ReFED

Progress on the Plate:

2026 ReFED U.S. Food Waste Report

Table of Contents

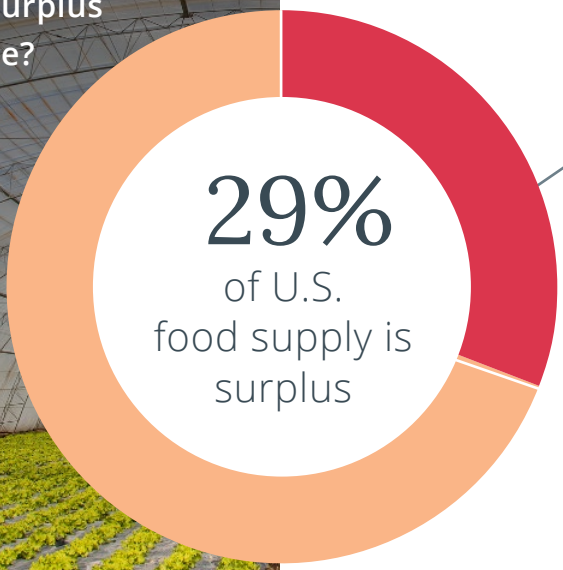
Key Statistics & Insights

As affordability and food prices remain top of mind for Americans, a harsh reality remains true: in the United States, **nearly one third of all food is lost or wasted as it makes its way from farm to fork.** Yet as you will see throughout this report, **progress is not only possible—it's happening.** This report represents a landscape assessment, pulling together ReFED data analysis and modeling with external research, supported by narratives developed through our work with partners across the food waste ecosystem. It is intended to help the food system understand the issue and what can be done to solve it.

2.2% reduction

in total surplus food from 2023 to 2024. Equal to a 3.7% reduction per capita.

How Much Surplus Food Is There?



70M Total tons of surplus food generated in 2024

$380B Value of surplus food generated in 2024

412 Pounds of surplus food per capita

KEY DEFINITIONS

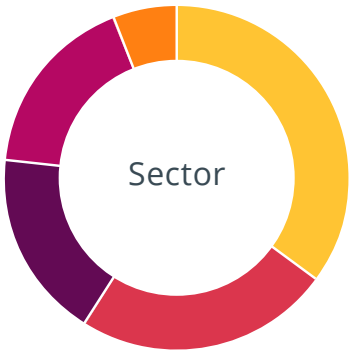
Surplus Food: All food that goes unsold or unused by a business or that goes uneaten at home or restaurants—including food and inedible parts that are donated, fed to livestock animals, repurposed to produce other products, or go to any of the destinations represented in food waste.

Food Waste: Uneaten food and inedible parts (e.g., peels, pits, bones) going to the following eight waste destinations: composting, anaerobic digestion, landfill, combustion, sewer, dumping, spread onto land, or not harvested.*

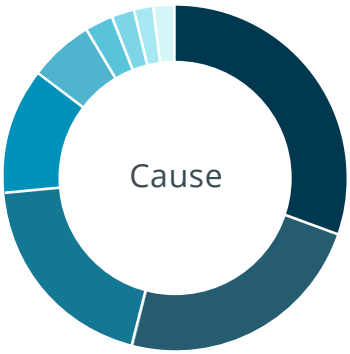
*Note: While some waste destinations recycle food scraps and are more preferred than others, they are all considered "waste" under the U.S. goal to halve food waste by 2030, or "loss and waste" under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12.3.

Unless otherwise indicated, data and estimates referenced are based on ReFED modeling.

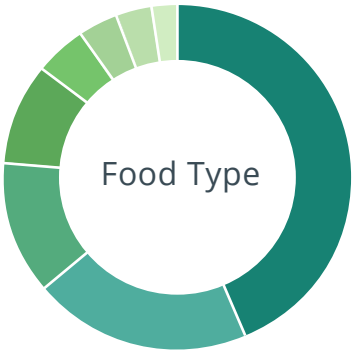
Where Does Surplus Food Come From?



- Residential - 33.5%
- Farm - 24.2%
- Manufacturing - 18.8%
- Foodservice - 17.9%
- Retail - 5.7%



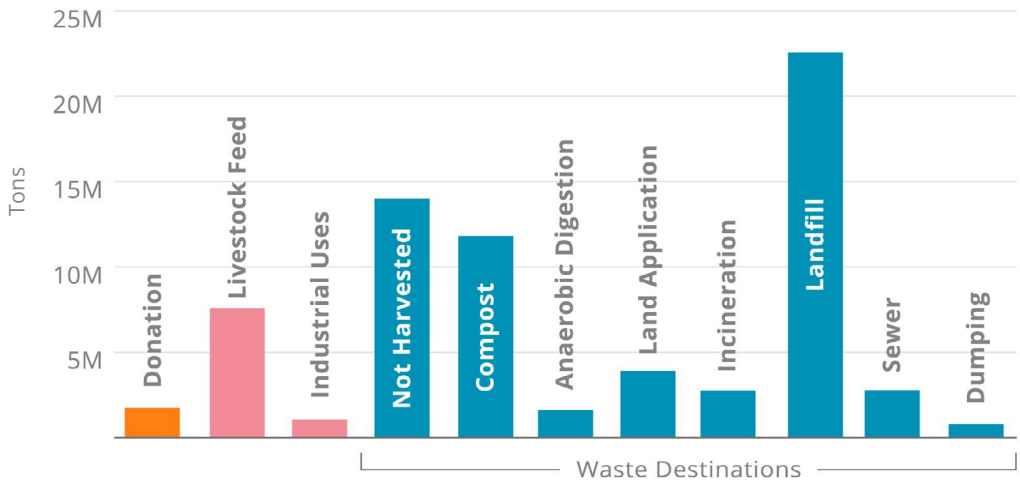
- Trimmings & Byproducts - 30.4%
- Excess - 23.7%
- Not Harvested - 19.9%
- Spoiled - 12.9%
- Date Label Concerns - 5%
- Food Safety - 2.3%
- Buyer Rejections - 2.2%
- Other -1.9%
- Mistakes & Malfunctions - 1.7%



