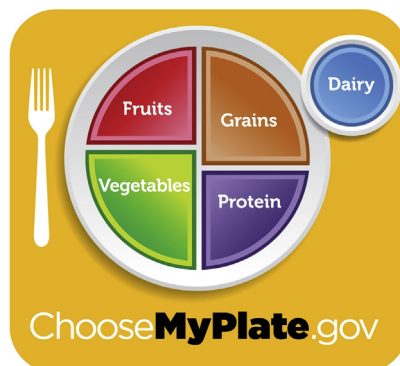


Food Waste Reduction Efforts at the USDA

IN SEPTEMBER 2015, AGRICULTURE Secretary Tom Vilsack and Environmental Protection Agency Deputy Administrator Stan Meiburg announced the United States' first-ever national food waste reduction goal,¹ calling for a 50% reduction by 2030. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is in a unique position to lead food waste reduction efforts given that each of its 16 different agencies has resources to address this major concern. The USDA has always encouraged food waste reduction efforts—from its consumer-focused World War II-era campaigns that promoted smart shopping, Victory Gardens, and food preservation to recent efforts among K-12 schools.

The USDA Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services includes the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP), and both offer initiatives to help reduce food waste and loss. In the FNS's school meals programs, the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, we are encouraging food waste reduction strategies to help schools save money and to alleviate food insecurity through food share tables and donation of excess school food to local hunger relief organizations. Equally important, schools can involve students by educating them about food waste and its impacts on the environment and



society. The food waste reduction, recovery, and recycling activities in schools teach students about the value of food and inspire them to waste less food throughout their lives.

FNS INFOGRAPHIC

The FNS has developed policy and will continue to offer guidance and training to help schools manage food waste. In 2014, the FNS created an infographic titled “Reducing Food Waste – What Schools Can Do Today.” The infographic explains the issue of food waste and offers simple strategies that schools can employ to reduce food waste such as scheduling recess before lunch or extending the lunch period by 10 more minutes.

CNPP INFOGRAPHIC

The CNPP is also supporting larger USDA efforts by offering a new section within ChooseMyPlate.gov to raise awareness about how much edible food is wasted at home and tips for consumers to reduce food waste. The website offers a range of federal resources to support the USDA food waste reduction initiative including a new infographic titled “Let’s Talk Trash.” Since the launch of MyPlate in 2011, ChooseMyPlate.gov has become a popular federal resource for consumers seeking information on nutrition and health. Facts about food waste and tips to help consumers cut back on food

waste will be a valuable addition to ChooseMyPlate.gov as the USDA strives to achieve food waste reduction goals throughout the Department.

The data in the infographic are based on findings from the Economic Research Service report, *The Estimated Amount, Value, and Calories of Post-harvest Food Losses at the Retail and Consumer Levels in the United States (2014)*.² The report highlights food loss, which includes food waste, as a major concern in both domestic and international circles. It also recommends shifts in consumer behavior as a key strategy in reducing food waste while still maintaining consumer demand for food safety, quality, variety, and affordability.

ADDITIONAL EFFORTS

Additional initiatives to reduce food waste include the Agricultural Research Service’s efforts with farmers to develop new technologies and value-added products from produce that would normally go to waste. And the Food Safety and Inspection Service developed a FoodKeeper app to educate consumers about food storage timelines and safe cooking tips that help prevent food spoilage. Each USDA agency plays a major role throughout the food supply chain and can impact the amount of food waste produced and reduced.

In 2013, the USDA and Environmental Protection Agency joined together to launch the US Food Waste Challenge to provide a platform to assess and disseminate information about the best practices to reduce, recover, and recycle food loss and waste. By the end of 2014, the joint-agency US Food Waste Challenge had over 4,000 participants, well surpassing its goal of 1,000 participants by 2020. The USDA is working to grow this list and expand food loss and waste reduction efforts from farm to fork.

In response to Agriculture Secretary Vilsack’s goal to reduce food waste in

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United States Department of Agriculture

REDUCING FOOD WASTE

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO TODAY



USDA's Economic Research Service estimates

31%

of the overall food supply at the retail and consumer level **went uneaten** in the U.S. in 2010



Scheduling recess before lunch can **reduce plate waste by**

AS MUCH AS 30%



Extending lunch periods from

20 TO 30

minutes reduced plate waste by nearly one-third



SMARTER LUNCHROOM STRATEGIES,

such as **how foods are named and where they are placed in the cafeteria,** can facilitate healthy choices and increase fruit and vegetable consumption by

UP TO 70%



SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE STEPPING UP TO THE CHALLENGE WITH INNOVATIVE NEW STRATEGIES, SUCH AS:

- Allowing students to keep a lunch or breakfast food item for consumption later in the school day
- Using techniques listed on the **Smarter Lunchrooms Self-Assessment Score Card** to help reduce food waste
- Setting up a table for kids to place items they are not going to consume (packaged or pre-portioned items)
- Letting kids self-serve
- Composting food waste for school gardens
- Collaborating with local farmers on composting or food-scrap projects
- Collecting excess wholesome food after mealtimes to donate to charitable organizations
- Sign up for the **U.S. Food Waste Challenge** to share your story on how you are reducing, recovering, or recycling food waste

The Food and Nutrition Service infographic—Reducing Food Waste — What Schools Can Do—offers simple strategies to help schools reduce food waste.



