



One out of every four calories produced by the global agricultural system is being lost or wasted, according to new analysis. This poses a serious challenge to the planet's ability to reduce hunger and meet the food needs of a rapidly-expanding global population.

Released on [World Environment Day](#) (WED), which this year carries the theme 'Think.Eat.Save - Reduce Your Foodprint', the new working paper, Reducing Food Loss and Waste, shows that more than half of the food lost and wasted in Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia occurs close to the fork—at the consumption stage. By contrast, in developing countries, about two-thirds of the food lost and wasted occurs close to the farm—after harvest and storage.

Reducing Food Loss and Waste was produced by the [World Resources Institute](#) (WRI) and the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) (UNEP), and draws on research from the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) (FAO).

It makes a range of recommendations including the development of a "food loss and waste protocol"—a global standard for how to measure, monitor and report food loss and waste. If what gets measured gets managed, then such a protocol could go a long way toward helping Governments and companies implement targeted efforts to reduce food loss and waste.

According to the study, which was released today in Mongolia, global host of WED 2013, the world will need about 60 per cent more food calories in 2050 compared to 2006 if global demand continues on its current trajectory.

Halving current rates of food loss and waste, say the authors, would reduce this gap by a fifth. This would also result in major savings in water use, energy, pesticides and fertilizers, and would be a boost for global food security.

"Beyond all the environmental benefits, reducing food loss and waste will save money for people and companies," said Craig Hanson, Director of WRI's People & Ecosystems Program and a co-author of the study. "The world needs urgent solutions to feed its growing population and reducing loss and waste is a critical piece toward a more sustainable food future."

"It is an extraordinary fact that in the 21st century, close to 25 per cent of all the calories linked with growing and producing food are lost or wasted between the farm and the fork—food that could feed the hungry, food that has required energy, water and soils in a world of increasing natural resource scarcities and environmental concerns including climate change," said Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary- General and UNEP Executive Director.

"Yet within the challenge of food are the seeds of a more cooperative and sustainable future—in short it is an issue that unites everyone today and generations to come. The menu of case studies and recommendations in this study provide national and community-led solutions that ally smart policies with traditional knowledge, modern science and common sense," he added.

"Everyone -- from farmers and food companies to retailers, shipping lines, packagers, hotels, restaurants and households -- has a role to play, and, in doing so, can contribute to maximizing the opportunities of the Millennium Development Goals, eradicating inequalities in rich and poor countries alike and laying the foundations of a more environmentally sustainable pathway for billions of people," said Mr. Steiner.

The paper includes a number of recommendations, including:

- Developing a common global standard for measuring and reporting food loss and waste by Governments and the private sector;
- Setting global, national and corporate food loss and waste reduction targets on the order of 50 percent;
- Doubling investment in reducing post-harvest losses in developing countries; and
- Establishing agencies and organizations in developed countries tasked with reducing food waste.

UNEP, together with FAO and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), is developing a food waste prevention and reduction tool kit with industry experts, supermarkets, Governments and other partners. The initiative will support Governments, companies and cities to better assess their own levels of food waste, pinpoint areas in their businesses and communities where food is being needlessly wasted, and devise strategies to reduce this waste. The tool kit is expected to be available for widespread deployment before the end of 2013, and aims to underpin a transition to a less wasteful world.

Additional links:

The new working paper Reducing Food Loss and Waste, is available at: www.wri.org and [hq web.unep.org](http://hq.web.unep.org)

About World Environment Day: WED aims to be the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action. WED activities take place year round but climax on 5 June. WED celebrations began in 1972 and have grown to become the one of the main vehicles through which the UN stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action. The WED 2013 theme is in support of the Think.Eat.Save campaign. For more information on activities in the host country Mongolia, and on hundreds of other global events, visit the WED site at: eb.unep.org/wed/ [hq](#)

About the Think.Eat.Save. Reduce Your Foodprint campaign: The campaign harnesses the expertise of organizations such as FAO, WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), Feeding the 5,000 and other partners, including national Governments, who have considerable experience targeting and changing wasteful practices. It aims to accelerate action and provide a global vision and information-sharing portal for the many initiatives currently underway around the world that aim to reduce food waste and food loss. Visit:www.thinkeatsave.org

World Resources Institute: WRI (www.wri.org) focuses on the intersection of the environment and socio-economic development.