**  
Grocery shopping without a plan (or shopping list) may result in excessive buying. Make a list at home and write down exactly what you need. Also, try to pack a left over from home before you go out, so that you may not need to eat impromptu from the restaurant when you have lots of food in your fridge. *On average, diners leave 17% of meals uneaten and 55% of these potential leftovers are not taken home.*   
  
**Bulk buying:**  
Buying bigger packs or cartons of fruits and veggies just because they are on sale (or offers) can result in waste at home. Remember that the grocery shops only want to get rid of them because they will go bad soon. Try buying just what you need, or better still, buy with the idea of giving some to a friend or neighbor immediately.   
  
**Spoilage:**  
Poor visibility of fruits, veggies, potatoes and other foods in the kitchen and fridge also result in food waste. The Internet is full of ideas on preserving foods and food freshness. Try to keep your fridge less cluttered and use the freezer too. More importantly, do not bring too much home in the first place.  
  
**Plate sizes:**  
Heaping your plate with food may result in waste. Try serving just a little at a time. If there are children in your home, you can serve yourself a little bit less and eat their left over, as children have the habit of wasting their meals.

**Extra Suggestions:**  
Strengthening the supply chain through the direct support of farmers and investments in infrastructure, transportation, as well as in an expansion of the food and packaging industry could help to reduce the amount of food loss and waste.

Farmer-buyer agreements can be helpful to increase the level of coordination. Additionally, raising awareness among industries, retailers and consumers as well as finding beneficial use for food that is presently thrown away are useful measures to decrease the amount of losses and waste.

Resources:

* <https://www.wri.org/blog/2013/06/numbers-reducing-food-loss-and-waste>
* <http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/>
* <https://foodsource.org.uk/building-blocks/building-block-what-food-loss-and-food-waste>
* <http://eschooltoday.com/global-food-waste-and-food-loss/food-waste-at-home.html>
* <https://georgiafoodbankassociation.org/find-your-food-bank/>