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Exploring Food Waste Issues Fall 2023

EPA Food Loss and Waste 2030 Champions

Since the very first issue of ReFresh Nebraska in 2017, our focus has been on providing information that helps reduce food waste from farm to fork. But what does success look like, and what have folks along the food chain done to get there? In this issue, we take a look at a few of the companies signed on with EPA to reduce their food waste 50% by 2030 and celebrate their accomplishments.

EPA's 2030 Food Loss and Waste Champions group highlights food waste reduction leaders to inspire other businesses to take up this important challenge. From the 2016 launch through May 2022, over 45 food businesses representing grocery stores, restaurants, food processors, food manufacturers, food service, hospitality, and entertainment companies have joined to become 2030 Champions. Following are some of their stories.



ALDI Inc.

- Actions:**
- ALDI uses the ReFED Food Loss and Waste Calculator to measure food waste in operations.
 - ALDI Stores and Warehouses have partnered with Feeding America affiliates to donate excess or unsalable food to local food banks.
 - Select stores in Chicagoland and northern Illinois have launched an organic recycling pilot program to turn food that would otherwise go to waste into compost and animal feed.
 - Partnered with celebrity chef, Andrew Zimmern, to educate consumers on how to reduce food waste at home through meal planning, proper storage, and other useful tips.
 - ALDI's waste goals include achieving zero waste in operations.
 - By diverting 90% of our waste from landfills through recycling, donation, and organic recycling programs by 2025, and aiming to reduce our food waste by 50% by 2030.
- Impact:**
- Diverted 74% of operational waste companywide in 2021.
 - Donated 33M+ pounds of food to Feeding America donation partners.
 - Composted nearly 870 tons of food between the ALDI Test Kitchen and select stores.
 - Stores donated more than 135 tons of excess baked goods to be converted to animal feed.

AMAZON

- Actions:**
- As an online food retailer and an operator of physical grocery stores, Amazon is committed to reducing our food waste by 50% across our U.S. and Europe operations by 2030. We became a member of the Food Loss and Waste 2030 Champions in 2020 and have since extended our commitment to reducing food waste to our Europe operations in 2021. To achieve this, we are optimizing our food inventory management systems to minimize waste from the outset and prioritizing ways to avoid landfills.
 - Wherever possible, we donate surplus food to individuals and families who need it most through community redistribution programs. In 2021, we donated 85 million pounds of food—equivalent to more than 70 million meals—through Feeding America in the U.S. Feeding America is a network of food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other community-based agencies that helps Amazon maximize the impact of our food donations.
 - For food that can't be donated, we turn to processes that avoid landfills, such as composting and anaerobic digestion. In 2021, we diverted 27,000 tons of food through composting and anaerobic digestion across our worldwide operations. All Amazon Fresh stores operating in the U.S. have composting programs for food that cannot be donated, and we are expanding our on-site composting capabilities across our facilities.
- Impact:**
- At our Whole Foods Market stores, we have active composting programs at nearly 470 locations and collectively diverted more than 155,000 tons of food waste by the end of 2021. Another 2,775 tons of food waste were sent to anaerobic digestion facilities through an organic waste recycling system called Grind2Energy. The Grind2Energy system has helped to divert 12,500 tons of food waste at Whole Foods Market stores since 2014. As a result, we have prevented nearly 9,000 metric tons of CO2e from entering the atmosphere and produced enough clean, renewable energy to power over 2,500 U.S. homes for a month.

