

# Waste not, want not

## Unveiling The True Prive Of Food Waste

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With around 733 million people going to bed hungry every night, the food-waste paradox is becoming more troubling than ever before. While millions cry for food, approximately 1.3 billion tonnes of food, or nearly one-third of all food produced globally, goes to waste annually. According to a NABCONS study conducted from 2020 to 2022, India alone suffers a food loss of about 1.53 trillion INR (18.5 billion USD) every year. Apart from this sheer wastage of food, there is also a hidden cost that comes with it in terms of depletion of natural resources, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and the long-term impact on biodiversity.

### *From lush lands to harvests we foreswear Lost in heaps, we squander what's rare*

Wastage occurs across various stages of the food supply chain, including production, processing, and eventually, at the retail and consumption level. In fact, it is a well-known fact that almost 45% of the world's fresh produce goes to waste each year. According to the United Nations, world population is set to reach around 10 billion by the year 2050, so it's a no-brainer that we cannot afford to lose this much food each year. Equally pertinent is the fact that agricultural practices utilise nearly 70% of the world's freshwater resources, and wasting this already scarce resource in this manner is a crime against humankind if food goes uneaten. When we waste food, we squander away the earth beneath our feet.

### *From engines loud to emissions sky-high Energy lost is a truth we can't deny*

The food processing industry is energy-intensive and consumes around 30% of the world's available energy. From the tractors that till the soil to the electricity that runs our storage plants, food production and consumption use energy sourced from fossil fuels. So, when we waste food, we are also wasting all this energy. Moreover, fossil fuels are significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. The carbon footprint of food waste is estimated at 3.3 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent annually. In India alone, food waste results in the annual emission of 330 million metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, according to a 2021 UNEP report. This shows the strong link between food waste and energy inefficiency, both of which are unsustainable in a world threatened by climate change.

### *From clear skies to smog-choked haze Air pollution rises in the dark daze*

When food waste decomposes in landfills, it doesn't magically disappear - it releases methane, a greenhouse gas which is far more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, nearly 8-10% of global methane emissions come from decomposing food waste. This not only accelerates climate change but also results in unbearable odours, parasitic infestations, poor water quality, and air pollution. Especially in developing countries, where rapid industrialisation is taking place without adequate waste management systems in



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place. Landfills remain open, unorganised, and prone to spreading diseases posing a direct threat to public health.

### *From blue seas to toxic waste embrace Oceanic health blurs in the waste's trace*

Our oceans are also paying a heavy price. When food waste gets into local waterways, it finds its way into the vast oceans, where it decomposes rapidly, using up oxygen in the water. This leads to 'dead zones' in the

oceans, with oxygen levels so low that most marine life can't survive. Moreover, food waste dumped in the oceans provides nutrients for harmful algae to bloom rapidly. These algal blooms are immensely harmful not only for marine life but also for humans as the latter can experience respiratory problems, skin irritation, and even death in severe cases. The UNEP has cautioned that ocean ecosystems are under severe strain due to pollution caused by food waste.

*Continued on page 6...*

## THE GT POLL

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- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Can't say

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In conversation with Dr Neelam Mohan, a paediatric hepatologist and liver transplant specialist, as she tells her tale of healing.

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**Whiffs of wonder**  
Wander into the aromatic lanes of the divine sandalwood grove and discover the varied variety of this fragrant wood grown across the globe.

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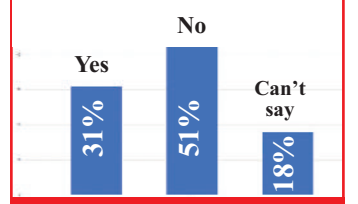
**Clothing with a conscience**  
Have a look at experts discussing the topic of sustainable fashion as part of the panel discussion organised by YP team of AIS Vas 6 (2023-24).

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## POLL RESULT

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