

International Day of Awareness on Food Loss and Waste Reduction



We know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and “whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor”.

Pope Francis *Laudato Si'* n50

Each year on the **29 September** we celebrate the United Nations International Day of Awareness on Food Loss and Waste Reduction. As the worlds' population increases and we see the impacts of climate change, we need to become more aware of how much food is lost and wasted at various stages of the supply chain. Globally, around **14 percent of food produced is lost between harvest and retail**, while an estimated **17 percent of total global food production is wasted** (11 percent in households, 5 percent in the food service and 2 percent in retail). [Source](#)

One of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, number 12, is about the “responsible consumption and production” of food. Find out more about this [goal](#).

The number of malnourished people in the world has been increasing since 2014. At Caritas Australia we are seeing this firsthand in the [Horn of Africa](#), where successive droughts have not allowed people to grow crops and have enough water for themselves and their livestock.



A woman grinding cereal in Ethiopia.
Photo Zacharias Abubeker



Did you know?

One-third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally. This amounts to about 1.3 billion tonnes per year, worth approximately **US\$1 trillion**. **All the food** produced, but never eaten would be sufficient to feed **two billion people**. That's more than twice the number of undernourished people across the globe.
Source: [World Food Program](#)

Food waste impacts on our environment because when it is taken to landfill it releases greenhouse gases which account for 8% of all global emissions. [Source](#) This is why organic waste collections by local councils and home composting is so important.

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What can you do about food waste and loss?

- Before you go food shopping, check what you already have in the fridge and pantry, plan your meals and make a shopping list so that you only buy what you need.
- Freeze leftovers or turn them into a new meal e.g., Savoury mince can be used to make pasta sauce, cottage pie, taco's, baked potatoes and more!
- Organise your fridge so that older ingredients are used first and are not forgotten.
- Use a worm farm or compost your organic waste; this includes eggshells, vacuum dust, hair, loose tea and coffee as well as fruit and vegetable scraps.
- If your council does not have a kerbside organic waste collection, contact them to ask if they could provide one.
- Take 'leftovers' home from restaurants and friends' houses (when offered!)
- Only take what you really need from a buffet table.
- Donate to food programmes, local food pantries, food drives and kitchens used for charity.
- Buy food produced locally or grow your own.
- If you have an excess of food e.g. harvesting home grown fruit, preserve or donate.

Suggested Activities and Resources

- [Caritas Australia School Resources](#) on food security – quiz, liturgy, prayer and lesson plans.
- Download the Sea Good “Litterless Lunchboxes” [Student Toolkit](#) from the Resources section of the Catholic Earthcare Australia website.
- Can you find some passages from Scripture that teach us about eating and wasting food? Here are two to get you started: John 6:12-13 and Luke 9:17.
- Write and/or say a prayer for people who may not have enough food.
- Carry out some research to find out about the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 and the associated 11 targets.
- Understand SDG 12 by downloading [Food Heroes!](#) Lesson plans for 8-14 year olds
- [Education materials](#) on reducing food waste from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Be a [Food Waste Warrior](#) from the World Wildlife Fund.
- [Food Smart Schools](#) lesson plans
- [Twinkl](#)
- Ask students to weigh and keep a record of how much organic food is wasted in their classroom or household. Graph the results.
- Use percentages to understand how much food is thrown away by downloading [Food Waste.](#)
- Write a letter to local council to ask them to adopt a kerbside collection for green waste.
- Role play a situation where students have to persuade their family to buy a worm farm or compost system to recycle green waste in their home.

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Primary

- Read about [SDG Goal 12](#) (Grade 5 and 6) and answer these questions;
 - (a) What is the world's population expected to be in 2030 and 2050?
 - (b) Is this a problem for our natural environment?
- [Unit on Waste](#) for grades 3 and 4 Cool Australia
- Food Waste Grade 5 [Teaching manual](#) from the Tasmanian Government
- [Food scraps to compost](#) from the City of Port Adelaide, Enfield

Secondary

- Watch this video on [food kilometres and food waste](#)
- Read about [SDG Goal 12](#) and answer these questions;
 - (a) How is an increasing world population going to impact our food, water and energy supplies?
 - (b) What can we do about this?
 - (c) Read one of the related news articles that you find interesting.
- Look at this information from the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) of the United Nations and answer these questions;
 - (a) Analyse the results from the graph "Percentage of food loss by region, 2016-20".
 - (b) Can you explain why developing countries have higher food losses than developed countries?

Download [The Human Face](#) lesson plans for 13–16-year olds where students look at the environmental impacts of food industries and the social impacts on equality and human rights for those that work in these industries.



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