

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT



REDUCING FOOD LOSS AND WASTE
IN NORTH AMERICA THROUGH
LIFE CYCLE-BASED APPROACHES

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Citation

Heller, M. (2019). "Waste Not, Want Not: Reducing Food Loss and Waste in North America through Life Cycle-Based Approaches". United Nations Environment Programme, North America Office. Washington, DC, USA.

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Acknowledgements

The idea for this report emerged from a consultative process between the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA)'s Office of Global Affairs and Policy and UN Environment's North America Office. UN Environment is grateful to the US EPA for its collaboration on this effort, including for its financial support.

The author of the report is Dr. Martin Heller of the Center for Sustainable Systems at the University of Michigan. Project supervision and oversight was provided by Hilary French from UN Environment's North America Office and by Ted MacDonald from the US EPA's Office of Global Affairs and Policy.

We wish to thank the following persons and their organisations for their expert reviews and other contributions to this process: David Donaldson and Gabriela Sanchez (Commission for Environmental Cooperation); Bruce Taylor (Enviro-Stewards); Cristina Cortinas (independent consultant); Quentin Read (National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center); Darby Hoover (Natural Resources Defense Council); David Alloway (Oregon Department of Environmental Quality); Cher Mereweather (Provision Coalition); Melvin Alvarez, Benjamin Basmaci, Hilary French, Laura Fuller, Barbara Hendrie, William Holness, James Lomax, Fatou Ndoye, Clementine O'Connor, Emilia Suarez and Sam Yancho (UN Environment); Elise Golan (US Department of Agriculture); Brianna Besch, Elle Chang, Claudia Fabiano, Hodayah Finman, Wes Ingwersen, Ted MacDonald, Walker Smith and Maxwell Torney (US EPA); and Kai Robertson (Advisor, World Resources Institute).

Editor: Lisa Mastny
Design/Layout: David Andrade

Foreword

Globally, an estimated one-third of all food produced is wasted rather than eaten. In North America, an estimated 30 to 40 per cent of the food available for human consumption is lost. This food loss and waste occurs throughout the food supply chain: on farms, in processing and manufacturing facilities, during transport and distribution, in retail and foodservice outlets, and in households.

Fortunately, there is growing national, regional and international impetus to address food loss and waste, and food waste-related policies and programmes across North America are gaining momentum. The 2030 Development Agenda underscored the importance of the issue by including the target of reducing per capita global food waste production by one-half by 2030. The United States government has a national goal for food loss and waste reduction and also runs the Food Recovery Challenge with businesses and organizations that have been taking steps to reduce their food waste since 2011. The Canadian government is also paying growing attention to the food waste challenge. And many states, provinces, cities and private actors are increasingly focused on the issue as well.

This report is the product of a collaboration between UN Environment North America and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The study examines ways in which life cycle thinking and related tools such as life cycle assessment can be used to inform effective policymaking, aimed at reducing food loss and waste. It describes how these methodologies can help decision makers prioritize policies and interventions through better estimates of the environmental impact of food loss and waste, comparisons of food waste disposal options, and evaluations of alternative intervention or abatement strategies. Case studies presented in the report highlight examples of how life cycle thinking is already being used successfully to reduce food loss and waste in North America.

We hope that the report will be useful for policymakers and other stakeholders, as we all confront the critical challenge of reducing food waste and loss around the world.

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List of Acronyms

CEC	Commission for Environmental Cooperation of North America
CO₂	Carbon dioxide
CO₂ eq.	Carbon dioxide equivalent
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLW	Food loss and waste
GWP	Global warming potential
HFW-ICS	High food waste content industrial, commercial and institutional waste generators
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LCA	Life cycle assessment
LCC	Life cycle costing
LCSA	Life cycle sustainability assessment
MFA	Material flow analysis
NRDC	Natural Resources Defense Council
OR DEQ	Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

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