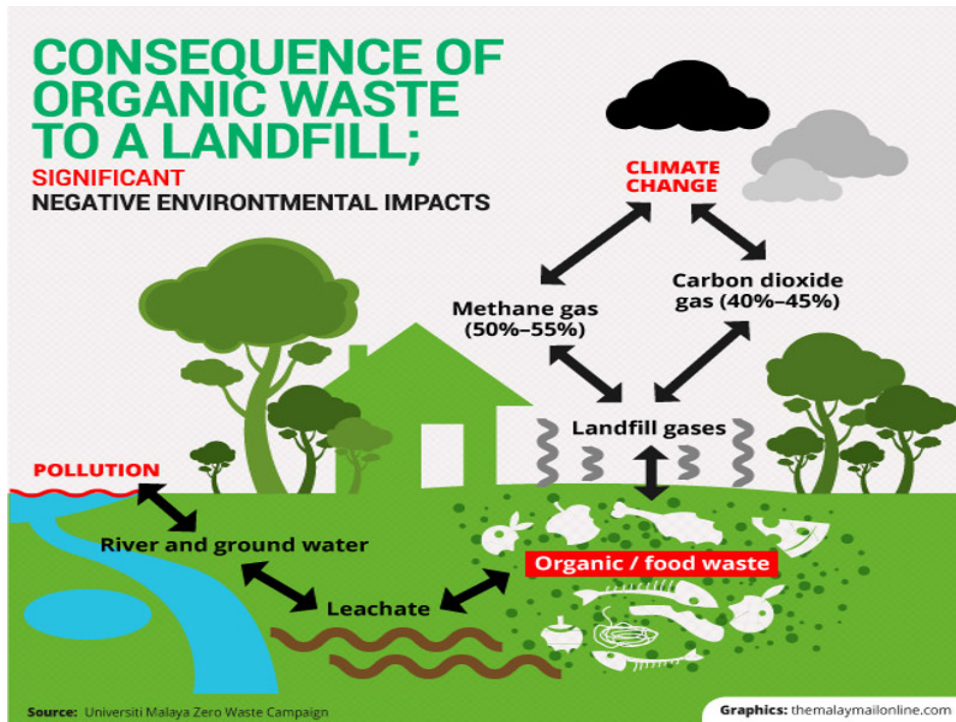


Imagine if for every 5 bags of groceries you buy, you just threw one away. As a nation, that's exactly what we're doing. Australians throw out \$8 billion of food every year, or about 20% of the food that we buy.



Image source: www.foodwise.com.au

When we throw food waste in the bin, it goes to landfill and breaks down underground where there is no oxygen. When there is no oxygen we call these conditions "anaerobic". When organic matter breaks down in anaerobic conditions it produces methane, a powerful greenhouse gas contributing to climate change. The breakdown of organic matter in landfills also produces a potent liquid called leachate, which can be toxic to the environment if it is accidentally allowed to contaminate groundwater and waterways.



Although the majority of food wastage occurs before we buy it, the impact of throwing food out after it reaches our homes has the biggest impact. When food is wasted in our homes we are wasting the resources used to store, process, transport and cook food as well as the water, fuel and resources put into producing the food in the first place.



We have limited resources: Phosphorus, which is an essential nutrient for the growth of all plants including food crops, has a limited global supply;

a changing climate is expected to put further pressure on water availability; and clearing land to grow more food is impacting on biodiversity. This is driving up the cost of food and putting a lot of stress on our rivers and soils.

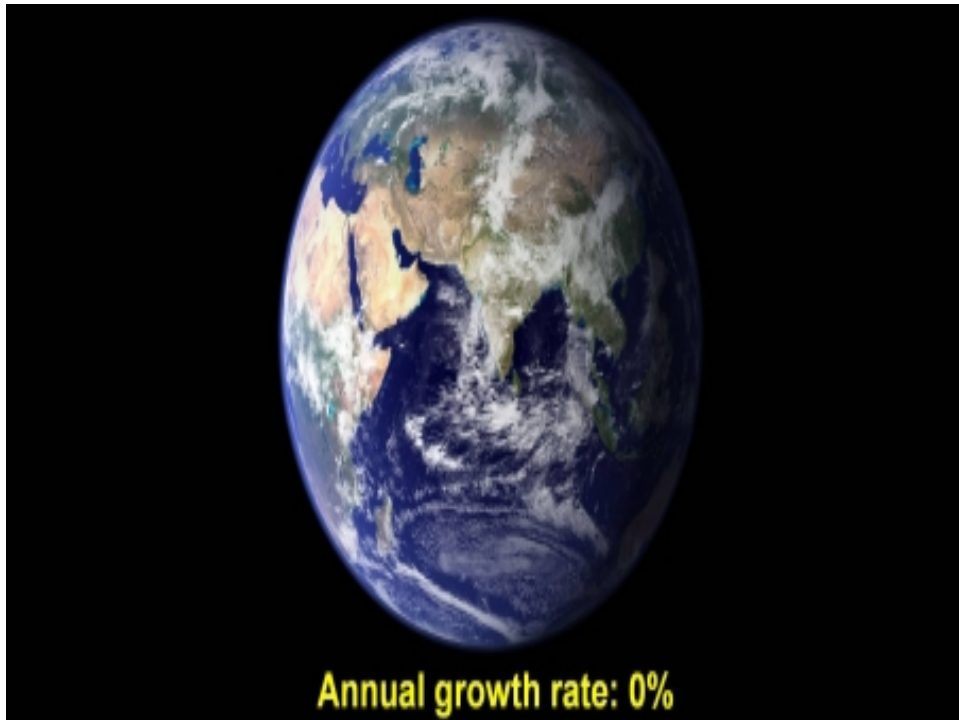


Image source: secure.avaaz.org

Meanwhile, food security is a real problem in Australia. In 2004 it was estimated that 1 million Australians were experiencing food insecurity, meaning that even with all the excess food we are producing and wasting, we are still not feeding around 5% of our population properly. If we want everyone to have enough to eat while not damaging our environment, one of the key things we can do is reduce our food waste.