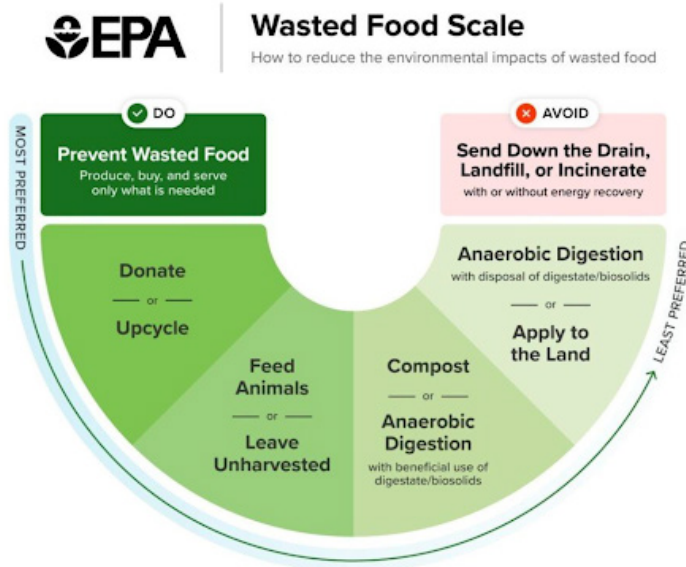


Goal 4: Reduce food waste and related solid wastes

It is estimated that 38 percent of all food produced or imported for consumption in the United States is never eaten.¹ Loss occurs at each step in the food system - from unharvested crops in fields to unsold food in retail stores to uneaten foods on plates. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has prioritized preventing food waste in their 2050 Vision and Framework for Action due to the combined environmental burdens of food production, distribution, refrigeration, preparation, and final disposal.²

Reducing food waste can ensure that food goes to feed hungry people, reduce methane emissions that contribute to climate change and save space in landfills.



The Rogue Valley Community Food Assessment highlighted key needs and opportunities voiced by the community when it comes to reducing food waste:

- **Keep compost local and connect with local farms:** Community members are passionate about keeping compost local, connecting with local farms, and increasing education and awareness about the importance of sustainable food waste management through neighborhood collaborations.
- **Challenges in scaling up:** Businesses working to scale up regional composting models in the Rogue Valley face significant regulatory and funding barriers. Scaling residential food scraps pickup programs face several challenges, including high collection fees for residents, the need to ensure that

compost remains local, and the difficulty of achieving large-scale opt-in participation.

- **Infrastructure and technology needed to scale up:** Accurately measuring and tracking food waste reduction and management strategies require enhanced capacity, infrastructure, and technology, which are currently limited.
- **Collaboration needed:** Addressing all of these barriers will require collaborative efforts to balance resident affordability, regulatory compliance, and the scalability of collection infrastructure.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency prioritizes actions that prevent and divert wasted food from disposal. The most preferred pathways – prevent wasted food, donate and upcycle food – offer the most benefits to the environment and to a circular economy. These “top” pathways prioritize using food for its intended purpose: to nourish people. The least preferred pathways – landfilling, incineration, and sending food down the drain – have the largest environmental impacts and have limited potential for circularity.³

Food Waste By the Numbers

38%

of all food grown or imported for human consumption in the US that goes to waste

71%

of the food waste generated by Oregon households that could have been eaten

6.3 pounds

of food are discarded by Oregon households each week

26%

of Rogue Valley CFA survey respondents who reported running out of food and not having money to buy more ‘sometimes’ (20%) or ‘often’ (6%)

Objectives and Actions

The objectives and actions in this goal propose solutions that first focus on reducing the amount of food waste we generate, then prioritize feeding people food that is safe and nutritious and composting any food waste that remains.

Objective 1. Prevent wasted food

Actions: Launch source reduction educational campaigns for farms and businesses; expand food waste audits and share tables in schools to reduce food waste in cafeterias; revitalize on-farm gleaning programs that prevent unharvestable food from going to waste; support legislation such as date labeling requirements, required food waste tracking, and other policies that encourage food waste prevention.

Objective 2. Support the safe rescue and redistribution of food to feed people in need

Actions: Expand existing food rescue efforts in restaurants and grocery stores; invest in infrastructure (i.e., food hubs, freezer space), transportation, and logistics for food rescue and redistribution; advocate for expanded and accessible state and local tax incentives and grants for food rescue programs; explore the feasibility of capturing food waste generated by seed growing operations, creating value-added food products; cover farmers' harvest costs for produce they donate to food rescue organizations; educate businesses on Good Samaritan laws and liability protections that protect businesses that donate food.

Objective 3. Increase access to composting

Actions: Expand existing composting pilot programs with restaurants and grocery stores; create neighborhood compost sites with local organizations; investigate the viability of a curbside composting program and opportunities to modify contracts with haulers to require bundled services (trash, recycling, and compost); advocate for expanded and accessible state and local tax incentives and grants for composting businesses; work with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to simplify the permitting process for composting operations wanting to scale up; increase access to composting supplies for individuals and families to practice backyard composting; install compost bins next to trash and recycling bins in public spaces, especially those near business districts, food courts and food halls, farmers markets, and areas with a high density of mobile food vendors.



Objective 4. Engage and educate our community about food waste

Actions: Advocate for school-based composting, vermicomposting and composting education in schools; increase awareness of existing compost education programs and expand residential composting education opportunities; collaborate with local solid waste haulers and wholesale composting businesses.

References

- 1 ReFED Releases New Food Waste Estimates and Calls for Increased Action by Food System
- 2 Materials Management in Oregon: 2050 Vision and Framework for Action
- 3 EPA Wasted Food Scale