

Global Hunger Phenomenon and Food Squandering

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Damages and wastes are carried out by people into variety of ways and usually no production, transaction and consumption process can be found which has no damages. The damages of production and consumption processes can be classified into different ways according to the purpose of study with different applications². Each of these classifications are subject of detailed discussions and regarding the importance of food and its high level of damages and wastes, and the malnutrition and hunger of people, all are subject to review.

Generally, damages occur in the process of production because of poor technology, management, warehousing and sale, lack of proper processing and preserving technology and proper transportation, delivery, packing and supplying to consumers and improper methods of food consumption by consumers as a fraction of household wastes, are the main sources of damages and wastes of food around the world³.

The subject is very important from humanities point of view because a quarter to one third of food materials are wasted every year and about one sixth of the people of the world which is about one billion people, are facing malnutrition and about one third of them are hungry. Due to poor nutrition during embryonic and childhood is the cause of death of one third of the children of the world⁴. According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), number of hungry people in the world had

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² - For example, damages can be classified according to the following groups: Solid Wastes, Liquid Wastes, Gaseous Wastes, Animal by-products, Biodegradable waste, Biomedical waste, Bulky waste, Business waste, Chemical waste, Clinical waste, Coffee wastewater, Commercial waste, Construction and demolition waste (C&D waste), Controlled waste, Consumable waste, Composite waste, Demolition waste, Domestic waste, Electronic waste (E-waste), Farm waste, Food waste, Green waste, Grey water, Hazardous waste, Household waste (including Household hazardous waste), Human waste, sewage sludge, Industrial waste (including: slag, fly ash and sludge), Inert waste, Kitchen waste, Litter organic waste, Liquid waste, Medical waste, Mixed waste, Municipal solid waste, Packaging waste, Post-consumer waste, Radioactive waste (nuclear Low level and High level waste, Spent nuclear fuel and Mixed radioactive/hazardous waste), Recyclable waste, Residual waste, Retail hazardous waste, Sewage, Sharps waste, Slaughterhouse waste, Special waste, Toxic waste, Uncontrolled waste, Waste heat, Wastewater, Winery wastewater... http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_waste_types

³ - Food wastes include any kind of raw or cooked nourishment which is thrown away. The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines food damages and wastes as "uneaten food". Also refer to:

"The Definition of Waste, Summary of European Court of Justice Judgments". Defra. Updated 2009.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/topics/pdf/ECJCaseLaw20090209.pdf>. Retrieved 2009-08-20.

⁴ - Announcement of Information Centre of United Nations, International Union against Hunger about Food. In this announcement the waste of food has been defined as a "criminal phenomenon" and has asked everybody to decrease waste to zero and do not buy or cook more than need and preserve food through proper methods so that food not to thrown away and before throwing away food, they should think if possible to prepare a tasty soup from the remained food? The announcement has also asked people to persuade governments to implement effective actions for alleviation of hunger and malnutrition.

http://www.fao.org/UNFAO/Bodies/cfs/cfs34/index_en.htm

Also see:

<http://www.iaahp.net>

Olivier De Schutter, 2009, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Accountability to combat hunger. http://www.iaahp.net/fileadmin/templates/iaah/WFD2009/contributions/IAAHeditorial_DeSchutter_EN.pdf

reached 105 million in 2009 and about 1.02 billions had malnutrition and hunger which has been the main cause of annual death of 30.5 million children of the world. Families in developing countries on average spend 70% of their income for food and this figure is about 15% to 18% in industrial countries. A study of hungry people of the world shows 70% of them are women and girls; while rural women produce 50% of the world's food.

The number of children suffering from low weight has increased between 2000 and 2005 according to UN reports. Micro-nutrition shortage is one of the most important factors for excessive low weight of children. It is one of the main health problems of the world. That is to say, vitamin A shortage and therefore we see anemia symptom because of low usage of iron and zinc. These are causes which increased the early death of children and mothers, further decrease IQ of the children and decrease of quality of life and productivity as well as economic growth in developing countries. According to a report, about 70% of non-pregnant mothers in India and 50% of women in sub-Saharan Africa are suffering from anemia because of inadequacy of iron consumption. Further, inadequacy of vitamin A has affected the immunity system of 40% of children below the age 5 in developing countries and has increased the average number of death among the children in developing countries. In some countries the figures are more desperate, one of which is related to India with 40% because of lack of consummation of adequacy of vitamin A among before school age children.

The UN World Food Program Agency projected to the new record number of world hungry people on the occasion of Global Food Day, and emphasis that help contribution has decreased to its lowest level of recent years, while the number of hungry people of the world has increased because of the combined effects of increase of the food price, financial crisis and climate change. In this regard, the executive director of the World Bank⁵ says: The main concern of world policy makers today is concentrated on the miseries caused by global crisis. But, the real crisis is hunger and malnutrition... 75% of the people of the world live in villages and most of their lives are tied to agriculture which is the basic tool to fight hunger, malnutrition, and alleviation of poverty and sustainable development⁶.

In complain to disregarding the vast hungers of the world, in a symbolic movement in May 2009, Jack Dief, director of Food and Agricultural Organization of UN, went on 24 hours strike in FAO headquarter in Rome. He went on a hunger strike to recall international organizations to fight against spreading world hunger. By expressing his worry about the increasing number of hungry people of the world, he asked all people of the world to join this strike. Dief mentioned that we have every kind of natural resources and techniques to abolish world hungriness and only political reasons prevent us from doing so.

All most 30% of food stuffs in America which amounted to 48.2 billion dollars in 2008 are wasted. A large portion of this figure is food wasted from restaurants, hotels, coffee shops and schools, university cafeterias and office restaurants⁷. All these food wastes are because of squandering of food stuff more than needed and are thrown away. Generally, purchasing and keeping more food than needed, increases other costs such as transportation and preserving which are usually forgotten. In this regard, it should be mentioned that according to the published data, about 18.7% of the world energy is used to preserve food stuff in refrigerators⁸.

⁵ - Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

⁶ - All-Africa Global Media, Feb., 19, 2008.

⁷ - Robin Shreeves, The Shocking Statistics of Food Waste (and How to Keep Your Contribution to the Problem at a Minimum) Published on August 25th, 2008, Home & Garden

⁸ - <http://www.refrigeratorsaver.com/>

The FAO has predicted about a hunger tsunami in Food Production Outlook for 9 billion people of the world in 2050. It has been mentioned in their report that in order to gain victory on this crisis in 2050, the rules and socio-economic framework should be changed to prevent imbalanced distribution of agricultural products. However, within the first half of the 21 century, amount of food needs to be doubled, where world temperature will increase, agricultural production capacity will decrease, while demand for these products will also increase. Hence, if we do not think essentially to solve this problem, the hunger crisis will be indispensable. A recent FAO study shows that in order to feed 9 billion people in 2050, we need to increase agricultural production by 70%, and most of this increase should be in vital strategic productions such as grains. One of the instances that FAO proposes is equal distribution of food and resources. According to the FAO report, grain production which is about 2.1 billion tons per year at present time should be increased by one billion ton. Meat production should increase from 200 million tons to 470 million tons in 2050. Out of these production, about 72% of this amount will be spent in developed countries, while, at present time, figure is 58% of total meat production. The report makes this clear that in order to eliminate hunger in 2050, it is necessary to increase investment in agriculture by 60% until 2050. It may be pointed out here that the Human Right Declaration in 1948 considers not being hungry and removal of malnutrition as an integral part of human rights which has been again confirmed by Children Right Convention in 1989, but UN and global community have not done any decisive action about this difficulty yet.

On the other hand, religiously speaking, the holly Quran has considered over-consumption and squandering (spending more than need) as a forbidden act. Al- Quran commands: "It is him who has created gardens with or without scaffold and date roots and fields with various fruits and olive and similar and un-similar pomegranates. When they become fruitful, eat their fruit and give God's share when you pick them and do not squander, because God does not like squanderers"⁹. The share of God here certainly means paying "Zakat" (an Islamic tax) to poor and helpless people. In Surah of Esra, God commands: "Pay the rights of helpless people and those tired up in roads and do not squander at all. Squanderers are brothers of Satan and Satan was not grateful with his God."¹⁰

It is quite clear that human beings are families and in the above verses of the Quran, when it refers to human beings it means to all the people around the world. This verse considered specific rights in the properties of people for family and helpless people, and there is no difference between Asian, African, American or European helpless people. Wherever the helpless is located, they are needy and we have to pay his right which is contained in the properties of wealthy peoples.

Quran again commands: "Eat and drink and do not exceed limits because he does not like squanderers"¹¹. This subject according to the commands of the God, there is urgently needed for global system to find a basic solution to the problem and put it at the top of international policy making agenda. Ethically, it is not appropriate for human being dignity to see some people throw away 30% of their food stuff while some others suffer and die because of hunger and malnutrition.

The UN World Food Program Agency referred to a new record of number of hungry people of the world on the occasion of International Food Day and made it clear that the agency had agreed to help

⁹ - An'am surah, verses 142-143.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ وَالنَّخْلَ وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا أَكُلُهُ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَآتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

¹⁰ - An'am surah, verses 26-27.

وَأْتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تَبْذُرْ تَبْذِيرًا. إِنَّ الْمُبْذِرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا.

¹¹ - Aaraf surah, verse No. 31. وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

by providing food for 108 million people in 74 countries this year. But some countries reduced the quota and pended the quota of some others because of budget deficit. At last it has managed to secure only 2.9 billion dollars of 6.7 billion dollars budget from donor countries in 2009. By a simple commensuration one can find out that just America's food squander which was about 48.2 billion dollars in last year, 775 million hungry people could have been fed. And if we add the amount of squandering by Europe, Japan and wealthy oil producing countries to this figure, we can see that their squandering amounts reached several times as much of the food needed for hungry and malnutrition people of the world.

Unfortunately, food is considered as other goods and no difference is considered between essential needs and luxury goods. Wealthy people can buy every thing, while poor people usually can not afford to buy their basic needs. Human being has biologic needs of food which is quit different from their secondary needs for other things. That is to say, they need food just like air and water to survive while food is supplied like other goods in the market. In this situation, in addition to people dying because of war and homelessness, some others die because of famine and starvation. Many people die because of chronic malnutrition and diseases thereof; their life becomes shorter and they suffer more. Lack of food, the children also suffered due to low mental and bodily growth which threatens their future¹². As a result the human being is wasting a portion of human power and resources which decreases the supply in the global economy. This concept can be deducted from the Quranic verse which says¹³: "Eat from clean things we have sustenance for you and do not squander them which makes my anger possible and if my anger descent upon anyone, he will die".

From economic point of view, prevention of squandering will decrease food prices and thereof, poor people can afford to consume more food. This is very important from economic point of view and everybody and every family needs to buy as much food stuff as it is sufficient for him and nothing should be left to be thrown away. Therefore, people should be trained not to throw away food stuff and instead, should give them to the poor and helpless people so that these people do not decrease their utility but reduces prices and increases their welfare as well. Certainly good nutrition of hungry people and malnutrition people will increase their efficiency which leads to more production increase and welfare of all people of the Earth planet.

¹² - Aaraf surah, verse No. 31. وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

¹³ - Taha surah, verse No. 81. كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي وَمَنْ يَحِلِّ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَىٰ.