



FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT 2021

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The UNEP Food Waste Index Report was developed in the context of the One Planet Network's Sustainable Food Systems Programme, whose Core Initiative on Food Loss and Waste aims to provide tools and build capacity for food waste measurement and action at national level

FOREWORD: UNEP FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT



If food loss and waste were a country, it would be the third biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Food waste also burdens waste management systems, exacerbates food insecurity, making it a major contributor to the three planetary crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. This is why Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 aims to halve food waste and reduce food loss by 2030.

In support of this vital target, UNEP's first Food Waste Index report provides insights into the scale of food waste and a methodology that enables countries to measure baselines and track progress in meeting the SDG target. The report estimates that food waste from households, retail establishments and the food service industry totals 931 million tonnes each year. Nearly 570 million tonnes of this waste occurs at the household level. The report also reveals that the global average of 74 kg per capita of food wasted each year is remarkably similar from lower-middle income to high-income countries, suggesting that most countries have room to improve.

It is fitting that this report is being launched just after the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly, which at its previous meeting urged Member States to establish mechanisms for measuring food loss and waste, and requested support in providing technical assistance that would allow countries to make measure and make progress. The report is a first step in meeting this request. In April, we will establish regional food waste working groups in Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and West Asia to support member states in developing food baseline baselines and strategies – bringing the report to life. The report is also part of UNEP's offer to the UN Food Systems Summit process, with the aim of encouraging the widespread adoption of a Target-Measure-Act approach to food waste reduction.

Some countries and private sector actors have already taken the SDG12.3 commitment to heart. There is growing evidence of success in reducing food waste – though not at the scale needed to achieve the target. Much more can be done. We need, for example, to address the role of consumer behaviour, in all cultural contexts, in achieving the target. Let us all shop carefully, cook creatively and make wasting food anywhere socially unacceptable while we strive to provide healthy, sustainable diets to all.

Inger Andersen

Executive Director United Nations Environment Programme, March 2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food waste reduction offers multi-faceted wins for people and planet, improving food security, addressing climate change, saving money and reducing pressures on land, water, biodiversity and waste management systems. Yet this potential has until now been woefully under-exploited.

This potential may have been overlooked because the true scale of food waste and its impacts have not been well understood. Global estimates of food waste have relied on extrapolation of data from a small number of countries, often using old data. Few governments have robust data on food waste to make the case to act and prioritize their efforts.

Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 (SDG 12.3) captures a commitment to halve food waste at the retail and consumer level and to reduce food loss across supply chains. This Food Waste Index Report aims to advance progress on SDG 12.3 in two ways:

- Firstly, it presents the most comprehensive food waste data collection, analysis and modelling to date, generating a new estimate of global food waste. Country-level food waste estimates have been calculated, and while confidence intervals for estimates vary by region and by sector, they offer new insight into the scale of the problem and into the substantial prevention potential in low-, middle- and high-income countries.
- Secondly, this report publishes a methodology for countries to measure food waste, at household, food service and retail level, in order to track national progress towards 2030 and to report on SDG 12.3. Countries using this methodology will generate strong evidence to guide a national strategy on food waste prevention, food waste estimates that are sufficiently sensitive to pick up changes in food waste over two- or four-year intervals, and that enables meaningful comparisons among countries globally.

In complement to the Food Loss Index, developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Food Waste Index covers the later stages of food's journey – food waste – occurring at household, food service and retail level.

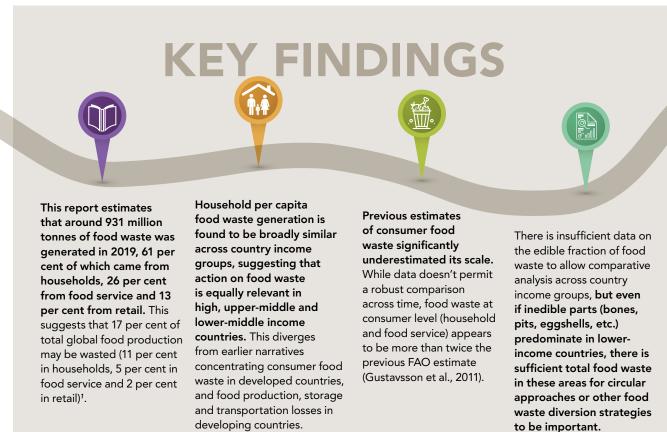


 Table 1: Average food waste (kg/capita/year) by World Bank income classification, averaging medium and high confidence estimates for countries

	Average food waste (kg/capita/year)		
Income group	Household	Food service	Retail
High-income countries	79	26	13

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