

Hello, and welcome to As It Is from VOA Learning English! I'm Katherine Cole in Washington.

Food waste is a problem around the world, especially in wealthy nations. Studies estimate that between 30 and 40 percent of the food in wealthy countries is thrown away every year.

At the same time, millions of people in the world do not have enough to eat. Christopher Cruise will join us today to investigate some of these issues.

Later in the show, Karen Leggett will report on what farmers in the United States are doing to reduce food waste.

But first, here is Christopher Cruise.

More Than One Billion Tons of Food Wasted Each Year

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization says more than a billion tons of food is wasted each year. Much of that waste happens in wealthy nations, but it happens in developing countries as well.

Even as all this food is being wasted, it is estimated that one billion people are undernourished, and hundreds of millions of people go to sleep hungry each day.

Danielle Nierenberg is the co-founder and president of Food Tank, an organization that studies food issues.

“A lot of people in the world -- one out of eight people -- are hungry. And at the same time we have around 1.5 billion people who are obese. So, that excess has consequences not just on our waistlines, but on the environment, on our food security and a whole range of other factors.”

Ms. Nierenberg says much of the food waste in the developing world is caused by poor infrastructure, like bad roads and storage areas that are too small.

In wealthy nations, people are to blame because they buy more than they can eat. Ms. Nierenberg also blames dates that are printed on food containers. These dates tell buyers and sellers what date the food should be sold or eaten by. She says these dates cause people to throw away food too soon.

VOA spoke with Ms. Nierenberg when she was in Milan, Italy. She was attending the Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition yearly meeting. Officials at the meeting released what they call the Milan Protocol. The document calls on international leaders and policymakers to improve food security.

“It not only focuses on food waste, but creating better and more-sustainable agriculture systems, as well as focusing on unhealthy lifestyles and really helping reduce the epidemic of obesity and overweight that is plaguing not just rich countries, but poor countries as well.”

Ms. Nierenberg says the amount of food wasted each year shows there is already enough food to feed the planet.

“The problem of hunger in the world is not one of not having enough food. We produce more than enough food for every man, woman and child to eat every day. Yet, it’s political reasons. It’s poverty, certainly, that prevents food from getting to people who need it the most.”

I’m Christopher Cruise.

You are listening to As It Is from VOA Learning English. I’m Katherine Cole.

A lot of people look at the United States as a rich country. Yet many American farmers are struggling financially. How do they deal with wasted food and unused crops? As Karen Leggett reports, some are using social media to help solve the problem.

Social Media Helps Farmers

The United States Department of Agriculture found that more than half of the small farms in California do not make a profit.

One California farm family is using social media in an effort to change the situation and reduce wasted food. Nick Papadopoulos is general manager of Bloomfield Farms in Sonoma County. It was difficult for him to watch his employees returning from several weekend farmers' markets with top quality, unsold produce. Mr. Papadopoulos said he would find boxes of leafy greens, herbs and carrots left in a storage area. The vegetables would go bad before the next market day.

As a result, Mr. Papadopoulos came up with a plan to offer the food at a low price by advertising it on the farm's Facebook status page on Sunday nights.

"We're going to put 'Breaking news! Crop mob. Two pallets of Bloomfield Farms' organic veggies, \$150 dollars per pallet.'"

The deals were open to anyone using the social media website. One week, several homeowners in a neighboring community bought the vegetables. Another week, the buyers were a group of friends.

Nick Papadopoulos began using social media after he went to work on a farm belonging to his wife's father. One night he began thinking about the issue of wasted food when he could not find a place to donate 32 cases of organic broccoli. He ended up giving some of the food to chickens and using the rest to make fertilizer.

“I don’t believe we should let it go to waste. I believe we should share it, donate it, whatever it takes to get it out there, and if possible - as farmers - we would like to recover a small portion of our cost.”

After his success of using Facebook, Mr. Papadopoulos helped to set up a website called cropmobster.com. It is a place where people involved with food production, feeding the hungry and those who want to buy locally-grown food can find surplus produce.

Have you ever used the Internet to buy or sell crops? If so, tell us about your experience. You can leave a message on our Facebook page or visit our website, learningenglish.voanews.com.

I’m Karen Leggett.

When you visit our website, click on “Contact Us” to tell us what you want to hear about on a future show. You can also read, listen to and download our programs. You will also find podcasts, captioned videos and lessons to test your English skills.

That’s our program for today. I’m Katherine Cole. Thanks so much for listening! Join us again tomorrow for another As It Is from VOA Learning English.

And, for the latest world news, be sure to listen to VOA at the top of the hour, Universal Time.