Executive Summary

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New Jersey Department of Agriculture
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In accordance with P.L.2017, c.210 approved August 2017, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the New Jersey Department of Education, the New Jersey Department of Health, and the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education developed voluntary guidelines for K-12 schools and higher education institutions to reduce, recover, and recycle food waste. State agencies hosted a meeting to review draft guidelines and solicit input, the following nonprofit organizations attended:

- Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC)
- Association of New Jersey Recyclers (ANJR)
- Bridgeton Public Schools
- City of East Orange Department of Recreation & Cultural Affairs
- New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association
- New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA)
- New Jersey School Buildings and Grounds Association
- New Jersey School Nutrition Association
- Rutgers Cooperative Extension
- Rutgers EcoComplex
- Sustainable Jersey
- Sustainable Jersey for Schools
- Table to Table

P.L.2017, c.210 requires that School Food Waste Guidelines include:

1. Information on food waste generally and the benefits of reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste.
2. Recommendations for how schools can incorporate this information into their curricula and create programs and activities for the reduction, recovery, and recycling of food waste.
3. Recommendations for how schools can reduce the volume of surplus food they generate.
4. Guidance on how schools can create share tables in their cafeterias.
5. Information on cost-effective, safe, and sanitary means by which schools may donate excess, unused, and edible food to nonprofit organizations that distribute food to nearby individuals.
Introduction to the School Food Waste Guidelines

While the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines food waste as “any food that is fit for human consumption that is sent for disposal” (EPA 2018), the guidelines also address non-consumable food waste, such as spoiled food and inedible trimmings. Food waste can consist of unsold food from retail stores, untouched prepared food or trimmings from restaurants, grocery stores, cafeterias or industrial processing facilities (EPA 2018). Environmental benefits associated with food waste reduction, recovery and recycling include resource conservation, energy savings, greenhouse gas avoidance, landfill space savings, and cost savings for schools.

These School Food Waste Guidelines are meant to advise K-12 schools and higher education institutions on how they can effectively reduce, recover, and recycle food waste. The guidelines use the EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy to illustrate how to prioritize actions schools can take to prevent and divert wasted food.

The EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy

The EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy prioritizes food waste actions from the most preferred way at the top to the least preferred way at the bottom. These include the following:

- Source Reduction (Reduction sections)
- Feed Hungry People (Recovery sections)
- Feed Animals (Recycling sections)
- Industrial Uses (Recycling sections)
- Composting (Recycling sections)
- Landfill

![Figure 1: EPA Food Waste Hierarchy](image-url)

Sections within the School Food Waste Guidelines

The food waste guidelines are organized into two separate documents. The first provides guidance to K-12 schools and the second to higher education institutions.

Table 1: Guidelines by Section. Sections included in the K-12 and higher education editions of the School Food Waste Guidelines.

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Getting Started Sections

The guidelines begin by offering suggestions on how schools can start to address food waste. Guidance is provided on the following preliminary steps that facilitate the scope of the program and identifies the best person or group of people to develop the program.

The K-12 guidelines for starting food waste programs on campus offer guidance on how to:
- Designate a faculty leader, and create a club, group, or committee
- Measure food waste
- Collect food waste

And include one collection case study:
- Collection Case Study - John Witherspoon Middle School

The higher education guidelines for starting food waste programs on campus offer guidance on how to:
- Designate a faculty leader, and create a club, group, or committee
• Measure food waste
• Collect food waste

Reduction Sections
Reduction is the most important action for preventing food waste and is at the very top of the Food Recovery Hierarchy. Reducing food waste prevents the need to deal with excess or spoiled food by not producing the food in the first place.

The K-12 edition's reduction section offers guidance on the following food waste reduction practices, and one reduction case study:
• Smart Food Handling Techniques
• The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement
• Production Records
• Scheduling Considerations
• Reduction Case Study – Paterson Public Schools

The higher education edition's reduction section offers guidance on the following food waste reduction practices, and one reduction case study:
• Connecting with a school food recovery network
• Implementing a Food Recovery Program – Includes guidance from the NJ Department of Health
• Share Tables
• Recovery Case Study – Table to Table

Recovery Sections
Only about 3 to 10 percent of unsaleable food from manufacturers, retailers, restaurants, and food service providers is recovered and donated each year (NRDC 2017). Food recovery is the process of preventing edible food from being wasted at restaurants, grocery stores, markets, or dining facilities by donating excess to food banks, food pantries, or soup kitchens under certain legal requirements. Many schools have initiated food waste recovery actions by donating whole, unused, and unopened food items where they are needed.

The K-12 edition's recovery section offers guidance on the following food waste recovery practices, and one recovery case study:
• Connecting with a school food recovery network
• Implementing a Food Recovery Program – Guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health
• Recovery Case Study – Table to Table

The higher education edition's recovery section offers guidance on the following food waste reduction practices and one recovery case study:
• Connecting with a school food recovery network
Recycling Sections

It is estimated that a single student can generate over two pounds of compostable materials, such as food scraps and soiled paper, each day (NERC 2010). That means a large amount of compostable materials will unnecessarily be sent to landfills if not diverted and recycled. Recycling school food waste significantly reduces a school’s municipal solid waste stream and creates an avenue for the waste to be recycled.

The K-12 edition's recycling section offers guidance on the following food waste recycling practices and one recycling case study:

- Off-Site Food Waste Management
  - Commercial Composting Fact Sheet
- On-Site Food Waste Management
  - On-Site Aerobic Composting Fact Sheet
  - Vermin Control
  - On-Site Anaerobic Digestion Fact Sheet
  - Recycling Case Study – Reeds Road Elementary School

The higher education edition's recycling section offers guidance on the following food waste recycling practices and two recycling case studies:

- Off-Site Food Waste Management
  - Commercial Composting Fact Sheet
- On-Site Food Waste Management
  - On-Site Aerobic Composting Fact Sheet
  - On-Site Anaerobic Digestion Fact Sheet
  - Vermin Control
- Recycling Case Study – Bergen Community College
- Recycling Case Study – Rutgers University

Each guideline includes appendices provide additional resources and information on food waste recycling.
Works Cited


