

TOP 10 TAKEAWAYS

FROM THE FOOD RECOVERY SUMMIT

Food waste is one of the nation's most significant issues. The social, economic and environmental impacts are staggering. The opportunity and ability to successfully address these challenges, however, is unlimited.

The work already has begun.

The Southeast Recycling Development Council (SERDC) played an integral role in the development of the 2015 Food Recovery Summit in Charleston, SC in November 2015. This national event – which

attracted key stakeholders from industry, non-profits, faith-based groups, local, state and federal governments and other stakeholders – looked at obstacles and solutions, success stories, best practices, partnership possibilities, goals and most importantly the development of a plan to keep the momentum and move forward.

Here are 10 key takeaways.



1. What a waste.

Food waste is the No.1 item Americans throw away accounting for 21 percent (more than 35 million tons) of the nation's waste stream. Only 5 percent (1.8 million tons) of the food waste generated across the country was recovered.

Food production consumes significant land, water, energy and other resources, but as much as 40 percent of the food produced in the United States is never eaten. All of this occurs while one out of every six Americans is food insecure.



2. It's a great opportunity.

Reducing food waste appears to be a daunting task, but rarely is there an issue of this size and scope with so much opportunity. There is already a nationwide foundation in place that includes charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, businesses, grocery stores, restaurants, food producers, local, state

and federal government agencies and other stakeholders that are committed to addressing this issue through prevention, donation, composting and other practices. In addition, there is proven technology (e.g., anaerobic digestion) and best management practices in place to safely and efficiently manage this material.

3. Knowledge is good.

The awareness of this issue must be improved. The social, environmental and economic benefits of preventing and reducing food waste must be shared through education and outreach initiatives. All of us need to know how and what we can do at home, work and school. Get the word out.

4. Infrastructure. Infrastructure. Infrastructure.

It's an absolute necessity. What is the best way to make infrastructure grow? The public and private sectors working together to create an efficient system for their community. State and local governments can play an integral role in this effort by developing and implementing food waste prevention campaigns.

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Charleston, SC • November 16-18, 2015

The 2015 Food Recovery Summit was sponsored by SERDC in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, N.C. Department of Environmental Quality and BioCycle.

5. It's a dating game.

Food product dating is confusing and contributes to consumers wasting food. "Sell by," "best if used by," "use by" and other food product dating must be standardized and explained to consumers. Most food waste occurs in the household. A family of four, on average, throws away \$1,500 or 2 million calories of food every year according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Much of this can be prevented with proper understanding of date labels. End the confusion. To learn more, visit serdc.org/food.



6. The fear of donation.

The single biggest restraint to food donation by companies and organizations is the fear of any liability issues both on the national and state level. Nationally, the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act was signed into law on October 1, 2006 to encourage the donation of groceries and food to non-profit organizations for distribution to those in need. The law protects donors from civil and criminal liability as long as the donor has not acted with negligence or intentional misconduct. To learn more, visit serdc.org/food. Companies also are concerned with what is allowed at the state level. State health and environmental agencies



must clearly communicate their position on this issue. The Good Samaritan law must be promoted to encourage donation.

7. Picture perfect produce.

Fruit and vegetables combined are the largest segment of food waste. Why? Often produce is not harvested or tossed simply because retailers and consumers don't want imperfect fruit and vegetables (irregular shape or size). This produce can help provide a healthy diet to those in need.



8. There is a goal.

Let's meet it. Everyone wins. In September 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the USDA announced the nation's first food waste reduction goal calling to cut food waste in half by 2030.

9. Planning is good, too.

The closing session of the Food Recovery Summit focused on what is next and where we go from here. It was agreed that EPA will continue to work with stakeholders and develop a national work plan to address this issue and accelerate the progress that already has occurred.

10. This is a new way to market recycling.

The prevention and recovery of food waste provides another approach to promote waste reduction and recycling.

About SERDC ...

SERDC works to unite industry, government, and non-government organizations to promote sustainable recycling in the Southeast. SERDC's region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Members are composed of a diverse array of industry and municipal representatives committed to improving material capture in both quantity and quality which will lead to a strengthening of local economies through recycling. While some of SERDC's content and tools are available for everyone to enjoy, members can access our member directory and connect to other leaders in the Southeast. Learn more at serdc.org.