- Produce - 45.4%
- Prepared Foods - 19.9%
- Dairy & Eggs - 12.7%
- Dry Goods - 9.8%
- Fresh Meat & Seafood - 5.2%
- Ready-To-Drink Beverages - 3.5%
- Breads & Bakery - 2.2%
- Frozen - 1.3%

46% of surplus food is generated by consumers in and out of the home.

Where Does Surplus Food End Up?



2.5%
Is donated

11%
Goes to livestock feed

85%
Goes to waste destinations

ReFED estimates using 2024 data.

Annual impacts include:

24%

Amount of landfilled material that is food (EPA Estimate)

7+ showers

worth of water use per day for every person in the U.S.

114B

Lost meals—enough to feed nearly 1/3 of the U.S. for a year

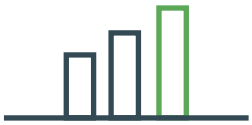
ReFED has modeled 47 solutions and found that their full implementation could achieve:

20M

Tons of waste reduced annually

51K

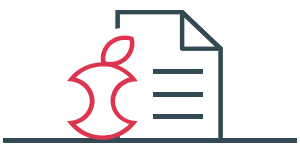
Jobs created over 10 years



$62B

Net financial benefit annually

State food waste policies in 2025:



12

Food waste diversion policies in effect

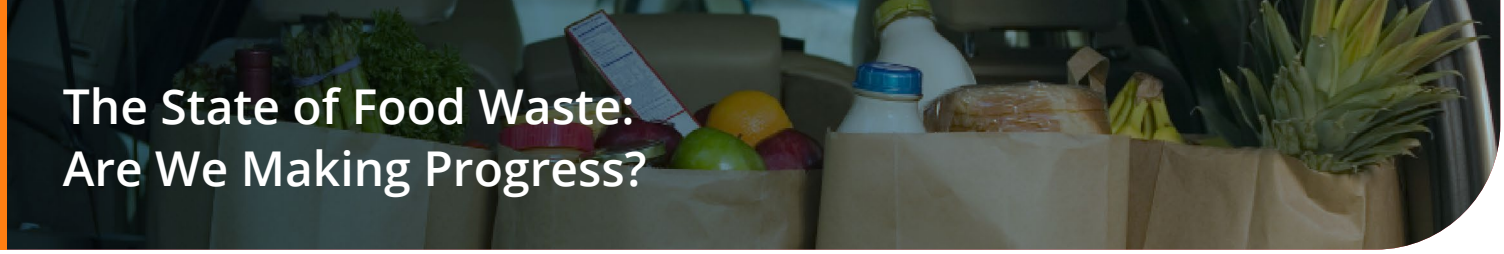
24

Bills passed in 2025

110

Bills introduced in 2025

ReFED estimates using 2024 data.



The State of Food Waste: Are We Making Progress?

1.57M

Tons of surplus food reduced from 2023 to 2024

844K

Cars' worth of GHG emissions avoided

This past year, the often "invisible" problem of food waste became much more visible. With persistent food insecurity, shrinking federal food assistance programs, and significantly elevated grocery prices stressing consumers and challenging food businesses, a wide range of external factors set the stage for food waste action. And for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, we're seeing this translate into meaningful reductions in food waste from year-to-year. In 2024, the latest year for which we have available data, ReFED's modeling and analysis shows that **total surplus food was 70 million total tons, about 29% of the U.S. food supply. This is a 2.2% reduction in total surplus food from 2023, or a 3.7% decrease per capita, led by a nearly 950,000 ton reduction in residential food waste.**

We're not only seeing progress in homes. The last year saw bright spots abound, including:

- **Businesses across the supply chain are committing to food waste action like never before.** The U.S. Food Waste Pact, a joint initiative led by ReFED and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to help food businesses achieve their waste reduction targets, doubled its signatories to 30, including the first trade association, food distributor, and hospitality members. Significant milestones include Sodexo surpassing its 2025 food waste reduction target with a 52% decrease in food waste at a majority of its US-based sites.*

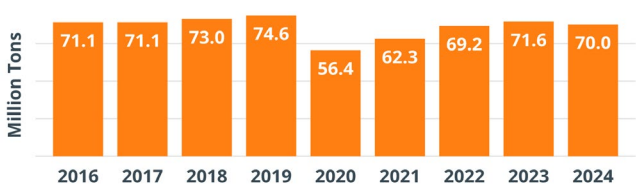
  * 82% of its U.S.-based sites (based on raw material cost).

- **Momentum behind food waste policy is building in state houses across the country, and in Washington D.C.** Maine became the 12th state in the country to implement a food waste diversion policy, while Massachusetts published an economic impact report (ICF, 2025) that showed its food waste diversion regulation has resulted in the creation of more than 1,670 jobs and $194 million in economic value. And for the first time, the federal Food Date Labeling Act received bipartisan support in the Senate with the backing of Senator Rick Scott (R-FL). The bill has been bipartisan in the House for several years. What's more, we're seeing promising signs of support for food waste reduction by the Trump administration, including the recently announced Feed It Onward initiative from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

- **Private funding to U.S. food waste solutions increased for the first time in four years.** Private sector funding rose 16% in 2025, while a modest decline in federal funding—driven in part by Inflation Reduction Act grant cancellations—partially offset these gains. Overall, funding grew 6% from 2024, representing a meaningful stabilization for the sector. This shift signals that private and philanthropic capital providers increasingly recognize food waste solutions as opportunities to achieve both financial returns and impact.

