

Food Waste in America

The world makes 4 billion pounds of food per year.¹ Not all of the food produced ends up eaten.



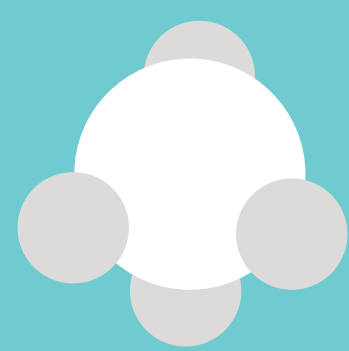
A third of this food goes to waste.¹

This number seems high, however it's not unmatched. The United States alone faces a bigger problem.



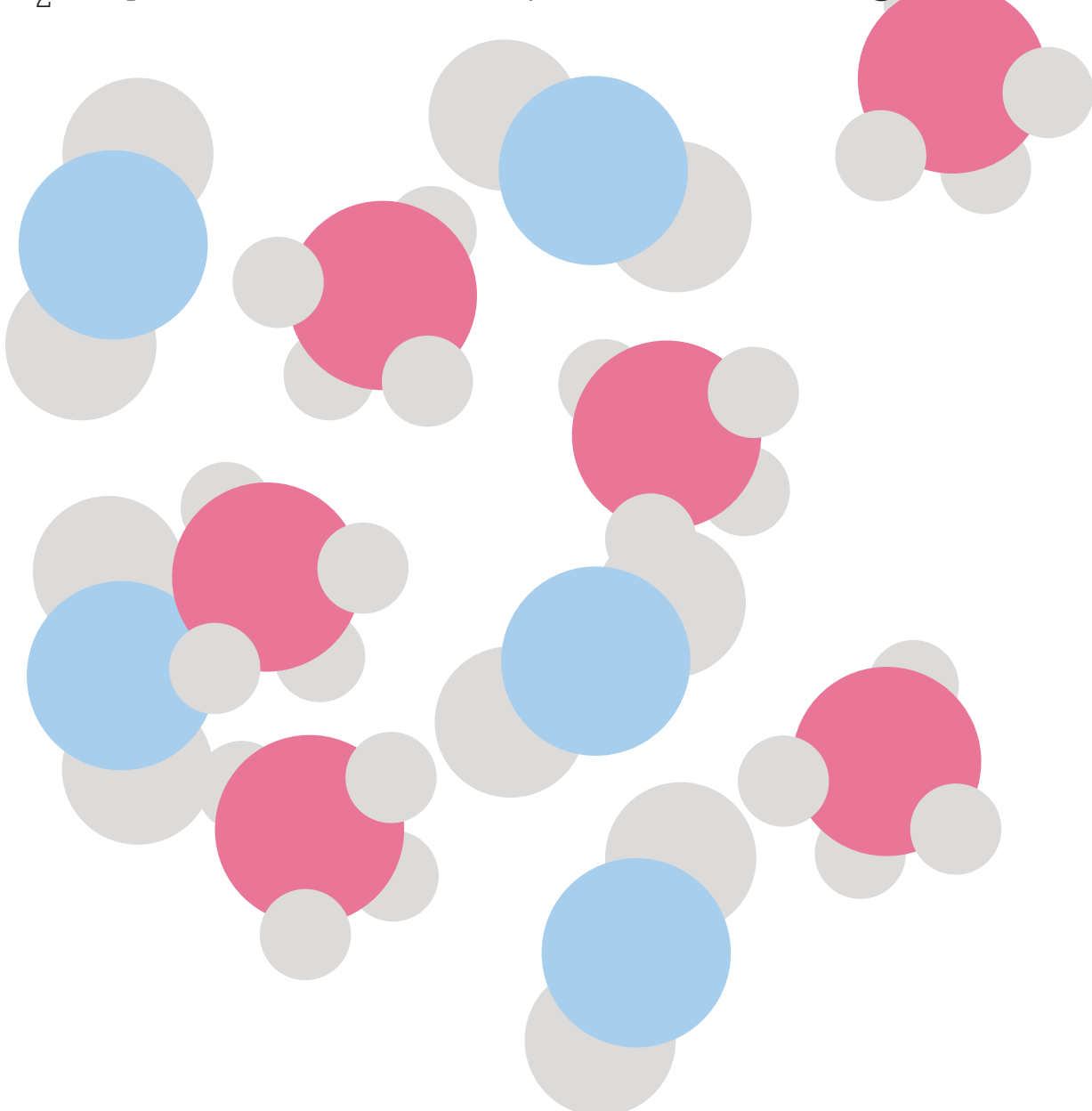
Food waste is an easy problem to overlook because the results aren't always apparent. In actuality, food waste presents a variety of environmental and other issues.

Once it comes off the plate, disposal is the next step. The method of disposal is directly related to the environmental detriment food waste leaves. Unfortunately, 97% of food waste makes its way to landfills.² Here, methane is produced.



