

The Silent Crisis of Food Waste: A Global and National Wake Up Call



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Food is the most essential need of life, yet across the globe it is also one of the most carelessly wasted resources. Despite the rapid advancement in agriculture and food production, food wastage has emerged as one of the most urgent crises of our time, affecting economies, societies, and the environment alike.

Globally, more than 1.3 billion tons of food, nearly one third of all food produced, is lost or wasted each year. This waste coexists with the grim reality that over 800 million people go to bed hungry every night. Economically, the annual cost of wasted food is estimated at one trillion dollars, creating immense pressure on governments, businesses, and households.

Studies reveal that more than half of food waste originates in homes due to careless consumption, overbuying, poor storage, excessive cooking, and ignoring leftovers. Retail and commercial losses are far smaller in comparison.

Asia contributes nearly half of global food waste, driven by rapid urbanization, population growth, and inadequate storage infrastructure. Ironically, the region also houses the largest number of undernourished people.

In Pakistan, the crisis is severe. The country wastes 36 million tons of food annually, roughly 40

percent of total consumption. This not only worsens food insecurity but also harms the environment, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, depleting water resources, and accelerating climate change. Punjab, as Pakistan's agricultural heartland, suffers the most from inefficient handling and storage practices, undermining national food security.

The social and environmental consequences are staggering. Food production consumes 70 percent of the world's freshwater and vast areas of agricultural land, all squandered when food is discarded. Alarmingly, food waste is responsible for about 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Addressing this moral and environmental crisis demands urgent behavioral and policy shifts.

Governments should incentivize storage infrastructure, support food donation programs, and promote public awareness. Every meal saved contributes not only to feeding the hungry but to protecting the planet.

The world cannot afford to ignore this silent epidemic. The time to act is now.