

## Working Together to Reduce Food Waste

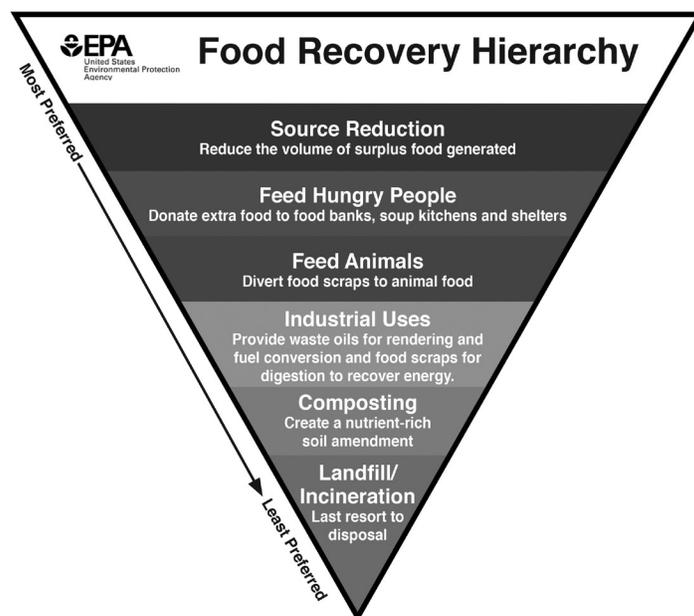
**Lisa Martin**, Shawnee County EFNEP/SNAP-Ed agent  
**Londa Nwadike**, Kansas State University/University  
of Missouri Extension, State Food Safety Specialist

### Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service estimates that 30 to 40% of edible food in the United States currently goes to waste. These 133 billion pounds of wasted food are worth an estimated \$161 billion, which is a significant loss to our economy. At the household level, the average US family of four loses an estimated \$1,500 per year on wasted food. Further, food waste accounts for 21% of the American waste stream.

When we throw food out, we are throwing away the money we spent on those items as well as wasting the water, energy, and labor used to produce that food. Also, food dumped in a landfill emits a large amount of methane gas, which is harmful to the environment. Organic waste, mostly food, is the second biggest component of landfills, and landfills are the third largest source of methane emissions (*FDA, 2020*). Because of the environmental impact of food waste, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a Food Recovery Hierarchy (*Image 1*) to help people to think about the best ways to reduce food waste.

Most food producers, processors, and food retailers are working on various initiatives to reduce their food waste. This lesson will focus on how consumers can reduce their own food waste. We will consider the different levels of the EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy (color image in fact sheet) and discuss how we can prioritize our efforts to reduce food waste and save our hard-earned money and global resources.



**Image 1:** Food recovery hierarchy

### Objectives

Participants will learn how to reduce food waste by

1. Reducing the volume of surplus food through:
  - a. Meal planning
  - b. Strategic grocery shopping
  - c. Proper food storage
  - d. Extending the life of food
  - e. Understanding and checking food product dates
2. Donating safe and nutritious surplus food
3. Composting food unsuitable for consumption

## Intended Audience

1. Kansans
2. Consumers
3. Staff and Volunteers at Food Pantries
4. Community Groups
5. Faith-based Organizations
6. Worksites

## Before the Lesson

1. Review this Leader's Guide and Fact Sheet (MF3482)
2. USDA, EPA and FDA have entered into a partnership to reduce food waste by 50 percent by 2030. Review each of the following websites:
  - a. Review USDA Food Loss and Food Waste Challenge: <https://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste>
  - b. Review ReFED: <https://www.refed.com/?sort=economic-value-per-ton>
  - c. Review FDA Food Waste: <https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/food-waste-and-loss>
  - d. Review EPA Food Waste: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food>
3. Review the KSRE Food Waste webpage: <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/topics/food-waste.html>

## Preparing for the Lesson

1. Make copies of fact sheet and evaluations.
2. Make copies of any optional supporting information.
3. Select websites and videos to show.
4. Gather potential lesson props:
  - a. Sample menu planners, such as from: [choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/budget/budget-weekly-meals](http://choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/budget/budget-weekly-meals)
  - b. Sample grocery shopping lists, such as from: [choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/budget/budget-grocery-list](http://choosemyplate.gov/eathealthy/budget/budget-grocery-list)
  - c. Food-grade storage containers for refrigerator and freezer
  - d. Food packaging samples to review food product dates