CONAGRA

- Actions:**
- We are committed to a manufacturing zero-waste-to-landfill journey, directing materials to the most beneficial use according to the principles of the U.S. EPA's Food Waste Recovery Hierarchy. Preventing food waste before it is created is the best thing we can do for the planet and our business. If our products or ingredients cannot be sold, donating to those in need is the next best thing. Ingredients that cannot be used to feed people may be used to feed animals. Fats, oils, and grease should be rendered into biofuel. Unseten food can also be composted to create a valuable soil amendment.
 - Employee innovation drives Conagra Brands' food waste-reduction efforts:
 - In 2021, our Troy, Ohio facility created a cross-functional team to work on a blend pairing strategy and a tool to document every step of the Slim Jim production process, determining moisture was the key variable to a more even cook. The project eliminated 5.6 tons of waste.
 - In 2021, our Oakdale, Calif. Hunt's® and ROTEL® facility eliminated over 7,000 tons of tomato and jalapeño waste by reviewing their batch process that previously led to unnecessary ingredient spoilage.
 - In 2021, at our Menomonie, Wisconsin facility the team focused on reducing yield loss by standardizing work procedures and reducing the number of changeovers to eliminate 130 tons of food waste.
 - In 2019, at Conagra's Vlastic® pickle facility in Imlay City, Michigan. The team eliminated 300 tons of waste by addressing glass jar losses through enhanced process settings, reducing bottle breakage by 35%.
- Impact:**
- In fiscal year 2021, 87% of solid and organic waste generated from our facilities was diverted to more beneficial uses through recycling, donations to feed people, use as animal feed, or land applications as a soil amendment.

SMITHFIELD FOODS INC.


- Actions:**
- Reducing waste and carbon emission has been a priority for Smithfield for nearly two decades. We continue to focus on:
- Optimizing our manufacturing operations, including supply chain and distribution processes, and implementing improvements across different stages of production to further reduce food waste resulting from processing.
 - Aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goal to end hunger.
 - Documenting food loss and waste and measuring progress at all Smithfield manufacturing facilities against a 2021 baseline.
 - Diverting food loss and waste to animal feed and rendering operations in our vertically integrated business model. For example, our bakery byproducts program is utilizing pre-consumer food waste including byproducts from popular bread, snack, and baked goods facilities as sources of human-grade fats, sodium, sugars, and other ingredients in our animal feed.
 - Fighting food insecurity continues to be our top philanthropic priority as a food company. We have donated hundreds of millions of protein servings in all 50 states since 2008 and recently pledged to donate an additional 200 million servings to our communities by 2025.
 - Upholding our ongoing commitment to food safety and quality continues to support our goal of reduced food waste.
- Impact:**
- Last year, we contributed 775,000 protein servings to our communities every week, many of which are underserved rural communities, and we recently doubled our previous donation commitment to target donating 200 million protein servings by 2025.
- In our processing operations, we're diverting more than 23,000 tons of food waste from landfills annually through our bakery byproducts program, and projects underway at our processing facilities are saving millions of protein servings from being wasted every year via sustainable improvements.

SYSCO

- Actions:**
- To reduce our impact on the planet, Sysco has committed to diverting 90% of operations and food waste from landfills as part of the company's 2025 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goals.
 - We work closely with suppliers, customers, and our operations teams to divert food to local charities in efforts to provide food to those in need and avoid sending waste to landfills.
 - We also contribute food waste to various organic waste outlets such those producing animal feed, or focused on composting efforts, or anaerobic digestion.
 - For Stop Food Waste Day, we held events to educate our associates on how they can reduce food waste at home and what Sysco is doing to reduce food waste in our operations.
 - We recently established a new partnership with Northstar Recycling to support our U.S. sites with identifying recycling and waste management solutions.
- Impact:**
- In Fiscal Year 2021, Sysco donated more than 27 million meals to local community organizations in the fight against hunger.
 - A few examples of our impact at local U.S. sites working with Northstar Recycling:
 - Freshpoint West Coast Florida found a compost outlet for their fruit, vegetable, and dairy waste, diverting 60 tons of product from landfills.
 - SYGMA Detroit found an anaerobic digestion outlet to convert 17 pallets (nearly 15 tons) of expired eggs into renewable biogas.
 - Sysco Metro New York found an anaerobic digester who could accept packaged food waste, diverting 25 tons.

TYSON FOODS

- Actions:**
- Tyson Foods has improved our inventory management process to ensure that edible product that is unsold is appropriately routed to the charitable food system via partnerships with national, regional, and local donation partners.
 - Additionally, Tyson Foods has implemented new technology solutions to automate the workflow from the sales team to the product donations teams to avoid inadvertent disposal and enforce defined process improvements through automation.
 - We continue to invest in the charitable food system to expand capacity to accept bulk and private label protein to repack for distribution to those in need.
 - We have built and are expanding relationships with alternative disposal solutions, including animal sanctuaries and national and local composting partners, to more environmentally dispose of finished product food waste that is beyond maximum shelf life. Within this current fiscal year, Tyson Foods has donated over 500,000 pounds of product to animal sanctuaries and composted over 5 million pounds.
- Impact:**
- During FY22, as of May 31, Tyson Foods has donated over 10 million pounds of product into the charitable food system with an estimated value of \$22.5 million - equating to 40 million meals.
 - In the first half of FY22, reduction in food waste and loss of finished product by 57%, compared to totals from the first half of FY21.
- To see more 2030 Champion stories, go to <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2030-Champions-2022.pdf>



