

# Reducing waste in the fruit & vegetable sector

As part of [WRAP's Hospitality and Food Service Agreement](#) businesses are looking for ways to improve their environmental performance, use resources wisely, and strengthen the industry's resolve to continuously reduce its impacts. Signatories have targets to meet as part of this commitment, and are looking to you, their suppliers, to help them achieve these. We encourage you to take action, become more resource efficient, and benefit from saving money in the process. We specifically want to prevent food waste and optimise packaging wherever possible.

Many companies underestimate how much waste is costing; it could be as high as 4% of turnover<sup>1</sup>.

The most significant causes of waste that can be targeted for reduction<sup>2</sup>:

- Products not reaching their **intended market** outlet. Reasons for this include having to be marked down for sale or not meeting specification requirements. Losses at grading can vary from 5% and 25%<sup>2</sup>.
- Loss of product because of **supply chain management**, for example, changes to packaging specifications or incorrect demand forecasting. Such losses are estimated in the order of 100,000 to 150,000 tonnes or around 5% of waste arisings<sup>2</sup>.



## What can you do to reduce your waste?

**Step 1: Find out where and why waste is being created.** The first step towards improved resource efficiency is to identify the waste currently being generated as part of your business's activities. The best way to do this is to carry out a waste 'walk-around'. A walk-around will allow you to gain an overview of the main processes, and will probably identify areas in which rapid, no-cost or low-cost improvements can be made.

**Step 2: Calculate the cost.** The true cost of waste isn't limited to the charges for disposal. It also includes wasted raw materials, energy and labour. The real value to the food and drink retail and manufacturing sector of a tonne of waste is between £820 and £1,600 per tonne<sup>3</sup>. Calculating your current waste costs will give you a baseline figure that you can use for benchmarking and against which you can compare future performance and help you to prioritise the most impactful changes you can make.

**Step 3: Develop an action plan** with targets, timescales and responsibilities. Your action plan can take the form of a written document or a table; make sure it is clear what is to be done, who needs to do it and what you aim to achieve.

**Step 4: Review progress on the plan each month.** Speak to staff and get their feedback on the progress being made. This will keep people involved and motivated. Measure the amount of waste produced regularly and work out how much money is being saved.

**Step 5: Share your good work with stakeholders.** Keep up-to-date on the good practice being carried out across the sector by looking online e.g. the [WRAP websites](#). Apply anything you learn to the plan and update it regularly.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/WRAP\\_Food\\_Drink\\_Manufacturers.pdf](http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/WRAP_Food_Drink_Manufacturers.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Resource\\_Map\\_Fruit\\_and\\_Veg\\_final\\_6\\_june\\_2011.fc479c40.10854.pdf](http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Resource_Map_Fruit_and_Veg_final_6_june_2011.fc479c40.10854.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/estimates-waste-food-and-drink-supply-chain>

Not sure how to get started? For more information download the WRAP guide: [Self-Assessment Review for Food and Drink Manufacturers](#) or visit the [Business Resource Efficiency hub](#) to access a range of tools and guides to help you to improve your business resource efficiency.

## Solutions in the fruit & vegetable sector

- **Apply Lean manufacturing;** WRAP has developed '[W.A.S.T.E.](#)', a straightforward problem-solving approach to help reduce waste in the food and drink supply chain. Follow this process to help your business understand the **root causes** of waste and develop **solutions** to reduce waste. [Tip sheets are available](#) to help you at each stage in the process.
- Promote best practice in the **handling of produce** to reduce damages. In storage, consider using **refrigeration** or modified atmosphere storage bags.
- **Improve supply chain communications.** As any crop grows and matures, good communication along the supply chain is essential, particularly if the **crop is ahead of or behind schedule** because, for example, of weather conditions. Work closely with **suppliers and customers** to minimise instances where produce is out of specification, close to sell by date or returned.
- **Review consumer specifications.** Introduce **flexibility** in size, colour and weight specifications to account for natural variability. There may be opportunities to introduce new **value lines** for certain products or **promotions** for misshapen produce. Produce that doesn't meet specifications can be used in **alternative products** such as jams, juices and sauces.
- [Redistribute](#) surplus food to **charities**. Produce that is unfit for human consumption should be sent to **animal feed**.
- **Work to optimise packaging.** Look at reducing pack weight and using modified atmosphere packaging. Look at using [returnable, re-usable](#) transit packaging. **Catering packs** can also optimise packaging – but only if this is not going to create food waste due to product deterioration prior to use. Use the [Product Action Finder](#) to help you identify potential actions you can take to change your products' **labelling, packaging and merchandising** to help your customers waste less food.
- **Recycle more.** Where not possible to redistribute, **compost** food waste or send it to [anaerobic digestion](#) instead of landfill. Use [recycled content materials](#) in packaging and **labelling** to encourage recycling after use.

## See how others have taken steps to reduce their waste

**Bettaveg** identified potential savings of **£5,000 a year** by supplying goods in re-usable plastic crates; achieving a 70% recycling rate; donating surplus fruit and vegetables that are fit for human consumption to a food redistribution charity and composting waste that isn't; and motivating staff. [Read more here.](#)

**L'Aquila** managed to significantly reduce their waste from the **1,100-litre wheeled bin** they were filling each week. One of the contributing actions was introducing more accurate forecasting. [Read more here.](#)

## Spread the word and let us know!

Promote best practice and the reduction of food and associated packaging waste wherever possible. Try and influence others in the Hospitality and Food Service sector using the information provided.

Please record what you have done to reduce food waste – we would be interested to know what activities you have undertaken and any achievements that have been made.

If you would like to get in touch, contact us at [hafs@wrap.org.uk](mailto:hafs@wrap.org.uk)