

## Why Less Food to Landfill



- **Introduction** - According to the multi-stakeholder group “Rethinking Food Waste with Economics and Data” or “ReFED” in their [2016 Report](#), American consumers, businesses, and farms spend \$218 billion a year, or 1.3 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), growing, processing, transporting, and disposing of food that is never eaten. Annually, \$162 billion is lost in economic value (water, fertilizer, cropland acreage) which equates to 31 to 40 percent of the total food supply.
- **Community Benefit**—Helping People—According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, approximately 14 percent of American households were uncertain of having or unable to acquire enough food to meet the needs of all of their members at some time during 2013. This is one in seven people.
- **The Environment**— More food reaches landfills and incinerators than any other single material in municipal solid waste (MSW). Fifty-two million tons of food is sent to landfills annually (equating to 21 percent of landfill volume), plus another 10 million tons is discarded or left unharvested on farms. According to Feeding America, food service operations is responsible for 10.250 million tons of wasted food each year. According to the Practice Greenhealth Sustainability Benchmark report, hospitals generate over 29 pounds of waste per staffed bed per day. Numerous states have estimated that 10 to 15 percent of an average hospital’s waste is comprised of food waste. Waste is trucked, railed, burned and buried with impact on air, water and soil.  
Users can multiply the number of staffed beds in the hospital by 3.42 pounds of food waste per day for a quick estimate of the facility’s food waste contribution and check out the state of Massachusetts’ [calculator](#) and NEWMOA [site](#) for guidance and calculators based on meals and staffed beds.
- **Climate Change** - According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), landfilled food waste produces methane, a greenhouse gas that is 25 times more potent than

carbon dioxide over a 100-year period. In March 2016, Rethink Food Waste Through Economics and Data (ReFED) released a roadmap aiming for a 20 percent reduction in food waste within a decade, resulting in a drop of 18 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year, according to ReFED's estimates. According to Refed, that's like switching off four coal-fired power plants every year.

- **Cost** - The United States spends about one billion dollars a year just to dispose of food waste. Hospitals, on average, spend \$0.06 to \$0.10 per pound for waste removal. Based on the Massachusetts calculator, a typical 200-bed community hospital might generate 124.83 tons of food waste annually at a cost of \$0.06 per pound for a total disposal cost of \$14,977. However, hospitals pay by compactor pull, not by the pound so these savings will be seen as a pull is eliminated. Food reduction, combined with recycling can result in a compactor pull reduction.
- **Soil Enrichment** - Soil Enrichment—For facilities that are near a composting facility or are composting onsite, food material breaks down naturally in short periods of time under the proper temperature and pressure conditions. Nourishing the earth with food waste and other compostable materials helps avoid other man made soil enriching materials like fertilizers. And since healthier soil improves water drainage, it can help with water conservation, as well.
- **Animal Feeding** - In rural areas in close proximity to animals, food waste is an excellent source of nutrition and donating food waste to farms as animal feed can be a win-win situation.