

How The Food Industry Is Reducing Food Waste

Reducing Food Waste and Food Insecurity in Communities Throughout the United States is a Priority for the Entire Food Industry



U.S. businesses and consumers combined throw away an estimated 25% to 40% of the food that is grown, processed, and transported annually.

Furthermore, an estimated **42 million Americans**, including **13 million children**, are at risk of not having enough to eat.

A key component of improving the resiliency and adaptability of our food supply chain must involve reducing food waste at every step in the system while ensuring Americans have access to the food they need to remain nourished and healthy.

Food Donation is a Critical Component of Mitigating Food Waste



Over the past several years, the food industry has helped establish numerous initiatives aimed at tackling food insecurity and mitigating food waste.

Food retailers have consistently been the largest private donors of meals to the Feeding America network of food banks. Food retailers donated **1.7 billion meals** in 2021 alone – contributing more than a quarter of the total **6.6 billion meals** donated.

Even during the height of the pandemic in 2020, food retailers maintained their commitment to simultaneously addressing food insecurity and mitigating food waste by donating **1.5 billion meals** to Feeding America that year.

Additionally, many food retailers also support and participate in innovative food donation efforts:

- For instance, some food retailers purchased food products like milk and fresh produce from farmers to donate to food banks during the height of the pandemic at a time when farmers were unable to otherwise sell these products.
- One food retailer partnered with an ambulance provider to deliver items donated during food drives to local food pantries.
- Another food retailer provided monetary donations to a local university to support their emergency food assistance program.



An Industry-Wide Approach is Needed for Meaningful Food Waste Mitigation



FMI – The Food Industry Association has also collaborated on reducing food waste through the **Food Waste Reduction Alliance (FWRA)**. This initiative of FMI, the Consumer Brands Association, and the National Restaurant Association engages companies and stakeholders in reducing food waste across the food industry.

Through this partnership, the food industry is working across the value chain to adopt a multipronged approach to reduce food waste in our operations, including:

- Developing an internal waste-prevention culture.
- Leveraging local food waste diversion infrastructure and programs.
- Improving and expanding efforts to donate surplus food to feed people at the local level.
- Using data to create achievable food waste reduction goals.
- Developing more robust composting strategies.



More information on these efforts is available in FWRA's report, "**Messy but Worth It! Lessons Learned from Fighting Food Waste.**"



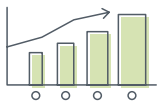
FWRA is partnering with the Environmental Protection Agency, Food and Drug Administration, and the United States Department of Agriculture to enhance interagency coordination to reduce food loss and waste. The group has pledged to increase food waste reduction education and outreach efforts aimed at consumers, reduce food waste in federal agencies, and share best practices on successful, creative, and innovative solutions to reduce food waste among industry sectors across the supply chain.

Managing Food Waste is Good for Business, Shoppers, and the Environment



Growing consumer interest in minimizing food waste also represents an emerging opportunity for food retailers to further their commitment to being responsible partners in their communities.

Given that consumers have shown an increased desire to purchase prepared food options, retailers are proactively working to repurpose the products that don't sell and might normally go to waste into grab-and-go items like pre-made salads and pies. This can reduce food waste while creating brand differentiation via ready-to-eat products shoppers love.



The food industry is also increasingly leveraging data-driven approaches to develop more efficient inventory management strategies to help reduce spoilage and food waste.

Food waste is extremely expensive for retailers, which creates an economic and environmental incentive to buy into programs that reduce waste across the board.

Increased Simplicity and Clarity for Product Code Dating



Grocery manufacturers and retailers are also collaborating to streamline and standardize the wording on package labels down to two phrases – “Best if used by” and “Use by” – to provide greater clarity regarding the quality and safety of products.

By addressing consumer confusion around product date labeling and educating consumers about the differences between “Best if used by” and “Use by” labels, the food industry and shoppers can reduce the amount of food waste sent to landfills.