

NEWSLETTER

Food Waste Management

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Challenges and Opportunities of Food Waste Management in Urban Africa

Food waste and food loss are key components of global food systems and pose a challenge to efforts toward sustainable development, as they affect global health, social, economic, and environmental issues. Over 1 billion tonnes of food were wasted in 2022 alone, stemming from household waste, the food industry, and retail services, representing about 19% of available food to consumers, while food loss in the supply chain from post-harvest to retail is estimated at about 13%¹. The constancy of those numbers compared with previous years' reports indicates little progress on this front.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) refer to those challenges in SDG 2 on zero hunger and SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). In particular, SDG target 12.3 focuses on "halving the per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food losses along production and supply chains by 2030."²

In the Global South, while food loss is a major issue, food waste management in urban areas is increasing alarmingly, accounting for about 70% of municipal solid waste (MSW), up from 44% globally. For instance, waste composition in African cities averages 50% due to rapid urbanisation and lifestyle changes, such as overconsumption and the consumption of processed foods. In addition, policy and regulatory gaps, food losses in urban agriculture, inefficient retail practices, inadequate food storage and preservation, and a lack of consumer awareness are also drivers of food waste generation and related management issues.

¹ United Nations Environment Programme, 2024. Food Waste Index Report 2024. UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya

² United Nations, Development Data and Outreach Branch, 2026. SDG Indicators [WWW Document]. URL

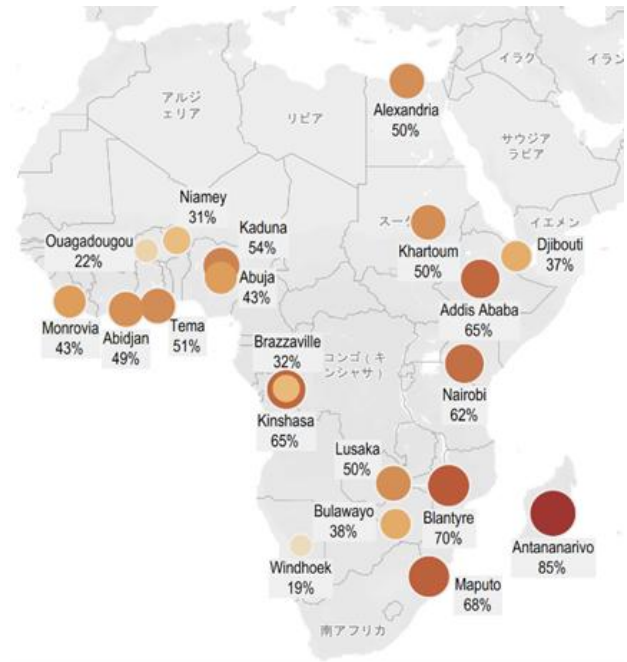


Figure 1: Waste composition of African Cities (%)³

The issue is compounded by a lack of segregated collection and suitable disposal and treatment options, which lead to environmental, social, and economic impacts.

The consequences of food waste are significant, as it contributes to greenhouse gas emissions from disposal sites, accounting for about 10% of global emissions. Landfilling of food waste not only generates methane, which increases vulnerability to climate change and leads to more frequent flooding, landslides, prolonged droughts, and rising food insecurity, but also significantly contributes to leachate generation that contaminates soil and water, as well as to declining air quality and related health issues.

Food waste also means resource waste, given the resources used to grow and sell food products, resulting in monetary losses and burdens throughout the supply chain. It also means worsening social inequalities, given

<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/goal-12/> (accessed 2.19.26).

³ ACCP Secretariat, 2019. Africa Solid Waste Management Data Book 2019. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)



the hunger and prevailing insufficient nutrition issues worldwide.

As such, albeit challenging, establishing sustainable food waste management systems is a triple-win opportunity to reduce environmental impacts, improve the cost-effectiveness of value chains, and feed more people.

Challenges

A critical challenge facing African cities in addressing food waste is the lack of prioritisation of sustainable, circular food-waste management, including food-waste avoidance, diversion, and recovery.

