


28 de marzo de 2016

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Presidenta
Comisión de Derechos Civiles,
Participación Ciudadana y Economía Social
Senado de Puerto Rico
PO Box 9023431
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00902-3431

RE: P. del S. 1497


Lcdo. Manuel Reyes Alfonso
Vicepresidente Ejecutivo

Agradecemos la oportunidad de expresarnos en torno al P. del S. 1497 que pretende establecer como política pública del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico la erradicación del hambre y fomentar e incentivar el manejo eficaz de excedentes de alimentos, a fin de promover una mayor y mejor distribución y suplido de alimentos; asegurar la integración y consideración de los aspectos legales en los esfuerzos gubernamentales por atender las necesidades sociales y alimentarias de nuestra población, entre otras; promover la evaluación de otras políticas, programas y gestiones gubernamentales que puedan estar conflagrando o impidiendo el logro de los objetivos de esta Ley; crear la Comisión para la Planificación de Distribución de Alimentos adscrita al Departamento de la Familia, y establecer sus deberes y responsabilidades.

La Cámara de Mercadeo, Industria y Distribución de Alimentos (MIDA) comparte la preocupación del proponente de la medida y trabaja junto a sus socios para minimizar la merma que representan alimentos expirados o dañados. Educamos a los socios sobre la necesidad de medir la merma y prevenirla por el costo que ello implica en sus negocios y que finalmente termina en el precio de sus productos. Trabajamos también con organizaciones sin fines de lucro como el Banco de Alimentos para coordinar la entrega y utilización de aquellos alimentos que a pesar de estar expirados o que tengan algún defecto de empaque,

estén aptos para el consumo humano. De hecho, durante nuestra Convención Anual coordinamos para que los expositores entreguen los excedentes de los productos no utilizados para el mercadeo al Banco de Alimentos al finalizar el evento.

Es precisamente por estos esfuerzos, y porque entendemos que cuando se trabaja con alimentos es imposible eliminar por completo la pérdida, y que el primer paso antes de aprobar nueva legislación debería ser medir mejor el problema e identificar las causas. El proyecto menciona estadísticas de pobreza pero no de alimentos desechados. No es que pongamos en duda que los haya, algo que damos como un hecho, sino que debemos entender mejor cuánto de ese total que aún no hemos medido podría realmente estar sujeto de ser reutilizado si se crea la estructura que se propone. Es decir, en este momento no sabemos claramente el total de alimentos desechados en Puerto Rico pero de ese total habría luego que segmentar lo que podría teóricamente ser consumido y lo que no; para luego identificar las razones y posibles acciones legislativas o voluntarias. En este proceso, no debemos olvidar que el desecho de alimentos no sólo ocurre a nivel comercial sino que buena parte ocurre a nivel individual. Datos del USDA indican que una familia de 4 desperdicia el equivalente a \$1,500 dólares al año. (Anejo A)

De la misma forma, hay que evaluar las causas del hambre las cuales no necesariamente se deben a la falta de coordinación de los desperdicios. El precio, la pobreza o el poder adquisitivo de la población y el acceso son otros factores a considerar. El proyecto propone la erradicación del hambre pero se concentra en el manejo de los excedentes de alimentos. Muy respetuosamente entendemos que aunque ciertamente el manejo eficaz de los excedentes de alimentos puede ayudar, el problema es mucho más abarcador.

Esta Comisión debe partir de la premisa que los negocios pierden dinero al desechar alimentos por lo que, además del interés humanitario, es en su mejor interés comercial reducir la merma al mínimo. Ese costo no es sólo por el valor de la mercancía comprada que no logró vender sino que el disponer de la misma también les representa un costo. Sin embargo, en muchos casos se desperdician innecesariamente alimentos porque los comerciantes no miden esa merma lo que no les permite la visibilidad necesaria para implementar medidas de control y reducción de la misma. Fíjese la Comisión que la eficiencia empresarial reduciría el desecho y la merma lo que a su vez reduciría la disponibilidad de los alimentos que la presente medida quiere redistribuir. Pero podría ayudar a reducir el costo. Es por ello que para erradicar el hambre hay que abarcar muchas otras áreas.

