



RESTAURANT & RETAIL: FOOD DONATION SOLUTIONS

FOOD LOSS AND WASTE IS A GLOBAL CHALLENGE. ALL SECTORS OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY CAN HELP DIVERT FOOD FROM THE LANDFILL.

According to the UN's Food Waste Index Report of 2021, 931 million metric tons of food waste was generated in 2019 [1]. **In 2019, the largest source of food waste in the United States was the restaurant sector** (Figure 1).

A 2020 study analyzing the costs of food waste found that **31% to 40% of restaurant food loss and waste is due to edible and prepared food that the customer does not consume**, which can be the result of large food portion sizes, the overproduction of prepared foods, or improper food storage [2].

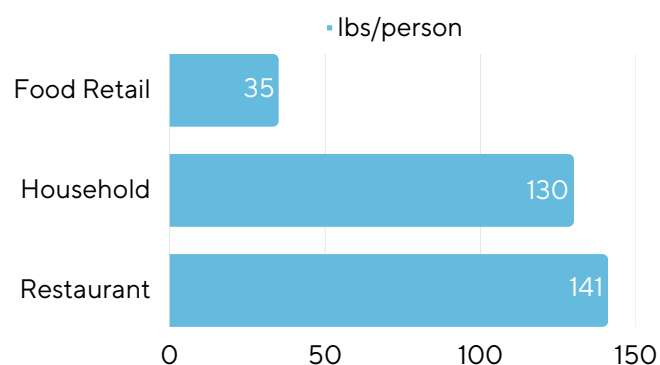


FIGURE 1. IN 2019, RESTAURANTS GENERATED THE LARGEST AMOUNT OF FOOD WASTE PER PERSON [3].

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2019, three of the largest global food banking networks collected 3.75 million tonnes of food, preventing 12 million tonnes of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere [5].



SUMMARY

Millions of tons of food waste are generated annually in the United States, largely due to processing, production, and consumer lifestyle in the restaurant industry. To alleviate the economic, social, and environmental costs of food loss and waste, restaurants and food retail companies can partner with local food banks to donate their food surplus. All sectors of the food industry - including farmers, distributors, and manufacturers - can use a circular approach to Recover, Reuse, and Recycle, keeping food on our tables and out of the landfill.

Food waste occurs at every stage of food production, including harvesting, processing, distribution, marketing, and consumption. The cumulative effects of wasted food add up through all phases of the industry such that **if food waste were represented as a nation, it would be the third largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions** [4].

Greenhouse gas emissions contribute to the warming of the planet's atmosphere, resulting in environmental changes such as **an increase in droughts, more frequent and intense wildfires, and shorter snow seasons**, all of which can make it more challenging to grow food.

A certain amount of food loss and waste is unavoidable due to food processing costs, the cost of demand versus production, and consumer lifestyle [6]. **However, much of the waste in the food retail industry can be prevented by partnering with local food banks to send all edible food to tables, not trashcans.** Food donations help create a circular economy within the local community, positively impacting food systems, environmental sustainability, and allowing individuals and families facing hunger to maintain a sense of security.

1, 3-4. *Food Waste Index Report 2021* (Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme, 2021), 4, 8, 47.

2. David Blum, *Ways to Reduce Restaurant Industry Food Waste Costs* (International Journal of Applied Management and Technology, 2020), 3-4.

5. The Global FoodBanking Network, *Reducing Food Loss and Waste* (2022).

6. FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2019: Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2019), 13-14.

SOLUTION

Food banks have successfully encouraged circular economies within local communities by keeping food in a cycle that **recovers, reuses, and recycles food** as much as possible [7]. Additionally, food banks contribute to business solutions with their supply chain partners, including farmers, distributors, processors, manufacturers, retailers, and restaurants [8]. Producers, such as restaurants, food retail companies, and distributors, find it beneficial to financially invest in their local food bank partners. An investment in food banks can generate a wider distribution of surplus food, create programs with perishable products, extend food recovery to high-need neighborhoods, as well as bring diversity to types of products [9].



For example, the Northern Nevada Food Bank has more than 150 food donors across Northern Nevada [10]. With partnerships between food donors and food bank agencies, **Northern Nevada was able to serve 130,000 people every month and distribute 20.9 million meals in 2019-2020** [11].

14.9 million of the 20.9 million meals were from partner agencies, including donations from restaurants, casinos, food manufacturers, and grocery store chains [12].

 = MEALS FROM PARTNER AGENCIES
 = TOTAL MEALS



Partnerships between food donors and food banks **create a circular system** between the food and retail industry and with other sectors of the community to keep food out of the landfill and alleviate food insecurity within the local community. **Strategies that restaurants or food retail companies can follow toward food loss and waste reduction include:**

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act federally protects donors from liability, and all businesses are eligible for tax credits for food donations [13].



1. Create a plan for how you will redistribute surplus food

2. Get suppliers involved - include them in your waste reduction goals

3. Encourage employees to volunteer with food banks

4. Connect online via **Feeding America's MealConnect program**.

The **MealConnect program**, by Feeding America, is an online tool that food producers can use to notify local banks of surplus food [14]. When they receive a notification on the app, a member of the local food bank will come to your store or restaurant to pick up and redistribute the food. This is a free and easy way to easily prevent food from going into the trash.

7. See note 5.

8-9. F. Ballve, *3 Ways CGF Members Can Partner with Food Banks on Intl. Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste and Every Day*. (The Consumer Goods Forum, 2021).

10. Food Bank of Northern Nevada, *Who We Are*.

11-12. Food Bank of Northern Nevada, *2019-2020 Annual Report* (2020), 7.

13. K. Link, *How Restaurants are Tackling Food Waste*. (FoodPrint, Last Modified April 29, 2021)

14. Feeding America, *MealConnect*.