

Zero tolerance for food waste a must

June 21 2013



In light of a recent international report warning of impending food production shortages, Dr Shashi Sharma, Chair in Biosecurity and Food Security at Murdoch University, has a simple message: the world must adopt a zero tolerance attitude to food waste.

"The United Nations reports food lost or wasted globally to be around 1.3 billion tonnes of food per annum, which includes four million tonnes wasted in Australia," he said.

"At the same time, two billion people presently suffer hunger and malnutrition worldwide and 25,000 die every day from hunger or hunger-related causes.

"Clearly wasting food is indefensible from an environmental, economic and moral point of view."

Dr Sharma said while the major cause of food loss in developing countries was from pests, developed nations were squandering enough food to feed millions through neglect.

"People are disconnected with the production of food. They have forgotten or have never known how we get the food they consume," he said.

"We fail to appreciate that to produce a kilo of potatoes requires about 500 litres of water and a kilo of rice 2000 litres. That cup of coffee left undrunk has taken 140 litres of water. And then to this you add the physical labour, cost of transportation, fertilisers, environmental impacts, etc."

Dr Sharma said with the [world population](#) set to increase by two billion people in the next 40 years, protection of food had become as important as production.

"We currently lose enough food along the food supply chain to feed two billion people, partly due to pests, but in large part due to waste. A surprising amount can be done by being aware and modifying our habits," Dr Sharma said.

Dr Sharma also encouraged people to be vocal in ensuring Australia's [biosecurity](#). He said currently over 70,000 species of pest were active in the world damaging [agricultural crops](#) and that exotic species caused \$1.4 trillion in losses every year.

More information: www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0066428

Provided by Murdoch University

Citation: Zero tolerance for food waste a must (2013, June 21) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-06-tolerance-food.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.