

Ways to reduce food waste in your business



Reducing food waste is an easy and smart way to reduce business costs. It is always best to avoid food waste in the first place. While some food waste is unavoidable, there are many alternatives to simply sending it to landfill.

Food donation to charities and not-for-profit organisations

If you have surplus edible food, you can donate it to a food distribution charity (see 'Resources' section). These charities will collect the food from your business and distribute it to those in need.

Food donors are protected under the *Civil Liability Amendment (Food Donations) Act 2002*. The Act limits the liability of individuals and businesses that donate food, provided that certain food-safety conditions have been met. The Love Food Hate Waste Food Donation Tool Kit (see 'Resources' section) provides information about how to donate food and helps you identify which charity to donate your food to.

On-site composting and worm-farming

Compost bins or large in-vessel composters process food organics on-site. This reduces the volume of waste and creates a useful soil enhancer (compost).

Worm farms or vermiculture systems transform food and other organic material into vermicast (worm compost) and vermi-liquid (liquid extract from a worm farm). Citrus fruit, garlic, onions, seafood, seafood shells, meat or bones are not an acceptable part of the worms' diet.

Check with your local council before setting up an on-site composter or a worm-farm system for any requirements.

Using a food-waste collection service

Food waste can be collected by a commercial

contractor for transport to a processing facility. You are responsible for making sure your waste is transported to a licensed facility that is lawfully able to accept that type of waste and that the collector has a relevant license. Search the EPA public register for a list of all environment protection licenses.

Using a macerator

Macerators are grinders that reduce the volume of food waste by turning solid food waste into pulp. The pulp slurry is pumped to an exterior holding tank for collection by a licensed contractor such as a commercial composting service. Fibrous material such as corn husks and oyster and mussel shells are not suitable for macerators.

Search the businessrecycling.com.au website to find local recycling services that accept food waste and search the Small Scale Recycling Equipment Catalogue for suppliers of recycling equipment (see 'Resources' section).

Applying food waste to land

Food waste should only be applied to land to benefit the soil. Food waste applied to land is considered waste disposal under Schedule 1 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* (POEO Act). If you or the contractor collecting your food waste cannot meet any of the following requirements, you may be in breach of this legislation.

Before you apply any food matter to land:

1. Check if the activity requires development consent from a Council or planning authority.

2. Check if an environment protection licence is required from the NSW EPA. (Schedule 1 of the POEO Act contains a list of activities that require an environment protection licence.)
3. Check compliance with any relevant resource recovery orders (RROs) and resource recovery exemptions (RREs).

The EPA resource recovery orders and resource recovery exemptions allow for the use of some waste materials outside the usual requirements of the waste regulatory framework. An RRO and an RRE currently exist for solid food waste and liquid food waste. There are specific conditions that need to be met under these RROs and RREs. Check the EPA website for a list of RROs and RREs.

Rapidly decomposed or dehydrated food waste

There are containers that rapidly decompose or dehydrate food waste by heating and agitating the food waste over 24 hours (this can occur with or without the addition of bacterial starter cultures.) Generally these containers need a sewer hook-up to dispose of the waste water and/or a filter for the vapours vented to the air, and this may require additional Council approval. The output captured from these containers cannot be directly applied to land without an environment protection licence, or a resource recovery order and resource recovery exemption.

Food waste as feed for animals

No products containing meat should be supplied to feed stock or as input to compost on farms. Feeding any animal material such as meat or bone meal, fish or feather meals, or any food potentially contaminated with animal material to ruminant animals (cattle, sheep, goats and deer) and pigs is banned in New South Wales. These bans provide insurance against the spread of several serious animal diseases.

Feeding an animal with any material that has not been produced specifically for use as stockfeed can also cause unacceptable chemical residues in animal products.

The risks of residues in animal products are increased by the fact that some chemicals concentrate in food wastes. Such food wastes include citrus pulp, fruit pomace, grape marc, vegetable skins and outer leaves.

Food waste as chicken feed

There are biosecurity issues (see 'Resources' section) associated with the feeding of food waste to

chickens, including those covered under the Stock Diseases Regulation 2009.

Feeding chickens with food waste increases the risks associated with animal health, animal welfare and human health. Generally, poultry businesses have highly formulated and specific feed rations and additional feed may be unacceptable to them. Check with your local council before using chickens on-site to reduce your food waste. You may also need to consider the requirements of the Department of Primary Industries, NSW Health and the NSW Food Authority.

Resources

Reducing food waste in business

www.lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au/food-businesses/reducing-waste-from-food-businesses.aspx

Donate food to charity

www.lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au/food-businesses/donate-food-to-charity.aspx

Food Donation Toolkit

www.lovefoodhatewaste.nsw.gov.au/portals/0/toolkit/Food-Donation-Toolkit.pdf

The EPA public register

www.epa.nsw.gov.au/prpoeo/index.htm

Find local services that accept food waste

businessrecycling.com.au

The Small Scale Recycling Equipment catalogue

equipment.businessrecycling.com.au

EPA's resource recovery orders (RROs) and resource recovery exemption (RREs)

www.epa.nsw.gov.au/wasteregulation/orders-exemptions.htm

Dangers of feeding waste material to livestock

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/104207/Dangers-in-feeding-waste-material-to-livestock.pdf

Biosecurity issues

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity

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Environment Protection Authority
59 Goulburn Street, Sydney NSW 2000
Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only)
or info@environment.nsw.gov.au
See also www.epa.nsw.gov.au

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