

Food Waste Index Report 2021: UNEP

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In news : The Food Waste Index Report 2021 has been released recently

About the report

It is prepared by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and partner organisation WRAP

The Food Waste Index Measurement Approach

The Food Waste Index has a three-level methodology, increasing in accuracy and usefulness of data, but also increasing in the resources required to undertake them:

- Level 1 uses modelling to estimate food waste, for Member States that have not yet undertaken their own measurement
- Level 2 is the recommended approach.
- Level 3 provides additional information to inform policy and other interventions designed to reduce food waste generation

Key findings of the report

- **Quantity of food wasted:** As per the report, an estimated 931 million tonnes of food were wasted globally in 2019, enough to circle the Earth seven times
- Of the total food wasted,, 61 per cent came from households, 26 per cent from food service and 13 per cent from retail.
- This suggests that 17 per cent of total global food production may be wasted (11 per cent in households, 5 per cent in food service and 2 per cent in retail)
- Household per capita food waste generation is found to

be broadly similar across country income groups, suggesting that action on food waste is equally relevant in high, upper-middle and lower-middle income countries.

- Previous estimates of consumer food waste significantly underestimated its scale. While data doesn't permit a robust comparison across time, food waste at consumer level (household and food service) appears to be more than twice the previous FAO estimate
- There is insufficient data on the edible fraction of food waste to allow comparative analysis across country income groups, but even if inedible parts (bones, pits, eggshells, etc.) predominate in lower income countries, there is sufficient total food waste in these areas for circular approaches or other food waste diversion strategies to be important.
- As per the report, household food waste estimate in the US is 59 kg per capita per year, or 19,359,951 tonnes a year, while for China these estimates are 64 kg per capita per year or 91,646,213 tonnes a year.
- It highlights that most of the food waste comes from households, which discard 11 per cent of the total food available at the consumption stage of the supply chain.
- Food services and retail outlets waste 5 percent and 2 percent respectively.
- The UNEP report says that on a global per capita-level, 121 kgs of consumer level food is wasted each year, with 74 kgs of this happening in households
- Food waste and climate change: It said that food waste has substantial environmental, social and economic impacts. At a time when climate action is still lagging, 8-10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions are associated with food that is not consumed, when losses before consumer level are taken into account.
- The report finds that with 690 million people affected by hunger in 2019, an estimate that is expected to rise sharply due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and three billion people unable to afford a healthy diet, consumers need

help to reduce food waste at home.

- The report also warned that with only nine years to go, we will not achieve SDG 12 Target 3 if we do not significantly increase investment in tackling food waste in the home globally

Average food waste (kg/capita/year) by World Bank income classification, averaging medium and high confidence estimates for countries

Income group	Average food waste (kg/capita/year)		
	Household	Food service	Retail
High-income countries	79	26	13
Upper middle-income countries	76	Insufficient data	
Lower middle-income countries	91	Insufficient data	
Low-income countries	Insufficient data		

India specific

According to the report household food waste in India is about 68.7 million tonnes a year. In India, the household food waste estimate is 50 kg per capita per year

Definition of food waste

For the purposes of the Food Waste Index, “food waste” is defined as food (see below) and the associated inedible parts removed from the human food supply chain in the following sectors: Retail, Food service , Households

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 12.3

It aims at halving per-capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food losses along production and supply chains. One of the two indicators for the target is the Food Waste Index.