

Food Waste

HOW CAN WE STOP FOOD WASTE?

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TRANSCRIPT

Did you know that food waste is one of the most alarming global problems today?

According to the United Nations Environment Programme, every year around 931 million tons of food are wasted around the world.

In Mexico, the situation is just as critical. Research by the FAO, shared by UNAM in 2023, reveals that nearly 38% of all food produced is wasted. Enough to feed almost 7 million people living in extreme poverty.

In my school and community, I've seen firsthand how food that could be used sometimes goes to waste. For example, in the cafeteria, there

were times when fruits or vegetables were thrown away, even though they could have been donated or reused. And from my personal experience, something I've really valued is how, when someone isn't going to use their meal tickets, they often offer them to others so they don't go to waste.

Faced with this complex issue, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) promotes several initiatives that directly help reduce food waste and encourage more responsible consumption and production.

For instance, the University Program for Sustainable Food (PUAS) promotes projects focused on the full use of food and on education to prevent waste.

Through the University Coordination for Sustainability (COUS), UNAM also runs the Alternative University Market, which connects small local producers and agroecological cooperatives with the university community. It helps reduce waste because producers sell just the right amount, avoiding excess and spoilage caused by overproduction or long storage times.

One of my favorite initiatives and the one I personally think has the biggest impact is the UNAM Composting Plant. It's the first of its kind in Latin America, and it processes the campus's organic plant waste to create compost, a natural soil enhancer. This project prevents tons of organic waste from ending up in landfills and promotes a closed cycle of production and consumption, turning what would have been trash into a valuable resource that regenerates the soil.

In my opinion, while the composting project tackles waste directly, the other initiatives are also essential because they raise awareness about local and conscious consumption.

Buying from nearby producers means food doesn't have to travel long distances, so it stays fresh for longer, which naturally reduces waste.

All these actions show that changing our habits is not only possible but necessary. We can all do our part to reduce waste, consume more mindfully, and protect our natural resources.

Together with our schools and communities, we can build food systems that are fairer, more sustainable, and more responsible and remind ourselves of the real value of food and the impact of our daily choices.

Education and collective commitment are the keys to building a future where food waste is minimal and respect for resources is at its maximum.