



## How to curb food wastage

*Wasting food is linked to hunger, wastage of natural resources and pollution*

Did you know that globally, sufficient food is produced to feed twice the world population? It is food wastage that is behind hunger and malnourishment. India's ranking in the Global Hunger Index in 2019 was 102, down from 95 in 2010. This is despite the fact that agricultural production has increased over the years. Nearly 15% of the Indian population is undernourished. Shockingly, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), nearly 40% of the food produced in India is wasted or lost.

Food wastage is harmful as it is linked to hunger, wastage of natural resources, climate change, pollution (caused by

food waste disposal) and food inflation. Trees are cut on acres of land in order to grow food and 25% of fresh water used to produce food is ultimately wasted. Food dumped in landfills gets decomposed releasing methane, a greenhouse gas. Toxins leach from food waste contaminating groundwater.

Food wastage in India happens at the time of harvesting, transporting, processing, packaging, and consuming. A great deal of food wastage occurs at the consumption stage – in homes, restaurants, college canteens, and at social events.

### **DoCA study**

A study was conducted in Delhi in 2011 by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA). The major findings were:

**Nutshell**

- Food wastage is behind hunger and malnourishment in the world
- Nearly 40% of the food produced in India is lost or wasted

- 93.4% of the respondents said that food is wasted in social gatherings like marriages, birthday and anniversary parties, and meetings and conferences
- 74.9% said that this is mostly an urban phenomenon but is catching up in the rural areas

- 89.1% said that food wastage is very high during marriages

### What consumers can do

Technology and improved storage could curb food wastage. Hotels and restaurants could donate excess food instead of throwing it away. Here are 10 things you, as a consumer, can do:

**Shop judiciously:** Since food is a perishable item, be conservative while shopping so that you do not have to throw away food later. Purchase local and seasonal food which stays fresh longer, is tastier and eco-friendly too.

**Store foods carefully:** Store grains and pulses in airtight containers and ensure your refrigerator is working properly.

**Manage your inventory:** Use fruits and vegetables before they spoil and you have to throw them away. Regularly go through your pantry to check labels for best before/expiry dates. Use the FIFO (first in, first out) rule in your pantry and refrigerator. Keep older items in the front so that they get used up first.



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**Donate leftover food:** If you plan a social event for a large number of people, plan to donate the leftover good to an orphanage, an old-age home, a food bank or an organisation which distributes leftover food to the needy.

**Clean your plate:** Try to achieve 'zero plate waste' by eating all there is on your plate. When you are at a buffet serve yourself less and then top it up as you feel the need. Ask for 'doggy bags' at restaurants to take home food you are not able to finish. At home, you can use cutlery of smaller size to help curb waste.

**Cook carefully:** Cook less food rather than more. You can always supplement a meal by consuming milk and/or fruits. Minimise waste while cooking. For instance, you can use cauliflower stems and orange rinds while cooking instead of dumping them.

**Be innovative:** Do not throw away leftover food that is in a good condition. At times, you can transform leftover food into an interesting new item. For instance, stale bread can be used to make croutons. Also, fruits and vegetables that are past their prime can be used to make soups and smoothies as long as they are not spoilt.

**Compost kitchen waste:** You can make compost from fruit and vegetable peels, stale vegetables, and tea leaves too.

**Teach them young:** Make children aware of the importance of food and the impact of food waste on the environment.

**Maintain a waste log:** If you are constantly aware of the amount of food wasted (and its cost) you are likely to waste less in future.

Sources: [www.farmveda.in](http://www.farmveda.in), [thecsrjournal.in](http://thecsrjournal.in), [food.ndtv.com](http://food.ndtv.com), [www.thebetterindia.com](http://www.thebetterindia.com)