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One-Third of World's Food Wasted, Report Says

By **JOHN COLLINS RUDOLF**

ReutersA vendor in Khartoum, Sudan, where a surge in food prices has led to hardships. The world may be on the brink of another food crisis, but it isn't from a lack of food.

Fully one-third of all food produced globally — a staggering 1.3 billion tons — is lost or wasted every year, a [new study](#) released on Wednesday by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization finds.

The report determined that overall food loss was divided about equally between the industrialized and developing world, although waste in rich countries was far higher on a per capita level.

In industrialized countries, food losses were most often caused by retailers and consumers who threw “perfectly edible foodstuffs” into the trash, the agency said in a statement. By contrast, losses in the developing world were driven primarily by poor infrastructure and low levels of technology in harvesting, processing and distribution.

Limiting such losses in the developing world could have an “immediate and significant” impact on food security, the study's authors concluded.

The report comes at a time of heightened concern over global food prices, which are at or above levels not seen since the 2008 food crisis, when the soaring cost of basic commodities set off riots across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

In the last year, oil prices over \$100 a barrel and crop losses due to extreme weather have driven a benchmark U.N. food price index to record highs, and have sent more than 40 million people into poverty, the World Bank [said recently](#).

A further 10 percent climb in the index would represent another 10 million people in poverty, the agency said.

Food riots across North Africa this year are also thought to have helped set off the revolutions that overthrew governments in Egypt and Tunisia.

The F.A.O. report, which was produced by the [Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology](#), found opportunities to reduce food waste in the developing world all along the chain of production. Improved harvest techniques, farmer education and better storage and cooling facilities could all make a substantial difference, it concluded.

Nevertheless, the researchers found that little effort was being made to study the problem or develop solutions.

“Further research in the area is urgent, especially considering that food security is a major concern in large parts of the developing world,” they wrote.

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