Sobre los desechos de alimentos hay que establecer que es un tema sumamente complejo porque hay que segmentar el tipo de alimentos que estamos hablando y el canal de distribución. También es importante la manera en que se dispone porque no es lo mismo enviarlo a un vertedero que reciclarlo, ya sea como composta u otro tipo de producto. Sobre

el canal, es necesario distinguir que la comida preparada por un restaurante tiene unos criterios comerciales y regulaciones diferentes que los alimentos no preparados en un supermercado. Incluso, en los supermercados, el trato es muy diferente entre los productos envasados y los frescos. En el primer caso, existen ya mecanismos y un buen sistema de distribución a través del Banco de Alimentos, pero en el caso de productos perecederos frescos, aunque el Banco de Alimentos también ayuda, se añaden otras dificultades principalmente por el tiempo de vida y requerimientos de conservación. Pero como decíamos antes, los detallistas de alimentos, sean restaurantes o supermercados, son sólo un eslabón en una cadena que incluye desde los agricultores hasta los consumidores y donde existen desperdicios en cada uno.

El proyecto menciona que no pretende burocratizar ningún proceso actual por lo que antes de crear una estructura burocrática y permanente adicional, sugerimos se evalúe si ya existe alguna agencia con responsabilidad sobre el tema y asignarle la tarea. Más aún, aunque el proyecto ubica la Comisión dentro del Departamento de la Familia, no se asigna presupuesto ni autoridad específica. Aun así, se le autoriza a aprobar reglamentos lo que genera preocupación de los potencialmente regulados porque es una delegación totalmente abierta. Nos parece que los objetivos de esta medida, lejos de crear una estructura permanente, deben ser temporeros para identificar y contabilizar mejor la merma que puede ser redirigida y los cambios regulatorios y legales que son necesarios luego de lo cual corresponde a la legislatura y al ejecutivo actuar. No vemos con buenos ojos, y la crisis fiscal lo valida, que se creen agencias y comisiones permanentes para cada problema que tiene nuestra población por válidos que sean sus objetivos.

En esa línea, pensamos que no es necesario inventar la rueda. El gobierno federal, a través del USDA, ha lanzado una campaña agresiva para reducir los desperdicios de alimentos con iniciativas que van desde la educación a comerciantes a través de toda la cadena y a los propios consumidores, hasta la simplificación de procesos para facilitar la donación de productos como las carnes. (Anejo B) Incluso, al tener el beneficio de la data, han establecido la meta de reducir a 50% el desperdicio de alimentos para el 2030. Sugerimos se explore la alternativa de integrar este esfuerzo a lo que ya USDA está haciendo.

En la misma línea esta Comisión debe reconocer, y así lo insinúa el texto de la medida, que mucho de lo que impide una mejor distribución de estos alimentos son las limitaciones legales y reglamentarias que existen porque la industria de alimentos es altamente regulada en el manejo de alimentos por los departamentos de salud y agricultura locales y federales, el USFDA, entre otras agencias locales y federales. No obstante, una comisión local no tendría autoridad sobre las federales y en cuanto a las agencias locales no nos parece prudente crear un organismo público para decirle a los otros cómo deben actuar en torno a este asunto. Máxime cuando el proyecto no le otorga autoridad para modificar los impedimentos legales ni cuenta con un presupuesto.