1. **Regulatory framework:** A major issue is the absence of consistent policies that clearly define the boundaries and stakeholders of food waste management systems across different waste generation sources in cities, with structured directives, incentives, and penalties for waste prevention and zero-waste practices, adherence to the waste hierarchy, and the promotion of suitable organic waste treatment options that eliminate the need for landfilling. Data gaps are also critical since they prevent a full understanding of the current situation, thus hampering the development and implementation of targeted interventions. Moreover, regulations on food donation and redistribution are lacking, limiting retailers and restaurants from redirecting their surplus accordingly.
2. **Treatment approaches:** Despite significant advances in organic waste treatment technologies that enable resource recovery, such as energy and nutrients for other uses and as feedstock, untapped recovery remains limited, coupled with weak source segregation. The continued practice of mixed food-waste management, from storage at the source through collection to disposal by dumping or burning, remains prevalent. Similarly, while urban agriculture is common in most African cities, inadequate post-harvest handling, the lack of processing facilities, and limited opportunities for value addition contribute to food losses from this urban activity. On a continent also struggling with food insecurity and energy access, there is an enormous opportunity to address these challenges while protecting the environment and generating long-lasting income.

3. **Generators' awareness and participation:** Limited engagement with both small and large food-waste generators hinders an effective management system. Therefore, understanding how critical their contribution is to the system is paramount. At the household level, a lack of awareness and a lack of restraint in response to marketing promotions or fear of future price hikes are causing African urban dwellers to over-purchase food. In addition, practices of throwing away food with minor imperfections are finding their way into consumer behaviour and retail services. Deficiencies in inventory design and management, including overcooking in restaurants, particularly those offering buffet services, are also causing a significant increase in food waste in cities.

Opportunities

A focus on integrating solutions, linking policy reform, investment and technology, and increasing public education is key to tackling food waste.

1. **Regulatory Policy levers:** Governments are called upon to introduce circular policies that regulate food waste management across the value chain, including reduction targets, data collection and monitoring, and strategies for producers, processors, distributors and consumers. In addition, the proper management of edible food, including donations to individuals and entities in need, is essential. Effectively involving the private sector through diversified structural and financial incentives, including public-private partnerships, in the development and implementation of food waste management is also key, as is ensuring continued knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders
2. **Place-based approaches:** Low-tech and low-cost solutions can be implemented on several fronts. First, optimising production and distribution processes to maximise shelf life and avoid overstocking. Accessible and inclusive communication should also be used to reach and motivate consumers to actively reduce food waste, participate in segregation efforts, and adopt source-based treatment, such as at-home composting and small-scale communal biogas systems. Equally important is prioritising landfill diversion by investing in innovative, culturally relevant



and financially sound treatment technologies that generate added-value products and resources, such as feed, bio-based materials, agricultural inputs and energy.

3. **Stakeholder engagement:** The current fragmentation of the food waste system can be addressed by harmonising and aligning stakeholders'

understanding and pursuit of common goals through awareness-raising and engagement initiatives that link food waste reduction and sustainable handling and treatment to environmental protection and to the delivery of significant rewards, such as public health maintenance, income and job creation, reduction of food insecurity, support for urban greening and local agriculture, and overall system cost-effectiveness.

Case Studies

InsectiPro, Kenya

InsectiPro is a women-led venture founded in 2018 by Talash Huijbers in Limuru, Kenya.

They raise Black Soldier Fly (BSF) larvae and crickets to produce alternative protein sources for the animal feed industry, and organic fertiliser (frass) using a low-tech, circular production process.



The flies also feed on community food waste, thereby upcycling organic waste. It also converts organic waste into high-value protein for human consumption. Its cricket powder is designed for the general market and can be added to anything from cookies to baby formula as a nutritious protein supplement.

Compost Kitchen, South Africa

Compost Kitchen is a composting company based in South Africa, developed by entrepreneur Himkaar Singh in 2018.

One of the services is the collection of organic waste from households and its transformation into vermicompost, which is then returned to customers – a circular economy approach from the food waste problem to soil conditioning and nutrition solution.



Another service supports the creation of at-home worm farms for income generation by providing earthworm starter packs and guidance and support until the first income is realised. The key sellable outputs are earthworms, vermicompost and worm tea.

Kubeko System

Kubeko system is a low-cost biowaste processing system designed for small-holding farmers to help manage their biowaste while generating income.

To date, their work has targeted farmers and cooperatives, generating additional income from by-products, particularly from cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire. The equipment was developed by LONO, a bioprocess engineering company based in Abidjan.



The system has been used for agricultural biowaste and shows potential for effective urban food waste management. It features two main components – a composter and a biodigester. The composter transforms biowaste into high-quality compost, with the main outputs being solid and liquid compost, used by farmers as organic fertilisers for their agricultural crops, in nurseries and for tree production. The biodigester converts green waste into cooking gas and liquid compost, which is also used to produce biopesticides.



