



# SUSTAIN

Alliance for healthy, just and sustainable food & farming  
Working across Indigenous Territories / Ontario

## Shift Wasted Food into an Asset

### Food Waste in Ontario

- **Food waste** is a significant issue in Ontario, contributing to environmental, economic, and social challenges.
- **Over 2 million tonnes** of food are wasted throughout the food system annually in Ontario, with a substantial portion coming from households, businesses, and the food service industry.
- Food waste contributes to **greenhouse gas emissions**, as decomposing food in landfills produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas.
- **Food waste** accounts for approximately **\$1 billion in losses** each year in the province, significantly impacting the economy
- **Agricultural production** also generates significant food waste due to cosmetic standards, overproduction, and inefficiencies in harvesting and processing.
- **Public awareness** of food waste issues is limited, including about green bin program functions and limitations, and green bin programs are often contaminated.
- Capacities for processing organic waste vary across municipalities
- There is a lack of **policies and policy coherence** at the provincial level as well as a lack of comprehensive strategies to address food waste across sectors, including production, retail, consumption, and disposal.
- **There is a public misconception that food waste redistribution can solve food insecurity.** While food waste reduction through redistribution and recovery plays a crucial role in mitigating environmental impacts and making better use of existing resources, it is not a solution to food insecurity. Food insecurity is fundamentally a matter of insufficient income, access to affordable and nutritious food, and systemic socio-economic barriers. While redistributing surplus food can provide immediate relief, addressing the root causes of food insecurity requires long-term solutions focused on economic equity, food access, and social support systems. Redistribution of food waste through food charities also raises questions of equity. Why should those experiencing food insecurity accept food discarded by others? Food recovery should complement, not replace, broader efforts to ensure all individuals have reliable access to sufficient and nutritious food. See: [Food Waste and Food Insecurity in Canada](#)

## **About this Document:**

Sustain is a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance of organizations that work through collaborative action towards productive, equitable and sustainable food and farming systems that support the health and wellbeing of all people in Ontario/Indigenous Territories. These policy recommendations have been developed through a participatory process between September 9, 2024 and February 7, 2025 engaging 90+ organizations, as well as academics who contributed expertise, across Ontario/Indigenous Territories.

This is not a finished product. It is being shared based on the election being called.

The process to date has included:

- A survey of food and farming organizations about policy priorities
- A policy grey literature review
- Multiple meetings among organizations in Sustain-facilitated networks
- 2 rounds of review by Sustain network organizations
- Review by academics working in respective policy areas

Sustain is sharing out this work widely, educating voters for the Provincial Election 2025, knowing there is more work to do.

### **Next steps:**

Sustain will continue to gather expertise and solutions in the months to come, building increasing participation and consensus on priority recommendations. Importantly, Sustain will facilitate network engagement across organizations to work with all MPPs who form the next provincial government, and staff, to implement these recommendations over the next four years. Sustain recognizes and looks forward to elevating the leadership and expertise of organizations to do this policy work from within the networks.

To join this network, please email Rosie at [networks@sustainontario.com](mailto:networks@sustainontario.com)

## Overall Recommendations

---

Implement, fund, and update [Ontario's Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement and Framework \(2018\)](#).

- This requires alignment with the [Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act \(2016\)](#), with ongoing updates and review every 10 years.

### Purpose:

- To support the transition to a circular economy by reducing food and organic waste, promoting resource recovery, and fostering sustainable waste management practices.

### Goals:

- Minimize waste generation and disposal.
- Recover valuable resources from organic waste, such as compost and bioenergy.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through waste reduction and recovery activities.

### Recommendations include:

- **Prevention:** Prioritize food waste prevention, recovery, and reuse before disposal.
- **Composting and Processing:** Encourage effective collection, processing, and reintegration of organic waste into the economy as value-add products
- **Public Education:** Promote awareness and behavior change related to waste reduction and resource recovery.
- **Support for Infrastructure:** Improve resource recovery infrastructure, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- **Minimize Environmental Impact:** Ensure policies protect human health and the natural environment while promoting waste reduction and resource recovery across all sectors.

