



# FOOD WASTE REDUCTION

A FUTUREPLUS GUIDE

## + WHY REDUCE FOOD WASTE?

The UK alone throws away **9.5 million tonnes** of food annually, equating to an estimated worth of £19 billion. But aside from the obvious financial cost, around 8-10% of our total global Greenhouse Gas emissions are also produced by food waste, and staggeringly over one third of all food produced around the world goes to waste. Food waste is often an unintended consequence of actions which create both an **environmental** and **financial burden** to businesses, so reducing food waste in your business is a change that can offer multiple benefits.

## + UNDERSTANDING YOUR FOOD WASTE

By understanding where food waste is coming from within your business, it's easier to start targeting and reducing it. Generally, food waste is produced in 3 ways:

- **Spoilage:** Food that was once edible, but has gone off or become inedible (e.g. rotten fruit, food past its sell-by-date / use-by-date).
- **Plate waste:** Food that has been served on a plate but not eaten (e.g. bones, side salads, buffet waste).
- **Preparation waste:** Food that is discarded during the preparation of a meal (e.g. vegetable peelings, bones, apple cores, food cooked but not served).

## + SETTING A REDUCTION TARGET

Measuring the food waste that is generated within your business over a set time period (we recommend a minimum of 2 weeks) can help you to understand the type of food waste your business is generating. Record what type of food waste is being generated and where it comes from. Once collected, this data can be analysed to help you understand food waste streams and to create a **food waste reduction strategy**.

Your reduction strategy should include targets for reducing your food waste. Your target could be a percentage reduction from either your base measure / per employee / per number of customers (if relevant).

## + TIPS FOR BUILDING A REDUCTION STRATEGY

Each of the different food waste streams benefits from a different strategy. Here are some ideas for each type of food waste, but you may require a unique solution for your business.

### Spoilage:

- Staff training on best-before and use-by-dates. Knowing what food is still safe and legal to use can help minimise wasting food that is still good quality.
- Consider investing in energy efficient, high quality food storage areas to help ensure the correct storage and preservation of food to reduce the likelihood of spoilage.
- Training for staff around correct food storage techniques and stock rotation practices to ensure food is used in the correct order.
- Consider adjusting ordering practices if food is regularly spoiling before being served.
- Encouraging and promoting pre-ordering from customers and when using contract caterers to limit the need for over-ordering food (e.g. for events and parties).

### Preparation waste:

- Understand how much of your preparation waste is edible. Are there creative ways to use it? (e.g. using bones and vegetable peelings for stocks.)
- Encourage menu planning that uses the whole produce / animal.
- Often, preparation waste from inedible parts of food is unavoidable. If you have the space, consider an on-site food composter or anaerobic digester. Alternatively, assess the potential for food waste collection within your business.

### Plate waste:

- Look at which foods are regularly contributing to plate waste (e.g. side salad, garnish leaves, bread baskets, chips, buffet foods etc.). Consider options for changing how these foods are offered to customers (e.g. smaller portions).
- Offer to pack up customer leftovers (in compostable boxes) so they may take home uneaten food.
- At a buffet, provide smaller plates but encourage second helpings if guests wish. This can help to reduce over-serving.

## + NON-FOOD BUSINESSES

Implementing measures to monitor food waste within your business is still be a useful exercise, even if your business does not provide any kind of food offering to it's staff. Engaging and educating your staff in this area can help them address food waste in their homes as well as in the workplace, extending your businesses positive impact within its community. Your business should still aim to:

- Regularly measure and record your waste volume. Try to identify any items that are frequently wasted, to develop a strategy for reducing (e.g. milk or fruit).
- Educate, engage and motivate your employees on simple ways to reduce food waste both in the workplace and at home.

## + CORPORATE EVENTS

Even if your businesses does not normally handle food, there may be occasions such as corporate events where you contract in catering companies. Events offer an opportunity for your business to showcase its commitment to sustainability to all of your stakeholders, so ensure your caterers share your values, and offer **positive sustainability commitments**.

- If your business has set food waste targets, make sure you communicate this to your food suppliers so that menus can be designed to minimise wastage.
- Put in place a plan prior to the event to handle any leftovers (e.g. if staff are able to take it home, ensure they bring food containers).

## + NEED MORE HELP?

If you need some help getting started, please get in touch: [team@futureplus.co.uk](mailto:team@futureplus.co.uk)

Alternatively, we offer consultancy services if you would like more comprehensive support in setting up food waste monitoring, or developing a food waste reduction strategy.

The organisation WRAP also offers an in-depth [toolkit](#) on developing a Food Waste Reduction Roadmap.