

We must cut food waste by a quarter

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

What kinds of food do people often throw away?

Do you waste food? Why? Why not?

2 Key words

Complete the sentences using these key words from the text.

rampant
malnutrition

momentum
landfill

retailer
poultry

campaign
wastage

edible
virtually

- _____ is a medical condition in which you are weak or ill because you do not eat enough.
- _____ is a situation in which something is wasted.
- A _____ is a person or company that sells goods directly to the public for their own use.
- If food is _____, it is safe or good enough to eat.
- _____ is another way of saying *almost completely*.
- If something is described as _____, it exists, happens or spreads in an uncontrolled way.
- _____ is the collective word for birds such as chickens that are used for meat or eggs.
- A _____ is a series of actions intended to produce political or social change.
- _____ is the process of burying waste in a large hole in the ground.
- _____ is progress or development that is becoming faster or stronger.

3 What do you know?

Decide whether these statements seem true (T) or false (F). Then, check your answers in the text.

- About one third of all food that is produced is wasted.
- Nearly 800 million people around the world suffer from malnutrition.
- More food is thrown away in poor countries than in developed countries.
- If food waste was a country, it would emit more greenhouse gases than the US and China.
- In the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, consumers throw away nearly 40% of all food purchased.
- The amount of food thrown away in the UK is still increasing.

We must cut food waste by a quarter

Level 3 • Advanced

Cutting food waste by a quarter would mean enough for everyone, says UN

With the global population rising, wastage of products including 45% of all fruit and vegetables and 20% of meat is one of the greatest challenges to achieving food security

Kate Lyons

12 August, 2015

- 1 If the amount of food wasted around the world were reduced by just 25%, there would be enough food to feed all the people who are malnourished, according to the UN. Each year, 1.3bn tonnes of food, about a third of all that is produced, is wasted, including about 45% of all fruit and vegetables, 35% of fish and seafood, 30% of cereals, 20% of dairy products and 20% of meat. Meanwhile, 795 million people suffer from severe hunger and malnutrition.
- 2 Well-publicized attempts to combat the loss of food – such as recent laws in France that require supermarkets to distribute unsold food to charities – have highlighted the issue of food waste, identified by the UN as one of the great challenges to achieving food security. Estimates suggest that, by 2050, food production will need to have increased by 60% on 2005 levels to feed a growing global population. Reducing food wastage would ease the burden on resources as the world attempts to meet future demand.
- 3 The problem is global but manifests itself in very different ways. In developing countries, there are high levels of what is known as “food loss”, which is unintentional wastage, often due to poor equipment, transportation and infrastructure. In wealthy countries, there are low levels of unintentional losses but high levels of “food waste”, which involves food being thrown away by consumers because they have purchased too much or by retailers who reject food because of strict aesthetic standards.
- 4 In developed countries, consumers and retailers throw away between 30% and 40% of all food purchased, whereas in poorer countries only 5% to 16% of food is thrown away. According to a 2011 report, in Europe and North America, each person wasted 95 to 115kg of otherwise edible food annually, whereas, in sub-Saharan Africa and south and south-east Asia, the equivalent waste was just 6 to 11kg.
- 5 “In the developing world, food waste is virtually non-existent,” says Robert van Otterdijk, coordinator of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s Save Food programme. “Food waste is happening in countries where people can afford to throw away food. One statistic is that the amount of food wasted by consumers in industrialized countries [222m tonnes a year] is almost the same as the total net food production of sub-Saharan Africa [230m tonnes]. But food losses, on the other hand, are really rampant in developing countries because of the underdeveloped conditions they have, from management of production to transportation and distribution.”
- 6 The environmental impact of food loss and waste is high. The carbon footprint of food produced and not eaten is estimated at 3.3 gigatonnes of CO₂, meaning that, if food waste were a country, it would rank as the third highest national emitter of greenhouse gases after the US and China. About 1.4bn hectares, or close to 30% of available agricultural land, is used to grow or farm food that is subsequently wasted. And more surface and groundwater, or “blue water”, is used to produce wasted food around the globe than is used for agriculture by any single country, including India and China.
- 7 “The whole issue of climate change has to do with our economy of production and consumption being out of balance with what the Earth can provide,” says van Otterdijk. “Production of food is one of the biggest production sectors in the world and, if one-third of all this is just produced in vain, you can imagine what a huge impact this has on the natural resources – on land, water, energy and greenhouse gas emissions.”
- 8 The worst food waste offenders are the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where consumers waste 39% of all food purchased, followed by Europe, where about 31% of all food purchased by consumers is thrown away. In the UK, 15m tonnes of food is lost or wasted each year. British consumers throw away 4.2m tonnes of edible food each year. This means that 11.7% of all food purchased is avoidably wasted, at an estimated cost to each family of £700 a year or almost £60 a month.
- 9 The foods most commonly found in British bins are bread, vegetables, fruit and milk. According to a nationwide analysis of food waste in UK households, the most wasted food in the UK by

We must cut food waste by a quarter

Level 3 • Advanced

weight is bread, with consumers throwing away 414,000 tonnes (22.4%) of all bread purchased. By percentage, the most wasted food is lettuce and leafy salads, of which consumers throw away 38% (64,000 tonnes) of all they buy.