## Food Waste Prevention in the Supply Chain

---

### Key Issues:

- High levels of food waste at the production stage due to overproduction, cosmetic standards, and inefficiencies in harvesting and processing.
- Retail food waste is driven by consumer and retailer demand for "perfect" produce and strict sell-by or best-before dates, leading to edible food being discarded.
- Lack of coordination between producers, processors, and retailers to streamline inventory management and reduce waste across the supply chain.
- Limited incentives for food businesses to reduce waste, with few financial or regulatory pressures encouraging waste prevention practices.
- Limited incentives for fostering capacity development and innovation in food waste processing facilities

- Inadequate storage and handling practices along the supply chain, particularly in areas with limited infrastructure, contributing to premature spoilage of food.
- Missed opportunities for redistribution of unsellable but still edible food due to lack of formal food recovery programs within the supply chain.
- Lack of data and monitoring systems to track food waste across the supply chain, hindering efforts to identify and address key points of waste generation.

### Policy Recommendations:

- Mandate **Food Waste Reduction Targets** across the supply chain, setting clear goals for food producers, processors, and retailers to minimize waste, focusing on sectors not included in the 2018 Policy.
- Incentivize waste prevention practices by offering **tax credits, certifications, grants, or subsidies** to businesses that invest in reducing food waste or donating surplus food.
- **Mandate food waste audits** for large-scale food businesses, requiring them to assess waste production and implement strategies for reducing waste across the supply chain.
- Support improved **inventory management and technology** to help businesses better predict demand and reduce overproduction, including using AI and data analytics to optimize supply chain processes.
- Enhance **storage and handling guidelines** for the food industry to ensure proper handling and reduce spoilage at every stage of the supply chain.
- Increase **public-private collaboration** to create a robust infrastructure for food waste recovery and redistribution within the supply chain.

### Existing Examples:

- The Netherlands' Food Waste Prevention Program: A national government initiative to reduce food waste ([United Against Food Waste](#)) by working with businesses to implement sustainable practices in production, processing, and distribution, as well as promoting waste reduction through the supply chain.
- New York State's [Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law](#): requires businesses and institutions that generate an annual average of two tons of wasted food per week or more must:
  - donate excess edible food
  - recycle all remaining food scraps if they are within 25 miles of an organics recycler
- '[Denmark Against Food Waste](#)': voluntary agreement that unites 25+ food producers and retailers behind a shared mission: to halve food waste by 2030.
- [A Food Loss and Waste Strategy for Canada](#): A policy framework aimed at reducing food waste across the country by improving food recovery and redistribution systems, promoting consumer education, and reducing waste at the industrial level.
- The UK's [WRAP](#) (Waste and Resources Action Programme): A program that works with food businesses, government, and the public to reduce food waste through better supply chain management, improved storage, and more accurate demand forecasting.

# Food Redistribution and Resource Recovery

---

## Key Issues

- The [2018 Food and Organic Waste Framework](#) has been created but no actions have been taken toward implementation, and no accountability measures are in place for ministries and departments responsible for carrying out the plan.
- Lack of provincial policy consistency in areas such as food waste diversion, resource recovery standards, and funding support leads to fragmented local efforts, making it harder for municipalities to plan, implement, and scale effective food recovery programs and infrastructure.
- Lack of effective incentives or regulatory tools to support municipalities in coordinating efforts to establish effective policy or programming.
- Limited funding for food recovery programs, including waste audits and infrastructure.
- Lack of enforcement and local political will to implement food waste programs.
- Competing municipal priorities (e.g., housing, homelessness) make food waste a lower priority.
- Lack of organic waste processing infrastructure in many communities.
- Aging infrastructure in other communities and lack of support for regional organics processing.
- The significant cost difference between organics processing and landfilling discourages its adoption by municipalities, businesses, and the waste management industry.
- Limited programs and incentives for on-farm aerobic composting and digestion.

## Policy Recommendations:

- Enact the [2018 Food and Organic Waste Framework](#) including accountability measures for ministries and departments responsible for carrying out the plan. and effective incentives and regulatory tools to support municipalities
- Create provincial policy to aid in consistency, drive coordinated efforts, and increase municipal capacity
- Increase provincial and municipal **funding for food recovery programs** and regional organics processing infrastructure (including both surplus food recovery, food waste upcycling, compost processing, and waste-to-energy solutions).
- Introduce **mandatory food waste diversion** and **landfill bans** with penalties for non-compliance across the value chain and waste industry (including waste hauling), and clearly outline responsibilities for enforcement (municipal or provincial) incorporating [lessons learned](#) from the issues implementing similar programs in Nova Scotia and Vancouver.
- **Strengthen cross-sectoral partnerships** between food producers, retailers, and food recovery organizations to coordinate and facilitate the **redistribution of**

