

# Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste:

## What resources go into a year of food loss and waste in the U.S.?

\*excluding impacts of waste management, such as landfill methane emissions



**Greenhouse gas emissions** of more than 42 coal-fired power plants

**Enough water and energy** to supply more than 50 million homes



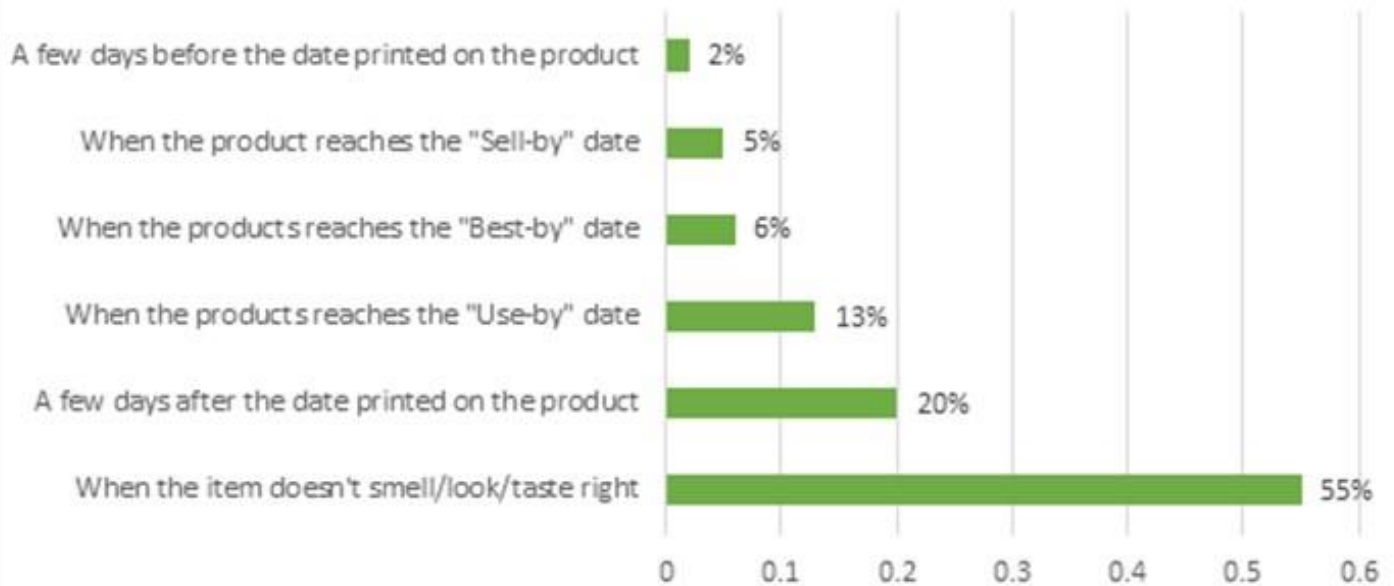
The **amount of fertilizer** used in the U.S. to grow all plant-based foods for U.S. human consumption

An **area of agricultural land** equal to California and New York



Learn more: [www.epa.gov/land-research/farm-kitchen-environmental-impacts-us-food-waste](http://www.epa.gov/land-research/farm-kitchen-environmental-impacts-us-food-waste)

### When do Americans throw away food?



### Reducing wasted food has social, environmental and economic benefits.

- **Wasted food is a social problem:** In 2018, 11.1 percent of U.S. households were food insecure at some time during the year. That is 37.2 million Americans, of which 11.2 million are children, living in food insecure households. Wholesome, nutritious food should feed people, not landfills.
- **Wasted food is an environmental problem:** Food is the largest stream of materials in American trash. Once wasted food reaches landfills, it produces methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.
- **Wasted food is an economic issue:** It is estimated that at the retail and consumer levels in the United States, food loss and waste totals \$161 billion dollars.

# TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SMALL CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT ON OUR PLANET!

## WHEN YOU THROW SOMETHING AWAY, WHERE DOES IT GO?



### Benefits of Recycling

- Reduces the amount of waste sent to landfills and incinerators
- Conserves natural resources such as timber, water and minerals
- Increases economic security by tapping a domestic source of materials
- Prevents pollution by reducing the need to collect new raw materials
- Saves energy
- Supports American manufacturing and conserves valuable resources
- Helps create jobs in the recycling and manufacturing industries in the United States



You can "reuse" materials in their original form instead of throwing them away, or pass those materials on to others who could use them too! Remember, one person's trash is another person's treasure!

Here are some examples of reuse...

- Take along washable cups or travel mugs instead of disposables; a lot of restaurants and stores will be glad to fill or refill your own mug.
- When you do use disposables like plastic cups, plates, utensils, and plastic food storage bags, don't throw them away! Wash and reuse them—most of them will last for a long time with many uses. They may not cost much to replace, but it doesn't make any more sense to throw away those things than it does to throw away your bicycle after one use.

***Ideas we can share with our parents, siblings, teachers, and more!***

When you do decide to replace something large and "reusable" (think bicycles, washing machines, dryers, etc.) be sure to donate the old item to charitable outlets like Goodwill, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Vietnam Veterans, and the others that are probably in your area. These older items may be able to be repaired by those groups, and then redistributed into other homes or offices rather than landfills.

Hold a yard sale or give-away. Ask your neighbors to join in, too—this shares the work and increases the number of unused things that can find new homes and new uses. Your local recycling/solid waste office may run a "swap shop" at recycling centers.

When you do need to purchase something, consider checking those yard sales and charitable outlets first to see if they have what you need before selecting something new.

Check out Keep America Beautiful to find out how you can take action in your community  
<https://kab.org/>

Programs like: Great American Cleanup, America Recycles Day, & RETREET