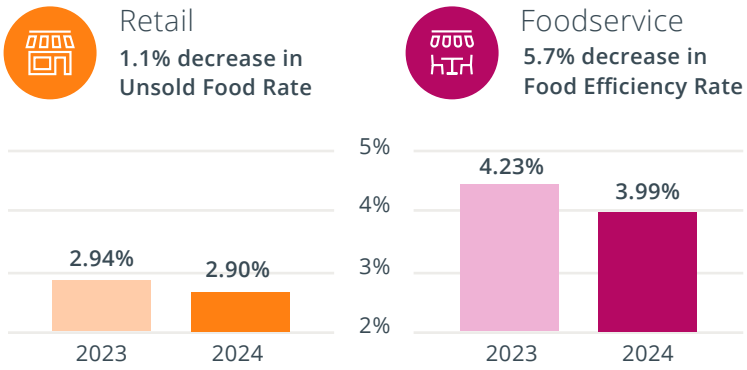
- **Health and economic trends are driving consumer behaviors that are favorable for food waste reduction.** Research from ReFED and Datassential (2025) found that 75% of GLP-1 users are more likely to visit restaurants that offer customizable portions—a solution that can reduce plate waste, the largest driver of food waste in restaurants. And a recent ReFED and YouGov survey (2026) found that, to cope with high food prices, Americans are adopting better food management practices that also lead to less waste, such as meal planning and cooking what still needs to be used up in their kitchens.

Surplus Food Generation in the U.S. Over Time

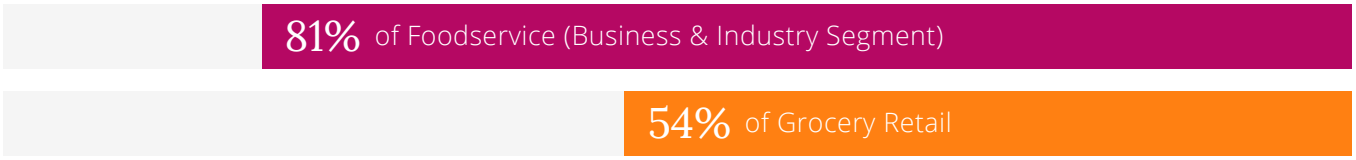


Decreases in both overall average unsold food rate and food efficiency rate (FER):

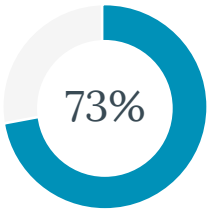
2024 data from the retail and foodservice signatories of the U.S. Food Pact—an industry collaboration led by ReFED and World Wildlife Fund—showed decreases in the rate of surplus food for both sectors. In retail, there was a 1.1% decrease in the Unsold Food Rate between 2023 and 2024. The Business & Industry subsector of foodservice had a decrease of 5.7% in the Food Efficiency Rate in the same timeframe, saving the foodservice sector an estimated $15.9M on the wholesale cost of surplus food.



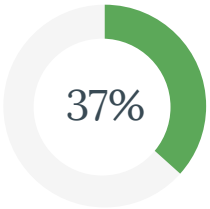
Percent of market share represented by signatories of the U.S. Food Waste Pact:



Across 75 companies analyzed in the retail, foodservice, manufacturing, and quick-service restaurant sectors in our U.S. Food Waste Commitment Landscape*:



Reference food waste as a distinct issue in their public reporting



Disclose a measurable target, either diversion-based or a quantitative food waste reduction

The groundwork has been laid, and a range of tailwinds are making now the most opportune time to act on food waste.

Due to high food prices, supply chain disruptions, and other concerns, more consumers and food businesses are recognizing the problem of food waste than ever before, and solving it continues to appeal to people across the political and cultural spectrum, breaking down potential barriers to progress. As we emphasize throughout this report, now is the time to maintain the momentum and accelerate toward a future free of food waste. **Progress isn't always linear, and we've reached an inflection point where the foundation has been built and enough solutions are scalable to address food waste.**

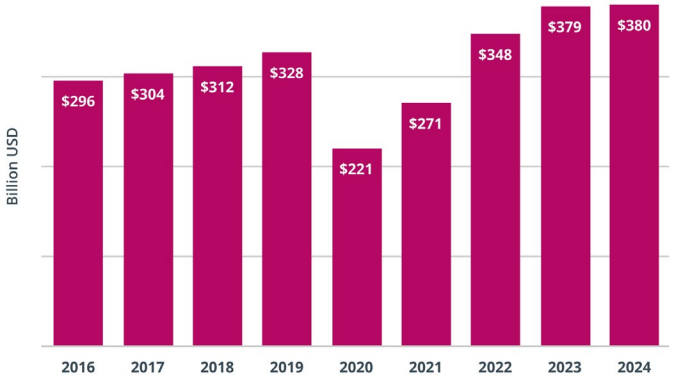
*Note: From Knott and Ly (2026).

The Impacts of Food Waste: Financial, Food Insecurity, Climate and Natural Resources

Financial

In September 2025, the Bureau of Labor Statistics shared that the price of groceries was up 29% since February 2020 (Horsley, 2025). That strain is being felt throughout the food supply chain. Whether it's tariffs, labor shortages, or rapid inflation, the cost of food remained high in 2025, which means the cost of wasting it did too. The total value of surplus food in 2024 reached $380 billion, of which 85%, or $325 billion, was considered food waste. While the financial cost of uneaten food is greatest for consumers—who spend more than $762 (in and out of the home) per person every year on food that goes to waste—surplus food within all food industry sectors was worth $122 billion (excluding plate waste).