### **unsellable but still edible food, and for inedible food waste resource recovery solutions.**

- Extend **tax incentives** to retail businesses that participate in food recovery and donate surplus food.
- Support **on-farm aerobic composting and digestion** (and anaerobic digestion for food producers) through incentives and reduce regulatory barriers for farm waste processing.
- Improve **data collection and monitoring** to track food waste and target recovery efforts more effectively across the supply chain (adding organic waste to the list of waste materials that businesses need to measure via [Ontario Regulations 102/94](#)).
- **Mandate waste reduction targets and measurement** which are currently listed as a suggestion in The Food and Organic Waste Policy
- **Release data collected by The Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority** from waste management facilities and municipalities regarding organic waste in landfills, compost facilities, etc. in aid of enforcement, informed decision making for municipal policy development, and other measurement/tracking needs.
- Provide **funding to food redistribution organizations** to weigh, aggregate (so businesses are anonymous), and report on the surplus food that they rescue.
- Conduct a **province-wide assessment of food waste** to understand how much there is and how it is distributed across sectors so they know how to tackle the issue. ([Quebec's recent assessment](#))

### Existing Examples:

- **California's Senate Bill 1383**: A law requiring businesses to reduce food waste and divert organic materials from landfills, with a focus on food recovery and redistribution.
- **The UK's FareShare**: A charity that collects surplus food from across the food industry and redistributes it to charities supporting people in need.
- **France's National Food Recovery Law**: Legislation that mandates supermarkets to donate unsold food to charities, drastically reducing food waste in the country.
- The Netherlands' Food Bank Network: A countrywide network that collects surplus food from producers and retailers and redistributes it to food banks across the country.
- **Not Far from The Tree**: A community-based organization in Toronto that harvests surplus fruit from urban trees and redistributes it to local food banks, shelters, and community organizations, reducing food waste and promoting food security in the city.

- **Second Harvest:** A Canadian non-profit organization that rescues surplus food from retailers, wholesalers, and manufacturers and redistributes it to food banks and community organizations across Ontario, helping to reduce food waste and address food insecurity.
- **Foodmesh:** A private sector initiative using a B2B network to help businesses reduce food waste by facilitating the redistribution of surplus food. Their platform connects food suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, and food service businesses to redirect excess food to those who can use it, including for animal feed or donations.
- **Halifax Regional Food Hub Initiative:** A collaborative project that supports local food producers by offering infrastructure, shared resources, and connections to reduce food waste. The initiative focuses on value-added production like sauces and preserves to ensure surplus food doesn't go to waste.
- **Odd Bunch:** A company that buys "imperfect" produce (items that don't meet cosmetic standards for grocery stores) directly from farmers. The produce is then re-sold as a "farm-to-table" model in urban markets, primarily in Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta, helping reduce food waste and offer consumers affordable, fresh, and high-quality produce.

## Public Awareness and Education Campaigns

---

### Key Issues:

- **Limited public awareness** about the scale and impact of food waste, leading to a lack of urgency and action from consumers, businesses, and local governments.
- **Public and business resistance** to waste diversion programs or low participation rates due to convenience and lack of understanding of the environmental benefits.
- **Limited education** and outreach on the benefits of food waste diversion and the environmental impacts of sending organic waste to landfills, leading to misuse of green bin programs
- Confusion around **food labeling** (e.g., "best before" vs. "use by" dates) leads consumers to discard food prematurely, even though it is still safe to eat.
- Lack of understanding about how to properly **store, manage, and utilize food** to prevent spoilage at home, contributing to unnecessary food waste.
- Insufficient education about **food waste's environmental impact**, such as its contribution to methane emissions from landfills and the loss of resources like water and energy.
- **Behavioral resistance** to changing habits, as many people prioritize convenience over sustainability, making it difficult to encourage widespread adoption of food-saving practices.
- Limited integration of food waste education **into formal education systems** (e.g., schools, colleges), missing an opportunity to build long-term awareness and behavior change from a young age.



- Challenges in reaching **diverse communities** with tailored messages, especially in multicultural areas where different cultural practices and attitudes towards food waste exist.
- **Public resistance to policy-driven changes** (e.g., landfill bans, food waste separation), due to misconceptions or reluctance to alter established practices.
- Difficulty in sustaining **long-term engagement**, as many food waste awareness campaigns are short-term or lack consistent follow-up, leading to limited impact.

