

# Wasted Food Solutions: New Jersey Spotlights

In the United States [40% of food produced](#) is thrown away, translating to over 63 million tons. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) estimates that [1.3 million tons of New Jersey surplus food](#) ended up in landfills in 2017. Surplus food can include food scraps, such as bones or vegetable peels and tops, which can be used to create energy through anaerobic digestion or converted into carbon-rich compost. It can also include edible food that can be consumed by people, and therefore donated.

Wasted food prevention, donation, and recycling are becoming higher priorities for states and businesses across the United States. These initiatives can also serve as a valuable opportunity for businesses and institutions to further reduce its carbon footprint across waste streams. In New Jersey, these priorities have become integral to improving public health, equity, and climate action goals. For instance, effective October 2021, [Bill A-2371](#) requires generators producing an average of 52 tons or more of pre-consumer food waste per year, located within 25 miles of an authorized organics processing facility, to source separate and recycle their food waste.







# HelloFresh

[HelloFresh, global food solutions group](#), serves millions of customers while also maintaining sustainable practices at its facilities. In partnership with the organization [Table to Table](#), HelloFresh has been able to redistribute 60% of its surplus food to feed people across 250 community programs in Northern New Jersey. In 2021 HelloFresh donated 6.9 million pounds of surplus across all its facilities, with 2.3 million pounds donated in New Jersey alone. HelloFresh credits its New Jersey facilities as company leaders who have raised the standard for food waste reduction. A dedicated sustainability team, researchers, and volunteers at events have helped the company gather this vital data.

HelloFresh shared, "We believe that food belongs on people's plates, not in the trash," an objective a 2019 food waste study helped the company better understand. Study participants cooked HelloFresh meals for the first seven days, then spent the next seven adhering to their usual diets, recording the weight of each meal's food waste. Comparing the data, HelloFresh researchers found that participants recorded a 70% reduction in preparation waste and a 23% reduction in plate waste using HelloFresh compared to their usual diets. This reduction is attributed to ingredient portioning, portion size control, and the reduction of food waste both upstream and downstream in HelloFresh's services. A 2021 study affirmed these food waste reduction benefits finding that, when compared to supermarket meals of the same portion size, HelloFresh meal kits have 31% lower life cycle carbon footprints.<sup>1</sup>

Incorporating a successful food waste reduction and management plan is an important goal for any business in the food industry. HelloFresh recommends engaging with the research community, as they found significant value from their studies and opportunities for improvement across all areas of waste.

1. [https://cdn.hellofresh.com/de/cms/HelloFresh\\_Meal\\_Kit\\_Life\\_Cycle\\_Assessment\\_Study.pdf](https://cdn.hellofresh.com/de/cms/HelloFresh_Meal_Kit_Life_Cycle_Assessment_Study.pdf)



# Wegmans

Once a business starts measuring food waste and diversion, the numbers can be shocking. For [Wegmans](#), they were surprised by the volume of food scraps that they generated. The grocery chain incorporated a variety of sustainable practices including food waste prevention, donation, and recycling. Thus far in 2022, Wegmans' New Jersey locations have donated 709 tons of surplus, edible food across 40 food recovery sites and organizations in the state.

When food cannot be donated, Wegmans separates inedible organics for anaerobic digestion. They have found this method to be the most impactful in volume, sending 2,431 tons of food waste to anaerobic digestors this year. Wegmans is partnered with [Natural Upcycling](#), which collects and hauls its food scraps and transports it to [Trenton Biogas](#) for processing. Surplus food that is not donated or diverted to anaerobic digestion is sent to feed animals.

While Wegmans has experienced a cost savings from donating surplus food and source separating food scraps for animal feed by avoiding disposal costs, this is not their primary motivating factor. Wegmans recommends that any businesses looking to implement food waste practices should start with their "Why" and understand that communication is key. Wegmans shared successful process improvements have often come from listening to their employees, who are experts of their respective work environments.

"Using food as it is intended, to feed people."

- Chris Foote, Sustainability Manager of Wegmans





## Plant Base

From day one, the non-profit café and grocery store, [Plant Base](#) knew its core concepts and values. Reducing waste, donating edible surplus, and recycling food scraps are all critical to its mission. Plant Base is the first fully vegan, zero waste market in the United States and strives to be an example for other food businesses.

While Plant Base believes in all aspects of managing surplus food, they see prevention as one of the key aspects. By growing their own food, they reduce surplus and avoid carbon emissions by eliminating the need for delivery. They recognize this as an opportunity to grow, source, and manage food locally, and want to include their customers and employees in the conversation.

Excess food that is not repurposed is placed in their 24/7 community fridge located right outside the shop. Plant Base utilizes the fridge to mitigate surplus and redistribute food to the community. Any food scraps generated from preparing food are composted on-site and used to grow more food.

Plant Base continues to set ambitious standards and goals for themselves. In the future, they aim to educate young people about sustainable living, growth, and cooking. Plant Base is also working toward the ability to go mobile and provide free, healthy meals to communities in need.

"If we all do what's right and be responsible with our waste and energy consumption, we can allow a better life for everyone,"

- Dhruva Lattore, Founder of Plant Base



# Get Started

**Start with prevention:** CET captured several stories of businesses across the US that bring [upcycling and repurposing of surplus food to life](#). Read how these businesses track waste, repurpose surplus, and reduce waste, ultimately leading to creative reuse and potential savings measures.

**Learn how to donate surplus food:** CET's Wasted Food Solutions website offers state-specific resources for NJ including information on [liability protections](#). These protections go beyond those provided by the [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#) that include a presumption of good faith, cover donations made directly to individuals, and allow distributors to charge a small fee for donated food. You can also check out CET's [Food Donation Made Easy](#) guidance which offers a broad overview of how successful food donation programs can be structured and implemented!

**Stay informed:** Find out more about food waste goals, plans, and regulations in NJ using the [Mid-Atlantic Food Waste Policy Gap Analysis and Inventory](#) developed by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). The [New Jersey DEP website](#) also provides up-to-date information on food waste, including authorized food waste recycling facilities in the state.

## Feeling moved to act?

Contact [CET's Wasted Food Solutions hotline](#) to access free and customized virtual on-site technical assistance.

**Email:** [wastedfood@cetonline.org](mailto:wastedfood@cetonline.org)

**Phone:** (888) 813-8552

**Website:** [wastedfood.cetonline.org](http://wastedfood.cetonline.org)







The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) helps people and businesses save energy and reduce waste. CET acts as a catalyst to accelerate the development of a vibrant marketplace to divert wasted food from the commercial and institutional sectors. We have been a leader in the wasted food reduction and diversion movement for more than 20 years, implementing some of the first wasted food composting programs in the country, and contributing to effective public policy.

We believe that better managing wasted food is critical in order to address climate change, feed more hungry people, and grow our economy. If you are a city, state or federal agency, industry group or foundation, and want to tackle the issue of wasted food, please contact us!

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