- 10 The most wasted meat, by both percentage and weight, is poultry, of which 13% of all edible parts (not including bones) is wasted and the most wasted fruit by percentage is melon, with the equivalent of more than a quarter of each melon thrown in the bin.
- 11 The UK has made progress in the past ten years, after a concerted campaign to reduce wastage. It is singled out by van Otterdijk as “one of the great successes” in combating food waste. Between 2007 and 2012, the amount of avoidable food waste produced by UK households decreased by 21%, from 5.3m tonnes to 4.2m tonnes, largely due to greater awareness. Of the food that is not eaten, less is ending up in landfill. In 2000–01, only 14% of household waste was recycled or composted but, by 2011–12, the amount of composted food had risen to 43%.

- 12 Van Otterdijk says there has been a “very encouraging, unexpected, continuing interest” in the subject of food waste, enabling grass-roots campaigns around the world to gain momentum. “We have to do much more and it needs the participation of public and private sectors,” he says. “But if it continues like this, with the same momentum, maybe, after ten years, we’ll have globally significant results.”

© Guardian News and Media 2015

First published in *The Guardian*, 12/08/15

4 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

- Which type of food is most likely to be wasted worldwide?
 - fish and seafood
 - fruit and vegetables
 - meat
- What is the main cause of food loss in developing countries?
 - the fact that people can afford to throw away food
 - the fact that people buy more food than they need
 - the fact that transportation and distribution are poor
- Which food do UK consumers throw away most?
 - lettuce and leafy salads
 - bread
 - poultry
- Why has the UK made progress in combating food waste in the last ten years?
 - because a campaign to reduce wastage has led to greater awareness
 - because less food is ending up in landfill
 - because more people are recycling or composting household waste

We must cut food waste by a quarter

Level 3 • Advanced

5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a verb meaning *do something to try to stop something bad from happening* (para 2)
2. a two-word noun phrase meaning *a situation where all people have access to sufficient food* (para 2)
3. a two-word reflexive verb meaning *become easy to notice* (para 3)
4. an adjective meaning *nice to look at* (para 3)
5. a two-word noun phrase meaning *the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of human activities* (para 6)
6. an adjective meaning *involving a lot of people or organizations working together in a determined way* (para 11)
7. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *choose one person or thing from a group for special attention* (para 11)
8. a two-word phrase meaning *relating to the ordinary people in society* (para 12)

6 Verb + noun collocations

Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns or noun phrases in the right-hand column.

- | | |
|------------|---------------------|
| 1. ease | a. household waste |
| 2. meet | b. greenhouse gases |
| 3. emit | c. the burden |
| 4. reduce | d. momentum |
| 5. recycle | e. future demand |
| 6. gain | f. wastage |

7 Word-building

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

1. Recent laws in France require supermarkets to distribute _____ food to charities. [SELL]
2. 'Food loss' is _____ wastage. [INTEND]
3. In the developing world, food waste is virtually _____. [EXIST]
4. The _____ impact of food loss and waste is high. [ENVIRONMENT]
5. In the UK, 11.7% of all food purchased is _____ wasted. [AVOID]
6. The foods most _____ found in British bins are bread, vegetables, fruit and milk. [COMMON]

8 Discussion

Discuss the following statements.

- Supermarkets should be required by law to give unsold food to charities.
- People should not be allowed to purchase more food than they need.
- Developed countries should give food to developing countries.

We must cut food waste by a quarter

Level 3 • Advanced

KEY

2 Key words

1. malnutrition
2. wastage
3. retailer
4. edible
5. virtually
6. rampant
7. poultry
8. campaign
9. landfill
10. momentum

3 What do you know?

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. F
5. T
6. F

4 Comprehension check

1. b
2. c
3. b
4. a

5 Find the word

1. combat
2. food security
3. manifest itself
4. aesthetic
5. carbon footprint
6. concerted
7. single out
8. grass-roots

6 Verb + noun collocations

1. c
2. e
3. b
4. f
5. a
6. d

7 Word-building

1. unsold
2. unintentional; unintended
3. non-existent
4. environmental
5. avoidably
6. commonly