

Food Loss Prevention Options for Manufacturers

Below is a list of ideas and activities that manufacturers may consider implementing to help prevent food loss and waste. Contact your local EPA representative for log sheets, signs, and other tools.

- Perform a food waste audit.** See what's being thrown out and why. Pick a day and be there at the waste bin with a few volunteers, buckets, a log sheet, and a weight scale. Record the following:
 - What is being thrown out,
 - Weight or number of items,
 - The reason the food is being disposed (if known),
 - The expiration date of the product (when applicable),
 - Whether the food was still wholesome/edible before being thrown out, and
 - The most-wasted and least-wasted items.

Based on the results, consider changing procedures to minimize loss (e.g., reduce order quantities of low sold or otherwise tossed items).

- Clarify date labelling and date encoding to reduce confusion to customers.** Some options might include:
 - Improve readability of labels (e.g., color, font),
 - Clearly label or define the difference between safety-based and quality-based dates,
 - Make "sell by" dates invisible to the consumer,
 - Use more "freeze by" dates where applicable so the customer knows they have that option,
 - Remove "best before" or other quality dates from shelf-stable, non-perishable foods for which safety is not a concern, and
 - Make sure all printed dates on products have descriptive language, not just a date.
- Promote short supply chains.** Look for more local customers, thus reducing the distance and time the food has to travel. This can both increase the freshness of food and also reduce the greenhouse gases generated.
- Increase regular communication with retailers and suppliers to reduce food waste** (e.g., schedule a meeting specifically to discuss reducing food waste; discuss minimum order quantities and/or large case sizes that may be causing unnecessary waste and talk through alternative options).
- Evaluate size requirements** and other strictly cosmetic standards to determine any flexibility that may reduce waste.
- Send order estimates more frequently** to better align production planning with order timings.
- Send cuts, ends or other unused product back to the supplier.** This can encourage redesign or reuse.



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- Redesign processing machines** to minimize trim and other cut offs. Design filters to capture more product to rework back into the process.
- Build ramps for large liquid dispenser containers/tanks**, so the liquid drains toward the tap outlet to reduce product left in the container.
- Ask for feedback from staff and retailers on how to reduce food waste.**
- Make food waste reduction a key indicator** in operations, supply chain and employee performance.
- Periodically search for secondary markets** for byproducts, trimmings and peels (e.g., fish waste to create omega rich fish chips).
- Consider producing a product from foods that would otherwise be sent for disposal** (e.g., chutney, salsa, compote).