Shopping your fridge first is an important strategy for reducing food waste. Here's a recipe idea that will help you use what you have before buying more!

Banana Bread

YOUR ENTIRE KITCHEN IS ABOUT TO SMELL AMAZING



People go bananas for bananas, which means a lot of overripe bananas on kitchen countertops and freezers. That's right freezers, which protect (some say enhance) the flavor until you're ready to bake! Fortunately, there's a huge number of recipes for banana bread and everyone has a favorite. James Beard offers two of his in Bread on Bread, finding this the lighter and more flavorful of the two.

USES UP Bananas		MAKES 1 Loaf
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INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, at room temperature
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup mashed, very ripe bananas (2 large or 3 medium)
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- ½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lavishly butter a 9 x 5 x 3-inch loaf pan.

Cream the butter and gradually add the sugar. Mix well. Add the eggs and mashed bananas and blend thoroughly.

Sift together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Combine the milk and lemon juice, which will curdle a bit. Slowly and alternately fold in the flour mixture and milk mixture, beginning and ending with the dry ingredients. Blend well after each addition. Stir in the nuts.

Pour batter into the pan and bake for 45-50 minutes, or until the bread springs back when lightly touched in the center.

Recipe courtesy of the [James Beard Foundation](#).

FOOD STORAGE TIPS FROM SAVETHEFOOD.COM

PANTRY STAPLES

SUGAR, BROWN

REFRIGERATE IT: No AT FRESHEST: Indefinitely

OPTIMAL STORAGE: Opaque, airtight, moisture-proof container in a cool location.

FREEZING: Necessary only if storing for a very long time or in a very dry area.

Place in airtight container. Thaw for 2 to 3 hours. If ice crystals form after long freezer storage, gently stir the sugar as soon as it thaws to prevent pockets of moisture from causing damage.

USE IT UP/REPREVAIL: Brown sugar hardens easily. To soften hardened brown sugar, place in a bowl with a slice of bread, an apple slice, or a couple of damp paper towels. Cover tightly, and let sit for about 2 days. Remove the bread or apple or towels after the sugar absorbs the moisture and softens. Stir the sugar with a fork. To soften more quickly, remove from the package and pour into an oven-safe container. Place in a 250°F/120°C oven. As soon as it's soft, measure out the amount you'll need, as it will quickly harden. Use caution, because it will be very hot.

SUGAR, WHITE

REFRIGERATE IT: No AT FRESHEST: Indefinitely

OPTIMAL STORAGE: Opaque, airtight, moisture-proof container in a cool, dry location.

FREEZING: Not recommended.

USE IT UP/REPREVAIL: To soften granulated sugar that has caked together, preheat oven to the lowest temperature. Remove the sugar from the package and put in an oven-safe container that will hold the sugar. Place in the warm oven for approximately 15 minutes. Tap the sugar with a spoon. If it starts to fall apart, turn off the oven and leave the sugar in the oven for 1 to 2 hours to completely dry out.

WHOLE GRAINS

REFRIGERATE IT: No AT FRESHEST: 6 to 12 months

OPTIMAL STORAGE: Airtight container in a dry, dark, cool place, or freeze in an airtight container.

FREEZING: Airtight container.

USE IT UP/REPREVAIL: Whole grains are great in kids' craft projects, such as gluing different grains onto paper to make a mosaic art piece. Make a garland of popped popcorn for your trees; the birds will love it. Make a popcorn ball to prolong the life of popcorn that you've popped.

Quick Tricks! Brought To You By:

NEBRASKA EXTENSION

QUICK TRICKS

Food tossed is money lost. One way to add new life to still edible foods is to re-purpose leftovers and reuse them in new ways and new recipes. This booklet will get you started with simple tips and recipes. You'll find "recycled" can taste just as good, maybe even better than the original recipe.