Value of Surplus Food Over Time

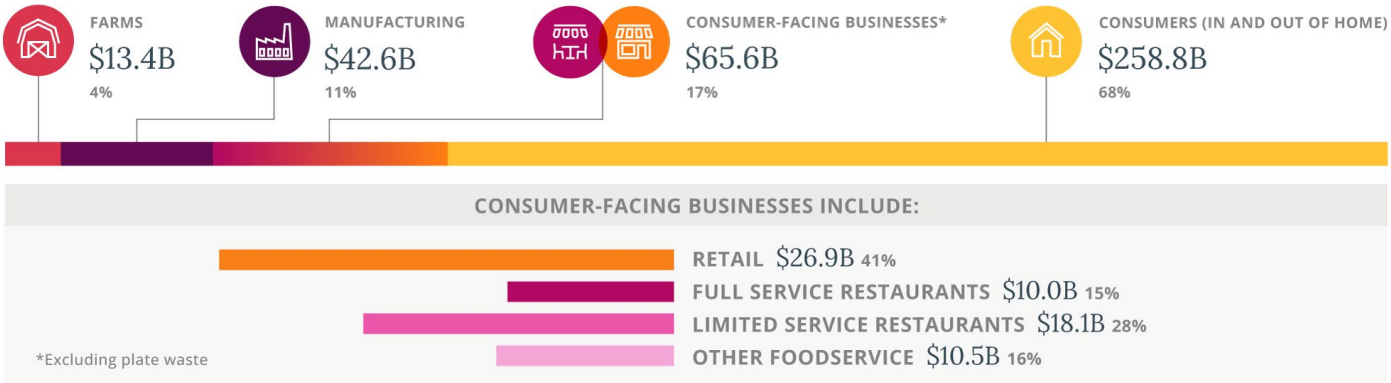


$380B Total value of surplus food

1.3% Total value as % of U.S. GDP

$1,120 Per capita value of surplus food

Value of Surplus Food Across Sectors in 2024



$122B Total lost value of surplus food (excluding plate waste) for food producers and businesses in 2024

$762 Average annual consumer spend on surplus food (in and out of the home) in 2024

Food Insecurity and Donation

Nearly one in seven American households experienced food insecurity in 2024, according to the U.S.Department of Agriculture (Rabbitt et al., 2025).

About 1.7 million tons of food was donated through the charitable food system in 2024, representing a slight increase from the previous year. At the same time, just under 13% of the food that could be donated actually was, indicating a massive opportunity to increase food donations from food businesses.

48M Americans facing food insecurity in 2024

1.7M Tons of surplus food donated in 2024

13% Donatable surplus food that's actually donated

Emissions from surplus food in 2024 were equivalent to **51M** cars driven for a year.

Climate and Natural Resources

Despite a decrease in total surplus food, the production, distribution, storage, preparation, and ultimate disposal of unsold or uneaten food still amount to 3.5% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions—the equivalent to driving 51 million gas-powered vehicles for a full year. What's more, the social cost of greenhouse gas emissions—an economic estimate that captures the tangible damages to human health, property, and agriculture that result from climate change—due to surplus food was nearly $60 billion in 2024.

When it comes to methane, the potent greenhouse gas that represents an opportunity to make an immediate impact on the effects of climate change, surplus food accounts for 2.6 million metric tons of methane gas in 2024.

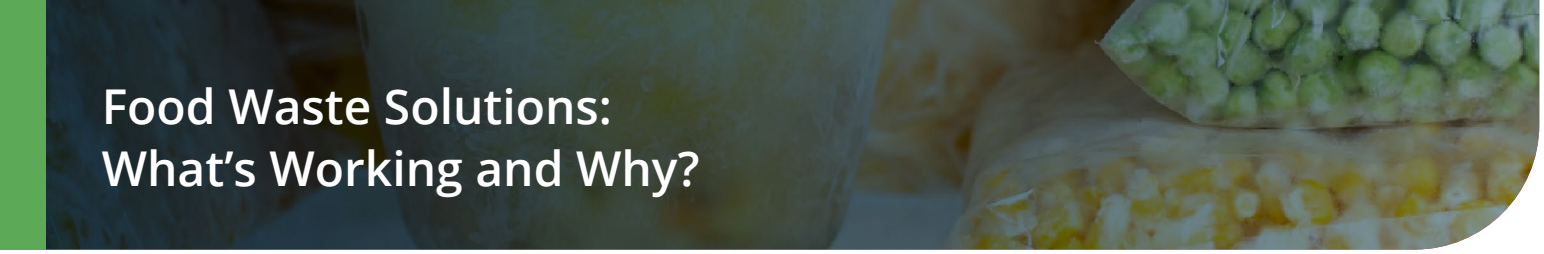
Food is estimated to be the number one input to landfills at 24%, which is where a significant portion of annual methane emissions are generated (EPA, 2023). Reducing food waste presents an opportunity to significantly reduce the country's methane emissions and preserve rapidly diminishing landfill capacity.

When food goes to waste, so do all the resources required to produce it. This includes water, land and healthy soils, fertilizers, pesticides, and more. If all surplus food in the U.S. were grown in one place, this "mega-farm" would cover 140 million acres—an area the size of California and New York combined (EPA, 2021).

219M Total GHG emissions in MTCO2e from surplus food in 2024

9% U.S. methane emissions generated from surplus food in 2024

16T Total gallons of water required to grow surplus food in 2024



Food Waste Solutions: What's Working and Why?

