

Food Loss and Waste Country Progress Index

A Tool to Measure National Progress on
Managing Food Loss and Waste

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progress on managing food
loss and waste**



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This publication was prepared by Craig Hanson and Brian Lipinski of World Resources Institute (WRI); Alex Nichols-Vinueza, Virginia Antonioli, Laura Espinoza, Samantha Kenny, and Pete Pearson of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF); and German Sturzenegger and Natalia Espínola López of the Inter-American Development Bank.

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Summary

The “Food Loss and Waste Country Progress Index” (“FLW Country Progress Index” or “the Index”) is designed to provide an objective assessment of the degree to which countries are taking steps toward reducing their food loss and waste (FLW) in alignment with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3. It can help countries identify the aspects of their FLW strategies on which they are making progress and how their progress compares with that of other countries. It can show which countries have made the most progress to date and help those that have made less progress identify best practices and key next steps. This paper answers a number of questions, including the following:

- What is the FLW Country Progress Index?
- Why have an index?
- Why anchor the Index in the Target-Measure-Act approach?
- What are the components of the Index?
- How should one interpret the scoring?
- How does the Index apply in pilot applications?

Although the Index was developed for initial application in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is designed to have universal relevance.

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What Is the Food Loss and Waste Country Progress Index?

The “Food Loss and Waste Country Progress Index” (“FLW Country Progress Index” or “the Index”) is designed to provide an objective assessment of the degree to which countries are taking steps toward reducing their food loss and waste (FLW) in alignment with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 12.3 (UN 2017). SDG 12 seeks to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.” The third target under this goal (Target 12.3) calls for cutting in half per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer level and reducing food losses along production and supply chains (including post-harvest losses) by 2030.

The Index can provide insights on which components of a country’s FLW strategy are making progress and which are not. The Index can also be used to compare the progress of countries across these components to discern which have made the most progress to date on key aspects of FLW. Index and component results per country could be displayed as a number that gives a quantitative “score” and/or displayed as a color-coded “traffic light” table (orange/yellow/green) corresponding to relative degrees of progress. The primary target audience for the Index includes government agencies responsible for reducing FLW, FLW reduction programs and initiatives such as #SinDesperdicio, and stakeholders representing key actors for FLW reduction in a country. Secondary audiences include nongovernmental organizations, the research community, and the media.

Why Have an Index?

In 2015, national governments from around the world committed themselves to the SDGs. Too few, however, have taken sufficient action on SDG Target 12.3 (Lipinski 2020). The Index is designed to catalyze friendly competition among countries to take more aggressive action on FLW. It could also help close the data gap that exists in the many countries that are not currently collecting national-level information about FLW. In addition, as the Index’s indicators are designed to reflect best practices as much as possible, the Index can give guidance on what countries need to do to make effective progress. The Index may also be revised over time to reflect new developments and practices for food loss and waste reduction.

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Why Anchor the Index in the Target-Measure-Act Approach?

The Index is predicated on the “Target-Measure-Act” approach (Box 1). As described in [Reducing Food Loss and Waste: Setting a Global Action Agenda](#) (Flanagan et al. 2019):

- **Target:** “Targets set ambition, and ambition motivates action. Governments therefore should adopt an explicit food loss and waste reduction goal aligned with SDG 12.3—a 50 percent reduction of food waste at the retail and consumer level, and a reduction of food losses along production and supply chains by 2030.”
- **Measure:** “The adage ‘what gets measured gets managed’ is true for FLW. Quantifying FLW within borders, operations, or supply chains can help decision-makers better understand how much, where, and why food is being lost or wasted. This information provides an evidence-based foundation for prioritizing interventions to reduce FLW, and helps entities monitor whether they are on track to achieving their target. Governments therefore should start to measure their FLW and monitor progress over time.”
- **Act:** “What ultimately matters is action. Governments therefore should pursue actions to reduce the ‘hotspots’ of food loss and waste that were identified by measurement.”

