

SPECIAL PROGRAMME ON

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF AWARENESS OF FOOD LOSS AND WASTE

Theme:

Building Resilient, Inclusive, and Sustainable  
Food Systems – From Production to  
Consumption



Thursday, September 29, 2022

The **IOD Foundation, India** organized its first panel discussion webinar on September 29, 2022, commemorating **'International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste'** in association with **Blitz India** as a Media Partner and **SDG Choupal** as a Sustainability Partner. The theme of the session was **'Building Resilient, Inclusive, and Sustainable Food Systems – From Production to Consumption.'** In the year 2020, the United Nation General Assembly designated September 29 as the International Day of Awareness of food loss and waste, with the intention of raising "awareness of the importance of the problem and its possible solutions at all levels, and to promote global efforts and collective action towards meeting goals of SDG 12-Responsible Consumption and Production." The webinar was attended by 80+ participants, including corporate citizens, food waste champions, agriculturalists, food scientists, industry experts, academicians, and university students, amongst many others, to listen to the latest developments and discuss strategies to build resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems.

The **'Welcome Address'** was delivered by **Mr. Pradeep Chaturvedi**, Vice President, IOD Foundation. He graciously welcomed all the distinguished speakers, event partners, and the participants. He introduced the theme of the webinar and referred to the FAO's strategic approach of working with a greater number of smaller organizations than just a few large organizations to tackle the problem better and increase the impact area. He mentioned how food wastage is affecting our climate and the urgency to make the food system processes climate resilient and said to overcome the situation we would be required to keep a human-centric development approach with diversity involved, leading to inclusive growth.

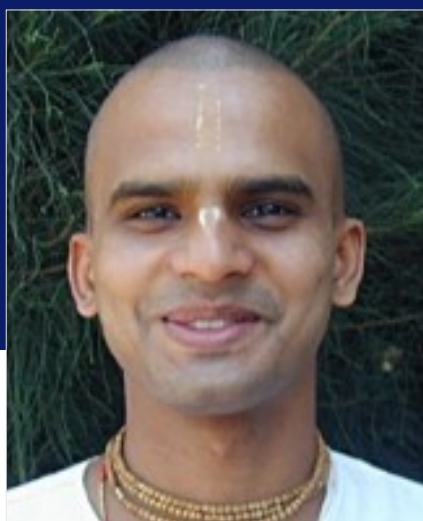
This was followed by the **'Special Address'** delivered by:

- 1. Mr. Bharatarshabha Dasa**  
National President and Trustee  
The Akshaya Patra Foundation
- 2. Dr. Sujeet Ranjan**  
Associate Director  
Tata Trusts
- 3. Dr. Nilesh Lele**  
Founder and Managing Director  
Exelon Foodbio Advisors Pvt. Ltd.
- 4. Dr. Smriti Pahwa**  
Senior Consultant  
Public Health Nutrition

**Mr. Dasa** discussed the role played by the Akshaya Patra Foundation in reducing hunger and malnutrition, as well as how the organization feeds over 2 million children daily in 65 places across India as part of its midday meal programme. He elaborated on the topic of the debate by providing important food statistics that detailed how much food is wasted and where it comes from in both commercial and residential settings. He said that hunger is a silent killer because, unlike other accidents or fatalities, many people die from it without receiving media attention, which leads to a lack of awareness. He described the agonizing discomfort we can experience if we skip two meals a day in order to help the audience acknowledge the annoyance of hunger. He described the agonizing discomfort we can experience if we skip two meals a day in order to help the audience acknowledge the annoyance of hunger. Later, he emphasized that there are two realistic ways to combat food waste: by engaging in individual practice and by developing new programmes that make efficient use of



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mass grain production. He concluded by highlighting their organization's solution for the problem, saying, "Akshaya Patra has a proper system to track data from the schools at which they feed to ensure no food is wasted by producing the necessary number of meals, and in case the food still gets left over, the organization uses it to generate biogas or feed it to cattle."

