



Food Waste Fact Sheet

This Global Topic will explore the fact that vast amounts of food grown never gets eaten.



What is food waste? How/where does it happen?

Food waste refers to the discarding or alternative(non-food) use of food that is safe and nutritious for human consumption. It is wasted in many ways from leftovers at home and in school to expired 'best before dates' by retailers and consumers or removed from the supply chain during sorting operations. Food loss refers to any food lost in the supply chain between the producer and the market.

There are 3 types of food waste thrown out:

60% Avoidable food waste (left overs, plate scrapings, perishables)

20% Potentially avoidable food waste (bread crusts, potato skins)

20% Unavoidable food waste (General rubbish, banana skins, chicken bones etc)

The Urban food waste collection (brown bin) by law was introduced in 2013. One third of the food we buy ends up in the bin. The average household bins between €400-€1,000 worth of food each year. As a nation that's a million tonnes of food waste per year, enough to fill Croke Park two and a half times! 1.3 billion tonnes globally! This is an alarming figure if you consider 1 billion are suffering from hunger per year. Reducing food waste is critical to creating a Zero Hunger World and achieving the second Sustainable Development Goal. Goal 12 'Responsible Consumption and Production' also sets out a 2030 target to halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains including post harvest losses. Food is not wasted in the same way in every part of the world. Most food waste worldwide actually occurs when food is left in the field. In lower income countries 40% of food is lost post harvest and during the processing stages due to poor infrastructure and a lack of efficient storage technology.

Food Labelling

A number of labels and dates on foods often confuse the consumer resulting in food waste.

Best Before dates relate to the food quality, taste, appearance, nutritional value etc. Often used on tinned food and are generally safe to eat past this date once stored correctly.

Use by dates are used for highly perishable foods such as dairy and poultry and should never be consumed after this date

Sell by/Display until dates are not a legal requirement and assist with stocktaking so can be ignored.

Expiry dates are never safe for consumption after the given date.

What are the environmental impacts?

A huge amount of resources go into the growing, production, transportation and packaging of our food. Around 20% of global GHG emissions are related to the production, processing, transportation and storage of food. An area larger than China (1.4 billion ha) is used to grow food that is never eaten. 25% of the world's freshwater supply is used to grow food that is never eaten.

Uneaten food ends up in our landfills releasing harmful greenhouse gases. In landfill food breaks down anaerobically producing methane, a greenhouse gas 21 times more potent than CO₂. Carbon dioxide, Methane, Nitrous oxide and Hydrofluorcarbons (fluorinated gases used in refrigeration) are produced and emitted from food production to our refrigerators. Metal cans, plastic bags and cardboard boxes our food comes in contribute too. According to the U.N Food and Agriculture Organisation, 30% of food is wasted globally contributing 8% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. If food waste was a country, it would come third after the U.S and China in terms of impact on Climate Change. Reducing food waste is one of the most important actions we can take in combating Climate Change.



What can your school do?

- **Record/Measure**-Pick a typical school day and empty all food waste into one bucket. Identify which food type is wasted the most.
- **Investigate** the option of a Compost Bin (and/or staff training on composting!)
- **Investigate and generate awareness around** use by and sell by dates
- Use what you have before buying more
- Compare how a pupil in Ireland and an indigenous Amazonian might differ in terms of attitudes and behaviours on waste
- Planning-Shopping-Storing-Cooking
- Explore systems that are set up to tackle food waste e.g. Food Cloud
- Circulate a calendar to "Eat in season"! <https://stopfoodwaste.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Final-Seasonal-Calendar.pdf>
- For further tips please go to
 - <https://www.mywaste.ie/what-to-do-with-my-food-waste/>
 - <https://stopfoodwaste.ie/>
 - <https://www.obeoliving.com/2016/11/30/food-waste-facts/>
 - <https://www.globalgoals.org/12-responsible-consumption-and-production>
 - <https://www.eatresponsibly.eu/en/materials/>
 - <http://www.fao.org/food-loss-and-food-waste/en/>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqfD3p8Fn-g>
 - <http://eschooltoday.com/global-food-waste-and-food-loss/how-is-food-wasted-in-the-food-supply-chain.html>
 - <http://www.foodwastemovie.com/quiz-js/>
 - <https://vimeo.com/154439089>