



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. (GST NO.-09AAPCAI478E1ZH)  
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to Priyagold Building gate, Sector 02,  
Pocket I, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201301, CONTACT NO:-8448440231

Date -30 March 2024

## FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT 2024

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "SOCIAL ISSUES" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

Based on the most recent Food Waste Index Report from the UN Environment Programme, approximately 19% of the food generated worldwide in 2022, equivalent to around 1.05 billion metric tons, was wasted.

### SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

#### WASTING AWAY

In 2022, the **world wasted** a staggering **1.05 billion tonnes of food**. This equates to nearly **one-fifth (19%) of all food available to consumers being discarded** at the retail, restaurant, and household level. This is on top of the estimated 13% of food lost earlier in the supply chain, highlighting the extensive problem of food waste.

#### HOUSEHOLDS LEAD THE WASTE PARADE

The report identifies **households** as the **biggest contributor to food waste**. In 2022, households were **responsible for throwing away 631 million tonnes of food**, which translates to a whopping 60% of the total waste. The food service sector follows closely at 290 million tonnes (28%), and the **retail sector discards 131 million tonnes (13%)**.

#### DAILY DOSE OF WASTE

Even more concerning is the daily amount of food wasted by households – at least **one billion meals are thrown away every single day**. This translates to an annual average of 79 kilograms of wasted food per person.

#### CLIMATE CONNECTION: HOTTER COUNTRIES, MORE WASTE

The report also explores the link between temperature and food waste. **Countries with warmer climates seem to have higher per capita household food waste**, possibly due to greater consumption of fresh produce with inedible parts and a lack of efficient cold chain infrastructure.

## URBAN VS. RURAL DIVIDE

The study reveals disparities in food waste patterns between urban and rural areas in middle-income countries. **Rural communities generally waste less food, potentially due to practices like feeding scraps to pets or livestock or composting them at home.** This finding suggests a need to focus on food waste reduction efforts in urban centres.

## G20: LEADING THE WAY IN TRACKING WASTE

Unfortunately, **only four G20 nations** (Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) **and the European Union have implemented food waste measurement systems** that allow them to track progress towards the 2030 goal of halving food waste. While Canada and Saudi Arabia have established methods to estimate household waste, and Brazil is expected to do so later in 2024, a significant gap remains.

## NEED FOR MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH

The report underscores the urgency of tackling food waste on both individual and systemic levels. This includes **targeted efforts to reduce waste in urban areas, international collaboration among countries, and improved coordination** across the entire food supply chain. Only through a comprehensive approach can we address this global challenge and ensure a more sustainable food system for the future.

## SOME PROMINENT REASONS BEHIND FOOD WASTE

- **Household Waste:** Homes are the biggest culprit, discarding a shocking amount of food due to factors like improper storage, poor planning, and confusion over labels and expiration dates.
- **Overproduction and Unrealistic Standards:** Sometimes, more food is produced than can be consumed, leading to waste. Additionally, cosmetic imperfections or sizing discrepancies can cause perfectly edible produce to be discarded.
- **Inefficient Infrastructure:** Lack of proper storage and transportation facilities, particularly in developing countries, can lead to spoilage before food even reaches consumers.
- **Confusing Labels and Miscommunication:** Unclear “use by” and “best before” labels, coupled with a lack of awareness, can lead to consumers throwing away food prematurely.
- **Oversized Portions:** Restaurants and supermarkets often offer portions larger than necessary, contributing to plate waste and leftover discards.

## ABOUT FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT

- It tracks food waste across retail, households, and food service (since 2021). A **joint effort by UNEP and WRAP** to support the UN’s SDG 12.3 on sustainable consumption.
- Focuses on reducing food waste **to achieve the SDG 12.3 target** of halving per capita global food waste by 2030.
- Defines food waste broadly to include inedible parts removed from the food supply chain.
- Highlights the need for global collaboration to improve food waste measurement, especially among G20 nations.

## ABOUT UNEP

Founded in 1972 at the Stockholm Conference, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has become a leading voice for environmental action. Its mission is clear: to inspire, inform, and empower nations to care for our planet, ensuring a sustainable future for all.

UNEP approaches environmental challenges through six key areas:

- **Combating Climate Change:** UNEP addresses the pressing issue of climate change, providing leadership and solutions.
- **Restoring After Disaster:** In the aftermath of environmental disasters and conflicts, UNEP aids recovery efforts and promotes sustainable rebuilding.
- **Protecting Ecosystems:** From forests to oceans, UNEP works to manage and restore vital ecosystems for the health of our planet.
- **Strengthening Environmental Governance:** UNEP helps countries implement environmental regulations and best practices.
- **Minimising Harmful Substances:** The fight against harmful substances and hazardous waste is a key focus of UNEP's work.
- **Promoting Resource Efficiency:** Encouraging sustainable consumption and production patterns is another crucial area for UNEP.

## PRELIMS PRACTISE QUESTIONS

**Q1. The FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) work together on**

- (a) Climate change mitigation
- (b) Codex Alimentarius Commission
- (c) Refugee resettlement
- (d) Global economic development

**ANSWER: B**

**Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Trans Fat:**

1. These fats are of the unsaturated variety and are synthesised exclusively through artificial means.
2. India had set a goal to eradicate trans fats from food by the year 2022.
3. Consuming trans fats heightens the likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes.

**How many of the statements above are correct?**

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

**Answer: A**

## MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

**Q1. Analyse the socio-economic factors that contribute to food waste in urban areas and rural communities and how addressing these factors could improve food security outcomes.**

**Q2. Share your insights on the potential benefits and drawbacks of processed foods in mitigating food waste and supporting food security goals.**

**Himanshu Mishra**