## Policy Recommendations:

- Launch a **Provincial Food Waste Awareness Campaign**: Develop a provincial government-led campaign to educate Ontarians on the environmental, economic, and social impacts of food waste, highlighting the benefits of reducing waste at home and across the supply chain, with emphasis on the food waste pyramid that emphasizes human consumption as the best use.
  - Create Ongoing, Multi-Year Education Campaigns for long-term, consistent food waste education, with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and ensure sustained behavioral change.
  - Launch Culturally Tailored Food Waste Campaigns to develop culturally relevant educational campaigns tailoring messages to reflect varying cultural attitudes toward food and waste.
- **Standardize Food Labeling Regulations**: Implement provincial regulations that create clear, consistent definitions for "best before," "use by," and "sell by" dates, reducing consumer confusion and encouraging more accurate food disposal decisions. This should include an awareness campaign/outreach so that people are aware of the regulation, and information on what can be donated (i.e., if it is passed it's best before date, is it allowed to be donated?)
- **Fund community-level educational initiatives** and community-based social marketing campaigns that teach practical food-saving techniques, such as meal planning, food storage, and cooking with leftovers, ensuring province-wide accessibility to these resources.
- Provide **public education and awareness campaigns**: Raise awareness about the benefits of circular economy models through public outreach, educating businesses and consumers on how circular practices can reduce food waste, recover resources, and contribute to a sustainable food system.
- Provide **financial incentives and create partnerships** for province wide education programs about food waste.
  - **Partnerships with Food Businesses** to co-host provincial-level public campaigns that promote sustainable food practices and the redistribution of surplus food through business-driven initiatives.
  - Provide provincial funding for municipalities to develop and implement local food waste reduction programs, including **educational workshops and community events** that promote sustainable food practices.



- **Involve local groups and organizations** in designing food waste programs, to create localized campaigns to address specific community needs and barriers and support long-term engagement and behavior change. Integrating local insights ensures programs are relevant and impactful for communities.
- Create and/or distribute a robust educational kit about food waste (ex. [Food Matters Toolkit](#))

### Existing Examples:

- Both the BC government and the Recycling Council of Alberta worked with [Love Food Hate Waste](#) to give local governments access to education materials
- New York City’s “[Save the Food](#)” Campaign: This initiative promotes public awareness about food waste, targeting consumers to reduce waste at the household level, with specific tips on how to store food properly, use leftovers, and reduce food waste in the home.
- Germany’s “[Too Good for the Bin](#)” Campaign: An initiative that educates consumers and businesses on the environmental impacts of food waste and provides practical solutions to reduce waste at all stages of the food system. In February 2019, the Federal Cabinet adopted the [National Strategy for Food Waste Reduction](#).
- Singapore’s “[Love Your Food](#)” Campaign: The Singapore government launched this public education campaign to reduce food waste at the household level, providing educational materials, workshops, and tools to help individuals minimize food waste.
- Scotland’s “[Zero Waste Scotland](#)” Program: This initiative focuses on reducing food waste through public education campaigns, including teaching households and businesses about food waste prevention and offering resources to redistribute food effectively.
- China’s [Clean Plate campaign](#), where they work with restaurants to encourage consumers to order the appropriate amount, to take their leftovers, etc.

## Lower-Tier Waste Management and Diversion Programs

---

### Key Issues

- **Regulatory barriers**, such as the limited scope of current legislation around food waste diversion, which may not provide municipalities with the necessary tools or mandates to drive change.
- **Inconsistent municipal waste management programs** across Ontario, leading to fragmented food waste diversion efforts and unequal access to waste services.
- **Limited capacity and infrastructure** in many municipalities to handle organic waste diversion, particularly in rural and northern regions.

- **Lack of funding for municipal programs**, making it difficult for local governments to implement or expand food waste diversion initiatives effectively.
- **Insufficient food waste diversion from landfills**, with food scraps still making up a significant portion of municipal waste that could be composted or repurposed.
- **Challenges in tracking and reporting** food waste, with many municipalities lacking the data and systems necessary to assess the effectiveness of their diversion programs.
- **Lack of regional coordination**, with some municipalities lacking the ability to process food waste locally, leading to reliance on external processing facilities, which can be costly and inefficient.
- **Aging infrastructure** and outdated waste management systems that do not prioritize or adequately support the diversion of organic waste, including food scraps, or technologies that may increase diversion participation (ie. repackaging equipment)

