

Food waste

This factsheet explores the issues of food waste and provides recommendations on how to reduce your impact

What is the issue?

Food waste has long been recognised as a global issue. Food is wasted throughout the value chain: at farms, in manufacturing processes, in cooking processes and by consumers leaving it on their plates. Food production needs a huge amount of resources (such as land, water and fertiliser) – if it's not eaten then all those resources have been wasted.

Why should hotels address this issue?

As part of their sustainability efforts, it is important for a business to fully understand all areas that contribute to their carbon footprint and ensure appropriate steps are taken to address these. Food waste is an area that has been frequently overlooked.

Calculations from the UK estimate that about 18% of annual food waste is created by the hospitality and food service industry.⁵ Addressing this issue is not just a priority in terms of sustainability, but also benefits the bottom line via significant reductions in food costs.

When thinking about food waste, it's worth remembering the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse, recycle:

- **Reduce** the amount of waste you create by making sure you only purchase what you need.
- **Re-use** some food e.g. using preparation waste as a base for soup stock.
- **Recycling and recovery** can prevent resources that went into producing the food from going to waste and have additional positive effects – food can be turned into compost and used as a soil conditioner or can be used to create energy through anaerobic digestion.

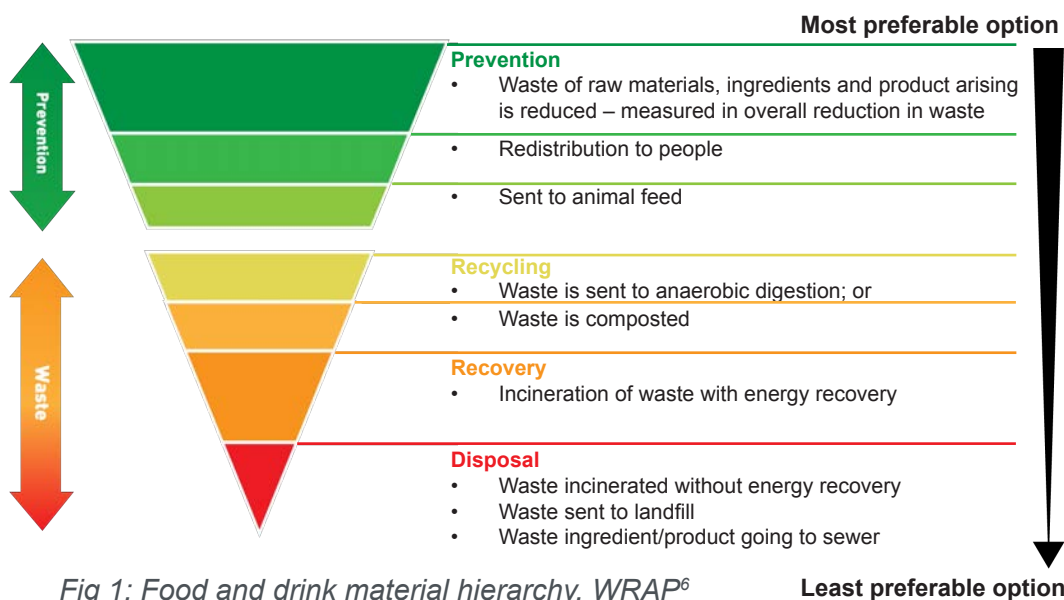


Fig 1: Food and drink material hierarchy, WRAP⁶



Estimated
1/3
of all food produced is
wasted every year¹



\$680 billion
of food is wasted by
developed countries per year
compared to \$310 billion in
developing countries²



In hospitality
1 in 6
meals are wasted in UK³



Food sector accounts for
30%
total global energy
consumption and
22%
total greenhouse gas
emissions – caused during
food production and
decomposition⁴

How to get started

Internal engagement

Food waste is mainly an issue within a hotel's Food and Beverage (F&B) operations so it's good if that department leads your efforts. Food waste may also be processed by other back of house teams, such as waste management or cleaning, and it would be best practice to also involve someone from these departments from the start.

Engaging your employees in your efforts and incentivising them to participate can help ensure the success of your efforts. Many of your employees may be keen to help address the issue of food waste, especially where food security directly affects their communities. A good way to engage them can be to run awareness and education campaigns in employee cafeterias.