Target-Measure-Act is used widely and successfully by governments and companies¹ working to reduce FLW. Examples include the member countries of the European Union as well as the United Kingdom.

BOX 1

Target-Measure-Act

The Index is aligned with the “Target-Measure-Act” approach, which was first described in [SDG Target 12.3 on Food Loss and Waste: 2016 Progress Report](#) (Lipinski et al. 2016), and which was expanded upon in the report [Reducing Food Loss and Waste: Setting a Global Action Agenda](#) (Flanagan et al. 2019). When using this approach, a country sets a food loss and waste reduction target; measures its current levels of food loss and waste (and periodically re-measures to assess progress); and takes action to reduce the hotspots of food loss and waste.

What Are the Components of the Index?

Table 1 outlines how the Index is structured and scored. The components and indicators are based on the structure and FLW reduction strategy and activities described in Flanagan et al. (2019).

- **Pillars:** The three pillars of the Index reflect the trilogy of the Target-Measure-Act approach.
- **Indicator:** Each pillar has one to two indicators of progress. There is one indicator for “target,” which is related to the country’s adoption of a target aligned with SDG 12.3. There are two indicators for “measure,” which reflect the extent to which a country has gathered base year data (needed to understand starting conditions) and conducted follow up measurements (needed for determining progress). The two indicators for “act” reflect that some actions in Flanagan et al. (2019) are processes while other actions are policies. Countries should be encouraged to pursue both.
- **Sub-indicator:** Each indicator has a specific set of sub-indicators. The sub-indicators for “target” reflect the spectrum of an FLW target that a country can set. As described in Flanagan et al. (2019), the optimal target is one that is aligned with SDG Target 12.3. But some countries have targets that reflect just a portion of their economies—that is, some but not all of the country’s territory, food sectors (i.e., stages in the food supply chain), and/or food categories. For “target” and “measure,” the sub-indicators enable users to capture these gradations of coverage. The sub-indicators for “act” are drawn from Flanagan et al. (2019) and the Lipinski et al. (2016) series, reflecting specific processes and policies that some countries have conducted to catalyze FLW reduction efforts. Since there are many processes and policies a country can pursue (and creating an exhaustive list is impractical), the Index allows for assessors to insert actions not covered in this list along with a justification.
- **Metric:** The metric is the logical “quantification” of the sub-indicator. For example, the metric for geographic coverage for a country is the share of its population living in the area being covered. For non-quantitative sub-indicators, the metrics may have a “yes” or “no” answer, or list relevant categories.
- **Data sources:** The Index is designed such that data about the metrics can be found in publicly available sources, typically from the relevant national governments. These sources could include official government statements, news releases, government websites, strategy documents, published analyses (e.g., from ministries of agriculture,

environment, and/or planning), and policies regarding the country's FLW reduction efforts. As such, they will be unique to each country (there is no “one-stop shop” for the information needed to complete the Index). This may lead to a variation in data quality among countries. Nonetheless, the highest-quality data available should be used to complete the Index. In addition, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and/or the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) may have data about specific country FLW efforts.

- **Scoring:** Each sub-indicator has a maximum number of scoring points that can be awarded. Although countries may have different starting points and hotspots of FLW, SDG 12.3 calls for countries to tackle FLW throughout their entire economies—hence the Index scoring is designed to encourage full coverage (e.g., a country gets more points the greater the share of territory, food sectors, and food categories that are covered). The indicator is designed such that the sum of the sub-indicator scores can reach at most 100. The “target” and “measure” components each can be up to 30 points while the “act” component can be up to 40 points. The Index gives greater weight to “act” because, in the end, action is what ultimately leads to the reduction of FLW whereas targeting and measuring do not directly lead to FLW reduction.

The Index is designed such that multiple entities could complete the requisite analysis for their own purposes. For instance, a government agency could complete Table 1 for its own country. An entity that convenes national governments (e.g., the Inter-American Development Bank) could give countries a template (based on Table 1) to complete and return for compilation. Or, an independent entity could conduct research using publicly available information to complete Table 1 for any number of countries. For countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region, #SinDesperdicio plans to publish the Index every year (reflecting the previously completed calendar year). This information will be reviewed and/or validated by national governments prior to publication.