## Policy Recommendations

- Create a **Provincial Framework for consistent municipal food waste diversion** programs, with clear guidelines and targets for all municipalities, ensuring uniformity across the province.
- **Increase funding and support for municipalities** to develop and expand food waste diversion infrastructure, particularly in rural and northern regions.
  - The government could use its allocated cost share funding from Infrastructure Canada to create an organic waste-specific infrastructure funding program ([like B.C.](#)).
- Implement **mandatory food waste diversion programs at the municipal level**, with clear **regulations and requirements for separating** organic waste from landfill-bound materials, noting different strategies for urban and rural communities, and including alternatives for remote communities (community composting, etc.).
- Provide **financial incentives or grants** to municipalities that implement successful food waste diversion programs or adopt innovative solutions for food recovery, waste-to-energy, and other circular resource recovery solutions
- Improve **public education and outreach** on food waste diversion, focusing on the environmental benefits and how residents and businesses can participate in waste reduction efforts.
- **Mandate food waste audits** for municipalities to track and measure food waste diversion effectiveness (residential/commercial), identify gaps, and improve program efficiency. This should include guidelines for standardization, and funding to support implementation.
- **Expand organic waste processing infrastructure** to allow municipalities to handle food waste locally, reducing transportation costs and supporting regional solutions.

- Implement **regional collaboration for food waste diversion**, enabling municipalities to share resources and infrastructure for more efficient and cost-effective organic waste processing.
- Introduce **clear regulations and incentives to support on-site composting** at businesses, schools, and residential properties, allowing for greater flexibility in managing food waste.
- Implement **landfill levies to provide municipalities with a sustainable funding source** for food waste programs, including subcontracting hauling or processing services, making it more affordable to procure these services through RFIs/RFPs.
- **Incentivize Public-Private Partnerships** to invest in or expand food waste processing infrastructure, supporting innovative service models and increasing the efficiency of waste diversion efforts.
- Use revenue from **landfill levies to incentivize businesses and service providers** to pilot new models and scale solutions that improve food waste processing and recovery.

## Existing Examples

- **Toronto's Green Bin Program**: A municipal program that collects organic waste from residents and businesses, including food scraps, (via a cost-recovery user-pay program) for composting and diversion from landfills.
- **Vancouver's Zero Waste 2040 Strategy**: A comprehensive municipal policy aimed at reducing waste, with food waste diversion as a key priority. The strategy includes education, increased organic waste processing, and goals for significant waste reduction by 2040.
- San Francisco's **Mandatory Composting and Recycling Ordinance**: A policy requiring all residents and businesses to compost and recycle, with a strong emphasis on food waste diversion. The city provides curbside composting services and has seen significant reductions in landfill-bound waste.
- Manitoba has created a levy on waste to encourage waste diversion from landfill & paired it with a **Compost Pays Support Program** where they give money to compost facility operators (who are sometimes municipalities) for every tonne of organic waste they process.
- Quebec gives funding to municipalities based on the performance of how much they divert from the landfill.
- **CIC's recent ICI food waste diversion pilot** in Strathcona County (AB) was transitioned to the municipality as an "early adopters" program, setting up the business community for future ICI diversion regulations. The regional pilot model, which consolidates waste from businesses, mirrors residential programs to negotiate lower tipping fees with the partner hauler. The County is now managing

the program and expanding it to address cost-related challenges in the commercial sector by utilizing the regional collective model.

- Also Lethbridge (AB) has an organics diversion mandate for ICI, and also provides municipal programming, and also has a data reporting mechanism to track success of the program and waste diversion targets.

## Incentives for Business Waste Reduction

---

### Key Issues

- **Lack of financial incentives** for businesses to invest in food waste reduction technologies, processes, and systems, resulting in low adoption of waste reduction practices.
- **Limited regulatory pressure** on corporations to take responsibility for food waste, with few mandates or policies requiring businesses to reduce waste or donate surplus food.
- **Absence of tax incentives or subsidies** for businesses that implement food waste reduction strategies or participate in food recovery programs.
- **Inefficient use of resources** by large corporations, including food retailers and processors, that generate significant food waste but lack incentives to improve waste management practices.
- **Inconsistent provincial government support** for food waste reduction efforts across sectors, leading to fragmented initiatives without a coordinated approach.
- **Lack of collaboration** between the public and private sectors to create incentives and frameworks for businesses to reduce food waste, leading to **missed opportunities for systemic change**, and missed regional economic opportunities for attracting investment/creating value-add products and jobs that support the economy.
- **Barriers to food donations** for businesses, including liability concerns and unclear regulations, which prevent excess food from being redistributed to food banks and community organizations.
  - There is a law that protects businesses from liability, but not many businesses know it exists, and it is quite vague. The government could raise awareness of this and set clear rules regarding what kinds of food (in what conditions) can be donated, so that businesses feel more secure in donating.
- **Insufficient awareness** of the **economic and environmental benefits** for businesses that reduce food waste

