

Is excessive food waste an environmental concern

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Excessive Food Waste: Is it an Environmental Concern? Excessive Food Waste: Is it an Environmental Concern? According to a report by the U. S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), remarkably few citizens know that excessive food waste is an environmental hazard. Excessive food refers to wasteful practices by consumers and during production. Most people argue that since food is biodegradable, it does not pose a threat to the environment. However, a report published by EPA revealed that when food rots, it produces a greenhouse gas known as methane. Amazingly, methane is twenty times more damaging to the environment than carbon dioxide (CNN, 2007). On the other hand, the U. S Department of Agriculture (USDA) argues that if only five percent of Americans' food scraps were recovered, it would be enough to feed four million people for a day. USDA reported that close to 26 million tons of wasted food gets thrown away in garbage annually. In fact, in 2010, food approximated to 34 million tons went to waste. In addition, food waste formed the single largest component of municipal solid waste reaching incinerators and landfills (CNN, 2007). EPA notes that the U. S government spends close to one billion dollars just to dispose off all its wasted food. This is exceedingly astonishing. The excess money spent on the management of wasted food can be used to run vital government departments.

Experts from the University of Arizona believe that the country's environmental impact can be reduced by 25 percent, if Americans can reduce their food wastage by a half (Salinger, 2012). This appears to be true because the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) indicated on 10th January, 2012 that one third of the food produced for human consumption

globally, goes to waste every year (Salinger, 2012). FAO reported that consumers and retailers in the U. S waste close to 40 percent of edible food annually. The data from FAO is also astonishing and calls for immediate actions.

From the data reported earlier, it is clear that excessive food waste is becoming a serious environmental hazard. Considering the report produced by FAO, the U. S is just a representative of many nations whose citizens waste tons of food annually. The most alarming bit is that methane, the gas produced from food rot, traps heat in the atmosphere 23 times more than the widely known carbon dioxide. Since global warming affects the whole earth, stakeholders should consider passing international regulations that regulate the quantity of wasted food a country produces, in order to curb methane overproduction.

Surprisingly, not so many people know the environmental impacts of wasted food. During dinner time at my uncle's place, I realized that none of his family members knew that Americans waste close to 29 million tons of food annually. They did not know that methane gas produced from food rot is more hazardous to the environment than carbon dioxide. They were surprised that wasted food contributes to global warming. My uncle could not believe that the government spends over one billion dollars to manage wasted food. Thus, I agree with experts who recommend the following ways in which consumers can prevent food wastage. First, consumers need to embrace the idea of converting wasted food into compost manure. Second, consumers with excess food should consider donating extra food to food banks. Third, Consumers should embrace reliable food storage methods to

avoid food wastage due to poor storage. Finally, consumers should learn how to budget for their food so that they do not buy excess food. Therefore, it requires collective responsibility in order to reduce food wastage and the concomitant global warming effect that results from unnecessary food wastage.

References

CNN: Green House Gas. Sept. 27, 2007. All about Food Waste. Retrieved on 5 April 2012 from <http://cnn.com>.

Salinger, G. (2012). Five Simple things Consumers Can do to Prevent Food Wastage. Retrieved on 5 April 2012 from www.who.org/fao.