Food waste is a systemwide problem, requiring multiple solutions to address it throughout the supply chain. Preventing food from going to waste creates the most environmental benefits because it keeps all of the resources that went into producing, processing, distributing, and preparing that food from going to waste—therefore prevention should be prioritized whenever possible.

When we look at ReFED's modeling, the top solutions to address food waste by tons diverted are recycling strategies, particularly centralized facilities that can accept a large volume of material. In terms of net financial benefit, consumer behavior change campaigns, foodservice portion sizes, and donation education campaigns rise to the top.

TOP SOLUTIONS	Tons Diverted	Net Financial Benefit	Total Emissions Reduced (CO_2e)
	1. Centralized Composting	1. Consumer Education Campaigns	1. Portion Sizes
	2. Livestock Feed	2. Portion Sizes	2. Manufacturing Line Optimization
	3. Centralized Anaerobic Digestion	3. Donation Education	3. Centralized Composting
	4. Co-Digestion at Wastewater Treatment	4. Meal Kits	4. Consumer Behavior Change Campaigns
	5. Manufacturing Line Optimization	5. Waste Tracking (Foodservice)	5. Manufacturing Byproduct Utilization (Upcycling)

To see ReFED's modeling and analysis of 47 different food waste solutions, visit the Insights Engine.

Taking into consideration what makes those solution areas impactful and applying it to what we're seeing in the field, here's what we think has the foundation and potential to make a big impact in the months to come:

- **Plug-and-play solutions that can process multiple waste streams or service multiple pathways of the EPA's Wasted Food Scale.** Ease and streamlining will be the name of the game in 2026. Solutions that can seamlessly integrate with existing operations and help prevent, recover, and/or recycle food waste will gain significant traction among waste generators.

  One particular area we're watching is the continued evolution of upcycling. Upcycling models are evolving beyond single-product solutions toward platform-like technologies that convert diverse byproducts into standardized industrial inputs. This approach can improve scalability, because there is access to multiple end markets and less demand concentration risk. The unit economics can be further strengthened through co-location with large food processors, which lowers transportation and handling costs, improves feedstock consistency, and reduces operational volatility.

- **AI-enhanced demand-planning solutions to improve inventory management and operational efficiency.** Artificial intelligence will continue to dominate the food waste conversation. One area that will continue to be particularly important is real-time demand planning for improved and accurate inventory management, a category that raised over $30 million in private funding in 2025. Helping businesses understand how to right-size their orders, manage current inventory, and constantly improve operational performance will prove valuable in a time of supply chain pressures like tariffs and high operating costs.

  The use of AI tools is growing among retailers, foodservice operators, and manufacturers, especially larger companies, though adoption remains uneven across the sector. Newer solutions in this category are being deployed alongside cameras, sensors, scanners, and other new hardware including wearables to identify operational bottlenecks, generate real-time insights, and reduce overproduction. This integrated approach will be a key driver of the next wave of traction.

Solutions that remove barriers and make it cost-effective to divert organic waste.
As landfill capacity continues to decline in regions across the country, more states will look to food waste diversion policies to extend the life of landfills and divert safe, edible food to those in need. And solutions that make it easy and cost-effective to manage organic waste streams will play a key role in helping businesses get ahead of new regulations. This includes depackaging solutions, which are seeing increased adoption but can come with their own set of risks, such as contamination from PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) or microplastics.

Dehydrators are another solution area gaining traction because they can serve as a pre-processing step for composters and other downstream solution providers by reducing volume and stabilizing material, as well as reducing contamination. Dehydrator companies are scaling by partnering with haulers and municipalities to increase household participation in organics diversion programs, as well as expanding into commercial settings.

Across this category as a whole, over $270 million of private and government capital was deployed in 2025 to solutions that enable easier recyclingand increased access to organics diversion.

Overall, the food waste solutions that *solve pressing problems* for their customers, *integrate seamlessly* into operations, and *demonstrate measurable value* will be successful in 2026.

Capital Supporting Food Waste Solutions

Private funding to U.S. food waste solutions increased for the first time in four years in 2025, driving total sector funding (federal and private) up 6% from $745M to $794M. This recovery is consistent across Climate Tech and AgTech, which underwent a prolonged correction due to disenchantment with the sectors and a challenging macroeconomic environment.

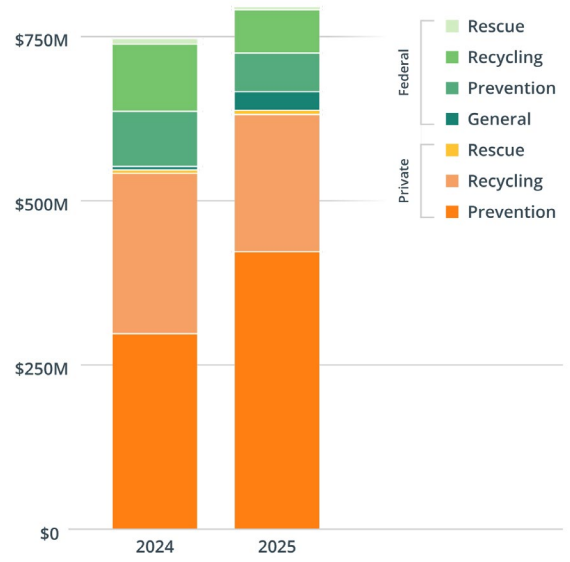
Three trends are shaping where private capital is flowing and influencing solution provider development:

1. Exit activity is beginning to emerge.
2. AI-powered supply chain platforms are scaling as their ROI becomes clear.
3. Private equity and corporate acquirers are consolidating both software platforms and organics infrastructure across North America.