**Mr. Ranjan** made an opening remark by addressing how Tata Trusts is acting as a catalyst in fighting against malnutrition rather than just a merit donor. He cited ancient Indian wisdom when he said that '*food is Madhur dharma (nectar) and that to waste it is paap karma (sin).*' In his opinion, zero hunger and good nutrition have the power to empower people to move towards a healthy life. According to the National Family Health Survey Report, which he indicated, "89 percent of children between the age groups of six months and two years don't get an adequate diet," there is a significant nutritional gap in children. He addressed the matter by recalling his first job in the food sector with USAID, where he discovered the benefit of adding responsibility at the individual, community, and system levels. He emphasized how Tata Trusts is becoming a contributor to the solution through interventions like midday meals, take-home rations, training farmers with proper harvesting, transportation, and supply chain techniques, and supplementary nutrition programmes for lactating mothers and children (6 months–6 years). As a part of the solution, he emphasized the importance of learning food loss mitigation techniques from international procedures (France, Norway, and Denmark) and including innovative technology. He concluded by saying, "Development is only possible if people are engaged in a way that they are empowered to understand the importance of taking action at the individual level and not just relying on the policy and procedures."

**Dr. Lele** spoke on the impetus for this specific conversation, which questioned the obligation to feed the growing population and the GHG emissions caused by food waste. He raised the second point by asking, "Where are the problems?" and "What might be the potential solutions at all stages, from post-harvest to transportation to packaging to consumption? He underlined the solution, saying that it was best to identify problems at multiple levels and have small, decentralized solutions at each level (mentioning potential strategies) rather than focusing on a single action at a single level to stop losses, which is a good strategy to tackle the situation. He drew insights and examples from already existing small-scale and easy-to-implement solutions under ICAR, ICAR Labs, etc. He addressed the third major issue, the imbalance between supply and demand, and he made a bold suggestion for creating a national agricultural strategy to determine how much grain the nation needs on a state-by-state and month-by-month basis and then allocate the growing patterns accordingly. He emphasized the importance of developing policies that allow for the mapping of supply and demand in his final remarks.

As part of her opening remarks, Dr. Pahwa engaged the audience in a fun exercise. She used an activity to illustrate how our brains are trained to focus on one occurrence while other things are going on in the background in the same scene, connecting it to the fact that food problems are numerous, widespread, and of various types. She emphasized the concept of 'missed opportunities cognition mindset' and urged the audience to concentrate on the influence they could have had on how they dealt with food, food losses, and food waste, whether they were in a school, NGO, office, corporate, or essentially any setting. She inspired everyone to take the required steps in their own communities



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**Mr. Reji Mathew**  
Secretary General  
IOD Foundation

and at their own levels, minimizing the loss, at least in terms of consumption. She emphasized the importance of recognizing the lack of knowledge on how to take effective action, focusing on what interventions work, where they work, and how to find the necessary hotspots to take workable actions. She suggested that companies with a significant presence can develop distinctive platforms, interfaces, and resources to integrate food waste with the E and S of ESG. She concluded her remarks by keeping focus on missed opportunities, cumulative gains from small efforts, and companies to introduce the agenda for the people to see linkages at higher levels.

This was followed by the panel discussion.

#### Key takeaways from the questionnaire:

1. **Mr. Dasa** emphasised, 'Greed shouldn't override you and lead to a hoarding tendency at the individual level, and the community as a whole should imbibe this value to curb wastage and losses.' (Greed is not justified; need is!)
2. **Mr. Ranjan** concentrated on the need to use technology and data culture to enhance the supply chain and reduce losses with regard to the production and retail sectors. He made a point of outlining how Tata Trusts collaborates with local and state agencies, as well as farmers, to build capacity and support technology. He went on to discuss the significance of bringing about multi-sectoral behavioural change and raising awareness among service providers and the general public. Dr. Pahwa added to this by saying that we shouldn't underestimate the effectiveness of encouraging and advocating small, realistic steps and making practises like food audits ingrained in society.

3. **Dr. Lele** brought up the concept of "**food literacy**" which should encompass all facets of food as well as the struggles or procedures that farmers actually go through to produce the food that we consume. He highlighted a specific rule he picked up as a kid: only put on your plate as much food as you can actually consume, and he stressed that it should be ingrained in everyone as far as behavior change is concerned. Gandhi once said, 'There is enough for everyone's need, but there is not enough for everyone's greed.' He cited this as the reason why farmers did not receive a fair price or why consumers were forced to pay outrageous prices.
4. **Dr. Pahwa** concentrated on the need for consuming locally grown seasonal fruits and vegetables to preserve environmental harmony, promote excellent health, and provide items at a reasonable price. She went on to stress the significance of creating a sustainable food ecology.

**Mr. Reji Mathew**, Secretary General of IOD Foundation proposed the '**Votes of Thanks**' and highlighted the main pointers discussed during the session.

The webinar was hosted online via Zoom and is also available on IOD Foundation's YouTube page. ■

Compiled by:

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