How to Freeze Milk and Cheese

Alice Hennerman, MS, RDN Extension Educator

Milk and cheese are very affordable sources of nutrition and make it easy to eat healthy. Milk and cheese provide essential nutrients including calcium to build strong bones and protein to support healthy muscles. A frequently asked question is whether milk and cheese can be frozen, such as when meal plans change or there is an especially good sale. Here is how to freeze them.

Freezing Milk

While milk can be frozen; it may separate, or be slightly grainy when thawed. Frozen milk works best for cooking, but you may find it is still acceptable for drinking. If you are thinking about freezing milk for drinking, you might try freezing a small amount first to see how you like it before freezing a larger batch.

Freeze milk in plastic freezer containers or special freezer-proof glass jars. Leave some extra space at the top since milk expands during freezing. If packaged in a wide-mouth container, leave 1/2-inch headspace for pints and 1-inch for quarts. If packaged in a narrow-mouth container (such as jars), leave 1 1/2-inch headspace for either pints or quarts.

Frozen milk will maintain best quality in the freezer for about 3 months; but will remain safe after that if stored at 00F. Thaw milk in the refrigerator. Stir well before using. Plan to drink within two to three days.

Freezing Cheese

Hard or semi-hard cheese can be frozen if cut into portions no larger than 1/2 pound blocks. Wrap in plastic wrap and then put in freezer bags. After freezing, cheese may become crumbly and mealy, but it will retain its flavor. It works best for cooking. Plan to use frozen cheese within 4 to 6 months for best quality; however if stored at 00F, it will remain safe after that time. Thaw cheese in the refrigerator. Use soon after thawing.

The cheeses that freeze best are:


- Brick
- Camembert
- Cheddar
- Edam
- Mozzarella
- Munster
- Parmesan
- Provolone
- Romano
- Swiss

Blue cheeses are more prone to becoming crumbly but they will still taste good. Cream cheese and cottage cheese do not freeze well.


For more waste reducing tips, go to: www.food.usd.edu/book-3-quick-documents/shakeover-you-foveters.pdf

Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste


What resources go into a year of food loss and waste in the U.S.?




Greenhouse gas emissions of more than 42 coal-fired power plants



Enough water and energy to supply more than 50 million homes

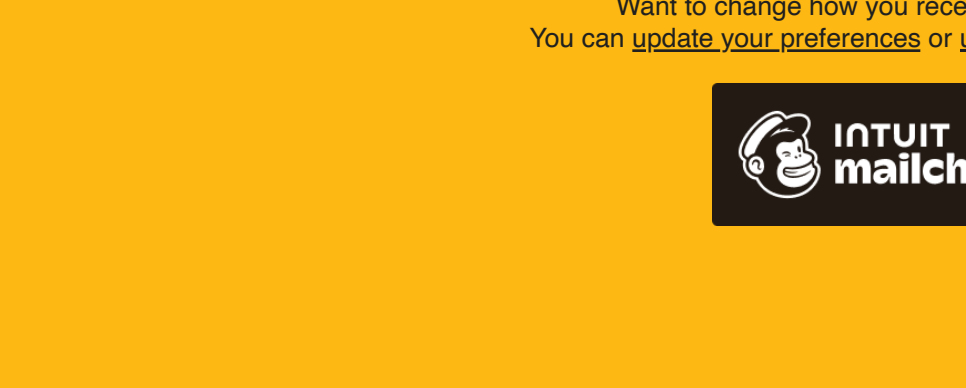


The amount of fertilizer used in the U.S. to grow all plant-based foods for U.S. human consumption

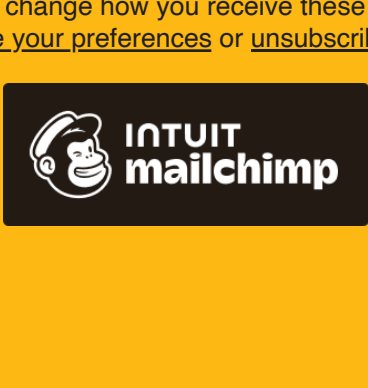


An area of agricultural land equal to California and New York

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