



Informed decision can reduce our foodprint

Reduction of waste at the source is of paramount importance. This is possible through our informed decision about food choice.

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UNITED Nation Environment Programme (UNEP), in its Governing Council meeting considered the most pressing environmental issues as food waste and food loss, where an individual can contribute to a low carbon and resource efficient future. Therefore this year the theme of the World Environment Day (WED) is “Think. Eat. Save. Reduce Your Foodprint”. Mongolia, one of the World's fastest growing green economy has been named as global host of WED. Meaning of this year's theme is manifold. Food waste means all the resources used in the production of food are also lost. Statistics suggest that the global food production occupies 25% of all habitable land, consumes 70% of fresh water, contributes to 80% of deforestation and responsible for 30% of greenhouse gas emission. In this context, informed decision means to select foods that have less impact on our environment. As an example, we can think of taking organic food, which has less impact on environment. Another way to reduce our foodprint is to buy food locally. Local food means less transportation cost or less storage cost.

UNEP thinks that over half of the food produced today is either lost, wasted or discarded as a result of inefficiency in the human-managed food chain. In low income countries, food waste and losses occur at early stages of food supply chain, mainly due to financial, managerial and technical constraints in harvesting techniques, storage and transportation. In high income countries, food waste and losses occur at later stages of food supply chain, mainly due to consumer behaviours. For example, in UK the single largest producer of food waste is the domestic household. On average 6.7

million tonnes of food waste, which account for 19% of all municipal solid waste produced in UK. Potato, salad, bread slice and apple are the main composition of the waste, which clearly related to people's choice of buying food. A statistics suggest that “the world could feed the entire projected population growth alone by becoming more efficient while also ensuring the survival of wild animals, birds and fish on the planet”.

In order to reduce our carbon footprint, we shall have to reduce our foodprint. Food waste has a damaging effect on the environment. When disposed of in a landfill, food waste releases methane, a critical greenhouse gas and leachate, a toxin capable of groundwater pollution. The food supply chain in UK accounts for one fifth of its carbon emissions. The production, storage and transportation require large amounts of energy. One of the regulatory requirements set up by European Union's Landfill Directive is to reduce biodegradable municipal waste gradually by 35% in 2020. In June 2009, former Environment Secretary announced the government's “War on Waste” programme. This has reduced waste by 0.13million tonnes. In addition to that different waste disposal techniques have been introduced. One of such techniques is anaerobic digestion technique, where biodegradable materials can be broken down in absence of oxygen. Another technique is the incineration of waste. Recovering the energy generated from these processes has become of great importance. Recently the level of emissions from such process has been substantially reduced by developing new technology and also by environmental permitting regulation.

Our foodprint is related to our carbon footprint. This means that foodprint is related to global climate change. Recently

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Waste not, want not

Bangladesh being an agrarian economy should be more proactive in handling pre-consumption food wastage as food system represents a great part of our carbon footprint.

MD. TOUHIDUL ALAM KHAN and RAISA RAHIM

BANGLADESH goes two steps up in ranking from 70th position to 68th in 2012 Global Hunger Index (GHI). Global Hunger Index is a report jointly prepared and published by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe. Although it is a good news especially in terms of eradicating hunger and reducing poverty, nonetheless, the country's hunger situation still remains 'alarming' as defined by the index criterion of the published report.

Food and food waste has been an emerging global problem for the past few years. With accelerated economic growth and increasing production, food waste will be a matter of grave concern also in Bangladesh sooner or later. Bangladesh, being the ninth most populous and twelfth most densely populated country in the world will surely bear consequences of both food scarcity as well as food loss if food wastage problem is not addressed.

Today is World Environment Day and it is celebrated every year on 5th of June all over the globe. The theme is set about by UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme) every year and this year's theme is Think. Eat. Save. Reduce your Foodprint. It is an anti-food waste and food loss campaign. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), every year 1.3 billion tons of food is wasted. This is equivalent to the same amount produced in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, 1 in every 7 people in the world go to bed hungry and more than 20,000 children under the age of 5 die daily from hunger. Approximately 98% of the world's hungry live in developing nations.

Bangladesh, being an LDC and an emerging economy, still has most of its regions poverty stricken. 49% of the country's population still living below national poverty line. In order to address problems strategically, food and food wastage problems will pose serious challenges indeed in the years to come.

Food, food waste and the environment are inextricably linked. Food that is thrown away when it could have been sold or eaten is wasted. But it is more than just the food itself. It is also a waste of all the natural resources that are used to produce, harvest, transport, process, package and distribute the food product. Have you ever wondered that scrapping leftovers into the bin contributes directly to climate change? When wasted food is thrown away and breaks down in landfill, together with organic materials, it becomes the main contributor to generation of methane a gas, 25 times stronger than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in atmosphere. Food waste has an environmental impact caused by the loss of natural resources used to produce the food and the greenhouse gas emissions created during its production and disposal. The fact that food



is wasted amongst a fixed class group while rest 49% of the country's population are going to bed hungry means it surely has a social impact.

Bangladesh being an agrarian economy should be more proactive in handling pre-consumption food wastage as food system represents a great part of our carbon footprint. According to Waste Database of Bangladesh (published by Waste Concern), food and vegetable waste comprises approximately 67.75% of urban solid waste. From Year 1991 to Year 2005, per capita waste generation rate in urban areas have been increased from 0.31 to 0.41. It has been further projected that by the year 2025, per capita waste generation rate in urban areas will increase to 0.60. With waste generation increasing in direct proportion with GDP and population, food waste will be a challenging issue indeed.

Pre-consumer waste is generated at many points in the food supply chain including manufacture, processing, storing and retailing. Traditional farming practices like clearing, cultivating, irrigating, spraying, fertilizing and cropping can impact our environment and combined with the introduction of pesticides and occurrence of, soil loss, dry land and salinity intrusion, have changed our landscape for worse. Inefficient farming methods and lack of knowledge amongst the farmers on efficient handling and usage of agricultural techniques have already contributed to the effects of climate change.

Other than food supply chain, pre-consumer food waste may also result from overproduction, spoilage, products not meeting the demands of food retailing and wholesaling sectors (size and aesthetic) and food preparation. Although half of the country's population is still below poverty line, the urban upper class group and the emerging dominant middle class is a contributing group to food wastage.

Food is also wasted after purchase. Post-consumer

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In the future, there will be no difference between waste and energy.



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