Ultimately, what matters most is countries' actual FLW reduction performance over time. Whereas “target,” “measure,” and “act” are all inputs, the actual annual FLW percentage and rate of reduction over time is the output. National-level data on FLW rates and reductions over time can come from the FAO-led Food Loss Index (FAO 2020), UNEP-led Food Waste Index (UNEP 2021), or other national-led FLW inventory quantification (consistent with the [Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard](#) (FLW Protocol 2016)). Calculating and making public these data at the same time as the FLW Country Progress Index can help countries and stakeholders more clearly see if and when their investments in Target-Measure-Act are having an impact.

TABLE 1

The FLW Country Progress Index: Components and Scoring

PILLAR	INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	METRIC	DATA SOURCE	SCORING
Target	1. Country has set an explicit FLW reduction target consistent with SDG 12.3	1. Target to reduce food loss and/or food waste by 50% by 2030	Yes/No	Government statements/policies	If not met, no points awarded in the “target” category
		2. Geographic coverage	Share of national population under the target	Government statements/policies	1 point per 10% of the national population
		3. Sectoral coverage	Stages of national food system under the target	Government statements/policies	2 points each for the following: ^b • Farm production • Manufacturing and processing • Retail • Hospitality • Household
		4. Food category coverage	Categories of food sold in country under the target	Government statements/policies	2 points each for the following: • Meat and seafood • Milk and dairy • Fruit and vegetables • Cereals and grains • Other foods^d
		Total possible:			30 points

PILLAR	INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	METRIC	DATA SOURCE	SCORING
Measure	2. Country has measured and publicly reported its base year FLW ^a	1. Geographic coverage	Share of national population's FLW being measured	National, publicly available government statistics	0.5 points per 10% of the national population
		2. Sectoral coverage	Stages of national food system being measured	National, publicly available government statistics	1 point each for the following: • Farm production • Manufacturing and processing • Retail • Hospitality • Household
	2. Country has measured and publicly reported its base year FLW ^a	3. Food category coverage	Categories of food sold in country being measured	National, publicly available government statistics	1 point each for the following: • Meat and seafood • Milk and dairy • Fruit and vegetables • Cereals and grains • Other foods^d
	3. Country has measured and publicly reported a subsequent year of FLW ^a	1. Geographic coverage	Share of national population's FLW being measured	National, publicly available government statistics	0.5 points per 10% of the national population
		2. Sectoral coverage	Stages of national food system being measured	National, publicly available government statistics	1 point each for the following: • Farm production • Manufacturing and processing • Retail • Hospitality • Household
		3. Food category coverage	Categories of food sold in country being measured	National, publicly available government statistics	1 point each for the following: • Meat and seafood • Milk and dairy • Fruit and vegetables • Cereals and grains • Other foods^d
	Total possible:				30 points

