



# Food Waste by Sector: Manufacturing

Loss and waste happen across the entire food system—this is a snapshot of food waste in the manufacturing sector. All estimates come from ReFED and are based on 2023 data (*the most recent year available*). For more facts and figures, visit the [ReFED Insights Engine](#).

1

**73.9 million tons of surplus food\* were generated across the entire food system in 2023.**

2

**In the manufacturing sector, 13.2 million tons of surplus food were generated, accounting for 17.8% of the total.**

- Of that amount, 6.62 million tons became food waste.
- 7.3% of food waste in the manufacturing sector—484,000 tons—went to landfill.

3

**Surplus food from manufacturing accounts for 38.3 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e released into the atmosphere per year.**

- That's equivalent to CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from nine million cars.
- Methane emissions—which are more potent than other greenhouse gas emissions—generated from the manufacturing sector equal 486k MT.

4

**Surplus food from manufacturing was valued at \$41.9 billion dollars in 2023.**

- That's equivalent to 5% of manufacturing sales.
- Food sent to landfill has a valuation of \$2.09 billion.

5

**The manufacturing sector wasted 3.82 trillion gallons of water in 2023.**

- That's equivalent to the amount of water in nearly six million Olympic-sized swimming pools.

6

**The equivalent of 21.1 billion meals went unsold or uneaten as a result of surplus food in the manufacturing sector in 2023.**

- The top three food types that go to waste are:
  - *Dairy & Eggs*: 4.84 million tons
  - *Produce*: 961,000 tons
  - *Dry Goods*: 613,000 tons

To see solutions for manufacturers, visit ReFED's [Solutions Database](#). To learn more about reducing manufacturing food waste, visit the [Manufacturer Recommendations](#) page on the ReFED website.

\*Surplus food is food that goes unsold or unused by a business or that goes uneaten at home—including food and inedible parts (e.g., peels, pits, bones) that are donated, fed to animals, repurposed to produce other products, composted, anaerobically digested, or otherwise wasted. ReFED bases its analysis on surplus food instead of food loss and waste in order to capture food that goes to donation, animal feed, and industrial uses, as a more holistic view of the food system.