Finalmente, debemos comentar que en la exposición de motivos y en la declaración de política pública de la medida se habla de seguridad alimentaria, algo que también entendemos es mucho más abarcador que los desperdicios. Constantemente vemos proyectos de ley que hablan de seguridad alimentaria en el contexto limitado de la producción agrícola local. En otras medidas se consideran temas de salubridad, precios y hasta disponibilidad. Vemos con mucha frecuencia medidas que, aisladas y segmentadas, tienen el potencial de afectar nuestra industria, máxime si no se implementan de manera coordinada. Es por ello que MIDA lleva años reclamando la creación de una "Política Alimentaria" abarcadora que no se limite a ninguna de estas áreas sino que evalúe toda la cadena de suministros para identificar problemas e inconsistencias que deban resolverse. Es decir, no debe atenderse el problema de los desperdicios de manera aislada y separada de problemas de acceso, de producción, de transportación, de costos, de contribuciones, etc. Por ejemplo, a pesar de que Puerto Rico importa la inmensa mayoría de los alimentos que consume por lo que debería fomentar la existencia de almacenes bien abastecidos para casos de emergencia, la política contributiva actual impone contribuciones a los inventarios de alimentos y con ello disuade su existencia. De la misma forma, se considera con frecuencia imponer IVU o IVA a los alimentos y se le imponen los mismos requisitos que al resto de los bienes de consumo cuando claramente los alimentos, y la cadena de distribución de éstos, deberían gozar de mayor interés público que los televisores o los carros. De hecho, una de las mejores manera para erradicar el hambre es manteniendo el costo de los alimentos asequibles para toda la población.

Por todo lo cual, aunque endosamos los objetivos de la medida y trabajamos frecuentemente con el asunto de los excedentes en el caso de supermercados, mayoristas y distribuidores, entendemos que la presente medida carece de los elementos necesarios para lograr sus objetivos y abonaría a la sobre-reglamentación que pretende atacar. Sugerimos como alternativa se considere integrar a las agencias locales a iniciativas ya existentes como la del USDA. De manera independiente podría crearse una Comisión temporera con la encomienda de crear una "Política Alimentaria" abarcadora que incluya el tema del hambre y los desperdicios pero que además incluya los temas de nutrición, salud, acceso, costo, transportación, contribuciones y todo lo que afecta la cadena de abastos de alimentos. Un buen inicio sería que la política pública identifique claramente que para el Estado los alimentos no son un bien más de consumo, como los carros y los televisores, por lo que tendrán prioridad y trato especial por las agencias del gobierno y los municipios. Esa política pública deberá entonces identificar los cambios legislativos y regulatorios necesarios de manera que esta Asamblea Legislativa pueda actuar en asuntos concretos.



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USDA and EPA Join with Private Sector, Charitable Organizations to Set Nation's First Food Waste Reduction Goals

NEW YORK, Sept. 16, 2015 – Today, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Environmental Protection Agency Deputy Administrator Stan Meiburg announced the United States' first-ever national food waste reduction goal, calling for a 50-percent reduction by 2030. As part of the effort, the federal government will lead a new partnership with charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, the private sector and local, state and tribal governments to reduce food loss and waste in order to improve overall food security and conserve our nation's natural resources. The announcement occurs just one week before world leaders gather at the United Nations General Assembly in New York to address sustainable development practices, including sustainable production and consumption. As the global population continues to grow, so does the need for food waste reduction.

"The United States enjoys the most productive and abundant food supply on earth, but too much of this food goes to waste," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "An average family of four leaves more than two million calories, worth nearly \$1500, uneaten each year. Our new reduction goal demonstrates America's leadership on a global level in getting wholesome food to people who need it, protecting our natural resources, cutting environmental pollution and promoting innovative approaches for reducing food loss and waste."

Food loss and waste in the United States accounts for approximately 31 percent—or 133 billion pounds—of the overall food supply available to retailers and consumers and has far-reaching impacts on food security, resource conservation and climate change. Food loss and waste is single largest component of disposed U.S. municipal solid waste, and accounts for a significant portion of U.S. methane emissions. Landfills are the third largest source of methane in the United States. Furthermore, experts have projected that reducing food losses by just 15 percent would provide enough food for more than 25 million Americans every year, helping to sharply reduce incidences of food insecurity for millions.

