

One billion meals thrown away every day

19th October 2026



More than one billion meals are thrown away worldwide every day, despite famine and millions of people starving. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recently reported that households are responsible for 60 per

cent of food waste, followed by restaurants and food services at 28 per cent, and shops at 12 per cent. The Maldives has the highest estimated household food waste per person, at around 260 kilograms annually. Syria, Seychelles, Mexico and Tunisia also recorded high levels. Globally, food waste accounts for 8 to 10 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. As discarded food decomposes in landfills, it releases the dangerous greenhouse gas methane, which accelerates global warming.

Individuals, businesses and governments can all take practical steps to reduce food waste. People should plan meals, prepare shopping lists, and purchase only what they need. We should store ingredients correctly and freeze surplus portions. We should also turn leftovers into new dishes and compost inedible waste. Restaurants and supermarkets also have a huge part to play in reducing food loss. They can donate surplus food to communities in need. Martin Krause, Director of the Climate Change Division at UNEP, said: "Every meal rescued, shared or never wasted is food put to better use." Reducing waste would save money, improve food security and help curb climate change.

Sources: unep.org / aljazeera.com / worldwildlife.org

Writing

Countries should be fined for their levels of food waste. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

meals / famine / UN / food waste / restaurants / greenhouse gas / landfills / methane / businesses / governments / shopping lists / leftovers / compost / food security

True / False

- 1) Over a billion meals go to waste every day in Asia. T / F
- 2) Food in the home represents 60% of global food waste. T / F
- 3) Maldives has the highest amount of food waste per person. T / F
- 4) Food waste is responsible for up to 10% of greenhouse gas emissions. T / F
- 5) The article says shopping lists can help to reduce food waste. T / F
- 6) The article says we should throw away leftovers. T / F
- 7) The article says restaurants give 15% of their stock to communities. T / F
- 8) Reducing food waste can help curb climate change. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. thrown away | a. workable |
| 2. famine | b. rots |
| 3. estimated | c. uneaten food |
| 4. decomposes | d. speeds up |
| 5. accelerates | e. food shortages |
| 6. practical | f. hold back |
| 7. purchase | g. approximate |
| 8. leftovers | h. excess |
| 9. surplus | i. discarded |
| 10. curb | j. buy |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What can individuals do to reduce food waste?
- c) What can supermarkets do to reduce food waste?
- d) What can governments do to reduce food waste?
- e) What do you do with leftovers?
- f) What do you think of all of us growing our own food?
- g) Should everyone eat much less?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the UN?

Phrase Match

1. despite famine and millions
 2. households are responsible
 3. Tunisia also recorded
 4. discarded food decomposes
 5. it releases the dangerous
 6. take practical steps to
 7. take practical steps
 8. turn leftovers into
 9. donate surplus food
 10. improve food
- a. to reduce food waste
 - b. greenhouse gas methane
 - c. high levels
 - d. security
 - e. reduce food waste
 - f. of people starving
 - g. to communities
 - h. in landfills
 - i. new dishes
 - j. for 60 per cent

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think of food waste?
- b) How much food do you waste?
- c) How do you feel when you throw food away?
- d) What can we do about food waste?
- e) How can we give food that we might waste to those who need it?
- f) How can we waste so much food while people are starving?
- g) What do you know about methane?
- h) What can we do with food waste rather than put it in landfills?

Spelling

1. despite fieman and millions of people starving
2. households are lbseprseoni
3. greenhouse gas eissnoim
4. As discarded food coessdopem in landfills
5. the dangerous greenhouse gas emtenha
6. laaeestcerc global warming
7. dliavnidsiu, businesses and governments
8. pehracsu only what they need
9. freeze rulupss portions
10. compost bideenli waste
11. euciismtnmo in need
12. ubrc climate change

Answers – Synonym Match

1. i	2. e	3. g	4. b	5. d
6. a	7. j	8. c	9. h	10. f

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	How much food waste is produced by households?
2.	Which country wastes the most food per capita?
3.	What percentage of greenhouse gas emissions is from food waste?
4.	Where does discarded food decompose?
5.	What does the article say accelerates global warming?
6.	What kind of lists can people make to reduce food waste?
7.	What does the article recommend freezing?
8.	What does the article say we should do to inedible waste?
9.	What does the article say has a huge part to play in reducing food loss?
10.	What can reducing food waste help curb?

Speaking – Saving Food

Rank these with your partner. Put the best ways to save food at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Shopping lists
- Freeze leftover
- Buy less food
- Share food
- Check food dates
- Grow own food
- Restaurant doggy bags
- Eat leftovers later

Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	T	4	T	5	T	6	F	7	F	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.