Food Waste by Sector: Retail

Food waste happens across the entire food system—this is a snapshot of food waste in the retail sector. All estimates come from ReFED and are based on 2024 data *(the most recent available)*. For more facts and figures, visit the ReFED Insights Engine.

1   **70.7 million tons of surplus food* were generated across the entire food system in 2024.**

2   **In the retail sector, 4.63 million tons of surplus food were generated, accounting for 6.5% of the total.**
- Of that amount, 2.7 million tons became food waste.
- 51.6% of food wasted in the retail sector—1.39 million tons—went to landfill.

3   **Surplus food from retail accounts for 15.1 million metric tons of CO_2e released into the atmosphere per year.**
- That's equivalent to CO_2e emissions from 3.5 million cars.
- Methane emissions—which are more potent than other greenhouse gas emissions—generated from the retail sector equal 170,000 MT per year.

4   **Surplus food from retail was valued at $30.3 billion dollars in 2024.**
- That's equivalent to 3% of food & beverage retail sales.
- Food sent to landfill has the highest valuation at $8.98 billion.

5   **The water required to produce the food lost at the retail stage equaled 1.12 trillion gallons in 2024.**
- That's equivalent to nearly 200 showers per person in the U.S.

6   **The equivalent of 6.22 billion meals went unsold or uneaten as a result of surplus food in the retail sector in 2024.**
- The top three food types that go to waste are:
  - *Produce*: 921,000 tons
  - *Dairy & Eggs*: 339,000 tons
  - *Breads & Bakery*: 318,000 tons

To see solutions for retailers, visit ReFED's Solutions Database. To learn more about reducing retail food waste, visit the Retailer Recommendations page on the ReFED website.

*Surplus food is all food that goes unsold or unused by a business or that goes uneaten at home or restaurants—including food and inedible parts that are donated, fed to livestock animals, repurposed to produce other products, or go to any of the destinations represented in food waste.