"Let's feed people, not landfills. By reducing wasted food in landfills, we cut harmful methane emissions that fuel climate change, conserve our natural resources, and protect our planet for future generations" said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "Today's announcement presents a major environmental, social and public health opportunity for the U.S., and we're proud to be part of a national effort to reduce the food that goes into landfills."

Ongoing federal initiatives are already building momentum for long-term success. In 2013, USDA and EPA launched the U.S. Food Waste Challenge, creating a platform for leaders and organizations across the food chain to share best practices on ways to reduce, recover, and recycle food loss and waste. By the end of 2014, the U.S. Food Waste Challenge had over 4,000 active participants, well surpassing its initial goal of reaching 1,000 participants by 2020.

In addition to the U.S. Food Waste Challenge, USDA has unveiled several food loss reduction initiatives over the past few years, including an app to help consumers safely store food and understand food date labels, new guidance to manufacturers on donating misbranded or sub-spec foods, and research on innovative technologies to make reducing food loss and waste cost effective. USDA will build on these

successes with additional initiatives targeting food loss and waste reduction throughout its programs and policies.

In addition, today, USDA is launching a new consumer education campaign through its Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion with information on food loss and waste facts and reduction tips. Moreover, a new section on ChooseMyPlate.gov will educate consumers about reducing food waste to help stretch household budgets.

USDA and EPA will also continue to encourage the private sector—food service companies, institutions, restaurants, grocery stores, and more—to set their own aggressive goals for reducing food loss and waste in the months ahead. Organizations such as the Consumer Goods Forum, which recently approved a new resolution to halve food waste within the operations of its 400 retailer and manufacturers members by 2025, are helping to lead the way.

The United States is leading global efforts to address the threat of climate change. The first-ever national food waste goal is just one part of the Obama Administration's commitment to protecting our environment for future generations. Since President Obama took office in 2009, the United States has increased solar generation by more than ten-fold, tripled electricity production from wind power, and reduced greenhouse gas pollution in the United States to its lowest levels in nearly 20 years. By setting achievable environmental goals, this Administration is making strides to help boost the economy and protect the health of American families for the long-term.

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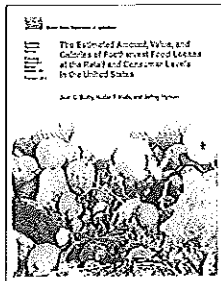
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United States Department of Agriculture

A report summary from the Economic Research Service

February 2014



Find the full report
at www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib-economic-information-bulletin/EIB-121.aspx

The Estimated Amount, Value, and Calories of Postharvest Food Losses at the Retail and Consumer Levels in the United States

Jean C. Buzby, Hodan F. Wells, and Jeffrey Hyman

What Is the Issue?

“Food loss” represents the amount of edible food, postharvest, that is available for human consumption but is not consumed for any reason; it includes cooking loss and natural shrinkage (e.g., moisture loss); loss from mold, pests, or inadequate climate control; and plate waste. “Food waste” is a component of food loss and occurs when an edible item goes unconsumed, such as food discarded by retailers due to undesirable color or blemishes and plate waste discarded by consumers. Food loss (particularly the food waste component) is becoming an increasingly important topic both domestically and internationally. Better estimates of the amount and value of food loss, including food waste, could help serve as quantitative baselines for policymakers and the food industry to set targets and develop initiatives, legislation, or policies to minimize food waste, conserve resources, and improve human nutrition. Reducing food loss would likely reduce food prices in the United States and the rest of the world, though the effects depend on the nature of supply, including import and export considerations.

What Did the Study Find?

In the United States, 31 percent—or 133 billion pounds—of the 430 billion pounds of the available food supply at the retail and consumer levels in 2010 went uneaten. Retail-level losses represented 10 percent (43 billion pounds) and consumer-level losses 21 percent (90 billion pounds) of the available food supply. (Losses on the farm and between the farm and retailer were not estimated due to data limitations for some of the food groups.)

