



Food Waste in the U.S.

This is a snapshot of the extent and impact of food waste across the United States. All estimates come from ReFED and are based on 2023 data (*the most recent available*) except where noted. For more facts and figures, visit the [ReFED Insights Engine](#).

1

31% of food produced in the U.S. goes unsold or uneaten annually. Most of this “surplus food” goes to waste destinations like landfill, incineration, or down the drain, or is left in fields to rot.

- That’s nearly 74 million tons of food each year.
- Of this surplus food, less than 1% is donated.
- 85% of surplus food—nearly 63 million tons of food each year—becomes “food waste.”

2

The value of surplus food in the U.S. is \$382 billion.

- 88%—\$338 billion—is due to food waste.
- Food businesses lose \$108 billion worth of revenue due to unsold food.

3

The amount of surplus food in the U.S. is equivalent to 120 billion meals.

4

Surplus food has a negative impact on the environment.

- 4% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions come from surplus food, making reducing it a top solution for climate change.

5

Surplus food uses 16% of U.S. cropland and 16% of U.S. freshwater consumption.

- This amount of cropland—140 million acres—is equivalent to an area the size of California and New York combined.
- This amount of freshwater is equivalent to nearly all of the water consumed in a year by California and Idaho combined.

6

24% of inputs to landfill are wasted food, making it the number one product entering landfills. There it generates methane, a greenhouse gas that’s 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide in a 20-year time frame.

- 58% of all landfill methane emissions come from food waste.
- 2.7 million MTCH of methane is generated from surplus food, 10% of the country’s total methane emissions