

Join the U.S. Food Waste Challenge!



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched the U.S. Food Waste Challenge in 2013, calling on farms, supermarkets, restaurants, schools, and local governments, to join efforts to reduce, recycle, and recover food waste. By joining the U.S. Food Waste Challenge, schools demonstrate their commitment to reducing food waste, feeding the hungry, and conserving our natural resources.

WHY REDUCE FOOD WASTE?

SAVE MONEY

Any food your school purchases, but does not make it into a child's stomach is a waste of your program's dollars. Applying best practices in planning, ordering, storing, and preparing food **prior** to and during meal service can help reduce wasted food and save your program money.



FEED the HUNGRY

A total of **14.3 percent** of American households found it difficult to put food on the table at some time in 2013, yet approximately **30 percent** of food at the consumer and retail level goes uneaten. Schools can help tackle both problems by recovering wholesome, uneaten food and donating it to local food pantry, food bank, or soup kitchen.



PROTECT the ENVIRONMENT

The land, water, energy, and labor it takes to produce, process, transport, store, prepare, and then dispose of food is too valuable to waste. Food is the single largest component going into landfills and when it breaks down it produces methane – a potent greenhouse gas with over **20 times** the global warming potential of carbon dioxide



HOW CAN SCHOOLS FIGHT FOOD WASTE?



REDUCE

The best way to minimize the negative environmental and societal impacts of wasted food is to produce only the amount of food needed to serve students based on past history.

BACK OF THE HOUSE IDEAS

- Order fresh product deliveries at shorter intervals
- Serve batch-cooked meals at the last possible minute and in small quantities
- Repurpose leftovers or unsold food that is still safe to eat
- Maintain First In, First Out (FIFO) system of inventory rotation
- Utilize a Just in Time (JIT) system of inventory and ordering

FRONT OF THE HOUSE IDEAS

- Use the **Smarter Lunchrooms Movement** techniques to encourage students to eat what's on their trays, for example, **making fruits easier to eat** by cutting them into bite-sized pieces
- Letting kids self-serve and self-portion
- Use the **Offer verses Serve** menu option for all appropriate grades in your district
- Schedule recess before lunch to reduce plate waste by as much as 30 percent
- Extend lunch periods from 20 to 30 minutes reduces plate waste by nearly one-third
- Introduce "share tables" into cafeterias so students can exchange their unwanted food items (milk and packaged or pre-portioned items)

RESOURCES

National Food Service Management Institute: www.nfsmi.org/
 EPA's Reducing Wasted Food & Packaging: A Guide for Food Services and Restaurants: www.epa.gov/foodrecovery/docs/reducing_wasted_food_pkg_tool.pdf

Smarter Lunchrooms Movement: smarterlunchrooms.org/
 USDA's Reducing Food Waste - What Schools Can Do Today infographic: blogs.usda.gov/2014/08/26/creative-solutions-to-ending-school-food-waste/

USDA's Offer verses Serve Guidance: www.fns.usda.gov/updated-offer-versus-serve-guidance-national-school-lunch-program-and-school-breakfast-program

MORE IDEAS

... HOW CAN SCHOOLS FIGHT FOOD WASTE?

RECOVER

Even with careful planning, there may be excess food from time to time. USDA encourages schools to donate uneaten, wholesome food to appropriate nonprofit institutions provided this practice is not prohibited by State or local laws or regulations. Work with your school district, local health department, and local hunger relief organization to see what food donation options are available to you. The **Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act** is a federal law that encourages food donations by protecting food donors from criminal and civil liability. Food donation has been a longstanding policy in all Child Nutrition Programs, as clarified in **guidance** from the Food and Nutrition Service.

RESOURCES

USDA Guidance on Food Donation in Child Nutrition Programs: http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP11_CACFP05_SFSP07-2012os.pdf

Legal Guide to Food Recovery (Overview of Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act): law.uark.edu/documents/2013/06/Legal-Guide-To-Food-Recovery.pdf

Find a Local Food Pantry: www.ampleharvest.org/find-pantry.php

Find a Local Food Bank: www.feedingamerica.org

Food Bus Food Recovery Toolkit: foodbus.org/toolkit

RECYCLE

Schools can use their food waste to produce compost on-site for school gardens or partner with a farmer or organization to have food waste composted off-site. Some farmers also accept food waste in order to feed their livestock. Fats, oil, and grease (FOG), can be used to make biodiesel and other goods. Contact a local biodiesel club or manufacturer to see if they are willing to accept used FOG. Most biodiesel organizations provide storage barrels and free pick-up service.

RESOURCES

Green Mountain Farm to School How to Compost Guide: www.greenmountainfarmtoschool.org/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Staring-a-School-Compost-Program.pdf

Find a Composter: www.findacomposter.com

Find a local farmer: www.localharvest.org

EPA Overview of Uses for Fats, Oil, and Grease (FOG): www.epa.gov/foodrecovery/fd-industry.htm

Visit
www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste
to join the
U.S. Food Waste Challenge
and get more ideas!

