

Wasted Food Has a HUGE Effect on the Environment!

It turns out that this is a very complex problem. I will only touch on enough of it to hopefully pique your interest/curiosity and you will delve more deeply into it on your own.

I have long held the belief that wasting food was wrong because there are hungry people in the world. I never considered the environmental impact until I started researching for this report. The numbers are staggering. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), **“one third of all food produced in the world goes to waste. That is an estimated 1.3 billion tons of food, costing 2.6 trillion US dollars annually, and more than enough to feed the 815 million hungry people in the world four times over.”**

Next consider what resources are required to produce the food and get it to your table. Water for crop irrigation, land for planting and fuel to power harvest and transport vehicles. Let's consider water, one of our most precious resources. 70% of the earth's fresh water is used for irrigating crops, drinking water for livestock, packaging and transporting food. Land is another of our precious commodities. The FAO estimates that 28% of the world's agricultural land is used to produce food that is ultimately lost or wasted every year.

Food waste also contributes to the emission of greenhouse gases. When discarded food rots in landfills, it produces methane. Greenhouse gases are also emitted from vehicles that produce and transport food. Livestock produce methane. If we stop wasting food, we will reduce the emission of @ 11% of the greenhouse gases that are produced in the production of food.

Finally, let's remember the initial steps in producing food. To have a farm, you must clear land. This disrupts wildlife habitats and ultimately reduces biodiversity.

As I said, this is a complex problem. We cannot change the world, but there are things that we can all easily do:

Be more diligent in your meal planning. Buy what you need, store it correctly and consume it before it spoils!

Know your labels! “Best by”, “Sell By” and “Use By” dates are largely arbitrary dates placed by food manufacturers and they are their “best estimates” of food's shelf-life. Based upon these dates, people are throwing out perfectly good food.

Use Leftovers!

Compost!