

Food waste a contributor to green house emissions

By Kiera Butler, Mother Jones

A full third of the world's food is wasted. According to a report from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, discarded food accounts for a staggering amount of planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, if food waste was a country, its 3.3 gigatonnes of emissions would make it the third highest-emitting country in the world, after China and the United States.

What exactly makes all that waste and its emissions?

It's not just consumers throwing dinner scraps away. Some food spoils before farmers can harvest it, other food goes bad on its way from the farm to the market, and still more food ends up rotting on supermarket shelves. Looking at emissions of uneaten food from farm to table, the researchers found that food wasted at the consumer phase had the highest carbon footprint. That's because by the time food gets to that stage, it's already accumulated emissions from production, harvest, and distribution.

In other words, when chuck food that you buy at the supermarket, you're throwing away every part of the process that has gotten it there, as well.

Some kinds of food waste create more emissions than others. Wasted fruit, for example, has a relatively small ratio of food waste to carbon emitted. Meat's ratio is much larger. That's because meat production is exceptionally carbon intensive.

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