PILLAR	INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	METRIC	DATA SOURCE	SCORING
Act ^c	4. Country has key FLW processes in place	1. National FLW reduction strategy in place	Yes/No	National government websites	5 points for each sub-indicator with a maximum of 20 points <i>(Note: Some countries may answer “Yes” to more than four sub-indicators. In these cases, 20 is still the maximum amount of points possible, and countries should share the full list of indicators to show this progress.)</i>
		2. Agency(ies) designated by law and/or official government documents to be responsible for national progress on FLW reduction	Yes/No	National government websites	
		3. FLW multi-stakeholder collaboration including the public sector (e.g., public-private partnership) established	Yes/No	National government websites	
		4. Government-supported public FLW communications effort conducted in the past 12 months	Yes/No	National government websites	
		5. Other relevant, effective FLW reduction process <i>(proposed by country or Index preparer and relevance evaluated by entity posting the results of the Index)</i>	Yes/No	National government websites	
	5. Country has key FLW policies in place	1. FLW reduction in country’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Climate Agreement	Yes/No	NDC forms	5 points for each sub-indicator with a maximum of 20 points <i>(Note: Some countries may answer “Yes” to more than four sub-indicators. In these cases, 20 is still the maximum amount of points possible, and countries should share the full list of indicators to show this progress.)</i>
		2. Policies or legislation to encourage food donations in place (e.g., liability limitations, tax breaks)	Yes/No	National government websites	
	5. Country has key FLW policies in place	3. Food date labelling policies have been reformed or legislation enacted to avoid consumer confusion about product safety and quality	Yes/No	National government websites	
		4. Programs or incentives (e.g., subsidies, tax breaks) to improve on-farm or near-farm food storage	Yes/No	National government websites	
		5. Mandatory corporate measurement and reporting of FLW	Yes/No	National government websites	
		6. Incentives for diverting food waste disposal (e.g., landfill ban for organic waste, organic waste tax)	Yes/No	National government websites	
		7. Other relevant, effective FLW reduction process <i>(proposed by country or Index preparer and relevance evaluated by entity posting the results of the Index)</i>	Yes/No	National government websites	
Total possible:					40 points
Grand Total possible:					100 points

Notes: The above data could be collected via an annual survey of the national governments requested by the Inter-American Development Bank. Abbreviations: FLW = food loss and waste; SDG = Sustainable Development Goal.

^a Using a credible quantification method, consistent with the global Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard (FLW Protocol 2016), such as the Food Loss Index (FAO 2020), Food Waste Index (UNEP 2021), and/or nationally developed quantification.

^b Farm production = FLW that occurs during harvesting, storage, and/or transportation. Manufacturing and processing = FLW that occurs while food is being processed or made into derivative food products. Retail = FLW that occurs while food is being sold to customers in markets. Hospitality = FLW that occurs in restaurants, offices, hotels, and other food service environments. Household = FLW that occurs at the consumer's home. FLW that occurs during farm production until the retail portion of the food supply chain is often considered "food loss." FLW that occurs during the other stages of the food supply chain is often considered "food waste."

^c If a region of a country is pursuing any of these "act" sub-indicators, give credit to this action by calculating the score proportional to the share of the country's population represented by that region. For instance, if a province has initiated a multi-stakeholder collaboration on reducing FLW (act, indicator 4, sub-indicator 3) and that province's population is equivalent to 20 percent of the country's population, then allocate 1 point (20 percent of 5 points) in the Index.

^d To earn the 2 points, the "other foods" category should be a suite of food types, not just one type of food (e.g., coffee).

^e Using a credible quantification method consistent with the global Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard (FLW Protocol 2016).

How Should One Interpret the Scoring?

One can interpret progress by considering the total score. The closer the scores get to 100, the closer the country is to fulfilling the Target-Measure-Act approach. One can also interpret progress by considering points per component of the Target-Measure-Act approach. Doing so reveals on which aspects of Target-Measure-Act the country has made progress and on which it has not. For instance, if a country scores only 5 points on the “target” component, then that is an indication that the country needs to take steps to set an FLW reduction target that is more consistent with SDG Target 12.3. If another country scores 30 points in the “target” component, 30 points in the “measure” component, and 5 points in the “act” component, then that is an indication the country needs to focus on taking action on FLW reduction. In other words, evaluating component-by-component, or “disaggregated,” scores can help a country and its stakeholders identify what the country needs to do next to make progress on its FLW reduction strategy and therefore on reducing its FLW.

To make it easier to discern country performance, the scores are represented in a “traffic light” (green, yellow, orange) display. This makes the scores intuitive (e.g., green is “good”), and quickly focuses attention. Table 2 describes the conversion of numeric scores into the color-coded display.