The estimated total value of food loss at the retail and consumer levels in the United States was \$161.6 billion in 2010. The top three food groups in terms of share of total value of food loss were meat, poultry, and fish (30 percent, \$48 billion); vegetables (19 percent, \$30 billion); and dairy products (17 percent, \$27 billion). The total amount of food loss represents 387 billion calories (technically, we mean *Calorie* or kcal *hereafter*) of food not available for human consumption per day in 2010, or 1,249 out of 3,796 calories available per American per day. Recovery costs, food safety considerations, and other factors would reduce the amount of food that could actually be recovered for human consumption.

ERS is a primary source of economic research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

The study also reviewed the literature and found that food loss is economically efficient in some cases. There is a practical limit to how much food loss the United States or any other country could realistically prevent, reduce, or recover for human consumption given: (1) technical factors (e.g., the perishable nature of most foods, food safety, storage, and temperature considerations); (2) temporal and spatial factors (e.g., the time needed to deliver food to a new destination, and the dispersion of food loss among millions of households, food processing plants, and foodservice locations); (3) individual consumers' tastes, preferences, and food habits (e.g., throwing out milk left over in a bowl of cereal); and (4) economic factors (e.g., costs to recover and redirect uneaten food to another use).

How Was the Study Conducted?

This report uses data from ERS's Loss-Adjusted Food Availability (LAFAs) data series. This data series is ERS's core Food Availability data series, adjusted for spoilage, plate waste, and other food losses and converted to daily per capita amounts, calories, and *food pattern equivalents* (previously called servings and *MyPyramid equivalents*). Here, the LAFAs data series' underlying loss assumptions are used to estimate food loss at the retail and consumer levels. The LAFAs data series is considered to be preliminary because ERS continues to improve the underlying loss assumptions and the documentation of the data series. In August 2012, new estimates for consumer-level loss were incorporated into the data series. Therefore, the relative contribution of the different food groups out of total food loss has changed from previous ERS publications on food loss. The analysis is an extrapolation from the data as of September 2012 and is not based on an equilibrium model. For each food group covered here, we calculated the amount, value, and representative calories of food loss at the retail and consumer levels in the United States in 2010. The value estimates are based on retail prices.

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USDA's Activities

Selected New and Ongoing USDA Food Loss and Waste Reduction Activities

USDA is doing its part to help make preventing food waste the first-best option for farmers, businesses, organizations, and consumers. A large number of USDA programs contribute to this objective, ranging from those supporting market and distributional efficiencies to those educating consumers about safe food storage. Selected new and ongoing activities directly contributing to the reduction of food loss and waste are listed below.

Consumer education about food loss and waste

Consumers account for 21 percent of food loss and waste in the United States. To help inform them about food waste, the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion has developed a new infographic, *Let's Talk Trash*, with information on food loss and waste facts and reduction tips. Moreover, a new section on ChooseMyPlate.gov will educate consumers about reducing food waste to help stretch household budgets. The potential audience for this outreach is large. Since the launch of MyPlate in 2011, ChooseMyPlate.gov has become a popular federal resource for consumers seeking information on nutrition and health. The number of visitors has grown from 6.5 million in 2011 to 50.6 million in August 2015 and the site received more than 288 million page views. Facts about food waste and tips to help consumers reduce will be a valuable addition to ChooseMyPlate.gov as USDA strives to motivate food waste reduction.

Consumer education about food storage

Some consumer-level loss arises from consumers or retailers throwing away wholesome food because of confusion about how to safely store it or about the meaning of dates stamped on the label. USDA, through the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), educates consumers about the importance of safe food storage as a means of reducing the risks of acquiring a foodborne illness. As part of its food waste reduction outreach, USDA recently updated the safe-storage and date-labeling information on the FSIS website and updated and expanded online FoodKeeper Resource. In spring 2015, USDA also launched (in partnership with the Food Marketing Institute and Cornell University) a FoodKeeper App to provide consumers with easy access to clear, scientific information on food storage, proper storage temperatures, food product dating, and expiration dates. (The app is available on FoodSafety.gov for those that do not have access to smart phones or tablets. There users can get all the same storage guidance on their desktop or laptop machines.) FSIS is working to update and launching a 2.0 version of the FoodKeeper app.

