

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

The IHR spread across 13 states and union territories of India, has a rich diversity of food cultures from cultivated, foraged and pastoral agroecology which include culinary processes, preparation and preservation. This diversity has traditionally provided nutritional security as well as livelihood to mountain people. Both production and consumption have historically been tied with culture. However, food systems in mountains are facing changes and challenges. Mountain food cultures are fast eroding with the onslaught of the food industry, globalisation and homogenisation of food and taste. Dietary shifts to packaged and processed food markets have doubled up between 2012 and 2018 in India. This has had deep ramifications on health and livelihoods of people across IHR. Indigenous food culture is being replaced by packaged food. In addition, it adds to the plastic waste problem in the mountains. Zero Waste Himalaya has conducted The Himalayan Cleanup in the IHR every year since 2018. The data from 2018 to 2021 has consistently shown that plastic packaging from food and drinks are the top trashed items. This case study focuses on the critical toxic intersection of nutrition devoid consumption and plastic waste problem in the mountain communities of IHR. Documenting the process and data collected by The Himalayan Cleanup, it draws the attention on how influx of packaged food into the remote mountain geographies is changing the consumption patterns in the Himalayas. In addition, it looks at the way forward in restoring the balance in the mountain food systems and dealing with the waste crisis.