

Sustainability

FOOD CHOICES

With a skyrocketing population, which is estimated to reach 10 billion by 2050, how do we produce, process and transport enough food to provide a nutritious diet for everyone, while at the same time, making sure that people are protected and the planet stays healthy and can provide for future generations?

FACTS:

Choosing your proteins: 33 percent of croplands are used for livestock feed production. As livestock density increases and is in closer confines with wildlife and humans, there is a growing risk of **disease** that threatens every single one of us: 66 % of the emerging diseases in humans have animal origins and one or two new diseases emerge every year. ([FAO](#))

Sourcing your food: Oceans serve as the world's largest source of protein, with more than 3 billion people depending on the oceans as their primary source. Some species are at risk of being overfished, or produced in ways that harm the marine environment.

Avoiding processed/packaged foods – From **packaging** to ingredients, foods like a nutrition bar could have a long list of ingredients, sourced from around the world, whereas an apple could be **grown locally** in Wexford and does not need packaging.

Purchase locally and seasonally Foods that travel long distances or are grown out of season are not typically sustainable. It is good to get to know your local seasonal produce.

Buy Fairtrade [Fairtrade](#) requires standards, which include environmental criteria such as, protecting the natural environment, banning the use of harmful pesticides, minimising the use of energy and water, especially from non-renewable sources, and making environmental protection part of farm management.

DISCUSS: What steps could you take to make your diet more sustainable for people and planet.



FOOD WASTE

Global food loss and waste amount to between one-third and one-half of all food produced. Imagine you have just walked in to an Irish Supermarket with its full shelves of produce and products. Multiply that in your mind by your community, town, city, county and nation. Think about the waste produced by this abundance, not to mention the resources that went in to produce it. We produce enough food in the world to ensure all people can have a nutritious diet, yet 821 million people go hungry every year. Much of our food produced is never eaten.

FACTS:

In **Ireland**, it is estimated that there are over one million tonnes of food waste disposed of each year. Around 1/3 of this comes from households.

Food waste costs about \$1 trillion per year and accounts for about 10% of greenhouse gas emissions from food systems. (FAO) **1 out of every 4 calories never gets eaten.** It is estimated that almost one-third of all food produced around the world is wasted. This equates to 1.3 billion tons of waste every year! 821 million people go hungry each year. (FAO)

Soil erosion and land usage: Major contributors to land occupation of food wastage are meat and milk, with 78 percent of the total surface, whereas their contribution to total food wastage is 11 percent. (FAO)

Deforestation: Prompted in part by global food production inefficiency, 9.7 million hectares are deforested annually to grow food; this represent 74% of total annual deforestation. (FAO)

Biodiversity loss Food wastage contributes to agricultural expansion into wild areas and increased fishing efforts that unduly overexploit forest and marine habitats. This results in loss of wildlife, including mammals, birds, fish and amphibians. (FAO)

Water: Agriculture already uses 70% of the global freshwater withdrawal and any increased production will likely mean more water use. Water will be a key constraint to global security. (FAO)

DISCUSS: What can we do to manage food production and consumption better?



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FOOD JUSTICE

Food justice is the right to grow, sell, and eat healthy fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals. Sustainable agriculture must be ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible.

FACTS:

Workers Rights Consider the supply chain that every item in you buy has gone through. At each stage, there is a human being on the other end, and often one who is not guaranteed stable work, a living wage or healthcare. Many are forced to migrate often illegally putting them in danger. The recent Covid crisis showed us how reliant we are on these workers to maintain food supplies. Oxfam's [Behind the Brands](#) can help decipher which companies look after workers.

Climate Crisis Extreme weather, changing rainfall patterns, seasonal differences, pests, severe wildfires, water scarcity, drought all the changes in our climate are making it difficult for people to grow food. Those that suffer most from the climate crisis and go without as a result are the most vulnerable. 75% of people living in poverty and are food insecure rely on agriculture and natural resources to survive. ([FAO.org](#))

Corporate control of our food In an increasingly globalized food sector dominated by large transnational corporations, small landowners are getting a smaller portion of the food dollar. Smallholders have a very limited number of buyers, and are in a deeply unequal bargaining position in respect of a fair price for their crops. ([UN](#)) Much of what we consume is produced cheaply in the global south yet profits are made by companies based in wealthy nations. ([Econexus](#)) 10 companies control almost everything we consume. Nestlé, PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, Unilever, Danone, General Mills, Kellogg's, Mars, Associated British Foods, and Mondelez. ([Oxfam](#))

DISCUSS: What food choices can we make to ensure all people are protected and provided with adequate nutrition?



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