Gains in private funding were partially offset by a decline in federal funding, driven in part by Inflation Reduction Act grant cancellations. Federal dollars remained consequential in supporting organics collection infrastructure, broad food waste initiatives (combining organics diversion, food rescue, and prevention), and continued research.

Philanthropic funding remains a consistent presence in the sector, directed primarily toward nonprofits engaged in food rescue, as well as field-building organizations that supportsector development, such as WWF, ReFED, and World Resources Institute (WRI).

Investment in U.S. Food Waste Solutions:



Private and federal funding data are sourced from PitchBook (2025) and the U.S. Department of the Treasury (2026), as of December 31, 2025. Due to a two-year disclosure lag, philanthropic figures for 2024 and 2025 are excluded from totals. Estimated philanthropic grants, calculated as grants above $250,000 from Candid (2025), are at least $59M and $10M for 2024 and 2025, respectively, and will increase as more grants are disclosed.

Unlocking Action: A Deep Dive Into Factors Influencing Food Waste Progress

High Food Prices, Consumer Behavior Change, and Residential Food Waste Reduction

In 2024, household food waste declined by about 950,000 tons. While people bought the same amount of food year-over-year, the decline is due to consumers better managing their food, likely because of the need to adapt to a sustained period of high food prices. Here's what to know:

4% decrease

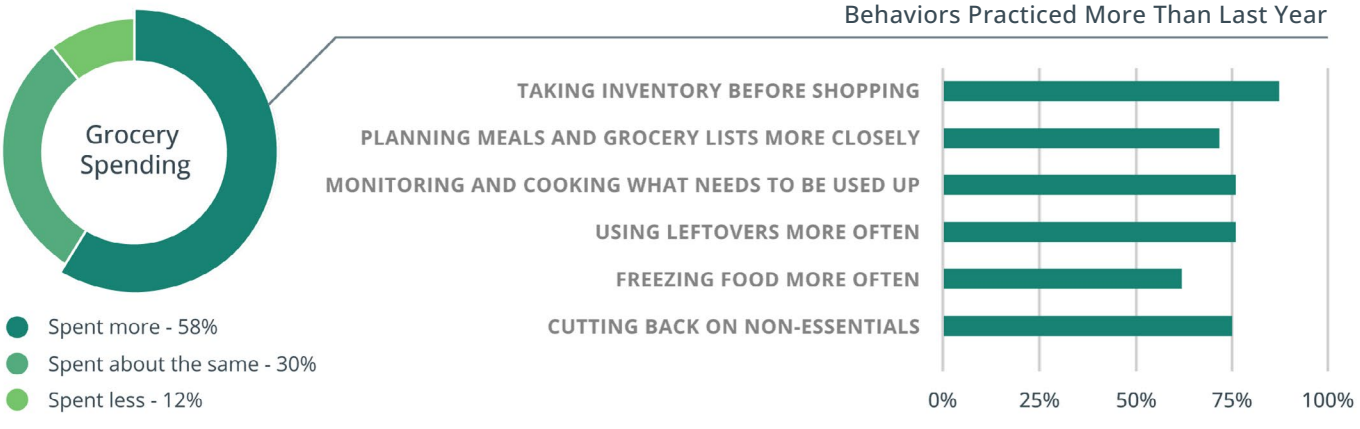
in household surplus food from 2023 to 2024. Equal to a 5% reduction per capita.

- **Reductions are driven by specific food categories, and the harder-to-manage items continue to be wasted.** Households are adapting to a prolonged period of elevated food prices by becoming more deliberate with foods they already know how to properly manage, especially visible, everyday items like milk and some prepared foods. This translated to a reduction in the waste of these items. Meanwhile, foods that are harder to manage like fresh fruit did not see the same reductions.

- **Consumers report that they are changing their behavior, particularly as it relates to grocery shopping, meal planning, and food management.** According to a January 2026 survey by ReFED and YouGov, consumers report changing their behavior in response to higher grocery costs. Among the 58% who say they are spending more on groceries compared to last year, 87% report checking what they have at home before shopping, 72% say they are planning meals or grocery lists more closely, and 76% are monitoring what needs to be used before it goes bad. In addition, 76% report eating leftovers more often, and 62% are using their freezer more frequently, while 75% say they are cutting back on non-essentials at the grocery store as a result of current prices.

- **There's a role for solution providers to help sustain these behaviors.** ReFED's analysis of the 2024 data suggest that households reduced waste most effectively where food was easy to see and manage. Therefore, solutions that improve inventory visibility, such as refrigerator monitoring tools, as well as tools that help people easily use up food that is on hand, such as "eat me first" labels or clear, portion-size food containers for storage and freezing, present opportunities to sustain and increase these behaviors.

Grocery Spending Compared to Last Year and Reported Behavior Change



The Future of the Federal Food Date Labeling Act

Momentum is building for the federal bipartisan Food Date Labeling Act (FDLA), which was reintroduced this Congress. The proposed law could address the $19.2 billion that consumers and businesses waste annually due to confusion over food date labels—all the more important at a time when affordability and food costs are top-of-mind. Between far-reaching industry support, buy-in across many parts of government, and the impending implementation of California's date labeling legislation this year, the path to becoming law is much clearer, but continued pressure is needed to get it passed and signed into law. If FDLA is enacted, it has the potential to make a dent in the more than 3.5 million tons of food that is discarded each year because of consumer confusion over food date labels (ReFED, 2026). Here's what to know:

- **Major food businesses are publicly supporting the FDLA.** Earlier this year, the Zero Food Waste Coalition released an industry support letter calling on Congress to pass the Food Date Labeling Act. The letter was signed by industry leaders including Walmart and Amazon, as well as major trade associations such as the Consumer Brands Association and FMI, The Food Industry Association.