### Policy Recommendations

- Introduce **financial incentives** such as tax credits, subsidies, or carbon credits/rebates for businesses that implement food waste reduction strategies, including technologies for reducing waste, food recovery, and donation programs.

- Create **mandatory food waste reduction targets** for businesses, particularly in the food service, retail, and manufacturing sectors, with enforceable regulations to ensure compliance, and make it clear what government level is responsible for enforcing these, especially because national brands may operate under different jurisdictional levels.
- Provide **liability protection for businesses that donate surplus food** to reduce legal risks, encouraging more food donations to food banks and community organizations.
- Offer **grants or low-interest loans to small and medium-sized businesses** to help them invest in sustainable food waste reduction practices, such as composting, recycling, and waste diversion infrastructure.
- Implement **waste diversion performance measurement and reporting** that requires businesses to publicly report their food waste reduction efforts, creating transparency and accountability.
  - And/or the government aggregates information and releases it so the public can understand, per sector, how much waste is being generated, diverted, etc.
- **Promote the economic benefits** of food waste reduction, education campaigns aimed at businesses, to increase participation and commitment to waste minimization efforts.
- Support **innovative technologies and solutions** for food waste reduction and recovery, providing funding for research and development for both the public and private sectors that can scale successful waste reduction models.
  - This could include funding for pilot projects that implement and test solutions like the [Circular Innovation Council's](#), and Guelph-Wellington's [Our Food Future](#).
- Encourage the **adoption of food waste audits** by businesses, with incentives for those who successfully track and reduce their food waste over time. Ideally, food waste audits would be mandatory for large-scale food businesses.

## Existing Examples

- Ontario did have a [one time COVID-19 pandemic fund](#) for surplus food redistribution. This could be a regular fund.
- The UK's "[Food Waste Reduction Roadmap](#)" (2020): A government initiative that encourages businesses to commit to reducing food waste by setting targets and tracking progress, offering resources and guidance to support businesses in implementing food waste reduction practices.
- [Sainsbury's Partnership](#) with WRAP (UK): Sainsbury's, a UK-based supermarket, partners with WRAP to reduce food waste in its supply chain. It involves waste reduction initiatives, as well as standardizing measurement and reporting of GHG emissions from food and drink, driving action on cutting the environmental impact of food and drink.

- South Korea's [Food Waste Recycling Program](#): South Korea has implemented a nationwide food waste recycling program where businesses are incentivized to segregate and recycle food waste, receiving financial support for compliance with food waste regulations. This program has helped South Korea shift from recycling 2% to 98% of their food waste.

## Supporting Innovation and Circular Economy Models

---

### Key Issues

- **Limited investment in circular economy solutions:** There is insufficient funding and support for innovative technologies and systems that can reduce food waste by turning waste into valuable resources, such as upcycling, compost, bioenergy, or animal feed.
- **Barriers to scaling innovative solutions:** Many small-scale, innovative food waste solutions (e.g., on-farm composting or food-to-feed systems) face challenges in scaling due to lack of funding, regulatory support, regional buy-in, or market demand.
- **Inadequate infrastructure for circular models:** There is a lack of proper infrastructure to support circular economy models at scale, such as composting facilities, food waste recycling programs, and food-to-energy systems, limiting their effectiveness and reach.
- **Resistance to new business models:** Traditional food systems are often slow to adopt circular economy practices due to entrenched habits and business models that prioritize linear production and consumption.
- **Lack of awareness about circular economy benefits:** Many businesses, especially in the food industry, are unaware of, or underinvest in circular economy approaches to food waste, despite their potential for reducing waste and generating additional revenue streams.
- **Fragmented efforts across industries:** Innovation in food waste reduction is often isolated to specific sectors (e.g., composting or bioenergy), with little coordination or collaboration across industries, preventing the development of large-scale, integrated systems across the supply chain
- **Difficulty in measuring impact:** There is a lack of comprehensive data and metrics to assess the effectiveness of circular economy models, which makes it difficult for governments and businesses to track progress, measure success, make informed policy and investment decisions, and incentivize broader adoption.

