



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

- Chris:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English, I'm Chris and with me today is Jen.
- Jen:** Hi there... Mmmm... Phew, I'm full. Well, I don't want this other sandwich. Where's the bin?
- Chris:** Jen, are you going to throw away that sandwich?
- Jen:** What's wrong with throwing it in the bin?
- Chris:** Before you throw it away, let's talk about today's topic shall we? Global food waste. Now, how often do you throw food away?
- Jen:** Well, I don't waste food all the time. It's usually when I've bought too much food and later I realise it has **expired** – or gone out of date.
- Chris:** Yes, I've done the same thing from time to time. But did you know that globally we are getting worse at wasting, or throwing away, water and food – food that is often still **edible**?
- Jen:** I suppose it's not such a good thing to throw away food – especially when some people are desperately hungry.
- Chris:** Absolutely. Now, before we go on, I've got a question for you – see if you can answer it. How much food is wasted every year around the world? Is it:
- a) 5,000 tonnes
 - b) 1 million tonnes
 - c) 1.3 billion tonnes
- Jen:** I think it's going to be quite a high number so I'm going to go for c), 1.3 billion tonnes.
- Chris:** OK, I'll reveal the answer for you at the end of the programme. Now, a conference in Sweden met recently to discuss food and water waste around the world. They say that about a quarter of the food that is produced for us to eat doesn't actually make it to our dinner plates – it is wasted.
- Jen:** A quarter! Why is all this food being wasted?

Chris: Well, it varies. In wealthier countries one problem is our attitude to the way food should look when we buy it. Here's a clip from a report by BBC Correspondent Mark Doyle – what do consumers in richer countries expect from their food?

BBC correspondent Mark Doyle:

Delegates to the conference in Sweden were told that about a quarter of the food we produce worldwide never reaches our plates. The way food is wasted varies. In richer countries, consumers expect their food to look so perfect that slightly blemished, though perfectly nutritious, fruit and vegetables never reach the supermarkets.

Jen: So consumers expect their food to look absolutely perfect.

Chris: That's right. Imagine you're in a supermarket and you want to buy a banana. One banana looks perfect; another one has a **blemish** – or a mark – on it. Which would you buy? Both bananas are perfectly **nutritious** to eat.

Jen: Well, I'd probably take the one that looked perfect.

Chris: Exactly, and supermarkets do the same, but on a much bigger scale. They ask the farmers who supply them with fruit and vegetables to throw away any items that have **imperfections**.

Jen: Which means lots are wasted, even if they are perfectly nutritious to eat. So maybe our **reliance** on supermarkets is one of the reasons why richer countries are wasting so much?

Chris: According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the average European or North American consumer wastes between 95-115kg of food per year. Compare that with people in sub-Saharan Africa who waste only 6-11kg per year.

Jen: Astonishing.

Chris: But there is food waste in developing countries too, but it's not from consumers – most of the waste is on farms. Let's hear another clip from Mark Doyle's report – why are farms in developing countries wasting so much?

BBC correspondent Mark Doyle:

In poorer, developing, countries most of the waste is on farms. Inefficient farming techniques are part of the problem and hot and humid conditions make storing crops difficult. Pests and diseases take their toll too.

Chris: So farms in developing countries use **inefficient** farming techniques, which lead to waste.

Jen: It said that storing crops in hot and humid conditions can also be difficult. If you've ever left fruit out in the sun, it can quickly **rot**.

- Chris:** In addition, pests – such as flies and rats – also **take their toll**. These pests spoil the crops and they have to be thrown away.
- Jen:** So there needs to be investment in farming to improve things like food storage and packaging for the farming industry.
- Chris:** And it's not just food; water is another precious resource being wasted. Now which industry do you think consumes the most fresh water?
- Jen:** Perhaps the manufacturing industry?
- Chris:** In fact, it is agriculture through irrigation – or watering the land – so crops can grow. About 70% of all the fresh water used around the world is for farm irrigation.
- Jen:** If we're wasting food, then farmers are wasting water to grow the food that is thrown away.
- Chris:** Yes, food waste puts pressure on the supply of water too. Looking into the future, this will become a greater problem. By 2050, it's likely we'll be using 50% more fresh water to feed the extra 3 billion people on the planet.
- Jen:** So we need to think more carefully about food and water waste... Maybe I should hang on to this sandwich then.
- Chris:** I think you should. Now, returning to the question I asked at the beginning of the programme: how much food is wasted every year around the world? Is it:
- a) 5,000 tonnes
 - b) 1 million tonnes
 - c) 1.3 billion tonnes
- Jen:** And I said it was c) 1.3 billion tonnes.
- Chris:** And you were absolutely right. It's a staggering amount of waste.
- Jen:** It certainly is **food for thought!**
- Chris:** I agree with that. Well, that's all we've got time for. Do join us again for more 6 Minute English from bbclearningenglish.com. Bye for now!
- Jen:** Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

expired	come to the end of the acceptable time to eat
edible	eatable
blemish	mark, fault
nutritious	healthy, beneficial
imperfections	defects, faults
reliance	dependence
inefficient	badly organised, wasteful
rot	decay
take their toll	have a bad effect on
food for thought	provide motivation for thinking about something

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