- **The support cuts across the political spectrum.** In May 2025, the America First Policy Institute, a think tank aligned with the Trump administration that was led by now-Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins, released a nutrition policy brief listing date label standardization as a key policy to reduce food waste. The fifth introduction of the bill also saw the first Republican Senator join as a co-sponsor, after multiple years of bipartisan support in the House.

- **The potential cost savings are huge for consumers and retailers.** At a time when affordability and high food costs are top-of-mind for consumers and retailers alike, ReFED continues to hear more support than ever for the FDLA. We estimate that consumers stand to save at least $1.3 billion annually through standardizing date labels (ReFED, n.d.). For retailers, standardizing date labels would help them save $253 million through better inventory management, including more clarity around what foods can be donated (ReFED, n.d.).

The Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Food Waste

Artificial intelligence (AI) is being applied across the food system in ways that aim to improve efficiency, including reducing food waste. But based on recent interviews with over 35 experts completed for a forthcoming ReFED report on the intersection of AI and food waste, its adoption across different parts of the food value chain—and its potential impact on food waste reduction—are constrained far more by siloed data, institutional resistance, and human behavior than by technical capability. Here's what to know:

- **The biggest impact from the use of AI tools on food waste today is largely quiet and unseen.** AI's most proven impact on food waste today is still concentrated in operational applications, particularly those built on established technologies such as computer vision, machine learning, and predictive analytics to support waste measurement, forecasting, and day-to-day decision support. A key area of traction is in foodservice, where AI-enabled systems track food waste and provide guidance in professional kitchens through tight feedback loops. Similar approaches are also taking hold in parts of retail and manufacturing, where AI improves ordering, forecasting, and yield, as well as on farms, where it is being deployed to monitor crop health, estimate yield, and detect disease or stress earlier in the growing cycle, preventing crop waste before it occurs. To date, applications aimed at helping households reduce food waste, the largest contributor to the problem, remain in their early stages and largely focus on improving waste visibility and encouraging behavior change.

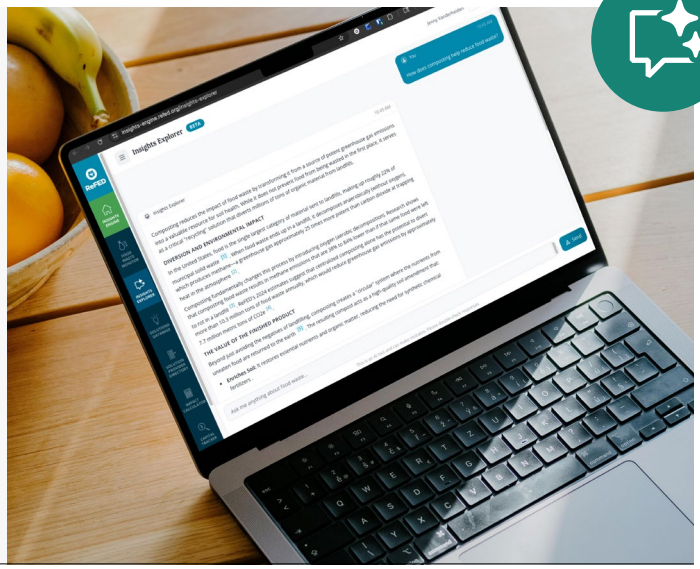
- **AI is starting to shift from a reporting tool to a prevention tool.** The use of AI tools in food waste reduction is gradually moving from measuring waste toward helping prevent it. Early applications focused on tracking and analyzing waste, and now, newer tools are beginning to support earlier decisions (such as forecasting demand or adjusting production) that can prevent waste from occurring in the first place. However, progress appears to depend less on the technical capabilities of AI and more on whether organizations have the data, incentives, and authority to act on these insights. Where those conditions exist, AI tools are starting to influence operational decisions, but where they do not, AI often remains a diagnostic tool.

- **The emerging AI approaches have yet to demonstrate impact in food waste reduction.** Much of the excitement surrounding newer AI approaches, such as large language models and generative AI, has yet to result in sizable reductions in wasted food. While academic studies and experimental models suggest significant potential benefits if these tools can be operationalized, most evidence to date reflects simulations, prototypes, or controlled trials rather than validated, large-scale deployments.

New Tool:

Insights Explorer

ReFED is excited to announce the launch of the Insights Explorer, a new, AI-powered research assistant housed in the Insights Engine that provides instant access to the most up-to-date data from ReFED and a range of other sources, plus actionable insights and expert analysis to help you stop food waste. Now in its beta version, the research assistant will continue to improve as more people use it—start exploring today.



Roadblocks to Overcome

While enough solutions are viable and ready to scale—making the potential for great leaps in food waste reduction real—there are still perennial challenges that must be overcome to unlock meaningful progress. Here's what to know:

- **For food businesses, food waste reduction still starts with data, ownership, and buy-in.** Whether it's breaking down data silos to quantify where waste occurs, assigning accountability for reduction across functions that rarely share it, or building the internal case that food waste reduction delivers financial and environmental returns, these are the operational fundamentals of food waste reduction—and where every company starts. More companies are engaging in this work than when ReFED released our original 2016 *Roadmap*. Each faces the same core challenge: moving from commitment to solution adoption at scale. The companies making the fastest progress have stronger foundations in data, cross-functional coordination, and executive commitment, and those capabilities determine how quickly a company can adopt, implement, and sustain the solutions that actually reduce waste.

