

# FOOD WASTE: A PROBLEM WE CANNOT IGNORE

Global oil and food systems are both operating near full capacity, and demand is on the rise. As a result, rising prices are hurting Americans today, and the United States is at risk of food and fuel shortages in the future.

To help head off an impending food and fuel crisis, Sustainable America aims to reduce U.S. oil consumption by 50% by 2030 while increasing U.S. food availability by 50% by 2035. Several solutions are within reach. Tackling the growing problem of rampant food waste is one way to increase food availability and create a more secure and stable food supply. Here's a little background:

## *Population Trends Drive Increased Demand, Increased*

***Food Insecurity.*** As the global population surges from 7 billion (2012)<sup>1</sup> to approximately 9 billion in 2035<sup>2</sup> and demand from growing middle and upper classes in emerging market nations increases, the amount of food needed to feed people will grow from approximately 20 trillion calories per day to 25 trillion calories per day<sup>3</sup>, a 25% increase that will strain already stressed food systems. Already, we're able to see the pressure on the food system and food prices here in the United States, as reflected by the nearly 50 million Americans living in a state of food insecurity, meaning that they cannot always meet their basic food needs.

***Food Waste: Unsustainable by Any Measure.*** America's food waste problem is out of control, with waste estimates ranging between 27% and 50% of food produced. To compound the problem, a recent study showed that roughly two-thirds of food waste goes to landfills, leaving only one-third diverted to other useful purposes such as composting, energy and fuels generation, animal feed, and redistribution to people.<sup>4</sup> Digging deeper into the statistics renders yet a more startling picture: While diverting food waste to compost and animal feed are worthwhile endeavors, only about 1% of food waste generated makes it to the food banks, soup kitchens and shelters that distribute food to Americans in need.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, only between 2% and 6% of food waste is composted or recycled, compared with 62% of paper, meaning that potentially rich soil amendments which could help grow more food are not utilized.




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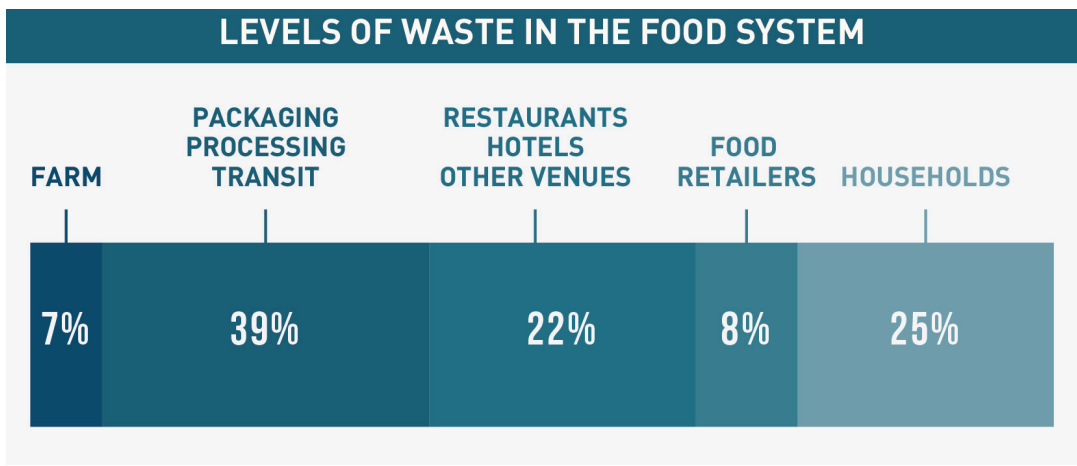



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**SUSTAINABLE AMERICA SUPPORTS**

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- Food Waste Solutions
- Alternative Farming
- Precision Agriculture
- Natural Gas Vehicles
- Electric Vehicles
- Fuel Efficiency
- Advanced Biofuels



<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau

<sup>2</sup> UN World Population Division

<sup>3</sup>Bridgespan Group and Sustainable America estimate, based on data and projections from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, and the International Institute for Applied Sciences.

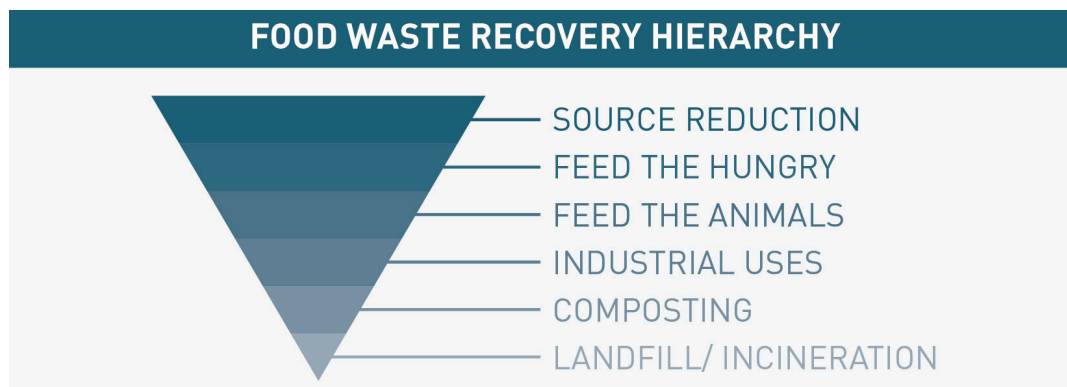
<sup>4</sup>Food Waste Reduction Alliance

<sup>5</sup> ibid

***Our Goal: Cut Food Waste in Half by 2035.*** Despite the scope of the food waste problem, it is one of the most obvious places for those concerned about food availability and food insecurity to begin, as a reduction in waste contributes immediately to available calories, even under current food production constraints. Using the success of paper recycling as an analogy, we have hope that Americans, if educated about the importance of reducing food waste and motivated to change, can make huge strides in a fairly short amount of time. If we assume a 33% food waste metric, Sustainable America's goal is to roughly cut that percentage in half, to 17% by 2035. While the United States government has not set out a goal to curb food waste, Sustainable America's goal for the U.S. is similar in scope to the goal that the European Union set for its member states.

***Our Proposed Solutions Include:***

- **Funding entrepreneurs** seeking to address food waste problems at all levels, with emphasis on waste at the farm, during transportation and during storage.
- **Encouraging composting** and other food waste recycling methods that divert organic waste from landfills to generate energy or return biodegradable nutrients back to the soil for future food growth.
- **Working with retailers** to help consumers understand food labeling and other efforts to reduce waste at the retail level.
- **Educating consumers** on buying habits, food storage and composting.



*Sustainable America is concerned with increasing food availability and making our food systems in America more resilient to price shocks, severe weather and other unforeseen events in the future. We believe that with focused and concerted efforts, we can simultaneously increase food production and decrease food waste to create a more sustainable America into the future.*