COP30
FACTSHEETS

UN environment programme

Food waste



The UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) will take place in Belém, Brazil, from November 10-21. Key expectations include the presentation of new national climate action plans (NDCs), progress on finance from COP29, and discussions on scaling innovative climate finance mechanisms. The conference will also feature the COP30 Action Agenda, a program to engage businesses, civil society, and various levels of government in practicalclimate solutions.

Overview

With up to one-third of all food produced globally lost or wasted yearly, urgent action is needed to end food loss and waste.

Cutting food waste is one of the fastest and most affordable climate solutions, capable of delivering immediate methane reductions while improving food security and resource efficiency.

Food loss and waste account for nearly USD 1 trillion in economic losses every year, undermining global efforts to achieve sustainable food systems and resilient economies.

Key messages

In 2022, **1.05 billion tonnes of food were wasted** – equal to 19% of food available to consumers. This is on top of 13% lost before reaching retail.

Food waste contributes to **8-10% of global GHG emissions,** including up to 14% of methane, one of the most powerful climate pollutants.

Methane is 86 times more potent than CO_2 over 20 years, making food waste one of the most urgent and avoidable climate issues.

At the same time, **783 million people face hunger**, while households waste at least one billion meals every day.

Food waste reduction offers a **triple win:** climate mitigation, food security, and economic savings.

Success depends on **partnerships:** governments, businesses, cities, and philanthropy working together.

Key data

Halving global food waste by 2030 can deliver **up to 7% reduction in methane emissions** and directly support the Global Methane Pledge.

Households are the largest source, responsible for 60% of global food waste, showing the need for targeted consumer engagement.

Food waste is a **global challenge:** levels are similar across high-, middle-, and low-income countries.

With 70% of food consumed in cities (set to rise to 80% by 2050), **urban action is critical** for cutting emissions, saving resources, and building resilience.

According to the latest estimates, only **24 countries have included food loss and/or waste reduction targets in their updated NDCs 3.0**, with just 12 specifically targeting food waste (WRAP, 2024).

Strong **measurement, policy integration, and finance** are needed to turn commitments into action.

What to expect at COP30?

Formal launch of the Food Waste Breakthrough under Activation Group 15 “Solid Waste Management” of the Action Agenda at COP30, with country champions Brazil, Japan and UAE.

The Breakthrough is a **five-year plan for governments, cities, food businesses and stakeholders** to cut food waste by 50% by keeping food out of landfills – resulting in **up to 7% reduction in global methane emissions.**

It builds on the COP28 Emirates Declaration, the COP29 Declaration on Organic Waste Methane, and the G20 Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty.

Members of Activation Group 15 are working together to formulate a plan of action for implementation of circular economy, food waste prevention and organic waste management solutions.

Side events will showcase leadership from governments, cities, businesses, and in **food waste prevention and methane emissions mitigation.**

Discussions will spotlight **financing needs and opportunities,** especially for consumer behaviour change and public-private partnerships.

UNEP's work on this

Led by the **Urban Food Systems team** of the **Cities Unit of the Climate Change Division**, UNEP fulfils a global mandate (UNEA Resolution 4/2) to support member states, build cooperation, and track progress towards halving food waste by 2030.

As **custodian of SDG 12.3**, UNEP publishes the **Food Waste Index Report**, the most comprehensive global and national assessment of food waste, and provides the common measurement methodology for tracking progress at country-level.

UNEP convenes **Regional Food Waste Working Groups** in Africa, Asia-Pacific, LAC, and West Asia, training over 25 countries on measurement and reduction, and supporting peer-to-peer learning.

Provides **direct technical support** to governments to design national food waste strategies and integrate them into climate and biodiversity plans.

Co-convenes **annual G20 regional workshops** with the MACS-G20 Food Loss and Waste initiative, most recently in Pretoria focusing on food loss and waste in Africa.

Advocates globally by co-leading the **International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste** with FAO each 29 September.

Works with ***retailers*** to pilot consumer behaviour change programmes in retail environments and with **cities** to design integrated interventions for circular urban food systems. UNEP is developing a Facilitation Guide for a Youth-led Month of Action on Food Waste to engage the future caretakers of food systems in local action.

Further reading

UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2024

Global Methane Pledge COP28 Emirates

Declaration on Sustainable Food Systems

Food is Never Waste Coalition

UNEP on Food Systems

Stop Food Loss and Waste

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