On-farm storage

On-farm storage can help reduce post-harvest loss by providing farmers with effective, safe and readily accessible storage for crops. In August, 2015, USDA expanded the Farm Storage Facility Loan program to provide producers of milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat, eggs, seafood, flowers, rye, maple sap and hops low-cost loans for on-farm storage facilities. These newly eligible commodities join corn, sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, pulse crops, hay, honey, fruit, vegetables, nuts and renewable biomass already in the program. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products, and underserved producers.

Since 2000, the Farm Storage Facility Loan program has disbursed \$2 billion in loans to farmers, facilitating the purchase of storage capacity sufficient for approximately 1 billion bushels of grain.

Support for rural counties

Through a Rural Utilities Service grant, USDA is funding the *Rural Iowa Food Waste Reduction Project*. This project will assist businesses in reducing food waste generation rates. Assistance will include on-site visits to determine food waste generation baselines; strategies for reducing food waste; siting for food waste capture systems; training in reduction strategies; and an exploration of local options for composting, biodigesting, donation of edible food, or commercial companies that offer organic waste diversion services. Through a Rural Utilities Service grant, USDA is also funding the *Food Waste Composting Education Program for Iowa Landfills*. This program will promote food waste composting in rural counties, targeting both landfills and the general public through on-site technical training and regulatory assistance related to composting food waste. In addition, the project has created fact sheets, guides, regulatory summaries and videos. The main goal of the project is to reduce the amount of food waste discarded in Iowa landfills by assisting landfills and the general public in expanding or implementing composting operations. The goal of the food waste reduction project is to reduce the annual amount of food waste by a modest 10%. Implemented across the state of Iowa, this would result in a potential annual food waste reduction of 19,388 tons (approx. 40 million pounds).

Streamline procedures for donating wholesome misbranded meat and poultry products

Recognizing that misbranded product is often safe and wholesome, USDA streamlined procedures for donating wholesome misbranded meat and poultry products by allowing establishments to donate such product without temporary label approval provided that the bills of lading for the product include certain information for Agency verification activities. (*Notice 68-13 Verifying Donation of Misbranded and Economically Adulterated Meat and Poultry Products*). Since the new regulations were enacted, new donations are starting to flow, including, for example, 84,310 pounds of misbranded sausage and thousands of pounds of pizza, soups and other meat products.

Connected fresh produce importers with charitable institutions

USDA has worked to help increase donations of wholesome fresh imported produce that is subject to destruction or rejection because it does not meet the same or comparable federal marketing order standards as the domestic product. USDA compiled a list of charitable organizations (with permission from the organizations) and posted and shared the list of exempted outlets with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Fruit and Vegetable Program Specialty Crop Inspection Division employees at major ports. Employees were requested to provide this information to importers who have fresh produce that is not inspected or does not meet certain marketing order requirements. AMS's outreach is starting to facilitate donations. In early 2015, for example, importers donated 604,000 pounds of produce to the Houston Food Bank, 380,780 pounds to Feeding America San Diego (and Foodbank of Southern California), and 192,174 pounds to the Food bank of Rio Grande Valley and Jesus El Pan de Vida.

