

8m tonnes of plastic products disposed of into sea

KARACHI: Experts on Friday said that the entire world dumps nearly one trillion tonnes of plastic products each year, killing animals, hampering rivers' streams and pollute oceans and alarmed that Pakistan's share is 8 million tonnes which is thrown into the sea.

They also called for a judicious consumption of food, warning that the one third of the total production is lost in the supply chain or thrown away. A total of 50 billion plastic bottles of water are bought annually and 80 percent are dumped.

Nearly 8 million tonnes of plastic products slip away into the oceans annually. An estimate shows that Pakistan's 80 percent of the total litter is single use plastic.

"The food system is posing one of the key threats to the nature today. It uses most of our natural resources with 69 per cent of our water and 34 percent of our land," Hammad Naqi Khan, Director General, WWF-Pakistan said on the first day of the environmental friendly food festival, ReFest being held in the city.

Not even all the food that is produced is consumed as around one third of it is lost in the supply chains or thrown away. The WWF-Pakistan works to improve food production and help change consumption modes besides ensure to conserve more for the human use than its wastage. The WWF-Pakistan's goal is also focused to create sustainable systems to safeguard the variety of life on earth while ensuring food security for the future as well, he added.

In a bid to discourage the single-use plastics and promote sustainable food consumption, the WWF-Pakistan and Brand Logics partnered to organise the country's first environmental-friendly food festival in the metropolis. The event aims to reduce food waste and raise awareness about eating food in a responsible way as well as adopting sustainable practices such as use of paper plates and cups. The WWF believes that if food is produced more sustainably, distributed fairly and consumed more responsibly, humans and planetary health can be improved.

A total of 70 food stalls were set up at the festival, which attracted a large number of Karachiites. The participants not only enjoyed food but music as well. The concept behind this event is to revisit the idea of organising food festivals, reduce food wastage, recycle what we can and reuse creatively. In an effort to make zero waste to landfills, a number of steps are being taken at the venue.

Only eco-friendly cutlery is available during the festival. Single-use plastic containers and straws are discouraged, however, if any food stall uses them they are being collected for recycling. WWF-Pakistan encourages people to use paper plates and cups as well as aluminium plates and packaging. Moreover, tickets used during the event were made from recycled paper. To reduce carbon emissions, carpooling is encouraged and tree plantations will be carried out after the festival.

As part of the eco-friendly festival, ReFest teams incentivise consumers to collect bottles at the venue. Further, all waste generated during the event is properly collected and segregated for

recycling. The festival also hosted a recycled art exhibition. Finally, all surplus food not sold at the end of each day at the festival was collected by Robin Hood Army and distributed to less privileged people in the city.

Talking about the festival, Asma Ezdi, Head of Communications and Marketing, WWF-Pakistan said that we need to increase people's awareness of where food comes from, and change our behaviours to ensure the proper functioning of our food system. As part of this festival, WWF-Pakistan in collaboration with different partners is also organising clean up drives across key public places in city. "The event will help create awareness about how people can change their ways to eat and reduce plastics that damage our environment and biodiversity," she added.

Ali Hassan, CEO, BrandLogics said, "Through this partnership with WWF-Pakistan, we are demonstrating our commitment to changing the event management space in the country. The ReFest food festival aims to showcase that it is possible to have fun while being responsible and promote environment friendly habits in our daily lives."

According to the Global Hunger Index 2016 report, Pakistan ranks as a country with a serious hunger level. Approximately 40 percent of food in the country is wasted, which amounts to close to 36 million tonnes of food waste per year in the country. This level of wastage is alarming when compared to the figure that 43 percent of the country's citizens remain food insecure with 18 percent facing severe shortages. This three-day event will be open for general public at Beach View Park, Clifton till Sunday, April 7.

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