## Presentation

1. Provide pens or pencils.
2. Provide contact information
3. Have participants introduce themselves and tell why they are attending.
4. Review and discuss each section:
  - a. Reducing the volume of surplus food through:
    - i. Meal planning
    - ii. Strategic grocery shopping
    - iii. Proper food storage
    - iv. Extending the life of food
    - v. Understanding and checking food product dates
  - b. Donating safe and nutritious surplus food
  - c. Composting food unsuitable for consumption
5. Distribute evaluations.
6. Answer questions.
7. Thank audience for attendance and adjourn

## Suggested Additional Publications

Donating Safe and Nutritious Food to Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens: [bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/Item.aspx?catId=201&pubId=20420](http://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/Item.aspx?catId=201&pubId=20420)

Making Compost: A Beginners Guide [bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF1053.pdf](http://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF1053.pdf)

Safe Food Storage: The Cupboard: [bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/Item.aspx?catId=201&pubId=17459](http://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/Item.aspx?catId=201&pubId=17459)

Safe Food Storage: Refrigerator and Freezer: [bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/Item.aspx?catId=390&pubId=17480](http://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/Item.aspx?catId=390&pubId=17480)

## Suggested Videos

A recipe for cutting food waste | Peter Lehner | TEDx Manhattan: [youtube.com/watch?v=UwOHpWTRsBE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=UwOHpWTRsBE)

BAC Fighter Knowledge Exchange: Food Waste and Food Safety at Home: [youtube.com/watch?v=VZp7g-Xr6i0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=VZp7g-Xr6i0)

A Love Letter to Food: <https://youtu.be/-5i-dCv7O8o>

Evaluating Canned Food: [youtube.com/watch?v=sVJxZWc3HgY](https://youtube.com/watch?v=sVJxZWc3HgY)

Evaluating Boxed Foods: [youtube.com/watch?v=FBGbfBeFLVk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=FBGbfBeFLVk)

Evaluating Food Jars: [youtube.com/watch?v=74b0bg\\_Eywk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=74b0bg_Eywk)

## Evaluation

### Working together to reduce food waste

Thank you for attending this presentation. Please help us to continuously improve our presentations by filling out this anonymous evaluation.

#### Before Presentation

1. How often do you plan your meals before you shop for groceries?  
 Never    Rarely    Sometimes    Often    Usually    Always
2. How often do you look in the refrigerator or cupboard to see what you need before going shopping?  
 Never    Rarely    Sometimes    Often    Usually    Always
3. How often do you make a list before going shopping?  
 Never    Rarely    Sometimes    Often    Usually    Always
4. How confident are you in reading and understanding expiration dates on food?  
 Not at all    Slightly    Somewhat    Fairly    Completely
5. How often do you donate or compost unused food?  
 Never    Rarely    Sometimes    Often    Usually    Always

#### After Presentation

1. How likely are you to plan your meals before you shop for groceries?  
 Not at all    Slightly    Somewhat    Fairly    Very
2. How likely are you to look in the refrigerator or cupboard to see what you need before going shopping?  
 Not at all    Slightly    Somewhat    Fairly    Very
3. How likely are you to make a list before going shopping?  
 Not at all    Slightly    Somewhat    Fairly    Very
4. How confident are you in reading and understanding expiration dates on food?  
 Not at all    Slightly    Somewhat    Fairly    Very
5. How likely are you to donate or compost leftover food?  
 Not at all    Slightly    Somewhat    Fairly    Very

#### Comments and Suggestions

## Reviewers

- Lori Wuellner**, Wyandotte County, Nutrition and Food Safety agent, K-State Research and Extension  
**Ariel Whitely**, Shawnee County, Horticulture agent, K-State Research and Extension  
**Crystal Futrell**, Johnson County, Nutrition and Food Safety agent, K-State Research and Extension  
**Bill McKelvey**, University of Missouri Extension, Senior Project Coordinator  
**Karen Blakeslee**, Extension Associate, K-State Research and Extension

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

 **Extension**  
*University of Missouri*

---

Publications from Kansas State University are available at:  
[bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu](http://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu)

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit Lisa Martin and Londa Nwadike, *Working Together to Reduce Food Waste, Leader's Guide*, Kansas State University, June 2020.

**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and  
Cooperative Extension Service**

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, J Ernest Minton, Director.

MF3483    June 2020