Stimulate research and knowledge sharing about food loss and waste

Through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture competitively funded a first of its kind conference on food loss and waste in the US. The conference, titled "The Last Food Mile: A Conference on Food Loss and Food Waste in the United States," intended to define the state of knowledge, understand the factors affecting the behavior, identify critical control points, and build a network of research and intervention strategies to address the issue. The conference was held on December 8-9, 2014 at the

University of Pennsylvania with twenty-five invited speakers and four panels that included industry initiatives, case studies, consumer level waste; and waste reduction, recovery, and recycling, and behavior change. Impacts include: 1) the formation of a knowledge network to exchange ideas, learn from each other, and engage and mobilize around the issue, 2) based on the conference, a book is currently being organized with the title "The Last Food Mile: Food Loss and Waste and Its Reduction, Recovery, and Recycling in the United States - A 2015 Status Report", and 3) expanded outreach through research and education efforts, e.g. incorporating food waste and food security into the curriculum, engaging students in and out of classroom settings, and conducting focus studies on consumer food behavior through grants from the University of Pennsylvania Research Foundation as well as PURM (Penn Undergraduate Research Mentoring Program).

Innovation

USDA has identified innovation as a major driver in increasing the reduction, recovery, and recycling of food waste. Innovation helps to make reducing, recovering and recycling food waste economically viable for businesses, organizations and households by increasing the feasibility or reducing the cost of better food waste management. Innovation can also help stimulate economic development and job growth by turning food waste into an economic opportunity. USDA's Agricultural Research Service supports innovation by conducting, often in collaboration with industry and academic partners, research on new technologies for reducing spoilage of fresh foods and the development of new products from waste materials at food processing facilities. This research stream, which is primarily conducted within ARS's National Program on Quality and Utilization of Agricultural Products, is reviewed/renewed in five-year cycles, with the next cycle starting in 2015.

USDA's Commitments

At the launch of the U.S. Food Waste Challenge in June 2013, USDA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency set a goal of 400 participants in the Challenge by 2015 and 1,000 by 2020. As of November 1, 2014, the U.S. Food Waste Challenge had over 1,000 participants. This level of participation demonstrates the real momentum that is building across the country to reduce, recover and recycle food waste.

In addition to spearheading the U.S. Food Waste Challenge, USDA initiated a number of activities to help reduce, recover and recycle food waste in the United States. USDA has delivered on its commitments for 2014.

Minimize food waste in the school meals programs. USDA has taken a number of steps to measure plate waste in the school meal programs and to develop innovative approaches to reducing it:

- Completed the design and school recruitment for a study on the amount of plate waste in schools with respect to the type of foods wasted and student and school characteristics. This research is on track for completion in 2017.
- Worked with the Cornell Behavioral Economics Center to develop and then disseminate Smarter Lunchroom training to over 2,400 school professionals. Funded 12 subgrants to university researchers examining the impact of behavioral economics approaches in school cafeterias.
- Conducted approximately 60 trainings from January to October 2014 to school food service personnel to reduce in-kitchen food loss, reaching over 3,500 participants.

Educate consumers on reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste. USDA has conducted a variety of activities to educate consumers about safe food storage, package dating, and the benefits of and steps to successfully reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste:

- Updated the safe-storage and date-labeling information on the website of USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service's website.
- Updated and expanded the 10-year-old online FoodKeeper Resource, which provides food storage information on a wide range of products (in partnership with the Food Marketing Institute).
- Developed (in partnership with the Food Marketing Institute and Cornell University) a FoodKeeper App to provide consumers with an option to access clear, scientific information on food storage, proper storage temperatures, food product dating, and expiration dates. The App is on track for delivery in June 2015 in conjunction with a nationwide consumer education campaign.
- USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) funded research examining childhood obesity, eating patterns and food waste.
- Purchased a demo composter for composting food waste for the garden at headquarters and provided composter demonstrations as part of the educational tours of the USDA headquarters garden.

