

FAO director-general calls for renewed commitment to zero tolerance on food loss, waste

At an event at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, FAO director-general José Graziano da Silva joined in calls for a renewed global commitment to zero tolerance on food loss and waste. The event focused on tackling food loss and waste as a pathway to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger.



José Graziano da Silva, director-general, FAO. ©FAO/Alessandra Benedetti.

"Zero tolerance for food loss and waste makes economic sense. According to a report, every \$1 invested in food loss and food waste policies brings \$14 in return," Graziano da Silva told event attendees. "Investing in measures to prevent food loss and food waste also means making investments in pro-poor policies as it promotes sustainable food systems for a zero hunger world," he added.

One-third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally each year. This loss and waste occurs throughout the supply chain, from farm to fork. Beyond food, it represents a waste of labour, water, energy, land and other inputs. If food loss and waste were a country, it would rank as the third highest national emitter of greenhouse gases.

Global call for greater cooperation

Graziano da Silva joined Gilbert Houngbo, president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), David Beasley, executive director of the World Food Programme (WFP), Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, minister of climate change and environment of the United Arab Emirates, Josefa Correia Sacko, commissioner for rural economy and agriculture of the African Union as well as representatives of the governments of Germany, the Netherlands and Angola in calling for greater cooperation by governments, business, development partners, farmers groups and others to address the problem.

Of the 815-million hungry people in the world, the majority live in rural areas of developing countries and are family farmers, pastoralists or fishers. They have poor access to modern means of preventing food losses and waste, and often local food systems are subject to gaps in post-harvest handling, transportation, processing and refrigeration.

By reducing loss and waste along the food value chain, healthy food systems can contribute to promoting climate adaptation and mitigation, preserving natural resources, and reinforcing rural livelihoods.

Tools to help prevent loss and waste

FAO has developed tools and methodologies for identifying losses, their causes and potential solutions along the entire food value chain, from production, storage and processing to distribution and consumption.

In South-East Asia, for example, fruit and vegetable producers found that around 20% of tomatoes were damaged during transportation because of the way they were packed in bulk. Initiatives to improve packaging practices, with the participation of producers and other stakeholders, resulted in an impressive 90% reduction of these losses.

In 2013, FAO launched a global initiative on food loss and waste called Save Food. The platform includes a network of more than 500 partners from international organisations, the private sector, civil society and others with the objective of promoting awareness and the exchange of ideas and best practices on preventing food waste and loss.

FAO also produces data and information so that decision-makers can better understand where and how food losses and waste occur, and the agency is working with partners to measure the impact of food loss and waste reductions on food security and nutrition.

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