



## **Food Waste Epidemic: Reduce It or Put It Productive Use**

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The food waste problem is becoming more widely recognized, with mainstream organizations and media reporting a staggering 30% of global food production worldwide goes to waste (up to 40% in the U.S.) Much of the attention has focused on reducing food waste. But a report released by the NGO Energy Vision, "Food Waste Erased," includes a less discussed but no less important dimension of the problem: what to do with food wastes that can't be eliminated.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and most recently, the global retailer IKEA have all adopted goals of cutting food waste in half.

That's a crucial goal, but achieving it would still leave the other half of food waste to manage, the report argues. "No matter how much food waste we avoid, we need to recognize that some element of waste will always be endemic, especially the large stream of inedible food," writes Energy Vision chair Joanna Underwood. "The question is, since we may not be able to avoid those wastes, what do we do with them?"

The report describes various uses for food waste, from making it into compost to capturing and refining the biogas it emits into renewable natural gas (RNG) for power generation and transportation. As a vehicle fuel, RNG can be net carbon-negative, meaning it prevents more GHGs from getting into the atmosphere than burning it emits. Compared to diesel and gasoline, RNG produced by anaerobic digestion of food waste reduces GHG emissions up to 120%. RNG production is growing fast. The first anaerobic digester facility in Utah, now under construction, will process food waste into enough RNG to power a city of 40,000. Matthew Tipper, Vice President of Future Fuels for Shell, recently wrote in Politico that until 2030 sustainable biofuels including RNG, combined with more efficient engines, "will provide the most cost-effective means of decarbonizing the transport sector."

"There's a wide range of strategies available today that enable all food produced to be utilized as a resource, either as food or as sustainable energy or fuel," said Underwood. "Food Waste Erased" provides information businesses and governments can use to implement them.