

The U.S. Food Waste Challenge



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Food waste in the United States is estimated at 30 to 40 percent of the food supply

Food waste has far-reaching impacts:

- Food Security
- Natural Resources
- Climate Change



In 2010, an estimated 133 billion pounds of food from U.S. retail food stores, restaurants, and homes—valued at approximately \$161 billion—went uneaten. All of the resources that went into producing that wasted food – including the land, labor, water, pesticides, and fertilizers – could have been saved or gone to uses of higher value for society

**U.S. Food
Waste**

CHALLENGE

Launched June 4, 2013

U.S. Food Waste Challenge

USDA and EPA challenge producer groups, processors, retailers, manufacturers, communities, and other government agencies to:

1. **REDUCE** food loss and waste
2. **RECOVER** wholesome food for human consumption
3. **RECYCLE** discards to other uses including animal feed, composting, and energy generation

GOAL: Lead a fundamental shift in how we think about and manage food and food waste in this country. To join the Challenge, participants list the activities they will undertake to help reduce, recover, or recycle food waste in their operations in the United States. **The Challenge includes a goal of 400 partners by 2015 and 1,000 by 2020.**



Private-Public Partnership

Founding partners from across the food chain:

- USDA
- EPA
- Rio Farms (United Produce)
- Unilever
- General Mills
- Food Waste Reduction Alliance
 - Food Marketing Institute (1,228 food retailers)
 - Grocery Manufacturers Association (300 food and consumer product companies)
 - National Restaurant Association (50,000 restaurants)



USDA's Commitments

1. Reduce food waste in the school meals programs

- Fund new research on the amount of plate waste in schools
- Fund new research on the school food environment to identify innovative actions to reduce plate waste, such as the timing and duration of lunch periods, the number of serving lines, and the availability of grab-and-go options.
- Issue updated guidance materials and provide technical assistance to further encourage “offer versus serve” and family-style service at school meals (two techniques proven to reduce plate waste).
- Provide training, resources and support to school food service personnel to reduce in-kitchen food loss, improve the quality and acceptability of foods served and donation of wholesome leftover foods where feasible



USDA's Commitments

2. *Educate consumers about reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste*

- Update the safe-storage and date-labeling information on the FSIS website
- Update and expand the 10-year-old online FoodKeeper Resource, and develop a FoodKeeper App to provide a user-friendly option to access good searchable information on food storage, proper storage temperatures, food product dating, and expiration dates.
- Create a nationwide consumer education campaign in English and Spanish on safe food storage and food waste for dissemination through social media outlets such as Twitter, podcasts, and YouTube videos.
- Purchase a demo composter for composting food waste for the garden at headquarters and provide composter demonstrations as part of the educational tours of the headquarters garden.



