

Food waste in Aotearoa New Zealand

Food loss and waste is of increasing public awareness in Aotearoa New Zealand and globally. It is a complex and significant environmental and social issue with multiple causes. Addressing food loss and waste is a key area for achieving the Ministry for the Environment's strategic priority of a sustainable and resilient food system.

New Zealand is developing an agreed definition of food waste and loss, expected in November 2022. Until then, we are working with the below proposed definition:

Proposed definition of food loss and waste for Aotearoa New Zealand
Imported or domestically produced food, including inedible parts of food, that is removed from any part of the food supply chain to be recycled, recovered or disposed of in New Zealand.

Quantity of food waste in New Zealand

In New Zealand, the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) estimates that 314,000 tonnes of food was sent to municipal landfills in 2021/2022. Food scraps make up 9 per cent of waste sent to municipal landfills, but account for 22 per cent of these landfills' emission.

It is not known how much total food waste there is in New Zealand. For households, there is an estimated 157,398 tonnes of *avoidable* food waste (ie, food that could have been eaten) disposed to landfill through domestic kerbside rubbish collections per annum.¹

MfE is procuring baseline data for food waste across the entire food supply chain as currently we only have estimates for food waste to municipal landfills. Once a baseline has been set, the government has committed to creating a national food waste reduction target.

Emissions reduction plan

There are a number of initiatives in the emissions reduction plan which focus on food waste reduction and diversion from landfill.

1. **Increasing food scraps collections (ERP action 15.2.1)** – the Government is considering proposals to require kerbside food scraps collections for urban households and for businesses to separate their food waste. The proposals follow through on Labour Party election commitments and are fundamental to achieving targets in the Emissions Reduction Plan. Decisions are expected toward the end of 2022.
2. **Research and resources to support increased participation in kerbside food scraps collections (ERP action 15.1.2)** – research has been procured to support understanding of behaviours relating to kerbside food scraps collections across the country, to inform best practice guidance for councils introducing collections.
3. **Investment into projects that divert food waste from landfill (ERP action 15.2.3)** – the Waste Minimisation Fund (WMF) has more than \$120 million in funding available (which includes \$75 million from the Climate Emergency Response Fund) over the next two years, which is focused on investment that will improve New Zealand's ability to reduce landfill

¹ 2018, Sunshine Yates Consulting. [Microsoft Word - Final 1.0 - New Zealand Food Waste Audit Report 2018 \(lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz\)](https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz)

(biogenic methane) emissions from organic waste, particularly kerbside collection assets, infrastructure and support for the roll-out of services for food scraps and green-waste, and organic waste processing facilities. Previous funding rounds have included \$460,000 invested into the national Love Food Hate Waste programme to raise awareness and change behaviour around food waste in New Zealand.

Funding and partnerships

Since it was established in 2010, the WMF has provided funding to a range of initiatives dealing with food waste. The types of projects funded include behaviour change programmes such as Love Food Hate Waste, food rescue services, community composting initiatives, organic food de-packaging plants, various organic waste processing infrastructure including anaerobic digestion and in-vessel composting units, and feasibility studies looking at regional solutions to organic waste.

MfE is also exploring potential partnerships with industry groups and NGOs for the implementation of national-scale programmes to prevent food being wasted by both households and businesses. This includes a voluntary commitment that businesses can sign up to measure and report on their activities to reduce food waste which include signatories such as Fonterra and Silver Fern Farms.

References

2022. *Towards a productive, sustainable and inclusive economy: Aotearoa New Zealand's first Emissions Reduction Plan*. [Aotearoa New Zealand's first emissions reduction plan | Ministry for the Environment](#)

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2018. *New Zealand Food Waste Audits*. Sunshine Yates Consulting. [Microsoft Word - Final 1.0 - New Zealand Food Waste Audit Report 2018 \(lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz\)](#)