

# A Beginner's Guide to Food Waste

Summer 2016



Spoiler  
Alert

# Food waste is an environmental, social, and financial problem.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL

- Approximately 30–40% of food is wasted in the United States.
- If wasted food was a country, it would be the third largest producer of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the world, after China and the United States.

## SOCIAL

- Meanwhile, 48.1 million Americans lived in food-insecure households in 2014.
- Reducing food losses by only 15 percent would be enough food to feed more than 25 million Americans each year.

## FINANCIAL

- \$218 billion is spent to grow, process, transport, and dispose of food that is never eaten.
  - Food & money is lost at every step in the supply chain – across farms, manufacturers, restaurants, and homes.
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## A Beginner's Guide to Food Waste

Here's an overview of the current food waste landscape.

It can serve as a primer for those looking for a quick guide to government calls to action, legislation, and online awareness campaigns.

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# Chapter 1: An Introduction to Food Waste

## A NATIONAL FOOD WASTE REDUCTION GOAL

In September 2015, the USDA and EPA announced the **first-ever national food waste reduction goal**. The organizations called for a 50% reduction in food waste by 2030. The announcement propelled the topic into national conversation, eventually leading to Food & Wine magazine naming food waste as “the most discussed food-related topic of the year.”

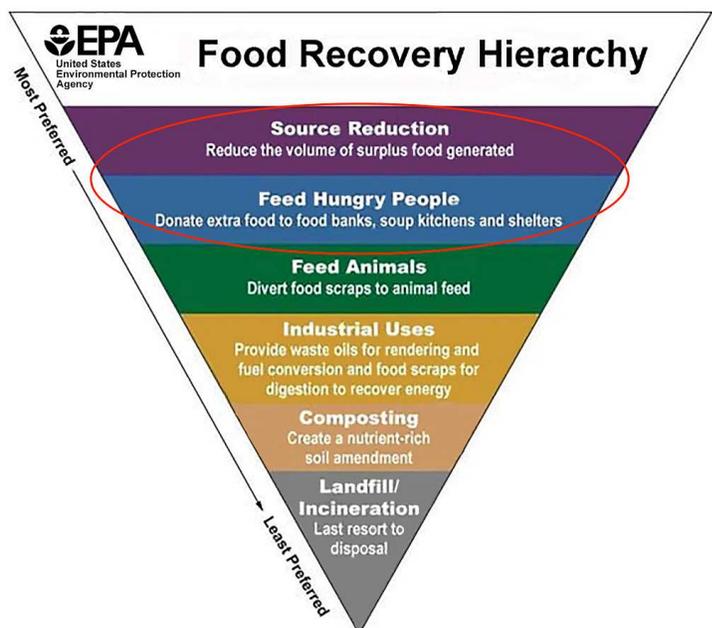
**Read more:** [What does a national call for food waste reduction mean?](#)

## U.S. FOOD WASTE CHALLENGE

The reduction goal came over two years after the **U.S. Food Waste Challenge** was launched in June 2013, which had over 4,000 participants by the end of 2014. Organizations within the U.S. food supply chain can participate in the challenge by submitting an activity form or joining through the Food Recovery Challenge.

## FOOD RECOVERY HIERARCHY

At the forefront of all food waste reduction efforts is the **Food Recovery Hierarchy** from the EPA, which is a great resource for understanding how organizations can identify landfill alternatives for wasted food. The hierarchy ranks ways to prevent and divert wasted food from most preferred to least preferred.



Source: EPA

## REFED ROADMAP

In March 2016, [ReFED \(Rethink Food Waste Through Economics and Data\)](#) released their roadmap of 27 actionable solutions to reducing food waste. It's the first data-driven guide for businesses, government, funders, and nonprofits to collectively reduce food waste at scale.

Through the lens of the Food Recovery Hierarchy, the roadmap outlines 12 solutions regarding food waste prevention, 7 solutions regarding food recovery, and 8 solutions regarding food waste recycling.

### IF IMPLEMENTED, THESE SOLUTIONS COULD GENERATE:



**\$10 BILLION**  
of economic value

[VIEW THE TOP FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS >](#)



**1.8 BILLION**  
meals saved

[VIEW THE TOP MEAL SAVING SOLUTIONS >](#)



**1.6 TRILLION GALLONS**  
water saved annually

[VIEW THE TOP WATER SAVING SOLUTIONS >](#)



**\$5.6 BILLION**  
annual consumer savings

[VIEW THE TOP CONSUMER SAVINGS SOLUTIONS >](#)



**\$1.9 BILLION**  
annual business profit potential

[VIEW THE TOP BUSINESS PROFIT POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS >](#)



**18 MILLION**  
tons of ghg emissions reduced annually

[VIEW THE TOP EMISSION REDUCING SOLUTIONS >](#)

Source: ReFED

**Watch more:** [ReFED Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste by 20%](#)

# Chapter 2: Food Waste Legislation

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## GOOD SAMARITAN ACT

Passed in 1996, the [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#) – commonly referred to as just the Good Samaritan Act – provides liability protection for food donations made in good faith. Good faith donors, including individuals, wholesalers, distributors, nonprofits, farmers, gleaners, and restaurants are protected, except in cases of gross negligence (intentionally donating food that is known to cause harm to the recipient).

## FOOD DATE LABELING ACT

Maine Congresswoman Chellie Pingree and Connecticut Senator Richard Blumenthal introduced the [Food Date Labeling Act](#) in May 2016 in an effort to standardize date labels such as “use by,” “sell by,” and “best by.”

Confusing date labels contribute to 90% of Americans throwing out perfectly good food, according the ReFED report. There are currently no national or governmental regulations on food date labeling for safety.

Read the bill [here](#).

**Read more:** [The Dating Game: How Confusing Food Date Labels Lead to Food Waste in America](#)

## ENHANCED TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR FOOD DONATIONS

In December 2015, Congress passed a permanent extension of enhanced tax deductions for food donations. When donating inventory of wholesome food to charity, Section 170(e) (3) of the U.S. Tax Code stipulates that businesses are eligible for enhanced tax deductions, up to 15% of their taxable income.

Learn which data you should track for [effective tax deduction documentation](#).

**Read more:** [What You Need to Know About the Tax Benefits for Food Donations](#)

# Chapter 3: Food Waste Awareness Campaigns

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## NRDC'S SAVE THE FOOD CAMPAIGN

The “[Save the Food](#)” [ad campaign](#) by the creators of Smokey the Bear (Ad Council) and the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) brings consumer attention to the issue of food waste, aiming to change household behavior. NRDC scientist and zero-waste advocate Dana Gunders revealed the campaign at the 2016 Food Tank Summit in Washington, D.C. in April 2016.

Meal planning tips, shopping guidelines, and information on deciphering “best by” and “use by” dates on products can be found at [savethefood.com](#), along with a comprehensive food storage directory. The campaign also includes digital media, outdoor (billboard), print and web advertising, and a TV PSA.

Watch the journey of a strawberry from the farm to the refrigerator to the garbage, highlighting the resources that it takes to bring food to consumers.

## EXPIRED: FOOD WASTE IN AMERICA FILM

**EXPIRED** is a short film that explores how misleading date labels on food products contribute to food waste in America. Spearheaded by the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, EXPIRED aims to show how date label reform can create a large impact in reducing the amount of wasted food.

**Read more:** [Consumer Perceptions of Date Labels](#)

## UGLY FRUIT & VEG TWITTER HANDLE

Ugly produce has become a star on social media, most notably on the Twitter handle [@UglyFruitandVeg](#) and Instagram page. Anti-food waste advocate Jordan Figueiredo runs the account and features ugly fruits and vegetables sent in by fans.

**Read more:** [How one activist got 30,000 people thinking about food waste](#)

## FEEDING THE 5,000

Feedback, an organization dedicated to public campaign about food waste reduction, hosts their **"Feeding the 5,000"** events in cities across the world. The events are communal meals for 5,000 people made out of recovered food that would have otherwise gone to waste.

## JUST EAT IT FILM

**The documentary** features Canadian filmmakers Grant Baldwin and Jenny Rustemeyer who aim to survive for six months solely on food that would have otherwise gone to waste.

**Read more:** [4 Fantastic Food Waste Quotes from the "Just Eat It" Film](#)

## JOHN OLIVER SEGMENT

The Last Week Tonight with **John Oliver: Food Waste** segment brought the issue to national attention outside of the food and waste industries.

# Chapter 4: Toolkits

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Looking for guides and actionable steps on how to reduce food waste? Check out this list of documents, which covers a broad range of food waste topics: food donation, food recovery, gleaning, and food waste assessments.

- [A Guide to Conducting and Analyzing a Food Waste Assessment](#)
- [Analysis of U.S. Food Waste Among Food Manufacturers, Retailers, and Restaurants](#)
- [Food Recovery: A Legal Guide](#)
- [Food Wastage Footprint: Impacts on Natural Resources](#)
- [Food Waste Reduction Alliance: Best Practices and Emerging Solutions Guide](#)
- [Let's Glean! United We Serve Toolkit](#)
- [Reducing Wasted Food & Packaging: A Guide for Food Services and Restaurants](#)
- [Waste Not, Want Not: An Overview of Food Waste](#)

# Chapter 5: Additional Resources

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Visit these websites for more information on how to reduce food waste.

- [BioCycle](#)
- [EPA's Sustainable Management of Food](#)
- [Food Loss + Waste Protocol](#)
- [Food Recovery Challenge](#)
- [Food Waste Reduction Alliance](#)
- [Greater Boston Food Bank's Glossary Terms](#)
- [Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic](#)
- [RecyclingWorks Massachusetts](#)
- [ReFed: A Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste by 20 Percent](#)
- [Save Food: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction](#)
- [USDA Food Product Dating](#)
- [USDA U.S. Food Waste Challenge](#)
- [U.S. Zero Waste Business Council](#)
- [WasteWise](#)
- [WRAP's Food Waste Reduction](#)

# About Us

Spoiler Alert is a food management platform for wholesale distribution, manufacturing, and grocery retail.

Our Enterprise platform introduces advanced inventory management, accounting, and reporting capabilities to help food businesses reduce costs of unsold inventory and maximize tax deductions for food donations.

# Contact Us

Want to learn more? Visit [www.foodspoileralert.com](http://www.foodspoileralert.com)

Ready to get started?

Email us at [info@foodspoileralert.com](mailto:info@foodspoileralert.com), or give us a call at 617-917-4123.