Learn More About Waste Wise Cities Tool

Have you forgotten what the Waste Wise Cities Tool (WaCT) is? No need to worry, you can access all the relevant information on our [website](#).

[Here](#) you can explore which cities have already submitted data collected with the Waste Wise Cities Tool (WaCT). As indicated in the article below, additional data is continuously becoming available.

WaCT Application with ACCP in 2025

WaCT Application in Bujumbura, Burundi



In October 2025, UN-Habitat implemented the Waste Wise Cities Tool (WaCT) and Waste Flow Diagram (WFD) in Bujumbura, Burundi, to strengthen evidence-based municipal solid waste management (MSWM) planning. The assessment covered the three main communes: Ntakangwa, Mukaza, and Mugere, representing diverse socio-economic conditions.

Bujumbura, the economic capital (population ~1.74 million), faces increasing pressure on municipal services due to rapid urban growth and expanding informal settlements. To capture this diversity, the WaCT study sampled nine representative neighbourhoods across low-, middle-, and high-income areas, with households participating in waste characterization activities.

Preliminary results indicate the city generates approximately 918 tonnes of MSW per day (0.53 kg/capita/day). However, only 23% is collected, and 9% is managed in controlled facilities, leaving 77% uncollected.

This massive gap highlights significant environmental risks from waste leaking into rivers and discharging into Lake Tanganyika.

Waste composition analysis shows organic waste is the largest fraction (66%), followed by plastics (10%), indicating strong potential for composting and recycling. The WFD analysis further revealed substantial plastic leakage, largely driven by inadequate collection and disposal infrastructure.

The final validated results will be published on the Waste Wise Cities data portal soon. A Local Stakeholders Workshop will also present findings to identify priority interventions and strengthen Bujumbura's MSWM.

WaCT Application in Bo, Sierra Leone



From September to October 2025, UN-Habitat applied the Waste Wise Cities Tool (WaCT) and the Waste Flow Diagram (WFD) in Bo City, Sierra Leone, under the UN Development Account project "Environmentally sounder



and safer waste management frameworks in Africa". The findings will feed into the strengthening of national and local legislative frameworks.

Bo City (population ~243,600) was divided into low-, middle- and high-income areas. Ninety households (30 per income group) joined an eight-day waste sampling and characterisation study. Two days of inception and volunteers training supported consistent application.

Early WaCT results suggest that 88% of total MSW remain uncollected and around 47% of household waste (59 t/day) has recycling potential, yet current recovery is only about 4 t/day (2% of total MSW). WFD modelling estimates more than 6,000 t/year of plastic waste, with 82% unmanaged.

WaCT Application in Mbabane, Eswatini

UN-Habitat applied the WaCT along with the WFD in Mbabane (Population-61,940 in 2015), Eswatini between September to December 2025. The assessment aimed to establish a baseline for SDG indicator 11.6.1 and inform data-driven improvements to the city's solid waste management system.

WaCT results indicate that 42 t/day of MSW is generated in the city, of which 96% is collected and 88% is managed in controlled facilities. The city recovery rate stands at 17%, with approx. 7 t/day recovered through city's official

buy-back centres and a composting facility. Per capita MSW generation averages 0.67 kg/cap/day, while per capita household food waste generation is 0.22 kg/cap/day. House-hold waste composition shows that food and organic matter account for 51%, with plastics and other recyclables comprising over 30%. Landfill waste composition data follows similar patterns, with 44% organic and 29% plastic content.

The assessment identified key bottlenecks including untapped recovery potential, landfill capacity constraints within two to three years, and a weak domestic recycling market. A Local Stakeholders Workshop held on 4 December 2025 validated the findings and identified priority interventions such as scaling up organic waste recycling, strengthening material recovery efforts, and addressing the waste financial model.



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New call for Expressions of Interest (EoI) to apply DIY-WaCT in 2026

The ACCP Secretariat will open a new call for EoIs for WaCT applications this year. For up-to-date information, please check the e-mailing list from us!

To learn more about WaCT again and learn in the online course, please see the information below.

- [Waste Wise Cities Tool \(WaCT\)](#)
- [Introductory video](#)
- [Online course](#): From Data to Tangible Impact: Achieving Waste SDGs by 2030
- [WaCT Data Portal](#)



If your city is planning to apply WaCT, kindly let us know! We are ready to support you remotely and technically.



Waste Wise Cities & African Clean Cities Platform Updates

African Clean Cities Platform (ACCP 8) Onsite Training for Landfill Operation and Management in Tunisia



In a recurring series of its onsite training sessions, ACCP brought together 11 delegates from eight ACCP member cities in a one-week training programme on landfill operation and management in Beja, Tunisia, from 17 to 21

August 2026. The onsite training session aimed to build practical skills in landfill operation and management using the Fukuoka method, outline safe and sustainable management of disposal sites and encourage mutual learning and knowledge exchange through city case studies on integrated solid waste management.

Day 1

The programme began with an introduction to the Fukuoka Method, -a semi-aerobic landfill technology - originally developed in Japan that uses natural air circulation through pipes to foster waste decomposition thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and prevent spontaneous fire. Participants also took part in an installation and construction of a gas ventilation pipe where they were briefed that venting pipes are the visible core of the Fukuoka Method as they let air move into the waste layer by natural convection, which keeps



decomposition semi-aerobic, improves the quality of the leachate and lowers methane generation.

Day 2

The second day started with a demonstration of initial disposal work at the UNIDO project site. This was followed by the installation of gas ventilation pipes (continued from Day 1) and improvement of the embankment demonstrated in parallel, so that participants could take turns between the two work fronts.

Day 3

The third day entailed the improvement of the access road leading to the primary disposal site. Access roads are especially overlooked given that without accessible roads that can be used in all weather, daily operation routines are not feasible. Participants also conducted environmental monitoring of landfill gas and leachate including sampling and on-the-spot measurement and discussed how simple and repeatable monitoring can be built into a normal operating budget.



Closing remarks by Prof. Yasushi Matsufuji © UN-Habitat

Through this immersive training, participants gained practical knowledge and hands-on experience that went far beyond theoretical classroom learning. Applying these hard-won insights upon returning home, they are expected to spearhead localized solid waste management improvements across their respective cities.

Inauguration of Nairobi's First Material Recovery Facility in Informal Settlements: Waste Wise Nairobi



MRF Inauguration on 6 March



Group Photo

The inauguration of Nairobi's first Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in an informal settlement took place on 6 March 2026 under the Waste Wise Nairobi – Korogocho Chapter initiative. Developed through a partnership between UN-Habitat, Nairobi City County, AVSI Foundation, and the Government of Italy through AICS, the facility marks a significant step toward improving waste management in Korogocho.

The MRF serves as a community-based hub for sorting and processing recyclable materials such as plastics and paper, helping to reduce waste going to Dandora dumpsite. It strengthens recycling systems while creating safer and more dignified livelihoods for local waste workers.

The project has supported 29 community-based organizations through training, equipment, and technical assistance, promoting a more structured and inclusive waste management system. By advancing a circular economy approach, the Korogocho MRF demonstrates a scalable model for sustainable urban development, cleaner environments, and improved public health in Nairobi's informal settlements.



Paving the Way for Tanzania's Circular Economy: UN-Habitat Accelerates National Policy



Aggregation Center, Dar es Salaam

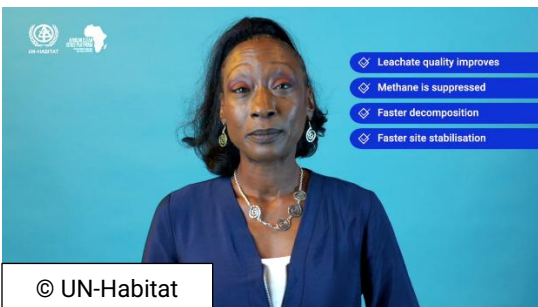


Meeting with Local Partner, Dar es Salaam

In February 2026, UN-Habitat and partners, including HafenCity University, conducted a strategic mission to Dodoma and Dar es Salaam to accelerate Tanzania's national waste management framework. Formal consultations with the Vice President's Office and the Ministry of Health led to the official appointment of technical focal points for a newly formed National Technical Working Group.

To ensure the proposed National Policy Brief is grounded in operational reality, the mission included a partner coordination meeting, and a field visit to an aggregation centre Dar es Salaam. These efforts will contribute to consolidating the policy scope in preparation for the first National Policy Roundtable this April. For more information, please access the following project website: <https://darsafi.hcu-hamburg.de/>.

New ACCP Online Course - Controlled Landfills in Africa



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As part of our ongoing mission to support sustainable waste management across the African continent, the African Clean Cities Platform (ACCP) is excited to introduce our new online course on landfill management.

