The rate of child poverty has only slightly lowered since the 1960's when President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a war on poverty and currently hovers around 22 percent. In 2012, 1 in 5 children were identified as poor. Good nutrition, especially in the early years of a child’s life, is vital to create the foundation for future physical and mental health. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nearly 16 million children under age 18 live in homes where they can’t consistently access an adequate amount of healthy and nutritious food. However, trillions of calories are wasted or lost on a yearly basis.

Recently, USDA reported that 141 trillion calories are being wasted which correlates to 1,249 calories per capita per day. If the authors of a new report are correct and we reduce this staggering amount of food waste the price of food might reduce. Jean Buzby, Hodan Wells and Jeffrey Hyman, researchers at USDA's Economic Research Service, reviewed estimates of food that was harvested but never eaten. They refer to edible food available for consumption - both food that spoils or is contaminated by mold or pests - as "lost." They call food that's been discarded by retailers due to having imperfections or the food left on consumers' plates "wasted."

Together 133 billion pounds of food, 31 percent of the total food supply, and worth about $161.6 billion went to waste in 2010. The report states that dairy products (25 billion pounds or 19 percent of all food lost), vegetables (25 billion pounds or 19 percent) and grain products (18.5 billion pounds or 14 percent) were the top three food groups lost.

According to Feeding America's childhood hunger facts, they note that 15.9 million children lived in food insecure homes in 2012. Interestingly, they report that more than 31 million low-income children received free or reduced-price meals as part of the National School Lunch Program in 2012 yet less than 2.5 million children participated daily in the Summer Food Service Program that provides free food when school is out of session.

The USDA researchers suggest there is a growing awareness of the cost and amount of food that's lost or wasted. "Economic incentives and consumer behavior will be paramount in reducing food loss," they write. "If food loss is prevented or reduced to the extent that less food is needed to feed people (i.e., the demand for food decreases), then this would likely reduce food prices in the United States and the rest of the world."

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