

# WORLD Environment day

AN ADVERTISER'S FEATURE

Think.Eat.Save.  
Reduce your foodprint is the theme this World Environment Day. It is imperative to make the right food choices. Here's why

**T**his year's World Environment Day message is targeting food wastage and campaigning for correct food choices. This is a problem of nations in North America and Europe, East Asia and urban India. In India, for every child who goes to sleep hungry, an urban child probably throws away his plate of vegetables.

It is estimated by the FAO that approximately 1.3 billion tonnes of food is being wasted everyday throughout the world. This is equivalent to the entire annual agricultural production of sub-Saharan Africa. It is also estimated that one in every seven people in the world goes to bed hungry and more than 20,000 children under the age of five die daily from hunger.

India was a food deficient country till the 1960s when a terrible famine engulfed the whole country. The Green Revolution made the country self-sufficient in food grains. India's food grain output for the year 2011-12 was 252.56 million tonnes. The stocks of food grain with the Government reached 82.4 million tonnes. However, the lack of adequate storage facilities and the absence of a proper distribution system meant that much of the food did not reach those who really needed it. First and foremost, urgent action should be initiated by the Government to prevent wastage. But it is more than food grains. Our consumption of

## Think before you eat



meat is growing. One billion people worldwide do not have access to clean drinking water. Yet the chicken industry uses 3,900 litres of water to produce 1 kilogram of chicken, while only 900 litres is required for 1 kilogram of grain. India is now one of the world's largest producers of milk, with an annual production of about 127 million tones, much of which is exported. The effect of this cattle population on our land is disastrous. It takes more fossil fuels (diesel/petrol) to produce and

transport animals and animal-based food than locally procured grains and vegetables. The ecological consequences of our insatiable appetite for meat, which has grown 500% since 1950, is frightening.

The intensive farming of animals negatively impacts biodiversity through habitat loss, climate change and the introduction of alien species which compete for limited natural resources. For example, although the capacity of the world's fishing fleets has increased five-fold in the last 40

years, the productivity of the world's fishing grounds has declined. 15 out of 17 of the world major fisheries are either depleted or over-exploited. Prawn fisheries on the Tamilnadu coastline have resulted in saline groundwater. And so on.

Today, rice output is growing. The consumption of cereals and pulses is going up. India has been able to meet the demand for rice, wheat and sugarcane. Production is now adequate to meet the domestic demand. However, a growing population requires continuous augmentation of food production. In the case of pulses and vegetable oils there is the gap between supply and demand. Hence, during the year 2010-11 India imported about 8 million tonnes of vegetable oils and 3 million tons of pulses.

Simultaneously, our eating habits are becoming healthier. Problems like obesity, diabetes, cancer and other lifestyle diseases are a direct result of poor food choices. A hearty meal of pizza and coke is not conducive to good health. Child obesity and diabetes are becoming more common in the world and among affluent Indians. Good health is directly linked to our food. If we think before eating, we can make a difference and reduce our "food" print.

The world is home to more than seven billion people. Feeding such a huge number of people is a gargantuan task. Sub-Saharan in Africa is still subject to periodic famines. In this scenario, it becomes imperative on our part to eat correctly, avoid wastage and ensure that every hungry person on this planet has food to eat. If precious natural resources are protected, and correct food choices are made, there will be enough food for everybody.

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