## Policy Recommendations

- Develop a **comprehensive policy framework that promotes circular models** in the food sector, supporting innovation, resource recovery, and waste reduction across the supply chain.
- Create a **food waste innovation fund**: Establish provincial and municipal funding streams dedicated to supporting research and development of new circular economy technologies and food waste reduction methods, with a focus on scalability and market integration. Targeted at municipalities, businesses, waste industry, and organizations developing and scaling food waste solutions (composting technologies, food-to-feed systems, and bioenergy initiatives.)
  - Target circular economy innovations in the food production/processing sectors and end-management resource recovery with OMAFA's funding from the federal-provincial Canadian Sustainable Agricultural Program
    - Other provinces have utilized this funding to research on-farm anaerobic digestion, to fund businesses that make animal feed from insects (that they fed food waste), and other value-added products.
  - Target support for businesses to create value-added products from food items that are often unused (like salmon jerky from the non-filet parts, fertilizer from seafood shells, fire logs from the non-edible part of the flax crop).
- Provide technical assistance on how food processing companies can evaluate their procedures to be more efficient/cut food waste (ex [Maple Leaf Foods](#)).
- Creation of networks for regional business-to-business (B2B) resource sharing, feedstock purchase, and upcycling solutions.
- Re-implement the Feed-in Tariff program to incentivize waste-to-energy electricity.
- Create incentives for businesses and municipalities to adopt circular practices: **tax credits, subsidies, or certifications** including **carbon credits, rebates, or other forms of recognition** for businesses that demonstrate measurable impact in reducing food waste through adopting circular economy solutions.
- Support the development of infrastructure: **Fund the establishment of regional food waste recycling centers, and food-to-energy** systems, especially in underserved areas, to help close the loop on food waste.
- Facilitate **cross-sector collaboration**: Foster collaboration between industries, including food producers, waste management companies, and technology developers, to **create integrated systems** that support food waste reduction and circular economy practices including conferences, meetings, and stakeholder groups.
- Develop **metrics for tracking circular economy impact**: Introduce standardized **performance tracking systems** for municipalities and commercial sectors to measure the success of circular economy models, providing businesses and governments with data on waste reduction, resource recovery, and environmental impact.



## Existing Examples

- The European Union's [Circular Economy Action Plan](#): This comprehensive plan supports the transition towards a circular economy, including measures to reduce food waste through innovation in packaging, recycling, and waste recovery across member states. The plan incentivizes businesses to adopt sustainable practices and promotes research and innovation in circular economy solutions.
- Singapore's [Zero Waste Masterplan](#): A government initiative that includes policies for reducing food waste by supporting circular economy models, such as upcycling food scraps into new products, composting, and converting food waste into energy. The plan provides incentives for businesses to invest in food waste reduction technologies.
- Finland's [Circular Economy Roadmap](#): Finland's national strategy encourages businesses to implement circular economy solutions, including food waste management. The roadmap supports innovation through subsidies, research funding, and collaboration across industries to promote sustainable food systems and reduce waste.
- Australia's [National Food Waste Strategy](#): This strategy includes policies that support businesses in adopting circular economy approaches, such as turning food waste into compost or bioenergy. It provides funding for innovations in food waste reduction and aims to develop infrastructure for a national food waste recycling system.
- Japan's [Food Waste Recycling Law](#): Japan's policy mandates businesses to recycle food waste, using it to generate energy or turn it into animal feed. The government provides support for businesses adopting these practices and incentivizes innovation in food waste recycling technologies.

## Recommended or Consulted Sources

---

*Policy Recommendations were identified through a participatory process with organizations and groups in Sustain's Network.*

WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme). (2020). The food waste reduction roadmap: A guide for the UK food industry. WRAP.  
<https://wrap.org.uk/content/food-waste-reduction-roadmap>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2019). The state of food and agriculture 2019: Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction. FAO.  
<https://www.fao.org/3/ca6030en/ca6030en.pdf>

Gunders, D. (2012). Wasted: How America is losing up to 40 percent of its food from farm to fork to landfill. Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).  
<https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf>

