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# BIGGEST ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF 2025

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**Annotation: The world is grappling with a host of pressing environmental challenges that demand immediate attention and action. From climate change-induced disasters to biodiversity loss and plastic pollution, the 15 biggest environmental problems of 2025 paint a stark picture of the urgent need for climate change mitigation and adaptation**

**Keywords:** Increased emissions of greenhouse gases have led to a rapid and steady increase in global temperatures, which in turn is causing catastrophic events all over the world – from Australia and the US experiencing some of the most devastating bushfire seasons ever recorded, locusts swarming across parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, decimating crops, and a heatwave in Antarctica that saw temperatures rise above 20C for the first time.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ROY MANGERSNES

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After several consecutive months of record-breaking temperatures, the hottest-ever summer, and the hottest day on record, 2024 was recently confirmed as the hottest year in history, with the global average temperature 0.12C above 2023, the previous warmest calendar year on record.

The global average temperatures was 1.60C above pre-industrial levels, making it also the first calendar year that has reached more than 1.5C above the pre-industrial level.

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This wraps up a decade of unprecedented heat globally fuelled by human activities, with each of the past ten years (2015-2024) being one of the ten warmest years on record.

What's more, greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations have never been so high. Atmospheric concentrations of all three major planet-warming gases – carbon dioxide (CO2), methane, and nitrous oxide – reached new highs in 2023, committing the planet to rising temperatures for many years to come.

This is undoubtedly one of the biggest environmental problems of our lifetime: as greenhouse gas emissions blanket the Earth, they trap the sun's heat, leading to global warming.Historic atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO2). Image: WMO (2024).

The burning of coal, natural gas, and oil for electricity and heat is the single-largest source of global GHG emissions. These are the primary drivers of global warming as they trap heat in the atmosphere and raising Earth's surface temperature.

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Scientists are constantly warning that the planet has crossed a series of tipping points that could have catastrophic consequences, such as advancing permafrost melt in Arctic regions, the Greenland ice sheet melting at an unprecedented rate,

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accelerating sixth mass extinction, and increasing deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, just to name a few.

The climate crisis is causing tropical storms and other weather events such as hurricanes, heatwaves and flooding to be more intense and frequent than seen before.

However, even if all greenhouse gas emissions were halted immediately, global temperatures would continue to rise in the coming years. That is why it is absolutely imperative that we start now to drastically reduce emissions, invest in renewable energy sources, and phase our fossil fuels as fast as possible.

According to economists like Nicholas Stern, the climate crisis is a result of multiple market failures.

For decade, economists and environmentalists have urged policymakers to increase the price of activities that emit greenhouse gases. This can be done, for example, through carbon taxes, which will stimulate innovations in low-carbon technologies.

To cut emissions quickly and effectively enough, governments must not only massively increase funding for green innovation to bring down the costs of low-carbon energy sources but they also need to adopt a range of other policies that address each of the other market failures.

A national carbon tax is currently implemented in 27 countries around the world, including various countries in the EU, Canada, Singapore, Japan, Ukraine and Argentina. However, according to the 2019 OECD Tax Energy Use report, current tax structures are not adequately aligned with the pollution profile of energy sources.

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For example, the OECD suggests that carbon taxes are not harsh enough on coal production, although it has proved to be effective for the electricity industry. A carbon tax has been effectively implemented in Sweden; the carbon tax is US$127 per tonne and has reduced emissions by 25% since 1995, while its economy has expanded 75% in the same time period.

Members of the UN are not obligated to adhere to suggestions or recommendations put forth by the organization. For instance, the Paris Agreement, a landmark accord under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), outlines the necessity for countries to make substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to limit global temperature rise to below 2C by 2100, with a preferable target of 1.5C. Participation in the agreement is voluntary, and there are typically no tangible consequences for non-compliance.

A third of the food intended for human consumption – around 1.3 billion tons – is wasted or lost. This is enough to feed 3 billion people. Food waste and loss account for approximately one-quarter of greenhouse gas emissions annually; if it was a country, food waste would be the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, behind China and the US. Food production accounts for around one-quarter (26%) of global greenhouse gas emissions. Our World in Data.

## REFERENCES

At the retail level, a shocking amount of food is wasted because of aesthetic reasons; in fact, in the US, more than 50% of all produce thrown away in the US is done so because it is deemed to be “too ugly” to be sold to consumers- this amounts to about 60 million tons of fruits and vegetables.

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