- **Educating and empowering consumers to waste less food.** Because consumers account for nearly 50% of food waste between their homes and restaurant dining, they play an integral role in solving food waste. But getting consumers to actually change their food habits and behaviors is challenging and typically requires an investment of time and money. In addition, food waste is often invisible—a little scrap here, a peel there—so individuals don't actually understand the enormity of the problem or what they can do about it. This consumer conundrum must be overcome to achieve significant reductions in food waste. Fortunately, our latest surplus food estimates show that this is possible.

- **Overcoming the perception of misaligned incentives.** Why would a low-margin food business invest significant capital in initiatives that don't contribute to revenue growth? If an employee is incentivized to keep shelves or a display case stocked until close, why would they care about potential waste? These questions are common, and they often reflect a data gap rather than a true misalignment. When food waste costs are invisible in operational and financial reporting, reduction looks like an expense with unclear returns. Companies that invest in quantifying waste consistently find that the incentives already favor reduction.

  Still, creative problem-solving can strengthen the business case further. Food waste diversion policies can create opportunities for capturing value from diverted food waste, such as through compost, energy, or animal feed, keeping food out of landfills. Figuring out when consumers or supply chain partners are willing to pay for an improved experience, such as longer shelf life, could be another path forward. And evaluating less obvious benefits—such as gaining repeat customers or consumers reinvesting savings into more premium food purchases—will be important for building broader buy-in.

Looking Ahead: 2026 Outlook

The 2.2% reduction in total surplus food from 2023 to 2024 marks a significant milestone and an inflection point, and we're optimistic that we've moved beyond "peak food waste." The foundation for success has been built and momentum is growing, making greater progress possible. In addition to keeping our eye on the factors highlighted above, here are a few other areas we'll be watching:

- **Foodservice in the spotlight.**
  The foodservice sector saw progress in 2024. In the latest U.S. Food Waste Pact Impact Report, reporting foodservice signatories saw a 5.7% reduction in the food efficiency rate, the metric that most accurately reflects waste reduction in the foodservice sector. This resulted in a 4,000 ton reduction in waste and a $15.9 million decrease in the wholesale cost of surplus food (ReFED and WWF, 2025). As this sector looks to expand on these reductions in the year ahead, there is a real opportunity for operators to re-evaluate their menu options and offer customizable portions in an effort to save money and reduce plate waste. The definition of "value" for a growing segment of consumers is changing to include quality and customization, and the operators who respond will have a competitive advantage.

- **Making America healthier by wasting less.**
  The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement is driving many food companies to make changes and reposition their products to cater to an emerging health-conscious market. As the food industry and consumers focus more on health and nutrition, solutions such as imperfect produce and flexible portion sizes become more appealing as they present opportunities to not only improve nutrition but also affordability—another top priority for industry and consumers. Imperfect produce is a healthy option that can be diverted from landfills and sold at discounted prices. Flexible portion sizes can help consumers who want a smaller serving size, often at a lower price point, while also avoiding plate waste. In addition, the MAHA movement is supporting steps to improve soil health, for which compost is a key component.

- **Greenhouse gas reporting in the Golden State.**
  In California, regulations on greenhouse gas emissions reporting go into effect this year for Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, and in 2027, emissions from food waste will be included when Scope 3 goes into effect. This will apply to U.S. partnerships, corporations, and LLCs with over $1 billion in annual revenue doing business in the state. This could add incentive for companies to reduce their food waste as a way to bring down their Scope 3 emissions.

- **The ballooning influence of GLP-1s.**
  With a GLP-1 pill now available, the expectation is usage of these medications will only continue to skyrocket, changing what and how much users eat in ways that can increase the risk of more food waste if their food management habits aren't adjusted. Targeted, education-driven support for GLP-1 users, focused on right-sizing purchases, adapting meal planning, and managing leftovers, could help these households maintain low food waste and may become increasingly important as uptake grows.

Together, we can solve food waste.

A constellation of external factors is making now the time to accelerate progress and continue to make a meaningful reduction in the 70 million tons of food that go unsold or uneaten every year in the United States. As a catalyst for the food system, ReFED is excited to collaborate to solve food waste. Reach out to discuss opportunities to work together.

ReFED Resources to Help You Take Action

Food Businesses

Join the U.S. Food Waste Pact and explore our Business Services offerings to accelerate progress on your waste reduction targets.

Solution Providers

Explore our Solution Provider resources and join the Solution Provider Directory.

Capital Providers

Explore our funder network, the Food Waste Funder Circle, and funder resources including the Solution Provider Directory. Join peer funders in contributing to ReFED's impact investing vehicle, the Catalytic Grant Fund.

Policymakers

Explore existing federal and state policies with ReFED's Policy Finder. Review the state policy toolkit from the Zero Food Waste Coalition.

Media

Reach out with a media request or access our media toolkit.

Consumers

Just trying to do your part? Learn more about the food waste problem and what you can do to address it, and check out the Food Waste Action Network to join a community for the food waste movement.

Supporting ReFED

> We're all connected to the food system, so we all play a role in stopping food waste. Learn how you can support the work of ReFED in advancing data-driven food waste solutions. Together, we can solve food waste.

About ReFED

ReFED is a U.S.-based nonprofit that partners with food businesses, funders, solution providers, policymakers, and more to solve food waste. Its vision is a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food system that makes the best use of the food we grow. Serving as the definitive source for food waste data, ReFED provides the most comprehensive analysis of the food waste problem and solutions to address it. Through its tools and resources, in-person and virtual convenings, and services tailored to help businesses, funders, and solution providers scale their impact, ReFED works to increase adoption of food waste solutions across the supply chain. To learn more about ReFED and solutions to reduce food waste, please visit www.refed.org.

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