

Cawleys' Sustainability Insights

# HOW CAN WE STOP FOOD WASTE FEEDING CLIMATE CHANGE?

March 2021



Lots of everyday activities are contributing to the climate crisis, but there's one in particular that many people would miss off the list: food waste. The connection between the two is not always obvious, and yet food waste is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than flying!

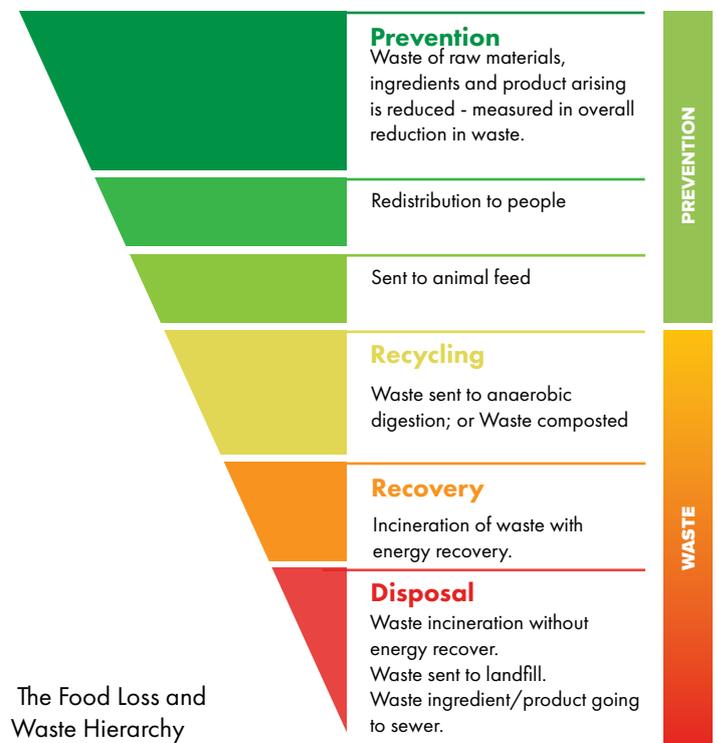
That's why WRAP is running its inaugural Food Waste Action Week this week under the banner 'Wasting food feeds climate change', in a bid to help people better understand the impact food waste has on the environment.

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The statistics are pretty alarming. If food waste was a country, it would have the third-biggest carbon footprint in the world after the USA and China. Around one-third of all the food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted, amounting to 1.3 billion tonnes every year. This is a huge waste of the resources needed to produce the food in the first place, and a massive contributor to atmospheric pollutants. Wasted food typically ends up in landfill, where it produces methane, a dangerous greenhouse gas that's 87 times more potent than CO2.

It's no secret that the global food system needs a total rethink – we'll have 10 billion people to feed by 2050, and keeping up with demand could have a devastating impact on forests, biodiversity and global warming, not to mention increased consequences for social equity and global poverty rates. We can't afford to waste food.

As the Food Loss and Waste Hierarchy indicates, the best way to tackle food waste is to avoid producing it in the first place. This is followed by reuse, which means ensuring surplus edible food products go to those in need, or inedible food products are repurposed as other products, such as pet food. Next on the hierarchy is recycling and diverting to energy, which is where we come in.



## Wasted value

We don't view food waste as 'waste', but rather as a valuable resource that's inevitable for some businesses – in many cases some degree of food waste is unavoidable, despite your best efforts. But instead of sending it to landfill (at the very bottom of the food loss and waste hierarchy) it can be put to good use as green energy.

We were the first company in the UK to set up a commercial food waste collection service to anaerobic digestion (AD). This process heats and ferments food waste and captures the resulting methane, which is then converted to green energy that's exported to the National Grid. What's more, the remaining sludge makes an excellent bio-fertiliser, which can be used to grow more food. Nothing is wasted.

There's no amount of food waste too small for recycling – every scrap that's recycled prevents the release of destructive greenhouse gases and helps create natural energy. Did you know that recycling just five caddies of food waste could generate enough energy to power a cinema screen for long enough to watch a whole film? And recycling requires no specific 'type' of food waste, either. You might not think of coffee grounds as food waste, for example, but we collect those, too, so they can be turned into a range of products.

Of course, recycling your food waste is not just great news for the environment – and by extension, your sustainability credentials, which are becoming increasingly important to customers and suppliers alike – but for your company's bottom line. Food waste collection can be expensive, but segregating it and sending it for recycling can help you save significantly on your waste management costs.



You can learn more about WRAP's great campaign at [lovefoodhatewaste.com/foodwasteactionweek](https://lovefoodhatewaste.com/foodwasteactionweek), and shout about the efforts your company is making – or get some inspiration for making a difference – using the hashtag **#FoodWasteActionWeek**. If you're not yet recycling your food waste, get in touch to see how we can help.

To discover how you can become more globally responsible through recycling visit [www.cawleys.co.uk](http://www.cawleys.co.uk)