TABLE 2
Converting
Numeric Scores
into a “Traffic
Light” Display

SCORE					
TARGET	MEASURE	ACT	TOTAL	COLOR CODE	MEANING
21-30	21-30	28-40	67-100	Green	The country is performing well in fulfilling the Target, Measure, or Act Index, or (for “Total”) in the full Target-Measure-Act Approach.
11-20	11-20	14-27	34-66	Yellow	The country is making some progress but has some gaps to fill.
0-10	0-10	0-13	0-33	Orange	The country is not yet making much progress and has gaps to fill.

Note: For each score, we use a simple arithmetic split where the top 1/3 = green, the middle 1/3 = yellow, and the bottom 1/3 = orange.

How Does the Index Apply in Five Pilot Applications?

Table 3 summarizes a pilot application of the Index for five countries (see Appendix for a more detailed summary of the pilot application scores). Data for each indicator and sub-indicator were accessible via public information. Other information that the respective governments may hold could affect the scoring. The best available data suggest that the United Kingdom is the pilot country that has made the most progress in tackling FLW from farm to fork, with a 27 percent reduction in FLW by 2019 relative to a 2007 baseline (Lipinski 2020). Not surprisingly, the United Kingdom scored a 90 on the Index, which corresponds with a green color code, the highest score of the countries tested in this pilot application.

TABLE 3
Results of Pilot
Application of
the FLW Country
Progress Index

	INDICATOR	MAX SCORE	UNITED KINGDOM	COLOMBIA	MEXICO	COSTA RICA	ARGENTINA
Target	Country has set an explicit FLW reduction target consistent with SDG 12.3.	30	30	0	0	0	26
Measure	Country is measuring its FLW	30	30	15	15	0	26
Act	Country has processes and policies in place to reduce FLW	40	30	20	15	10	20
Total		100	90	35	30	10	72
Actual performance of FLW reduction over time			27% (2007–2019)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Note: The above data could be collected via an annual survey of the national governments requested by the Inter-American Development Bank.

Abbreviations: FLW = food loss and waste; SDG = Sustainable Development Goal; TBD = to be determined.

Concluding thoughts

By assessing country performance against the Target-Measure-Act approach, the FLW Country Progress Index can help countries understand where they are making progress and where they have remaining gaps with respect to their FLW reduction strategies. In addition, it enables countries to benchmark themselves against and learn from their peers. In turn, this can facilitate advancements in national FLW strategy development and implementation.

Utilizing the Index to spur steps to reduce FLW is urgent. The world has no more time, or food, to waste.



Appendix

Table A-1
Results of Pilot Application of the Food Loss and Waste Country Progress Index

	INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	MAX SCORE	METRIC	SCORING	UNITED KINGDOM	COLOMBIA	MEXICO	COSTA RICA	ARGENTINA
Target	1. Country has set an explicit FLW reduction target consistent with SDG 12.3.	1. Target to reduce by 50% by 2030	Pre-requisite	Yes/No	If not met, no points awarded in the “Target” category	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
		2. Geographic coverage	10	Share of national population under the target	1 point per 10% of the national population	10				10
		3. Sectoral coverage	10	Stages of national food system under the target	2 points each for the following: • Farm production • Manufacturing and processing • Retail • Hospitality • Household	10				6
		4. Food category coverage	10	Categories of food sold in country under the target	2 points each for the following: • Meat and seafood • Milk and dairy • Fruit and vegetables • Cereals and grains • Other foods	10				10
		Total:				30	0	0	0	26

Table A-1
Results of Pilot Application of the Food Loss and Waste Country Progress Index

INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	MAX SCORE	METRIC	SCORING	UNITED KINGDOM	COLOMBIA	MEXICO	COSTA RICA	ARGENTINA
Measure	2. Country has measured and publicly reported its base year FLW*	1. Geographic coverage	Share of national population's FLW being measured	0.5 points per 10% of the national population	5	5	5		5
		2. Sectoral coverage	Stages of national food system being measured	1 point each for the following: • Farm production • Manufacturing and processing • Retail • Hospitality • Household	5	5	5		5
		3. Food category coverage	Categories of food sold in country being measured	1 point each for the following: • Meat and seafood • Milk and dairy • Fruit and vegetables • Cereals and grains • Other foods	5	5	5		5
	3. Country has measured and publicly reported a subsequent year of FLW*	1. Geographic coverage	Share of national population's FLW being measured	0.5 points per 10% of the national population	5				5
		2. Sectoral coverage	Stages of national food system being measured	1 point each for the following: • Farm production • Manufacturing and processing • Retail • Hospitality • Household	5				1
		3. Food category coverage	Categories of food sold in country being measured	1 point each for the following: • Meat and seafood • Milk and dairy • Fruit and vegetables • Cereals and grains • Other foods	5				5
	Total:				30	15	15	0	26

Table A-1
Results of Pilot Application of the Food Loss and Waste Country Progress Index

	INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	MAX SCORE	METRIC	SCORING	UNITED KINGDOM	COLOMBIA	MEXICO	COSTA RICA	ARGENTINA
Act	4. Country has key FLW processes in place	1. National FLW reduction strategy in place		Yes/No	5 points for each sub-indicator with a maximum of 20 points	5	5	5		5
		2. Agency(ies) designated to be responsible for national progress on FLW reduction		Yes/No		5	5	5		5
		3. FLW multi-stakeholder collaborative (e.g., public-private partnership) established		Yes/No		5		5	5	5
		4. Government-supported public FLW communications effort conducted in the past 12 months		Yes/No		5				
		5. Other relevant, effective FLW reduction process (proposed by country or Index preparer and evaluated by IADB)		Yes/No						
	Subtotal:		20			20	10	15	5	15

Table A-1
Results of Pilot Application of the Food Loss and Waste Country Progress Index

INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	MAX SCORE	METRIC	SCORING	UNITED KINGDOM	COLOMBIA	MEXICO	COSTA RICA	ARGENTINA
Act	1. FLW reduction in country's Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Climate Agreement		Yes/No	5 points for each sub-indicator with a maximum of 20 points					
	2. Policies or legislation to encourage food donations in place (e.g., liability limitations, tax breaks)		Yes/No		5	5		5	5
	3. Food date labeling policies have been reformed or legislation enacted to avoid consumer confusion about product safety and quality								
	4. Programs or incentives (e.g., subsidies, tax breaks) to improve on-farm or near-farm food storage		Yes/No		5	5			
	5. Country has key FLW policies in place		Yes/No						
	6. Incentives for diverting food waste disposal (e.g., landfill ban for organic waste, organic waste tax)		Yes/No						
	7. Other relevant, effective FLW reduction process (proposed by country or Index preparer and evaluated by IADB)		Yes/No						
Subtotal:		20			10	10	0	5	5
Total:		40			30	20	15	10	20

Table A-1
Results of Pilot Application of the Food Loss and Waste Country Progress Index

	INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	MAX SCORE	METRIC	SCORING	UNITED KINGDOM	COLOMBIA	MEXICO	COSTA RICA	ARGENTINA
	Total:		100			90	35	30	10	72
	INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	MAX SCORE	METRIC	SCORING	UNITED KINGDOM	COLOMBIA	MEXICO	COSTA RICA	ARGENTINA
	Actual performance of FLW reduction over time			Percent reduction of FLW in tons per capita relative to the base year	Not weighted in the Index but displayed separately	27% (2007-2019)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Note: The above data could be collected via an annual survey of the national governments requested by the Inter-American Development Bank.
Abbreviations: FLW = food loss and waste; SDG = Sustainable Development Goal; IADB = Inter-American Development Bank; TBD = to be determined.

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¹ A number of major food businesses (e.g., IKEA, Kellogg Company, Nestlé, Olam International, Sodexo, Tesco, Walmart) and business associations (e.g., The Consumer Goods Forum, the Global Agribusiness Alliance) follow the Target-Measure-Act approach.

Food loss and waste country progress index

**A tool to measure national
progress on managing food
loss and waste**