It is designed to help cities transition from open dumping to controlled and sanitary systems, this self-paced program breaks down anaerobic, aerobic, and semi-aerobic landfill technologies—exploring everything from site selection and daily operations to carbon impacts and practical quizzes. Beyond the engineering fundamentals, the course tackles the real-world operational challenges cities face, highlighting essential financial and institutional prerequisites, and features an inspiring success story of community-driven improvements from Kiambu, Kenya.

Stay tuned for registration details and join us in building a cleaner, greener future for African cities!



Updated Online Course: Municipal Solid Waste Management in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

The online course "Municipal Solid Waste Management in Low- and Middle-Income Countries" has recently been updated and is available on Coursera. More than 100,000 learners worldwide have already completed the course, gaining a better understanding of how solid waste management systems function and why they are essential for public health, cities, and environmental protection.

The course is free, self-paced, and permanently available online, with videos in English and subtitles in over 30 languages.

The updated version includes:

- New and revised videos reflecting current solid waste management challenges
- Weekly summaries to reinforce key learning points
- A practical challenge allowing learners to apply course concepts to real situations
- New reading materials covering emerging topics, including waste management in humanitarian contexts
- The course can be accessed here: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/solid-waste-management>

Closing the Loop: UN-Habitat at WUF13 in Baku



The thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) took place from 17 to 22 May 2026 in Baku, Azerbaijan, under the theme "Housing the World: Safe and Resilient Cities and Communities." Co-organized by UN-Habitat and the Government of Azerbaijan, WUF13 brought together governments, mayors, civil society, academia and the private sector for over 300 events across six days. With 3 billion people worldwide facing inadequate housing and over 1.1 billion living in informal settlements, the Forum served as a critical global

checkpoint for the New Urban Agenda at its mid-term point.

Among the special sessions, UN-Habitat convened "Closing the Loop: Advancing Waste Management Towards Circular Economy", repositioning municipal solid waste management as a core element of the circular economy (CE) and adequate housing. Proper waste collection, recycling and disposal systems are fundamental to ensuring safe, healthy and sustainable living environments yet cities worldwide continue to struggle with open burning, uncontrolled dumping and inadequate infrastructure, notably in informal settlements. The session demonstrated how integrated solid waste management advances poverty eradication and climate action, with a particular focus on how equitable waste services reduce climate risks, improve living conditions and create dignified livelihoods for women and youth. It also highlighted the role of the informal sector in recycling as both environmental necessity and a pathway to social inclusion.

Drawing on experiences from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Arab States, and building on platforms such as the African Clean Cities Platform and Waste Wise Cities, the session showcased innovative partnerships and inspire cities to scale up zero waste practices as a cornerstone of equitable urban transformation.



Key highlights of the session

Waste as a resource: Innovators like Waste-Plus (Uganda) showcased how plastic waste can be transformed into affordable construction materials and recycled pipes, turning waste into jobs, innovation, and climate action.

Simple solutions can save lives : The globally recognized Fukuoka Method demonstrated how low-cost, locally

adaptable landfill technologies can reduce methane emissions, improve landfill safety and prevent disasters.

Partnerships matter: Governments, UN agencies, JICA, the World Bank, local authorities, academia, and the private sector reaffirmed commitments to scale Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) and circular economy approaches through city-to-city learning and collaboration.

UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board of Eminent Persons on Zero Waste

The work of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste (ABZW) continues to translate global ambition into practical action. Over the past months, the Board has focused on accelerating implementation at city level while reinforcing the global narrative around prevention-first approaches.

A major milestone has been the continued engagement with the 20 Cities Towards Zero Waste initiative. These selected cities represent diverse geographic regions and development contexts yet share a common commitment: transitioning from linear waste systems to prevention, reuse, composting, and circular economy solutions. The initiative is not simply a recognition platform, it is a peer-learning and advocacy mechanism. Participating cities are exchanging policy tools, financing approaches, and community engagement strategies, particularly on food and organic waste prevention, which remains one of the largest and most climate-relevant waste streams globally.

