

## ***Preparing for the Papal Climate Encyclical and Visit Help for Reducing Food Waste in Parishes***

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The amount of food wasted in the United States is staggering. The United States generates more than 36 million tons of food waste each year. Since 2010, food waste is the single largest component of municipal solid waste reaching landfills and incinerators.

Generating food waste has significant economic, social, and environmental consequences. In his weekly address on June 5, 2013, Pope Francis urged people of good will throughout the world to reduce food waste. He said: “This culture of waste has made us insensitive even to the waste and disposal of food, which is even more despicable when all over the world, unfortunately, many individuals and families are suffering from hunger and malnutrition.... ***Throwing away food is like stealing from the table of the poor and the hungry.***”

Often, simple changes in food purchasing, storage, preparation, and service practices can yield significant reductions in food waste generation. Not only will this reduce waste, but it will make food dollars go further. And much of this food “waste” is not waste at all but actually safe, wholesome food that could potentially feed millions of Americans in need. Food donations redirect these valuable resources to “feed people – not landfills.”

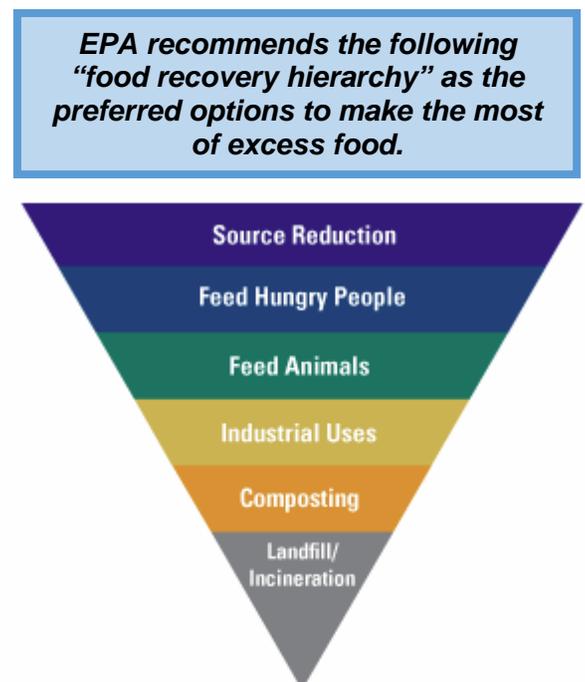
Additionally, not only does this wasted valuable resource have huge economic and social impacts, it also has huge and immediate environmental impacts. When food is disposed in a landfill it quickly rots and becomes a significant source of methane. Reducing, recovering, and recycling wasted food diverts organic materials from landfills and incinerators, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from landfills and waste combustion. The use of recycled food scraps (compost) has many environmental benefits.

An additional benefit of food waste reduction, donation, and composting is improved sanitation, public safety and health for both your facility and congregation.

### **THE FOOD RECOVERY HIERARCHY**

Both EPA and the USDA recommend following the “food recovery hierarchy” as the preferred options to make the most of excess food. The food waste recovery hierarchy comprises the following activities, with disposal as the last, and least preferred, option:

- Source Reduction – Reduce the amount of food waste being generated;
- Feed People – Donate excess food to food banks, soup kitchens, and shelters;
- Feed Animals – Provide food scraps to farmers;
- Industrial Uses – Provide fats for rendering; oil for fuel; food discards for animal feed production; or anaerobic digestion combined with soil amendment production or composting of the residuals;
- Composting – Recycle food scraps into a nutrient rich soil amendment.



# JOIN EPA'S FOOD RECOVERY CHALLENGE

Parishes can respond to Pope Francis's teaching, reduce their environmental footprint, and save money by joining EPA's Food Recovery Challenge.

It just takes 5 easy steps:

## 1. Sign Up

- ✓ Go to EPA's Sustainable Materials Management web site (<https://connect.re-trac.com/register/epafrc>) to register to participate in the Challenge.
- ✓ Once your account has been activated, choose the "Food Recovery Challenge" and sign the participation agreement. You can find an example of the participation agreement form at [http://www.epa.gov/smm/pdf/prticipatn\\_agrmnt\\_2.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/smm/pdf/prticipatn_agrmnt_2.pdf).

## 2. Set a Baseline

- ✓ **Assess It!** Conduct an inventory of your food waste. Baseline data provides a starting point for setting goals and tracking progress. We recommend that your baseline data be representative of 12 prior months of food data. If you need assistance in developing your baseline, please contact the WasteWise Help Line at 800.EPA.WISE (800.372.9473) or send an email to the program at [wastewisehelp@epa.gov](mailto:wastewisehelp@epa.gov).
- ✓ **Submit It:** Baseline data must be entered and submitted through the Sustainable Materials Management web site within 90 days of registering for the Challenge. You can choose from three food diversion categories: food waste prevention (e.g. source reduction), donation, and/or recycling (e.g. composting and anaerobic digestion). Don't forget to click the "Submit" button in the database.

## 3. Set a Goal

- ✓ **Choose Your Actions!** Choose the activities your organization plans to undertake. Examples are modifying food purchasing, changing food production and handling practices, reducing excessive portion size, donating to those in need, and recycling. Tools such as the Food Waste Logbook (<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserves/pubs/food-waste-log.pdf>) and other food waste assessment tools (<http://epa.gov/epawaste/conserves/foodwaste/tools/index.htm>) can help here as well.
- ✓ **Submit It:** Goals must be entered and submitted through the Sustainable Materials Management web site within 90 days of registering for the Challenge. Identify a quantitative goal, expressed in tons for the current calendar year. Don't forget to click the "Submit" button in the database.

## 4. Take Action

- ✓ Undertake the identified activities to reduce your food waste.

## 5. Track It

- ✓ Track your progress, report your food diversion results, and establish new goals annually using the Sustainable Materials Management web site by March 31 each year. Don't forget to click the "submit" button in the database.

**For further details contact Tiffany Kollar at [Kollar.Tiffany@epa.gov](mailto:Kollar.Tiffany@epa.gov) or (703) 308-8675.**

**To join the Challenge, go to: [http://www.epa.gov/smm/foodrecovery/join\\_info.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smm/foodrecovery/join_info.htm)**