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (2020). Food recovery hierarchy. <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-recovery-hierarchy>
- Government of Canada. (2020). A food waste reduction strategy for Canada. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/food-waste-reduction-strategy.html>
- Not Far From the Tree. (2020). Harvesting surplus fruit in Toronto. Not Far From the Tree. <https://notfarfromthetree.org/>
- European Commission. (2020). Circular economy action plan: For a cleaner and more competitive Europe. European Commission. <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/>
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. (2022). Food donation and food scraps recycling law. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/111830.html>
- Zero Waste Scotland. (2017). Food waste reduction: Policy options for Scotland. Zero Waste Scotland. <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/content/food-waste-policy-options>
- ReFED (Rethinking Food Waste Through Economics and Data). (2020). The food waste diversion toolkit: Reducing food waste and improving the food system. ReFED. <https://www.refed.com/>
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). (2021). Food waste index report 2021. UNEP. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/food-waste-index-report-2021>
- USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). (2020). The 2030 food loss and waste reduction goal. USDA. <https://www.usda.gov/topics/farming/food-waste>
- The Real Junk Food Project. (2020). Fighting food waste: Redistributing surplus food to local communities. The Real Junk Food Project. <https://realjunkfoodproject.org/>
- The Guardian. (2021). The global food waste scandal: How excess food is thrown away while millions go hungry. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/23/the-global-food-waste-scandal>
- C40 Cities. (2020). Food systems and food waste: City-led solutions to reduce food waste in urban areas. C40 Cities. <https://www.c40.org/>
- Environmental Defence. (2019). Food waste in Canada: A growing problem and how to fix it. Environmental Defence Canada. <https://environmentaldefence.ca/>
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2020). Reducing food waste: A strategy for sustainable food systems. OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/food-systems/food-waste/>

- Sainsbury's Waste Not Campaign. (2019). Fighting food waste through business action and consumer engagement. Sainsbury's. <https://www.sainsburys.co.uk>
- Buzby, J. C., & Hyman, J. (2018). The economics of food loss at the consumer level in the United States. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/87639/eib-213.pdf>
- National Zero Waste Council. (2019). A framework for action: Reducing food waste in Canada. National Zero Waste Council. <https://www.nzwc.ca/>
- The Ellen MacArthur Foundation. (2019). The circular economy in food systems. Ellen MacArthur Foundation. <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy-in-food-systems>
- ReFED. (2020). Food waste solutions: A roadmap to reducing food loss and waste in the U.S.. ReFED. <https://www.refed.com/>
- Food Secure Canada. (2020). A food strategy for Canada: Reducing food waste and promoting sustainable food systems. Food Secure Canada. <https://foodsecurecanada.org>
- Gunders, D., & Bloom, J. (2020). Save the food: Reducing food waste in restaurants and food service. Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). <https://www.nrdc.org/>
- World Resources Institute (WRI). (2020). Reducing food loss and waste: An imperative for sustainability and food security. World Resources Institute. <https://www.wri.org/>
- The Food Recovery Network. (2020). Food recovery: A model for addressing food insecurity and waste. Food Recovery Network. <https://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org/>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2020). Food systems and waste: How innovation can reduce waste in developing countries. UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/>
- Canadian Foodgrains Bank. (2021). Food loss and food waste: Impact on global hunger. Canadian Foodgrains Bank. <https://foodgrainsbank.ca/>
- Lynch, J., & Strasser, L. (2020). Food waste and food insecurity: The double burden of wasted food and hunger. Harvard Law School. <https://www.law.harvard.edu/>
- The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). (2018). The food waste hierarchy: A framework for waste management in the food industry. WRAP. <https://wrap.org.uk/>
- US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (2021). Sustainable materials management: Food waste. EPA. <https://www.epa.gov/smm/sustainable-materials-management-food-waste>

Istanbul Convention on Food Waste. (2020). Creating a global framework to reduce food waste. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). <https://www.unep.org/>

Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. (2020). Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production—Food waste reduction targets. United Nations. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg12>

World Economic Forum. (2020). A roadmap to reduce food waste: Global initiatives and the circular economy. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/>

The Rockefeller Foundation. (2019). Building resilience in food systems through food waste reduction. The Rockefeller Foundation. <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/>

Food Waste Reduction Alliance. (2021). Reducing food waste in food service: Best practices and case studies. Food Waste Reduction Alliance. <https://www.foodwastealliance.org/>

C40 Cities. (2020). C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group: Reducing food waste in urban areas. C40 Cities. <https://www.c40.org/>

Institute of Mechanical Engineers. (2013). Global food: Waste not, want not. Institute of Mechanical Engineers. <https://www.imeche.org/>