



# FOOD WASTE FACT SHEET

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- EPA estimates that more food (over 76 billion pounds per year) reaches landfills and combustion facilities than any other material in everyday trash, constituting 22% of discarded municipal solid waste. Landfills are the third largest source of human-related methane emissions in the United States.
- Food waste not only impacts landfill space and emissions, it hurts the U.S. economy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates the value of food loss for retailers and consumers each year to be over \$161 billion.
- Across the globe, food loss and waste have a combined carbon footprint of 4.4 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Globally, food waste consumes 21% of all fresh water.

<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/sustainable-management-food-basics>

<https://www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-information-about-landfill-gas>

## What is Food Waste?

*Food waste is safe, high-quality food that is thrown away rather than eaten. Food waste occurs for a variety of reasons, including:*

- Uneaten food that is thrown out at homes, stores and restaurants.
- Crops left in fields because of low crop prices or too many of the same crops being available.
- Problems during the manufacturing and transportation of food.
- Food not meeting retailer's standards for color and appearance.

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/our-work/our-approach/reduce-food-waste>

**In the United States, food waste is estimated at between 30-40% of the food supply.**



## Ways to Avoid Wasting Food

- Be aware of how much food you throw away.
- Don't buy more food than can be used before it spoils.
- Plan meals and use shopping lists. Think about what you are buying and when it will be eaten. Check the fridge and pantry to avoid buying what you already have.
- Avoid impulse and bulk purchases, especially produce and dairy that have a limited shelf life. Promotions encouraging purchases of unusual or bulk products often result in consumers buying foods outside their typical needs or family preferences, and portions — potentially large portions — of these foods may end up in the trash.
- When eating out, become a more mindful eater. If you're not terribly hungry request smaller portions. Bring your leftovers home and refrigerate or freeze them within two hours, and check the Food Keeper to see how long they'll be safe to eat.
- Check the temperature setting of your fridge. Use a refrigerator thermometer to be sure the temperature is at 40° F or below to keep foods safe. The temperature of your freezer should be 0° F or below.
- Avoid "over-packing:" Cold air must circulate around refrigerated foods to keep them properly chilled.
- Keep it covered: Store refrigerated foods in covered containers or sealed storage bags, and check leftovers daily for spoilage.
- Refrigerate peeled or cut veggies for freshness and to keep them from going bad.
- Use your freezer! Freezing is a great way to store most foods to keep them from going bad until you are ready to eat them.
- Check your fridge often to keep track of what you have and what needs to be used. Eat or freeze items before you need to throw them away.

<https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/how-cut-food-waste-and-maintain-food-safety>

**Throwing away one  
burger wastes the  
same amount of water  
as a 90-minute  
shower.**