United States Department of Agriculture

Let's talk trash.

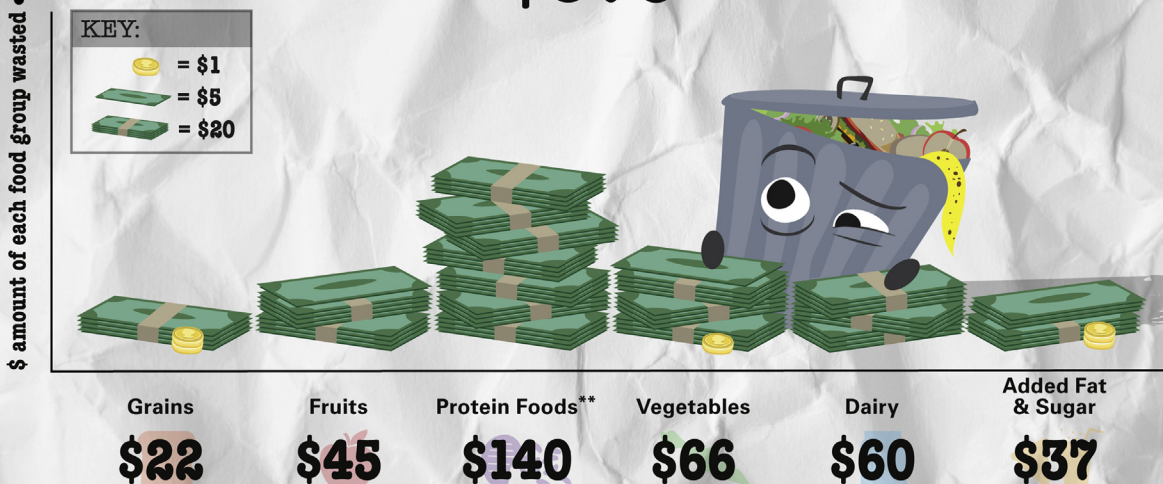
Cut back on **food waste and loss** to save money, improve access to food, and protect natural resources.



About
90 billion
pounds of edible food goes uneaten each year.*

That weighs
123x
the Empire State Building.

This cost consumers **\$370** per person each year.



The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion infographic—Let's Talk Trash—highlights food loss and waste.



Reduce **wasted food** in your home with simple shopping, storage, & cooking practices.

WHAT YOU CAN DO



Plan & Save

Plan your weekly menu and make a grocery list. Does the list include food that you already have at home? Buy only what you need and stay within your budget.



Be Food Safe

Shop refrigerated or frozen foods just before checking out. Transport items that spoil easily in a cooler or thermal bag and refrigerate or freeze within two hours of shopping.



Check for Quality

The date on a food package helps the store determine how long to display the product for sale. It can also help you to choose a product at its best quality.



Set Storage Reminders

Track storage times for different foods using The FoodKeeper Application. This tool will remind you when foods are near to the end of their storage date.



Be Organized

Foods are less likely to go bad when you use the older items first. Keep your pantry and refrigerator clean and organized so you can see what needs to be eaten first.



Re-purpose

Give leftovers a makeover when you reuse them in recipes. Add broccoli stems to a salad or blend overripe fruit into a low-fat smoothie. Freeze extra food.



Donate

Many shelters, food banks, and faith-based organizations will accept food donations to feed others who need a meal.



Recycle & Compost

Instead of throwing out food, create a compost bin. Don't have a yard? Your city may help you find composting or recycling options that are right for you.



*In homes and away-from home eating places.

**Protein foods includes meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and nuts.

Sources:

All sources are available at ChooseMyPlate.gov/lets-talk-trash.

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
September 2015



(continued) The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion infographic—Let's Talk Trash—highlights food loss and waste.



The FoodKeeper app was developed by the Food Safety and Inspection Service to educate consumers about food storage and food safety.

the United States by 50% by the year 2030, the USDA Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services will do its part and continue to promote food waste reduction by working with national- and community-based organizations. Registered dietitian nutritionists are encouraged to consider how they can promote these efforts and inspire future generations to become concerned about reducing food waste and producing environmentally-stable communities.

References

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