ThisIsPlastics.com

Plastics Reduce Food Waste and Support Sustainable Food Systems

Plastics ensure that increasingly complex, modern food systems can meet global demand—all while minimizing waste and emissions. As critical supply chains across the economy face continued challenges and disruptions, plastics keep food products accessible, sustainable, affordable and safe.

From farm to table, plastics are integral to global food systems

01 AT THE FARM

Increasing crop yields

Across the globe, farmers use plastic products to cultivate affordable and water-efficient crops year-round. Hoop houses made from ethylene-vinyl acetate and plastic netting help farmers reduce costs and protect crops against pests and other damage, maximizing yield, minimizing food waste and associated emissions and keeping produce safe. Thus, farmers are able to pass these cost savings onto consumers, increasing accessibility to and affordability of safe and nutritious food.

02 ON THE ROAD

Reducing emissions

Considering the average U.S. meal travels about 1,500 miles from farm to plate, efficient and sustainable transportation is a key component of modern food systems. Plastic food packaging is lighter to transport and uses less energy during production than alternatives. This allows more products to be packed into fewer shipments, providing additional efficiencies and reducing system greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

03 AT THE STORE

Promoting food safety and reducing waste

Plastic packaging helps valuable food products last longer and stay safer in stores, restaurants and the home: cucumbers, bananas and meat products last 11, 21 and 26 days longer, respectively, when packaged in plastic. By reducing food waste, the associated sizeable GHG emissions are also diminished. In fact, the climate impact of one cucumber wasted due to spoilage is the same as the amount of plastic used to wrap nearly 100 cucumbers.

04 ON THE TABLE

Providing affordability and accessibility

Plastics offer significant cost savings compared to alternatives, making food products more affordable and accessible. Plastic bottles, for example, are less than half the cost of glass bottles, which helps to reduce the difficult impact felt through escalated consumer prices in times of high inflation. Particularly in rural areas and food deserts, plastics ensure families around the world can afford to put safe, high-quality food products on the table.

Plastics are essential to securing food systems' sustainable future

From produce to protein and everything in between, all foods rely on plastic to reach the dinner table efficiently, safely and sustainably. Especially during a time of heightened food uncertainty, a possible ensuing global food crisis and shortages for critical food products, policymakers and food system stakeholders alike must embrace plastics to build a reliable, sustainable food supply chain for generations to come. To that end, investments in advanced recycling can ensure an infinite lifecycle for plastic packaging and provide additional sustainability gains through increased material circularity.