USDA's Commitments

3. Recover or recycle food that has been removed from commerce

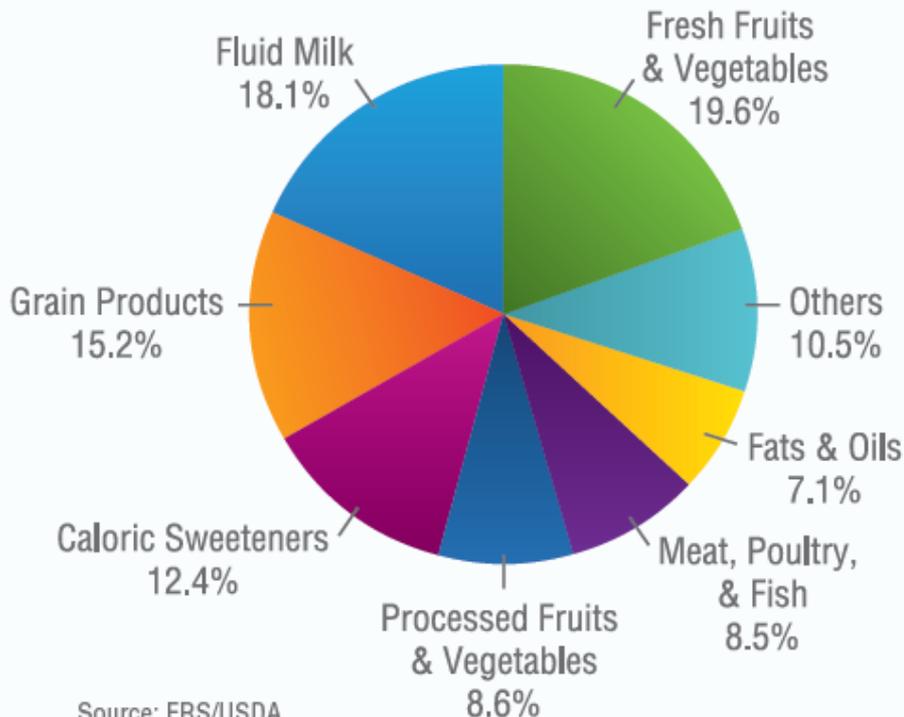
- FSIS will streamline procedures for donating wholesome misbranded meat and poultry products (over 3 million pounds in FY 2010-2012) by allowing donation of such product without temporary label approval.
- FSIS's Western Laboratory discards reserve samples that are no longer needed—400 to 600 pounds per month—with the regular solid waste. The Laboratory will initiate a pilot program to compost this meat.
- Approximately 48,091,376 lbs. per year (3%) of the imported fresh produce that is subject to inspection under Section 8E of the Agricultural Agreement Marketing Act is turned back or destroyed because it does not meet federal marketing order standards. USDA will work to divert wholesome food to donations by connecting fresh produce importers with charitable institutions.
- Work with the California Desert Grape Administrative Committee to specify alternative exempted outlets for fresh table grapes that are not inspected or that do not meet federal marketing order requirements.



USDA's Commitments

4. *Estimate and model food loss*

- Fund a study to update loss estimates for fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, and seafood at the retail level in the United States.
- Develop a consistent and globally applicable conceptual model for estimating post-harvest food losses.



Source: ERS/USDA

Breakdown of 96 Billion Pounds of Edible Food Loss in the United States, 1995*

A 1997 ERS/USDA study estimated that Americans wasted or lost 27 percent of the edible food available for human consumption by retailers, consumers, and food services. This figure does not include waste that occurs at the farm and processing stages.

*1995 is the most recent year for which a reliable estimate is available.

USDA's Commitments

5. Conduct research on new technologies for reducing food waste

- In collaboration with an industry partner, develop fruit- and vegetable-based powder coatings to inhibit spoilage of fresh-cut produce.
- Develop in-package plasma sterilization system to lengthen shelf life of fresh poultry meat.
- Investigate genetic/breeding options for inhibiting sprouting of potatoes during storage.
- Investigate use of 1-methylcyclopropene (1-MCP), refrigeration, and alternative packaging to delay ripening of strawberries, blueberries and tomatoes during shipping and storage.
- Develop, in collaboration with industry partner, active packaging to extend fruit and fresh-cut produce shelf life.
- Develop 2-stage anaerobic digestion of potato-processing waste (mostly peels) to produce a substitute for peat moss, an imported non-renewable matrix for potting and garden soils.
- Develop biodegradable biopolymers from polylactic acid and sugar beet pulp, a waste product from sugar beet processing.

USDA's Commitments

6. Reduce and recycle food waste at USDA headquarters

- USDA currently composts 2,400 pounds of food waste per week from the USDA headquarters in Washington, DC. USDA will work to increase this to at least 2,520 pounds per week by the end of 2014, for a total of 131,040 pounds composted food waste per year out of this single cafeteria complex.
- Install additional compost receptacles for coffee grounds
- Create educational material including posters, articles, and a video to encourage the use of recycling bins, home composting, and the reduction of food waste.



Success Story

Basic research can help reduce food waste internationally:

- Instant corn-soy blend with a 1-year shelf life is ideally suited for tropical countries that lack adequate storage facilities
- Inexpensive, small-scale processing equipment cut postharvest losses of locally grown peanuts in Haiti by about 75 percent and sped local production of a peanut-butter-based food that is important in preventing malnutrition.



Want more information?

<http://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste>