



THE AVOIDABLE CRISIS OF FOOD WASTE:
the roadmap

UPDATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Roadmap has been developed by the following individuals at Second Harvest:

Lori Nikkel
Jackie Marchildon
Giao Chau
Gillian Chin Sang
Madison Maguire
Winston Rosser

With key input from the Technical Report written by Second Harvest and the following individuals from Value Chain Management International:

Martin Gooch, PhD
Delia Bucknell
Dan Laplain
Peter Whitehead, PhD
Caroline Glasbey

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KEY CONTACTS FOR THIS PROJECT:

Second Harvest

Lori Nikkel
Chief Executive Officer
Email: lorin@secondharvest.ca
Tel: +1 416.408.2594 x 294

Value Chain Management International

Martin Gooch, PhD
Chief Executive Officer
Email: martin@vcm-international.com
Tel: +1 416.997.7779

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Second Harvest is Canada's largest food rescue organization and a global thought leader on food waste and perishable food redistribution. It rescues unsold surplus food from thousands of food businesses from across the supply chain to redistribute it to non-profits in every province and territory. This prevents harmful greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere while improving access to nutrition for millions of Canadians experiencing food insecurity.

Beyond food rescue and redistribution, Second Harvest is deeply involved in

advocacy, research, training and education. Its groundbreaking reports, such as "The Avoidable Crisis of Food Waste," provide critical data and insights to inform public policy and educate the public on sustainable food systems.

Second Harvest is committed to driving systemic change, helping to shape policies and practices that reduce food waste and address its role in climate change, while also supporting communities by providing them with the food they need.

www.SecondHarvest.ca



Value Chain Management International (VCM International) has authored/co-authored several publications on food waste and is a leading public and industry voice in bringing awareness to the opportunities and solutions surrounding food waste reduction, traceability and the environment. VCM International measures waste within the overall analysis of food systems

to create pragmatic and sustainable solutions for businesses and industry organizations along the value chain. VCM International applies specialized value chain diagnostic tools to detect where waste occurs and to determine how to eliminate it. VCM International then participates in the implementation of new practices to solve the issues and ensure successful outcomes.

www.VCM-International.com

an updated roadmap to reduce food waste in canada

This report, *The Avoidable Crisis of Food Waste Roadmap: Update*, is a follow-up to Second Harvest's groundbreaking research published in 2019 that quantified food waste (FW) in Canada by examining the entire supply chain. By 2024, we saw the need for updated research amid increasing awareness of food waste, its new driving factors and the potential for economic incentives to address it.

WHY SECOND HARVEST DID THE RESEARCH

- **To measure food waste in 2024:**
Compare levels from different parts of the supply chain to 2019 estimates.
- **To analyze food waste by type:**
Break down food waste across different foods.
- **To calculate greenhouse gas emissions:**
Measure the environmental impact of food waste.
- **To evaluate date coding:**
Understand how much best before dates (BBDs) contribute to food waste.
- **To understand the impact of climate change on food waste:**
Determine if and how much food is wasted due to changing weather patterns.
- **To estimate economic impact:**
Calculate the financial cost and opportunity of avoidable food waste.
- **To study farm waste:**
Evaluate food waste on farms, including unharvested crops.

This roadmap summarizes why food waste happens across the supply chain and makes actionable recommendations for how we can improve. It draws entirely from the Technical Report, which details the research methodology and contains more detailed data.

why

WE NEED TO STUDY FOOD WASTE

Studying food waste is about creating action and giving direction to all of us — from industry including farmers, manufacturers, producers and distributors to retail, and restaurants and to the government as well as individual consumers.

HERE'S WHY THIS RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT

1. **It will lead to informed decision-making:** This research provides evidence-based insights, identifying the root causes of food waste so that strategic decisions to reduce it can be made.
4. **It can guide policy development:** The findings can facilitate the creation of more effective public policies and foster collaborations between relevant stakeholders to reduce food waste.

2. **It highlights economic benefits:** The report shows that reducing food waste can lead to cost savings and economic gains with appropriate incentives.
3. **It details the environmental impact of food waste:** The report quantifies food waste's greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption, and highlights areas where changes can and must be made to address this issue.

There's a massive opportunity in reducing the amount of food waste throughout the system in Canada. Including the benefit of supporting people with the food they need by redistributing rescued food to vulnerable populations, addressing the environmental harm food waste causes and economic benefits to industry and consumers.



what

THE RESEARCH SAYS

Since Second Harvest published *The Avoidable Crisis of Food Waste* in 2019, there's been increased awareness on the issue of food waste and a call for industry to invest in sustainability practices. Businesses are much more conscious of food waste and have begun implementing efforts to decrease it. The government has also raised the standard for how its food waste statistics are monitored and reported.

WE'VE MADE PROGRESS IN TACKLING FOOD WASTE — BUT NOT ENOUGH

The good news is that the overall amount of food waste has declined. But avoidable food waste — food that could be eaten by people — has gone up. This is particularly problematic in an environment where food affordability has increased dramatically.

In the face of rampant food inflation and overwhelmed food charities, we're discarding MORE surplus food than we did five years ago.

We need to change, for the good of Canadians and the health of our food industry in the long term.

There are two types of food waste: avoidable and unavoidable.

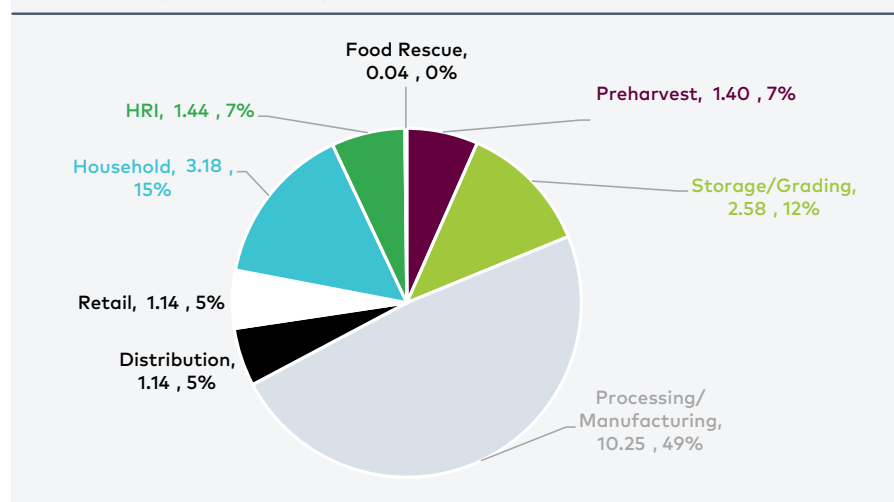
AVOIDABLE

food waste, such as blueberries that reach the retail store but are not purchased by consumers, is edible at some point in time — including at the time of disposal. This type of waste can and should be reduced or eliminated. But this type of food waste has actually increased in the past five years.

UNAVOIDABLE

food waste includes items that are byproducts, such as animal bones and husks that cannot be eaten — the planned waste that occurs when food is cooked and processed. The food system has become more efficient and reduced this type of waste since our first study.

TONNAGE (IN MILLIONS) AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FW



46.5%

OF ALL FOOD
IN CANADA IS

WASTED EVERY YEAR

21.18 MILLION
METRIC TONNES

41.7%

OF ALL OF THIS WASTED FOOD
COULD BE RESCUED TO SUPPORT
COMMUNITIES ACROSS CANADA

8.83 MILLION
METRIC TONNES

WE'RE NOT JUST WASTING FOOD — WE'RE WASTING PRECIOUS RESOURCES, TOO

Canada's food waste numbers put a spotlight on our inefficient and unsustainable use of natural resources, leading to harm for the environment.

Avoidable food waste equates to **25.69 million metric tonnes of CO₂** emissions every year. That is the equivalent of 253,223 one-way flights from Toronto to Vancouver.



AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE IS BAD FOR EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

Economically, food waste impacts everyone. For businesses, it results in lost revenue and increased costs, which can squeeze profit margins. For consumers, the cost of food waste is built into the prices we pay for food and beverages, and managing waste adds to municipal taxes and disposal fees.

VOLUME AND VALUE OF AVOIDABLE, POTENTIALLY EDIBLE FW

	VOLUME (MILLION TONNES)	VALUE (\$ BILLION)
Field Crops	3.40	\$27.62
Produce	3.39	\$12.56
Dairy	1.29	\$11.02
Meat & Poultry	0.38	\$4.93
Marine	0.07	\$1.39
Sugars	0.28	\$0.36
Eggs	0.03	\$0.19
TOTAL	8.83	\$58.07

All of this wasted food is enough to feed over **17 million people per year.**

THE COST OF FOOD HAS GROWN BUT THE VALUE WE PLACE ON FOOD HAS NOT

Food affordability has been a huge issue for Canadians in the last several years. The price of everything has gone up and people are struggling. Canadians continue to get sticker shock from the price of groceries.

Cantaloupes that are one half-inch undersized are rejected by distributors and retailers for not meeting specifications and left on the farm to rot.

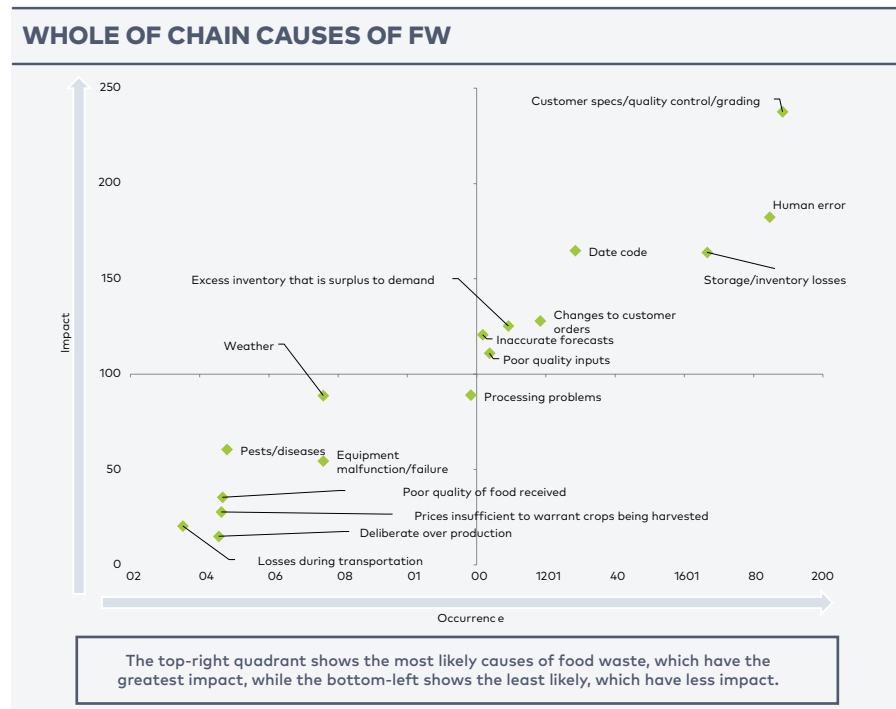
Surplus edible food is sent to animal feed or compost because it's less costly and complex than redirecting it to food rescue and redistribution.

Consumers buy the milk with the latest BBD because they want to have the most time to drink it before it "goes bad."

WHY IS FOOD WASTE STILL HAPPENING?

One of the most significant causes of food waste is grading regulations and specifications set by the government and industry, which often result in perfectly edible food being discarded if it does not meet visual or grading standards. Grades are set both domestically and internationally and include parameters like texture, colour, size, condition and more. While the grading process is consistent, specifications set by retailers vary greatly from store to store. Many retailers commonly go above and beyond government regulations in their purchasing practices in a desire to market premium "cream of the crop" food to consumers.

Human error is another major contributor, with mistakes made during processing, handling or transportation leading to unnecessary waste. Poor storage and inventory management can also cause food to spoil before it even reaches the consumer.



Two major drivers of food waste have grown significantly over the past five years and affect the entire supply chain: best before dates (BBDs) and changing weather patterns or climate. A third factor that needs to be addressed is the fact that industries lack the economic incentives to appropriately manage and process food waste.

Let's focus on these drivers, looking at the research data to understand the scale of the impact.

BEST BEFORE DATES (BBDs)

23%

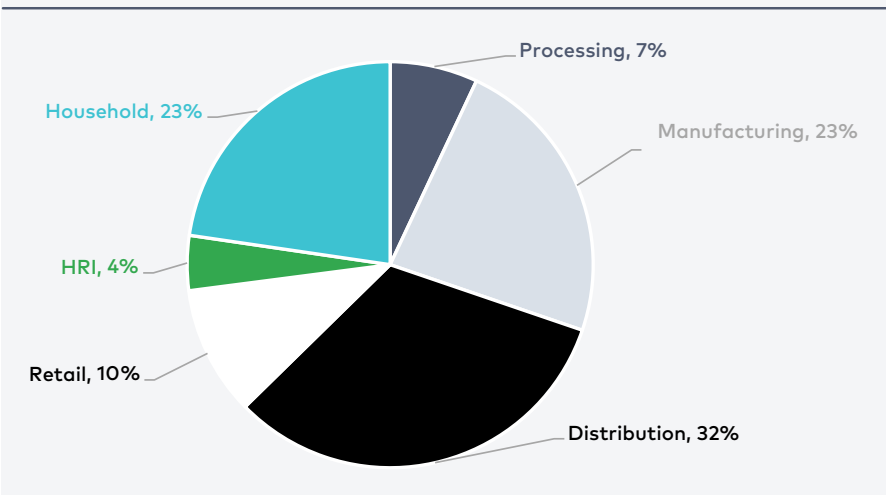
of avoidable food waste from processing to purchase is caused by best before dates

"The intent behind best before dates is good, but the issue is how the overall process is currently executed. We need to communicate best before dates in a more informed, descriptive fashion."
— Ontario food processor/retailer

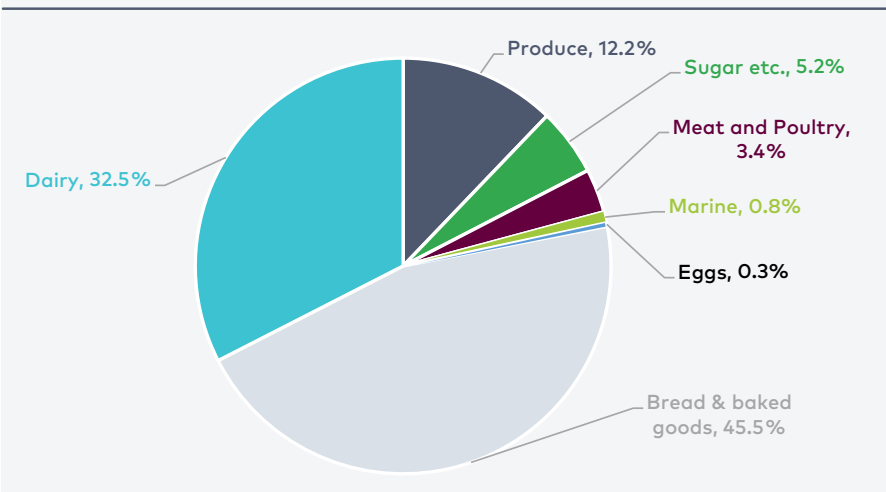
In response to food inflation and rising costs, consumers are looking for better value in their food purchases. This has led to a greater emphasis on buying high-quality, good-looking products and paying more attention to BBDs.

BBDs contribute to 23 per cent of the 7.24 million tonnes of total avoidable food wasted from processing to purchase. They can mislead consumers into discarding perfectly good items like canned vegetables, rice, pasta, dairy and fresh produce.

AVOIDABLE FW ASSOCIATED WITH BEST BEFORE DATES



BEST BEFORE DATE RELATED FW BY FOOD TYPE



Only foods with a shelf life of 90 days or less require BBDs, yet they're found on almost everything. Introduced in Canada in 1976 for short shelf-life foods, BBDs today don't reflect a product's actual shelf life or safety. While BBDs were intended to manage inventory and guide consumers, they've become a significant source of unnecessary food waste at home and in the industry.

Unlike expiry dates, which apply to only five food types in Canada (meal replacements, nutritional supplements, infant formula,

formulated liquid diets, foods for low-calorie diets) and must be strictly followed, BBDs serve as general guidelines for freshness, taste and nutritional value.

Businesses sometimes use BBDs to drive sales, causing consumers to replace food that's still perfectly good and edible and contributing to waste. This problem affects the entire supply chain.

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Consumers want picture-perfect produce, which is challenging for farmers given changing weather patterns that go beyond just heatwaves. Climate change is making it harder to plant, grow and harvest crops. This variability affects farmers' ability to consistently grow crops, especially delicate fruits like blueberries and peaches that are sensitive to temperature changes. As a result, more crops are being produced that don't meet retailer quality standards and are being wasted.

Climate change is increasing production losses both pre and postharvest. Extreme weather, water shortages and soil erosion make it harder to grow and transport food, resulting in more waste. The market for "imperfect" foods has far from flourished. Consumers still don't fully accept imperfect-looking produce as being of equal quality to flawless items.

The food system is responsible for over one-third of human-made greenhouse gas (GHG)

emissions, with food waste contributing between 8-10 per cent of global emissions and 26 per cent of emissions related to the food system.

In Canada, food waste accounts for 77.7 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions, with avoidable waste contributing 25.7 million tonnes.

Avoidable food waste has a **water footprint of 13,314 million cubic metres**. That is the equivalent of the amount of water that flows over Niagara Falls in **53.6 days**.

Avoidable food waste creates **25.7 million tonnes of CO₂**, which is roughly equivalent to the annual emissions of **5.6 million passenger vehicles**.



THE LACK OF A FINANCIAL INCENTIVE FOR BUSINESS

In this competitive market with tight profit margins, retailers (and, to a lesser extent, hotels, restaurants and institutions (HRI) operators) have set stricter quality standards for their suppliers. Some retailers have introduced discounts on misshapen produce, but many are still rejecting fruits and vegetables due to size and colour.

Reducing food waste is a huge financial opportunity for both the Canadian food industry and consumers. Taking a cue from the UK, where they've aimed to address the economic impact of food waste, we can see the potential benefits here, too.

The Courtauld Commitment, formed in 2005 by UK retailers

and food makers, aimed to slash £3 billion in waste-related costs over 10 years. By 2012, they smashed that target, reaching nearly £5 billion in savings. In Canada, reducing food waste offers clear financial benefits: for every 1 per cent reduction in food waste, businesses can see a 4 per cent boost in revenue. This improvement happens because tackling the 20 or more costs related to food waste — beyond the actual price of the food — can help businesses cut their operating costs by 15 to 20 per cent. All these savings add up, resulting in higher margins and profits.

There are 7.35 million tonnes of avoidable food waste from production to retail and hospitality in Canada.

This represents a whopping \$17.73 billion in food waste, about 12 per cent of the \$147.44 billion spent on food and drinks in retail. This aligns with the UK estimates that avoidable food waste makes up around 10 per cent of what consumers pay for food.

Meanwhile, food affordability issues have led to record levels of food insecurity, with many people in Canada relying on non-profits to access food. Yet, 8.83 million tonnes of potentially edible food worth \$58 billion (up from \$49 billion in 2019) is wasted each year.

\$58B IS THE VALUE OF AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTED ANNUALLY

This is enough money to pay for the groceries of **3.7 million Canadian families for a year.**

By reducing **1% of their food waste**, businesses can boost **their revenue by 4%.**

The cost of avoidable food waste equates to **12% of prices paid for food at retail.**



THE BLUEBERRY:

THE STORY OF WASTE
FROM FARM



TO TABLE

overview



where food waste is happening

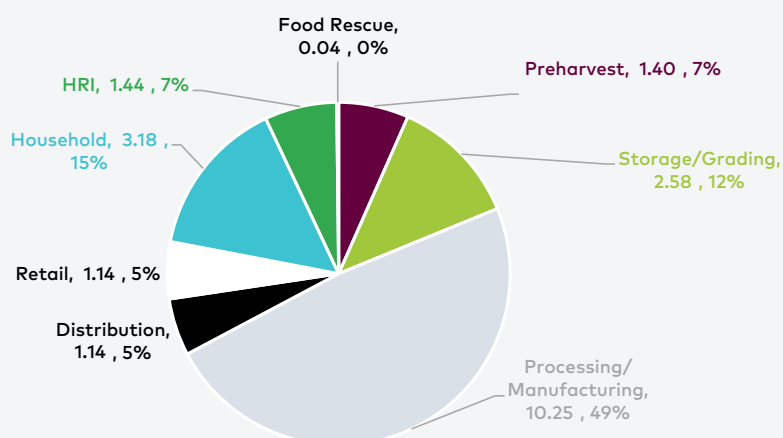
Canadians love blueberries. We are one of the world's largest producers, and given our cold climate, we also import blueberries from across the globe. By following the path of the blueberry through the food system, we can understand how produce like blueberries get wasted, instead of ending up in your muffin.

ALMOST HALF OUR FOOD WASTE HAPPENS BEFORE FOOD REACHES STORE SHELVES

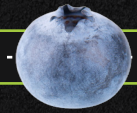
The biggest contributor to overall food waste happens before food even gets to the store. This includes losses during farming, storage and processing. Together, these three stages account for 68 per cent of all food waste.

The further away perishable food is from its market, the greater risk of spoilage within the first few links of the supply chain.

TONNAGE (IN MILLIONS) AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FW



overview (con't)



AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE HAPPENS THROUGHOUT THE FOOD SYSTEM

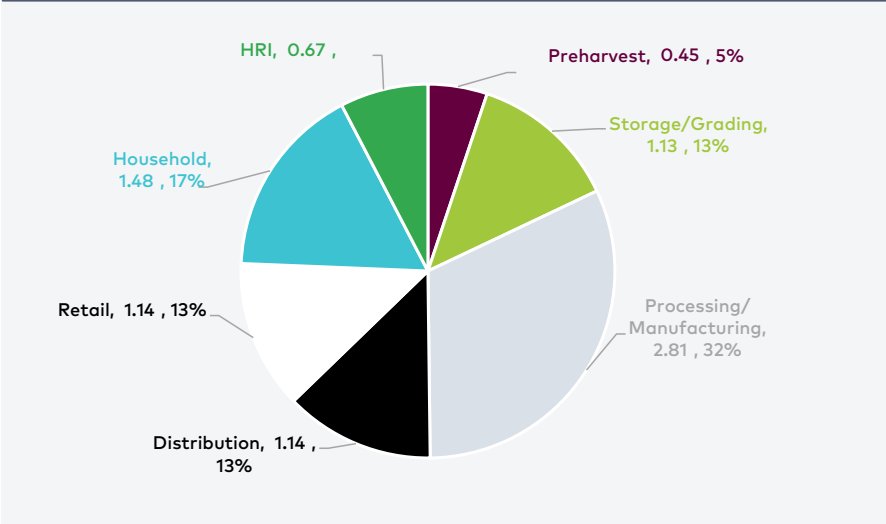
No sector of the food system is immune to avoidable food waste, it happens from field to fork. Food processing and manufacturing is responsible for the largest share of avoidable food waste, which is most likely caused by product storage and inventory issues. Retailers often order more stock than needed, especially for national brands, to avoid missing sales. This excess inventory leads to waste, especially when unsold products (like bread and fruit juice, for example) are returned to vendors, which increases losses for distributors and manufacturers. Retailers are also less likely to donate private label products, leading to more waste for these items compared to national brands.

MOST FOOD WASTE COMES FROM GRAINS, PRODUCE AND DAIRY

In terms of volume by weight (metric tonnes), the highest amount of total food waste comes from field crops (bread, bakery, soya, etc.), produce (fresh and processed fruits and vegetables) and dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese, etc.).

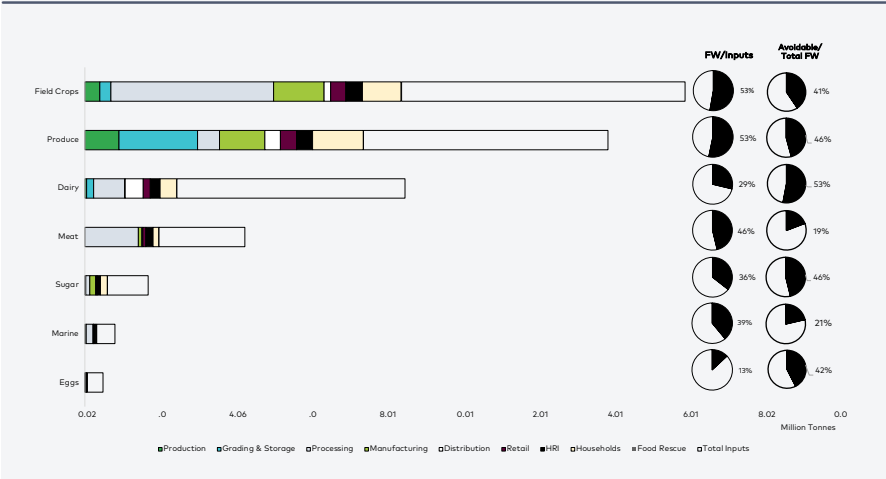
Most fresh produce has a relatively short shelf life; any unsold inventory will spoil and be impossible to sell. This "shrinkage" loss factor impacts both domestic and imported produce.

TONNAGE (IN MILLIONS) AND PERCENTAGE OF AVOIDABLE (POTENTIALLY EDIBLE) FW



For distributors a key cause of waste, especially for perishable products, is the inability to move products quickly. Many interviewees mentioned problems with the availability and reliability of both international and domestic transportation, which leads to food waste.

PROPORTION OF FW IN DISTINCT FOODS BY WEIGHT AND BY POINT IN VALUE CHAIN



FOOD WASTE IN production



01

"The 2023 crop year will have some of the highest waste of all time because of many factors: late frost so thinning was scaled back, but loss due to the frost was less than thought, so there ended up being an abundance. [There is a] decrease in demand for juicing apples, with many fast-food operations switching to cheap imported concentrate rather than 100% apple juice. It's not worth picking up the grounders for juicing anymore."
— Ontario producer of apples and pears

Food waste in agriculture often happens because mature crops don't meet quality standards, or market prices are too low to justify harvest costs. Sometimes farmers produce more crops than they can sell. This can happen when they're unsure of market demand or when there are unexpected changes in the market.

FARMERS FACE MANY CHALLENGES THAT CAN LEAD TO FOOD WASTE. SOME OF THE BIGGEST FACTORS INCLUDE:

PESTS AND DISEASES:
Insects, fungi and other pests can attack crops, reducing yields and quality. Climate change is making these problems worse.

WEATHER:
Extreme weather events like heatwaves, droughts and floods can damage crops and make them unsuitable for harvest.

MARKET CONDITIONS:
Farmers need to consider the price of their crops and the cost of growing them. If the price is too low, it might not be profitable to harvest the crops. In 2024, high input (fuel, fertilizer) and labour costs have reduced deliberate overproduction. Farmers now focus on aligning production with demand to cut waste.

CROP INSURANCE:
Back in 2019, the Avoidable Crisis of Food Waste report noted that some farmers didn't harvest crops due to crop insurance claims, especially for vegetables grown for processing. This issue is still being reported, but the more significant issue now is that postharvest crops don't meet retailer specifications (which, as noted earlier, typically exceed regulatory grading), often due to growing conditions.



18%

AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE THAT OCCURS DURING PRODUCTION

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Encourage farmers to harvest all crops by removing clauses in crop insurance policies that prevent the donation of edible crops.

FOOD WASTE IN processing, manufacturing and distribution



02



32%

AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE THAT OCCURS DURING PROCESSING AND MANUFACTURING

FOOD WASTE HAPPENS IN FOOD PROCESSING, MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTION DUE TO STORAGE AND INVENTORY PROBLEMS. SPECIFIC ISSUES INCLUDE:

RETAILER SPECIFICATIONS:

BBDs and expiry dates are often part of retailers' specifications called minimal life on receipt (MLOR). Different retailers have different MLORs, and if distributors can't send products before they no longer meet these requirements, the products become unsellable, leading to inventory loss and food waste.

POOR QUALITY INPUTS:

If the ingredients used in processing are of poor quality, it can affect the final product and lead to waste.

TRANSPORTATION:

Delays in shipping can cause food to spoil. This is especially true for perishable products.

COLD CHAIN ISSUES:

Problems with keeping food at the right temperature during transportation can also lead to waste.



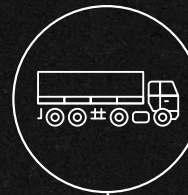
13%

AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE THAT OCCURS DURING DISTRIBUTION

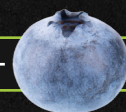
WHAT CAN WE DO?

In the last five years, many businesses have started measuring and reporting food waste. They're also taking steps to reduce it. However, with Canada still wasting nearly half of its food, there's a clear need for improved waste management practices. This could be achieved through a federal policy dedicated to monitoring and reporting food waste in the food industry.

FOOD WASTE IN retail



03



"Date codes are used to drive sales ... Consumers need to be educated that food is still safe to eat after the best before date has passed."

— Ontario food manufacturer/distributor

The main causes of food waste in retail are caused by excess inventory and BBDs. Retailers often overstock to avoid missing sales, leading to unsold items like bread and packaged foods being returned to suppliers. This adds to the waste faced by distributors and manufacturers. BBDs also contribute significantly to food waste, linking to stock problems and customer expectations.

Fresh produce, like fruits and veggies, are especially vulnerable to waste due to environmental factors and transport delays that shorten shelf life. Consumers often judge fresh produce by appearance, discarding perfectly good but slightly imperfect items. Additionally, human error due to inadequate training of store staff can lead to inefficiencies and increased waste.



13%

AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE THAT
OCCURS IN RETAIL

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Follow the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to explore the effects of eliminating BBDs on food in Canada. Also, improving staff training to reduce human error will enhance operational efficiency and help cut down on food waste.

FOOD WASTE IN hotels, restaurants and institutions (HRI)



04

"Measuring food waste has helped us reduce it because chefs are more conscious of the numbers. We have a good system of in/out; if anything gets close to the best before date it's made into something and frozen."
— BC foodservice operator

The HRI sector covers everything from cafés and fast-food restaurants to buffet services in institutions. Big corporate operations tend to run smoothly with relatively low food waste, especially in food prep, whereas smaller independent places often struggle with higher waste levels for their size. This is because they may not have the same systems in place to manage food waste. BBDs do cause some waste, but it's less of an issue here than in retail. This implies good management of items with short shelf lives. The biggest waste culprits in HRI are inventory management and forecasting.

Some HRI businesses tracking food waste focus more on waste that occurs during preparation instead of what's left on plates, possibly because it's harder to categorize plate waste. Since plate waste involves food that's already been sold, there's less motivation for operators to reduce it.



7%

**AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE THAT
OCCURS IN HRI**

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Reducing plate waste is an area HRI operators should tackle. Strategies for this include menu modification, smaller portion sizes, tracking the popularity of specific items for better inventory management, offering take-home containers, and composting (either on-site or through a partner).

FOOD WASTE AT home



05



THE ANNUAL COST OF
AVOIDABLE FOOD
WASTE IN CANADA IS

\$3,872

PER HOUSEHOLD*



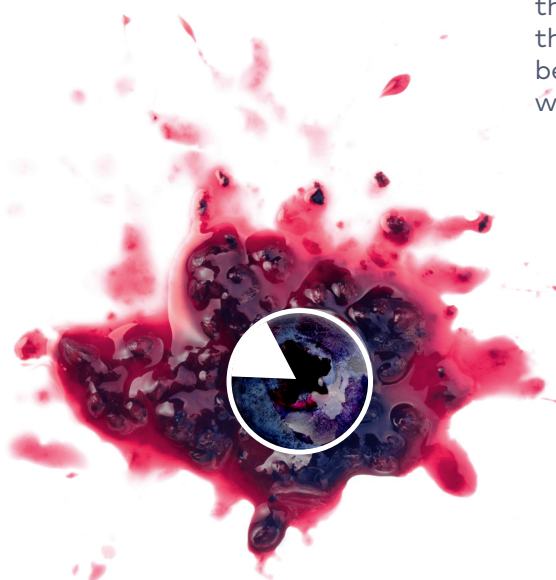
*Based on calculations using data from The Avoidable Crisis of Food Waste: Update Technical Report and Statistics Canada.

While the research for this report did not focus on household waste, it did still quantify it across the chain and found that 17% of avoidable food waste occurs at home.

A higher proportion of total and avoidable food waste is occurring upstream versus in households than five years ago. This is due to consumers being more mindful when purchasing groceries, driven by food inflation and cost-of-living concerns. People are always looking for ways to extend the shelf life of their expensive groceries and think it's important to buy the best-looking produce or items with the longest BBDs.

Helping consumers understand that "best before" does not mean "bad after" and encouraging people to purchase imperfect-looking produce through awareness and education campaigns would be beneficial for everyone. Learning to shop sustainably, purchasing only what we need, rather than over-purchasing in a bid to get a good deal, would also help limit food waste.

Change needs to occur across the food supply chain. We can all do our part in minimizing waste, especially in a time when the climate depends on humans changing their habits.

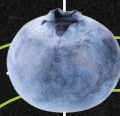
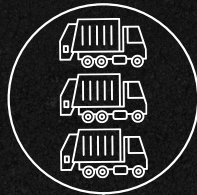


17%

AVOIDABLE FOOD WASTE THAT
OCCURS AT HOME



food rescue and redistribution



Food waste is not a material issue for non-profits helping with food charity; they make good use of what they are given. The main reasons for waste in food rescue and redistribution are poor quality food donations and BBDs.

For financial reasons, donors often hold on to perishable food until the last minute, hoping to sell it first before they donate it, which means that the food quality is not ideal by the time it reaches the non-profit that needs it. BBDs sometimes deter businesses from donating food, especially if the date has almost or passed.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Offering financial incentives, like tax breaks for donating food, could encourage businesses to donate food earlier, reducing waste and helping food rescue organizations in the process.



where does food waste go?



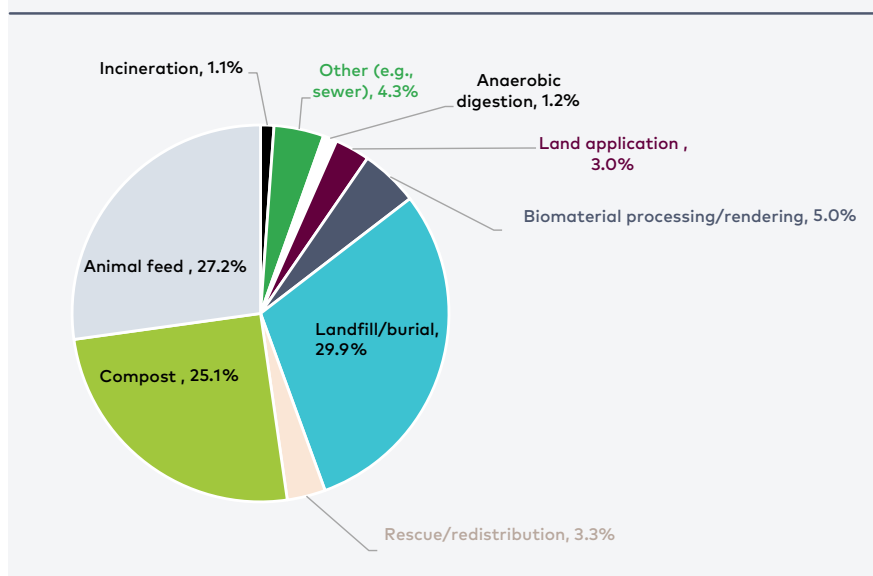
Compared to five years ago, the industry now diverts more food waste to animal feed and composting, and sends less to landfills. This shift is due to organic landfill bans and the cost benefits of using animal feed and composting.

While some avoidable food waste goes to non-profits, it's not much. Food rescue organizations receive slightly less food now than in 2019, as businesses prefer sending surplus edible food to animal feed or composting to save on disposal costs.

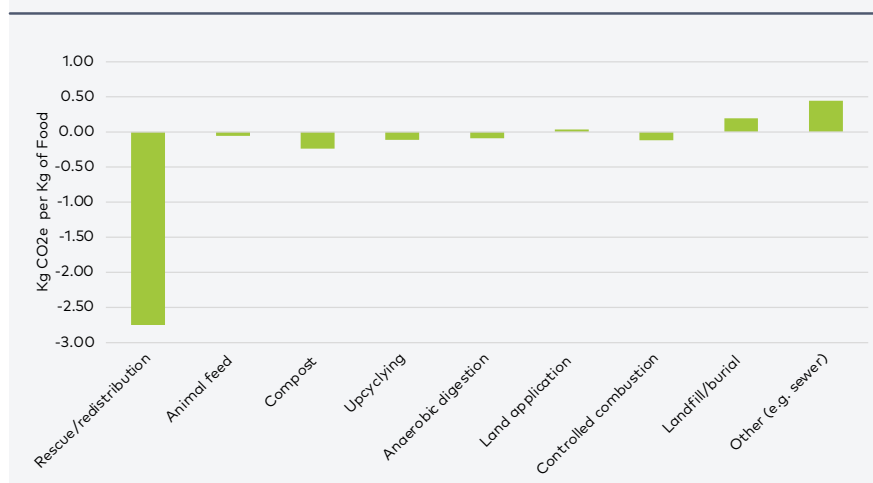
Redistribution is more complex due to food safety requirements and storage needs, which can also be more expensive — but there is no doubt that the benefit of rescuing and redistributing food far outweighs the drawbacks.

Giving surplus food to non-profits cuts food-related greenhouse gases 12 times more effectively than composting and 30 times more than upcycling.

COMPARATIVE VOLUME OF FW BY DESTINATION



GHG EFFECT BY DESTINATION



how we can eliminate food waste

The following recommendations aim to provide practical solutions for reducing food waste, from setting measurable goals and rethinking BBDs, to boosting food donation efforts.

1. MODIFY DATE CODING PRACTICES:

There is a direct link between BBDs and avoidable food waste. However, extending BBDs to signal a longer shelf life won't necessarily lead to significantly less waste. The issue is more complex. Here are suggestions that will work better:

REVISE REGULATIONS:

Update and enforce date coding rules, such as limiting which products get a date code. For example, consider removing BBDs on foods with a shelf life of 90 days or more.

STANDARDIZE FORMATS:

All food should have a consistent BBD format to avoid confusion.

EDUCATE CONSUMERS:

Teach people what BBDs really mean to reduce unnecessary waste from misunderstandings.

CHANGE THE LANGUAGE:

If nothing else, replace "Best Before" to better reflect the intent of BBDs, using "Best Enjoyed By" or "Manufactured On" instead.

USE TWO DATES:

One for food quality or taste and one for food safety, with the safety date highlighted to help consumers better understand.



2. SET TARGETS, MANDATE MEASUREMENTS AND TRACK PROGRESS:

Since 2019, more businesses have adopted food waste measurement and reduction programs. Yet more can be done to help businesses further reduce their food waste:

MAKE IT SIMPLE TO TRACK WASTE:

Develop standard, easy-to-use tools to measure and report food waste. These tools should blend seamlessly into existing management systems.

RAISE AWARENESS:

Educating businesses about the financial and ethical benefits of reducing food waste is key. Training staff, especially managers and executives, will support the rollout of effective waste reduction strategies.

DEVELOP A NATIONAL STANDARD OF FOOD WASTE TERMS AND DEFINITIONS:

Creating clear definitions will help with benchmarking and measuring success. This clarity will foster industry-wide improvements.



3. ENCOURAGE BUSINESSES TO DONATE SURPLUS FOOD:

Businesses are donating less surplus edible food than five years ago, mainly for economic reasons. It's easier and cheaper to send food waste to animal feed or composting, where they can earn money or save on disposal fees. Additionally, concerns about food safety, and potential legal or reputational risks, make businesses more cautious about donating food.

Donating surplus edible food to food rescue organizations is not only morally right, it's also better for the environment. Distributing food to people in need reduces food-related greenhouse gases 12 times more than composting and 30 times more than upcycling.

DRIVE MORE DONATIONS:

Develop tax incentives like the ones in the U.S. to motivate businesses to donate surplus edible food.

UPCYCLE FOODS:

Transform products that aren't ready for direct donation into suitable foods for charities.





appendix

In 2024, food waste is still a huge issue in Canada because while things have improved in certain areas, they've remained the same or become worse in others. While our recommendations aim to provide practical steps for reducing food waste within the industry as a whole, the food system is complex.

One step we can take to reduce the amount of food being wasted, and simultaneously improve the environmental impact of food waste, is to encourage more donation of surplus edible food to rescue and food charity organizations.

Second Harvest knows that businesses are eager to donate surplus food if there's an easy and safe way to connect with local social service programs. To facilitate this, we've created the Second Harvest Food Rescue App, an online platform that links food donors with non-profits across Canada.

HOW THE SECOND HARVEST FOOD RESCUE APP WORKS:

- Food businesses and non-profits register as rescuing partners and agree to follow food safety guidelines set by health authorities.
- When businesses have surplus food, they post it as a donation on the app, specifying the type and amount, and providing a pick-up window.
- Non-profits receive notifications and can claim donations to pick up.
- Donors can also set up recurring donations with pre-scheduled pickups.

BENEFITS FOR NON-PROFITS WITH FOOD PROGRAMS:

- Increased access to fresh, nutritious food
- Local community connections and awareness
- Positive environmental impacts
- Access to safe food handling resources

BENEFITS FOR FOOD BUSINESSES:

- Analytics and detailed reporting, including calculators showing food rescued in pounds and GHGs averted as a result
- Reduced waste disposal fees
- Alignment with public expectations to not waste safe food
- No special insurance needed under the Ontario Donations of Food Act

For more details on food rescue in your community, email us at contactus@foodrescue.ca or register for the Second Harvest Food Rescue App directly at foodrescue.secondharvest.ca/registration.



SECOND HARVEST

120 The East Mall, Etobicoke, ON M8Z 5V5

SecondHarvest.ca

Charitable Registration # 13386 5477 RR0001



VALUE CHAIN MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL INC.

1155 North Service Rd. West, Suite 11, Oakville, ON, L6M 3E3

VCM-International.com