Methane is 21x more potent than CO₂ in contributing to global warming.² For every ton of food wasted, 3.8 tons of GHG emissions are produced.³

Along with methane production, 3.3 billion tons of CO₂ is produced annually due to wastage.¹



In addition to gas emissions, food waste also presents water concerns. Almost 25% of all freshwater consumed annually in the US is associated with food waste.⁴



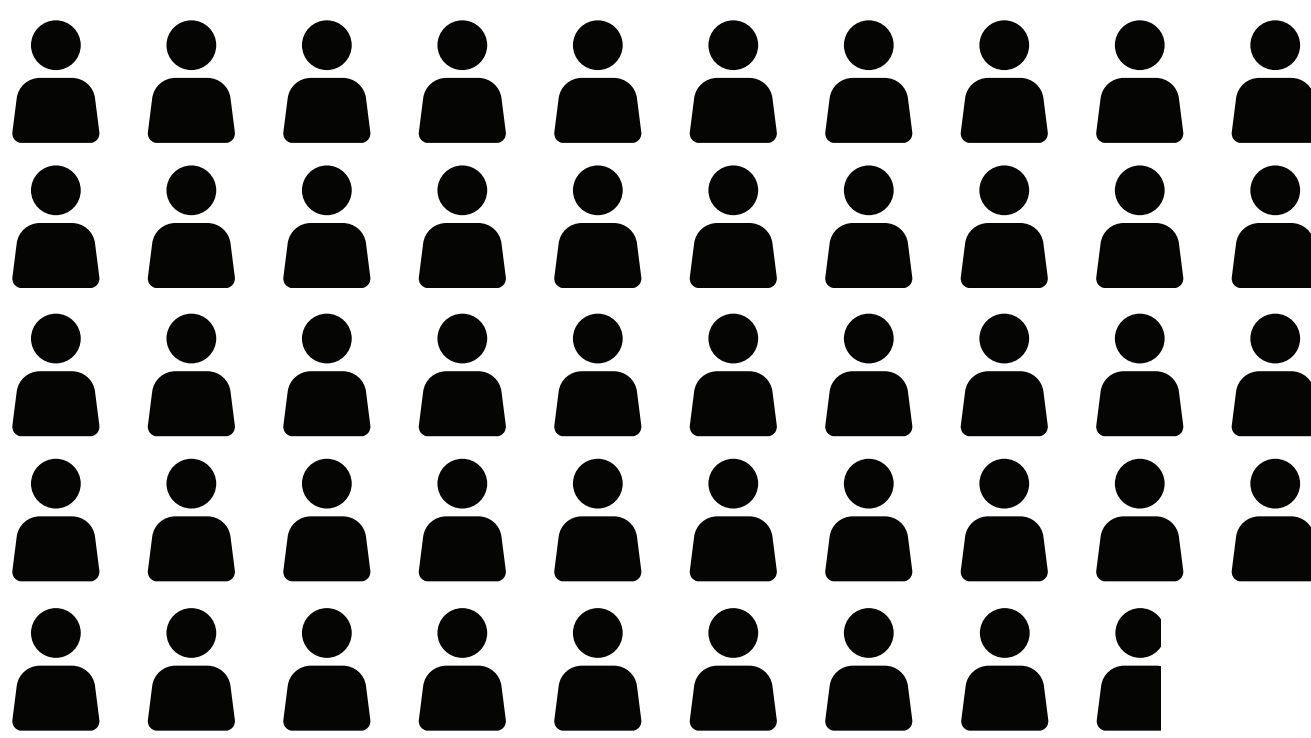
It's not just the environment that food waste is bad for. It's hard on our wallets, too:

\$589.76 Annual food waste cost for a 4-person family.⁵

\$1.3 B EPA estimate of food waste disposal costs in 2008.¹

\$165 B Total annual food waste cost in the United States.⁶

With so much money going to waste, social problems arise.



In 2010, 48.8 million⁵ Americans lived in food-insecure households. This poses the question: how is all this food going to waste if there are people out there who need it?



Unfortunately this question goes unanswered. However, research shows that the largest source of food loss in the American marketing chain is consumer and foodservice waste.⁵

This means the most qualified person to begin acting in reducing waste is you.

In summary, agro work, animals, plants, and money are all wasted as a result of food waste wasted. And the numbers are still rising.

Studies show that in 1974, the United States wasted around 30% of food. That number has risen by at least 10% in the past 20 years.⁷

Trying to the effects of your food waste?

Through several simple steps, you can begin to reduce the environmental detriments food waste has.⁷

1 Buy locally-grown food.

Food products are handled, on average, 33 times before reaching the supermarket. This travel has high amounts of GHG emissions. By purchasing locally-grown food (including produce, dairy, and meats!), you reduce your methane and carbon dioxide footprint.

2 Compost at home.

Composting at home can reduce over 300 lbs of food waste per year.¹ If you live in a residence hall, make sure to utilize compost bins in dining halls and in the trash rooms.

3 Buy frozen; freeze perishables.

Purchasing frozen food when necessary can help reduce food waste due to spoilage. Also, if you have fresh food that you won't finish soon, try freezing it for later.

4 Skip the dining tray.

Next time, carry your plates and drink by hands. Researchers revealed that tray-users waste 32% more food on average than individuals who don't grab a tray.⁷

5 Plan for leftover meals.

Don't throw away your excess food. Put it in tupperware and eat it later in the week. Most foods last up to a week in the fridge depending on the ingredients. Plan to eat leftovers at least once a week.

6 Don't throw away food.

Especially water-intensive foods like meat. Share sides with other people at the table and bring things home with you.

1. FAO 2. EPA 3. WRAP 4. Starkman, Civil Eats 5. USDA ERS 6. Fox News 7. NIDDK 8. National Geographic