Analyse your operations

Food waste occurs at various stages in operations:

- 1. Delivery and storage** – Food can be spoiled during the delivery process and a good storage process (first in, first out) can help ensure that even spoiled/damaged food items can be repurposed and avoid landing in the bin. Track what is wasted at the storage stage to see if you are purchasing more food than you are using.
- 2. Preparation** – This involves looking at how food is prepared, how to re-use offcuts, menu planning and introducing dedicated food-waste bins in your kitchens and back of house (e.g. loading docks) to ensure no food waste ends up in landfill.
- 3. Food consumption** – Analyse your food waste to establish correct portion sizes and reduce waste further by introducing optional (and ideally recyclable) take-away bags. Introduce food-waste bins in your clear-up areas to ensure no food waste ends up in landfill.
- 4. Leftover food** – Look at options to donate your leftover food items from buffets (depending on local laws). Analyse wastage to establish how best to manage buffets to reduce amount wasted.

Measure your impact

Tracking and measuring how much waste you create daily will quickly show you the impact of any reduction measures. WRAP have created a [free toolkit](#) for hospitality businesses to setup a simple tracking and measuring process.

Case studies

Hyatt

Park Hyatt Zurich has been raising awareness of cooking with all parts of an animal. The hotel prepares dishes using typically less desired parts and features them in its restaurant. The executive chef has also collaborated with a local association on organising a competition and speaking at a conference to engage more chefs on this topic.

Scandic

In 2018, Scandic began cooperating with digital resellers of leftover food. These projects resulted in 155,000 portions being sold onward instead of being thrown away, as well as a decrease in CO₂ emissions of 280 tonnes in 2019 alone.

Soneva

Soneva implemented a system to measure food waste in four parts: customer plate; preparation waste; spoilage; and non-edible. By getting a detailed understanding of where food waste stems from, the team was able to put in processes to reduce food waste by nearly 50%. All the food waste left over is mixed with garden waste to generate nutrient rich compost which is used in the gardens to grow herbs and vegetables that the Chefs can use to create tasty dishes for guests. Soneva generates around US\$200,000 a year in value from its gardens.



Communications

Letting your customers know what you are doing to address the issue of food waste is almost as important as taking action.

Your communications should include what you are doing, what your achievements have been and how you are addressing some of the bigger, longer-term issues. A good start is to map your efforts against the relevant [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). There may not always be a specific goal for the exact issue you are addressing but the goals most related to food waste efforts are SDG 2, 11, 12 and 13.

[Tips to avoid greenwashing](#).



Tools and resources

Free toolkits

- The [Hotel Kitchen Toolkit](#) provides tools and resources to prevent, donate and divert food waste.
- WRAP have created a [free toolkit](#) for hospitality businesses to setup a simple tracking and measuring process. You do not need to join their '[Guardians of the Grub](#)' campaign to use the toolkit.

Case study – analysis tools

There is technology available that can help you be more specific and detailed with your food waste tracking and measuring. Typically, these are scales that require employees to log all food items before they are disposed. These types of tools require some up-front investment, which can be recovered in subsequent efficiency savings.

In 2019, **Marriott International** finalised a Leanpath pilot (a digital food waste tracking solution) at 10 hotels across Europe, which resulted in a 64% reduction in annualised food waste generation over four months.

In the United States, Marriott secured a grant from the state of California's CalRecycle program to allow nine hotels to begin the journey of using the Leanpath system to measure, analyse, and modify their processes in an effort to reduce food waste.

1. UN SDG12, available from: www.un.org/
2. Compare Camp, 48 Food Waste Statistics 2020/2021, available from: www.comparecamp.com
3. Which, Three food waste facts everyone needs to know, available from: www.which.co.uk
4. UN SDG12, available from: www.un.org/
5. Which, Three food waste facts everyone needs to know, available from: www.which.co.uk
6. WRAP, Food and drink material hierarchy, available from: www.publications.parliament.uk

About Sustainable Hospitality Alliance

Sustainable Hospitality Alliance brings together engaged hospitality companies and uses the collective power of the industry to address key challenges affecting our planet and its people.

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