

In 2010, about 35 million tons of food waste was generated in the U.S., with 97% of that amount ending up in landfills. Why does that matter? For a lot of reasons.

First, despite all of this discarded food, people are still going hungry. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated in 2010 that 14% of U.S. households were “food insecure,” meaning they were not always certain where their next meal would come from.

Secondly, do you think all this food going into the landfill was free? It’s not. In fact, it costs a lot of money! The USDA estimates that wasted food costs our country more than \$165 billion annually.

Wasted food is a huge environmental problem. Energy and water are expended at every step of the chain in producing all this food—growing it, transporting it, processing it, storing it, cooking it and even disposing of it. All of this activity has associated costs, including environmental costs such as energy and water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. This is not a time when we can afford to overlook these enormous environmental impacts.

As recently as 2006, the EPA has estimated that 13% of annual greenhouse gas production across the nation came from the production of food. The Natural Resources Defense Council’s analysis shows that 300 million barrels of oil and a quarter of our nation’s freshwater use each year is devoted to **producing the food that will be thrown away.**

To reduce this unnecessary and harmful waste of food and resources, the U.S. EPA launched the Food Recovery Challenge. Through the Food Recovery Challenge, many different types of organizations are rethinking food and food waste, and saving money in the process! For restaurants, food source reduction does not mean selling fewer meals, but rather making operational changes that ultimately reduce purchasing costs, staff time and disposal fees. Joining the Food Recovery Challenge can help you think about these changes and support you as you implement them, giving you the public recognition for environmental stewardship that you deserve.

Our program is free and completely voluntary – check it out now! Just type www.epa.gov/foodrecoverychallenge into your web browser. Feel free to contact Rachel Chaput at EPA Region 2, at (212) 637-4116 for more information or for help in signing up.