



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

# FOOD LOSS AND WASTE FACTSHEET

SEPTEMBER 2019

## DID YOU KNOW?

- EPA estimates that more food (over 75 billion pounds) reaches landfills and combustion facilities than any other material in everyday trash, constituting 22% of discarded municipal solid waste.<sup>1</sup> Landfills are the third largest source of human-related methane emissions in the United States.<sup>2</sup>
- Food waste not only impacts landfill space and emissions, it hurts the U.S. economy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates the value of food loss for retailers and consumers each year to be over \$161 billion.<sup>3</sup>
- Across the globe, food loss and waste have a combined carbon footprint of 4.4 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Globally, food waste consumes 21% of all fresh water.<sup>4</sup>

## EPA TAKING ACTION TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE

**Winning on Reducing Food Waste Month** - EPA and USDA worked with President Trump to successfully designate April 2019 as “Winning on Reducing Food Waste Month” to garner national attention on the need to address this important issue.

**Winning on Reducing Food Waste Initiative** - In October 2018, EPA, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the USDA signed a formal agreement to align efforts across the federal government to educate consumers, engage stakeholders, and develop and evaluate solutions to food loss and waste.

In April 2019, the three agencies released a **federal strategy** prioritizing six main areas for action:

1. Enhance Interagency Coordination
2. Increase Consumer Education and Outreach Efforts
3. Improve Coordination and Guidance on Food Loss and Waste Measurement
4. Clarify and Communicate Information on Food Safety, Food Date Labels, and Food Donations
5. Collaborate with Private Industry to Reduce Food Loss and Waste Across the Supply Chain
6. Encourage Food Waste Reduction by Federal Agencies in their Respective Facilities

**Food Recovery Challenge** - A voluntary incentive program in which EPA works with over 1,000 businesses and organizations to set data-driven goals, implement targeted strategies to reduce food waste in their operations and report results to compete for annual recognition.



**U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 Champions** - EPA and USDA launched this group to showcase private sector commitments. Currently, 25 businesses have made a public commitment to reduce food loss and waste in their own operations in the U.S. by 50% by the year 2030.

**Collaboration with ReFED, Inc.** - In April 2019, EPA, USDA, and FDA signed a formal agreement with ReFED, Inc. to collaborate to reduce food waste in the U.S. Some efforts include developing approaches for measuring the success of food waste strategies, advancing data collection and measurement efforts, and participating in the *Further with Food: Center for Food Loss and Waste*.

**Technological Innovation and Infrastructure** - In April 2019, EPA announced \$110,000 in funding for food waste management and infrastructure projects (to expand anaerobic digestion capacity) in Wisconsin, Vermont, and Washington. EPA also opened a Small Business Innovation Research Grants program solicitation in 2019, which included “preventing food waste” as a topic.

**President’s Environmental Youth Awards and Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators** - In July 2019, EPA and the White House Council of Environmental Quality recognized students and teachers from across the country who are promoting environmental stewardship and furthering environmental education in their communities and schools. There were 3 student projects and 4 teacher projects related to food waste that received awards in 2019.

**Environmental Education Grants** - Since 2016, EPA has awarded over \$338,000 in grants classroom and youth organization projects on food waste reduction practices.

**Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits** - EPA, USDA, and the University of Arkansas developed a tool to help schools calculate the amount of food wasted in their cafeterias and share tips on food waste prevention.

### State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Efforts -

- **Winning on Reducing Food Waste State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Pledge** - To date, 34 government organizations have signed onto EPA’s pledge which signifies their interest in working with federal partners to build upon efforts to address food loss and waste in the U.S.
- Some states and local governments are placing mandates on food recycling from certain food service establishments. Others are providing **guidance and technical assistance** on feeding food scraps to animals, liability protection, and tax incentives with respect to food donation and recovery. Various cities are rolling out **food scraps collection** programs.

## U.S. Food Loss and Waste 2030 Champions



### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2019). *Sustainable Management of Food Basics*. Retrieved from the Environmental Protection Agency website: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/sustainable-management-food-basics>

<sup>2</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2019). *Methane Emissions from Landfills*. Retrieved from the Environmental Protection Agency website: <https://www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-information-about-landfill-gas>

<sup>3</sup> Buzby, J., Wells, H., & Hyman, J. (2014). *The Estimated Amount, Value, and Calories of Postharvest Food Losses at the Retail and Consumer Levels in the United States*. Retrieved from the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service website: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=43836>

<sup>4</sup> ReFED. (2019). *The Multi-Billion Dollar Food Waste Problem*. Retrieved from ReFED's website: <https://www.refed.com/?sort=water-conservation>