

## THE LEGISLATIVE LAND SCAPE OF FOOD WASTE

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### ABSTRACT

Food waste has started receiving much attention at the policy and management levels due to the strong research evidence identifying it not only in terms of wastage of valuable resources but also due to its environmental impact. There is considerable emerging evidence to suggest that land-filled food may be one of the major causes of landfill methane emissions. Climate change and its impact on food availability and access to a potentially 'at risk' population, has also drawn attention.

This paper attempts to identify some common ground in terms of definitions of food waste and food loss, particularly referring to the FAO and European Union. Then, it offers a roundup of current thinking on valuation of food loss and waste and its challenges at various points along the supply chain. Subsequently, an overview of current level of global legislation aimed at arresting and remedying food waste and losses is presented. Following which, glimpses of relevant Indian traditional and culturally tied-in norms and practices are presented to set a backdrop for suggestions on possible policy directions in the Indian socio-cultural context.

This paper recommends that although the Indian Government has made many efforts to rein in food wastage, the depth of the problem is such that the impact of these efforts is hardly up to the mark. In order to make progress in reducing the burden of this problem, the Government needs to primarily contain the excessive wastage in transportation and improve storage facilities that are currently 50 per cent less than required. Besides this, the Government must also focus on food processing technologies that are both advanced and affordable so that food preservation practices can be encouraged thereby saving food from wastage. India should also take a cue from global practices that are both unorthodox and innovative in order to tackle food wastage problem. For instance, France has passed unanimous legislation requiring supermarkets to either give unsold food to charity or send it to farmers for use as feed and fertiliser. Similarly, institutions in Canada are recovering unused and unspoiled food from retailers, manufacturers, restaurants and caterers and sending them to charities, in the process delivering ingredients for over 22,000 meals daily. These powerful initiatives have made a big difference in how these countries have approached a vexing issue. India can effectively use technology to script a new chapter in prevention of food wastage. The Government can speed up research in Nano technology with the help of which eco-friendly and healthy food preservation applications can be invented that are helpful in preserving food for longer duration and keeping farm produce fresh. In addition to these efforts, the Government must make it mandatory for the food retailers across the country to adopt technology standards that allow incentives for the customer to purchase perishable products that are approaching their expiration dates. This will help reduce food wastage, maximize grocery retailer revenue, and effectively reduces the food waste carbon footprint.