



## EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

**GENERAL STUDIES 3: ECONOMY**

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**TOPIC: AGRICULTURE**

**Colossal wastage that is food for thought**

### Global Food Waste Overview

- In 2022, 1.05 billion tonnes of food were wasted worldwide, about 20% of all food available to consumers.
- India is one of the highest food-wasting nations, ranked second after another large country.

### Difference Between Food Waste and Food Loss

- **Food Waste:** Edible and inedible parts discarded from manufacturing, retail, restaurants, and households.
- **Food Loss:** Occurs earlier in the supply chain due to poor storage, transportation, and handling.

### Food Waste in India

- India's per capita household food waste is 55 kg per year, lower than some countries but still significant due to its large population.

### Impact on Hunger and Economy

- \$1 trillion worth of food is wasted globally every year.
- 783 million people worldwide suffer from hunger.
- India wastes about 78 million tonnes of food annually, while over 20 crore Indians go hungry.
- Despite being a major food producer, India faces challenges ensuring food reaches those in need.

### Reasons Behind Food Waste in India

- Over-purchasing leads to food spoilage.
- Improper meal planning results in wasted ingredients.
- Limited storage facilities (e.g., small refrigerators) worsen the problem.
- Cultural practices, such as preparing excess food for guests or celebrations, contribute to waste.
- Poor refrigeration and short shelf life in urban markets increase waste.
- 61% of global food waste occurs at the household level, highlighting the need for better consumer awareness.



## Environmental Consequences

- Food production consumes large amounts of land, water, and energy, which are wasted along with food.
- In India, food waste contributes to 10%-12% of total municipal waste, producing methane, a harmful greenhouse gas.
- Food waste is responsible for 8%-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions.
- If food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases.

## Social and Climate Challenges

- Food waste prevents food from reaching those in need, exacerbating hunger.
- It hampers progress toward global goals like Zero Hunger and waste reduction.
- Climate change is already affecting food production, and wasting food increases the strain on limited resources.

## Steps to Reduce Food Waste

### Individuals can:

- Plan meals and buy only necessary groceries.
- Store food properly with airtight containers and refrigeration.
- Use leftovers creatively to prevent waste.
- Compost food scraps to reduce landfill waste.
- Donate surplus food to charities and food banks.

### Systemic actions include:

- Building better cold storage and transportation networks.
- Encouraging businesses to redistribute unsold food.
- Educating consumers about responsible food consumption.
- Supporting food redistribution networks and providing refrigeration subsidies.

## Conclusion

- India needs to reduce food waste to lower its carbon footprint, improve food security, and address social inequality.
- Focus should be on valuing and conserving available food, not just increasing food production.



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