

## Sansad TV Perspective: Food Loss & Waste

In the series Sansad TV Perspective, we bring you an analysis of the discussion featured on the insightful programme 'Perspective' on Sansad TV, on various important topics affecting India and also the world. This analysis will help you immensely for the [IAS exam](#), especially the mains exam, where a well-rounded understanding of topics is a prerequisite for writing answers that fetch good marks.

In this article, we feature the discussion on the topic: UNSC: Food Loss & Waste.

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**Guests:**

1. Dr. Ruchika Singh, Director, Sustainable Landscapes and Restoration, WRI India
2. Alok Sinha, Former Chairman and Managing Director, Food Corporation of India
3. Urmi Goswami, Senior Journalist

**Context:** International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste.

**Highlights of the discussion:**

- Introduction.
- Issue of food loss and waste.
- Rationale of the day.
- Associated Concerns.
- Measures taken.
- Way Ahead.

**Introduction:**

- The International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (IDAFW) was observed for the third time on 29 September 2022. The theme of the day was 'Stop Food Loss and Waste! For People and Planet.' This day assumes huge importance due to the rising food insecurity across the world.
- According to the United Nations Environment Programme(UNEP), an estimated 14 percent of the world's food is lost between harvest and retail. Moreover, an estimated 17 percent is wasted in retail and at the consumption level.
- Moreover, this food loss and waste account for 8-10 percent of the total global greenhouse gas emissions. Food loss and waste undermine the sustainability of the food systems thus making them less resilient.

### Issue of Food Loss and Waste:

- The problem of food loss and waste is huge, as it not just entails food loss but also covers the loss of resources that are involved in the production of food. One of the major resources is water that is consumed in producing food crops.
- The other material resources include fertilizers, seeds, time, labor, etc.
- While addressing food loss and waste, issues like malnutrition, inequity of access to food, issues of wasting material resources, etc are also addressed.
- IPCC talks about emissions and global footprint, a large chunk of emissions can be attributed to emissions in the entire food supply chain.
- In country-specific findings, [UNEP \(United Nations Environment Programme\)](#) in 2021 showed that the Food Loss and waste in India is 50 kg per capita, which is better than the global average.

### Rationale/ Benefits of celebrating the International day:

- It brings the concept of Food waste to the forefront of discussions and deliberations.
- It is a critical problem of a society that was not getting adequate attention, so [United Nations General Assembly](#) gave acceptance in 2019 to celebrate the International Day of Awareness of food loss and Waste.
- There were also movements in several parts of the world against food wastage that also gave impetus to the issue in the international arena.
- Moreover, it is a crucial issue in terms of policy and economy that doesn't get the desired attention.
- The overproduction of certain types of crops also adds to the issue of food waste.
- With growing affluence and urbanization, the issue is becoming more challenging and thus needs to be brought to the spotlight.

### Associated Concerns:

- The economic cost of post-harvest loss is nearly 926.51 Billion Indian Rupees (as per a 2014 study). It is about 0.6% of India's GDP and two and a half times the Budget estimate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- Apart from Food loss and waste, there are gaps in terms of policy issues and research.
- According to a systematic literature review conducted in this aspect, it was noticed that the focus in India is mostly on the quantity of post-harvest loss. The data on food wastage at the retail and household levels is at the nascent stage.

- The problem of food wastage is at multiple levels beginning from the farm gate, Mandis to retail shops and individual households. Moreover, it can be at various stages like collection, storage, packing, processing, transportation, etc.

**Measure taken:**

- Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 talks about halving food loss and waste by 2030. It also talks about halving the food loss in production and supply chains.
- India is one of the few countries that has been systematically estimating food loss since 1968 and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has also conducted several studies and quantified the loss at certain levels.
- Ashok Dalwai committee has also suggested various interventions that go beyond the supply chain.
- Globally a network of Champions 12.3 is being developed.
  - Champions 12.3 is a coalition of executives from different governments, businesses, International organizations, research institutes, pharma groups, etc.
  - They are coming together to devise strategies and inspire and mobilize actions towards achieving [SDG 12.3](#).

**Way Ahead:**

- Action should be taken across the entire supply chain from producer to consumer.
- A nodal agency should also be constituted to look after the matter in a comprehensive manner, as presently the system is extremely fragmented.
- Technological interventions like farm machinery, storage, etc can improve the condition to a great extent.
- Disaggregate data should also be collected to know the problem areas and tailor the solution according to the magnitude and severity of the problem.
- The policy interventions should be cohesive along with robust infrastructure and proper awareness programmes at both producer and consumer levels. Apart from that awareness should be created at all levels like international, national, regional, and local levels.
- Food processing can be expanded, especially for perishable products. This would have a positive impact on the economy of the country as well.
- Moreover, Agriculture Research Centers should provide adequate training to help farmers better market and manage their products.
- Since the issue of food wastage is not just centered around food insecurity, there is a need to increase the space of operation.
- A better assessment of food wastage and loss is also required so that regional policy decisions can be deliberated and prepared.

- Since it is a multidimensional problem, the solution should also be holistic. It can include aspects like Integrated pest management, capacity building, packaging, etc.
- Food loss and waste should be looked at as a disjoint issue because some data regarding food loss is available, but there is no data regarding food wastage in India.
- One of the major solutions is to address the issue of uncertainty in agriculture marketing.

**Conclusion:**

The issue of food loss and wastage is complex. It poses economic as well as policy challenges. The interventions are required at various levels apart from reforms in regulatory procedures. The problem of food loss and wastage is a life-cycle problem and thus requires a life-cycle solution.