- San Francisco, USA
- Yokohama, Japan
- Accra, Ghana
- Lilongwe, Malawi
- Hangzhou, China

- Suzhou, China
- Sanya, China
- Bologna, Italy
- Zapopan, Mexico
- Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka
- Varkala, India
- Chefchaouen, Morocco
- George Town, Malaysia
- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Gaziantep, Türkiye
- Florianópolis, Brazil
- San Fernando, Philippines
- Iloilo City, Philippines
- Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- Kisumu, Kenya

Technical exchanges, visibility at international events, and targeted advocacy, the 20 Cities are demonstrating that zero waste is both feasible and economically sound. Several cities have already reported progress in strengthening source segregation, scaling composting systems, engaging the private sector on packaging reduction, and integrating informal workers into formal waste management structures. Their leadership reinforces the message that cities are pivotal actors in advancing national and global zero-waste commitments.



International Day of Zero Waste Observed on March 30

This year's International Day of Zero Waste placed a strong spotlight on food waste prevention, recognizing it as one of the most urgent and cost-effective pathways to addressing the global waste crisis.

The scale of the challenge is stark. Our planet is drowning in waste, driven by unsustainable production and consumption patterns. Globally, humanity generates between 2.1 and 2.3 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste each year. If current trends continue, cities will generate 3.8 billion tonnes annually by 2050. With nearly 70 per cent of the world's population (more than 6.5 billion people) expected to live in urban areas by mid-century, and 80 per cent of all food consumption taking place there, cities and sub-national governments are central to ending the global waste crisis.

Food waste sits at the heart of this challenge. In 2022, while 783 million people faced hunger, 1.05 billion tonnes of food, 19 per cent of all food available to consumers, were wasted. An additional 13 per cent was lost post-harvest and before retail. Most food waste occurs at the household level (60 per cent), followed by food service (28 per cent) and re-tail (12 per cent). Households alone waste approximately one billion meals every day, averaging 79 kilograms per person annually. This staggering scale undermines food security and compromises progress toward a zero-waste, circular future.

Reducing food waste is also one of the most powerful climate solutions available today. Food loss and waste generate an estimated 8-10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, nearly five times the emissions of the aviation sector. Food waste alone accounts for up to 14 per cent of global methane emissions, a gas 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. Organic waste decomposing in dumps and landfills is one of the largest urban methane sources. Because methane has a shorter atmospheric lifespan than CO₂, reducing organic waste offers a strong near-term opportunity to minimize the length and severity of a potential 1.5°C overshoot. Preventing food waste upstream also

eliminates emissions from production, transport, refrigeration and disposal, positioning food waste reduction as one of the most cost-effective and achievable climate interventions.

Beyond climate mitigation, reducing food waste strengthens the efficiency, resilience and sustainability of food systems. Food loss and waste cost the global economy approximately USD 1 trillion per year. Yet prevention yields strong returns: for every dollar invested in preventing food waste, cities save around eight dollars, households save approximately eighty-four dollars, and businesses often see significant returns, with many reporting savings of four-teen dollars for every dollar invested.

Observances

Commemorations of the International Day of Zero Waste began with a high-level event on 27 March at the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York, convened in partnership with the Zero Waste Foundation and supported by the First Lady of the Republic of Türkiye. The Executive Directors of UNEP and UN-Habitat delivered remarks underscoring the urgency of prevention-first action, particularly in addressing food waste within urban systems.

National observances further amplified the message, including events held on 30 March in Istanbul, supported by UN-Habitat's Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which highlighted good practices in the Region and its continued leadership on the zero-waste agenda. These events brought together government representatives, municipalities, private sector actors and civil society to showcase practical food waste reduction initiatives and reinforce the role of cities in driving systemic change.

Gaia

GAIA convened city leaders, grassroots groups, and regenerative agriculture experts for a global roundtable on food waste. The discussion highlighted how cities can build closed-loop food systems, prevent food loss, and create social, economic, and environmental co-benefits. Speakers emphasized community-led solutions, environmental justice, and scaling investment in zero-



waste initiatives as key to resilient, sustainable urban food systems.

Across all observances, the message is clear: tack-ling food waste is an issue central to climate stability, food security, economic resilience and the achievement of a zero-waste future.

Further information on

[UN-Habitat event page](#)

[Zero Waste Day page](#)

[Trello board](#)

[UNEP event page](#)

[UN.org](#)

Call to Action

- Share with us your good practices of EPR, zero waste practices, and other innovative solutions related to EPR and circular economy!
- Proactively implement and enforce robust Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes in your cities for sustainable waste management!
- Become an ACCP and/or Waste Wise Cities [member](#) or [affiliate](#) and share your stories with us!
- Visit our [ACCP](#) and [Waste Wise Cities](#) websites for more details on our projects in EPR



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