Recover or recycle food that has been removed from commerce. USDA completed a variety of activities to increase the recovery or recycling of wholesome food that is removed from commerce:

- Streamlined procedures for donating wholesome misbranded meat and poultry products by making changes to allow establishments to donate such product without temporary label approval provided that the bills of lading for the product include certain information for Agency verification activities. (*Notice 68-13 Verifying Donation of Misbranded and Economically Adulterated Meat and Poultry Products*).
- Conducted a one-year meat composting pilot program for meat samples submitted for chemistry analysis, diverting 8,800 pounds of meat from solid waste disposal to recycling (at the Food Safety and Inspection Service's Western Laboratory). This successful program is now in use at two of FSIS's three labs (Western Laboratory and Eastern Laboratory). The labs will continue to track monthly quantities of meat composted and explore options for expanding and enhancing the Meat Sample Composting Program to include the Midwestern Laboratory.
- Connected fresh produce importers with charitable institutions to help increase donations of wholesome fresh imported produce that is subject to destruction or rejection because it does not meet the same or comparable federal marketing order standards as the domestic product.
- Began working with the California Desert Grape Administrative Committee to specify alternative exempted outlets for fresh table grapes that are not inspected or that do not meet certain federal marketing order requirements.

Update estimates of food loss in the United States. USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) calculates and maintains the U.S. Food Availability data system, including the Loss Adjusted Food Availability (LAFA) data series. This data series was primarily designed to estimate daily per capita calorie availability and food-pattern equivalents of the five major food groups plus the amounts of added sugars and sweeteners and added fats and oils. These data include the widely cited estimates of food loss at the retail and consumer levels in the United States. USDA is on track to release in June 2015 the results of a study updating the loss estimates for fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, and seafood at the retail level in the United States.

Conduct research on new technologies for reducing food waste. USDA's Agricultural Research Service continues to conduct, often in collaboration with industry and academic partners, research on new technologies for reducing spoilage of fresh foods and the development of new products from waste materials at food processing facilities. Recent research projects include:

- Development of a fruit- and vegetable-based powder to inhibit spoilage of fresh-cut produce.
- Investigation of genetic/breeding options for inhibiting sprouting of potatoes during storage.
- Development of active packaging to extend fruit and fresh-cut produce shelf life.
- Development of a technology to utilize olive-mill waste-water in body-care or beverage products.

- Development of a process to produce new oils and dietary-fiber products from fruit and vegetable seed byproducts.
- Development of a grape-seed flour, a byproduct of wine making, as a healthy food ingredient that helps to lower the risks of heart disease and obesity.
- Development of a 2-stage anaerobic digestion process for potato-processing waste to produce a substitute for peat moss, an imported non-renewable matrix for potting and garden soils.
- Development of a digester process for coffee grounds to substitute for peat moss and imported non-renewable materials
- Development of a new design and operational procedures for retail grocery store open-air, lighted and refrigerated produce display cases to reduce spoilage, and extend shelf-life and nutritional quality.
- Development of new food and feed ingredients from fish processing waste.
- Development of a small scale peanut dryer and peanut sheller that is suitable for use in remote areas of Heiti, where as much as 50% of the peanut crop is lost due to poor moisture control.
- Development and commercialization of novel nutritious gluten-free fruit and vegetable wraps.
- Development of a licensed technology for forming 100% fruit health bars.
- Commercialization of an ARS-developed process to create a product from sweet potato culls.
- Development of an optical property analyzer to help growers assess crop maturity and quality of food products, and thus help determine optimal harvest time and appropriate postharvest handling/processing procedures to minimize food loss and enhance marketability.
- Development of an automated in-orchard apple sorting technology to enable apple growers to remove inferior fruit in the orchard and better manage the harvested fruit in postharvest handling, thus avoiding potential devastating product loss during postharvest storage/handling.
- Development of value-added food products from rice hulls, including products (such as ground beef and catfish patties) utilizing antioxidants from rice hulls to reduce lipid oxidation.

Reduce and recycle food waste at USDA headquarters. USDA increased the amount of food waste it composts from the USDA headquarters in Washington DC from 2,400 to about 2,650 pounds of food waste per week. This represents about a 10% increase, which is double the 2014 goal of 5%.