N SEPTEMBER 2015, AGRICULTURE Secretary Tom Vilsack and Environ-
mental Protection Agency Deputy Administrator Stan Meir-
burg announced the United States’ first-ever national food waste reduc-
tion goal, calling for a 50% reduction by 2030. The US Department of Agri-
culture (USDA) is in a unique position to lead food waste reduction efforts
given that each of its 16 different agencies has resources to address
this major concern. The USDA has always encouraged food waste re-
duction efforts—from its consumer-focused World War II—era campaigns
that promoted smart shopping, Victory Gardens, and food preservation to
recent efforts among K-12 schools.

The USDA Food, Nutrition, and Con-
sumer Services includes the Food and 
Nutrition Service (FNS) and the Center
for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
(CNPP), and both offer initiatives to
help reduce food waste and loss. In the
FNS’s school meals programs, the Na-
tional School Lunch Program and
School Breakfast Program, we are
encouraging food waste reduction
strategies to help schools save money
and to alleviate food insecurity through
food share tables and donation of
excess school food to local hunger re-
lief organizations. Equally important,
schools can involve students by
educating them about food waste and
its impacts on the environment and
society. The food waste reduction, re-
cover, and recycling activities in
schools teach students about the
value of food and inspire them to waste
less food throughout their lives.

FNS INFOGRAPHIC
The FNS has developed policy and will
continue to offer guidance and training
to help schools manage food waste. In
2014, the FNS created an infographic
titled “Reducing Food Waste – What
Schools Can Do Today.” The infographic
explains the issue of food waste and
offers simple strategies that schools
can employ to reduce food waste such
as scheduling recess before lunch or
extending the lunch period by 10 more
minutes.

CNPP INFOGRAPHIC
The CNPP is also supporting larger
USDA efforts by offering a new section
within ChooseMyPlate.gov to raise
awareness about how much edible food
is wasted at home and tips for
consumers to reduce food waste. The
website offers a range of federal
resources to support the USDA food
waste reduction initiative including a
new infographic titled “Let’s Talk
Trash.” Since the launch of MyPlate in
2011, ChooseMyPlate.gov has become a
popular federal resource for consumers
seeking information on nutrition and
health. Facts about food waste and tips
to help consumers cut back on food
waste will be a valuable addition to
ChooseMyPlate.gov as the USDA strives
to achieve food waste reduction goals
throughout the Department.

The data in the infographic are based
on findings from the Economic Re-
search Service report, The Estimated
Amount, Value, and Calories of Post-
harvest Food Losses at the Retail and
Consumer Levels in the United States
(2014). The report highlights food
loss, which includes food waste, as a
major concern in both domestic and
international circles. It also recom-
mends shifts in consumer behavior as
a key strategy in reducing food waste
while still maintaining consumer de-
mand for food safety, quality, variety,
and affordability.

ADDITIONAL EFFORTS
Additional initiatives to reduce food
waste include the Agricultural Re-
search Service’s efforts with farmers
to develop new technologies and
value-added products from produce
that would normally go to waste. And
the Food Safety and Inspection
Service developed a FoodKeeper app to
educate consumers about food storage
timelines and safe cooking tips that
help prevent food spoilage. Each USDA
agency plays a major role throughout
the food supply chain and can impact
the amount of food waste produced
and reduced.

In 2013, the USDA and Environ-
mental Protection Agency joined
together to launch the US Food Waste
Challenge to provide a platform to
assess and disseminate information
about the best practices to reduce,
recover, and recycle food loss and
waste. By the end of 2014, the joint-
agency US Food Waste Challenge
had over 4,000 participants, well sur-
passing its goal of 1,000 participants
by 2020. The USDA is working to grow
this list and expand food loss and
waste reduction efforts from farm to
table.

In response to Agriculture Secretary
Vilsack’s goal to reduce food waste in
The Food and Nutrition Service infographic—Reducing Food Waste — What Schools Can Do—offers simple strategies to help schools reduce food waste.
The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion infographic—Let’s Talk Trash—highlights food loss and waste.

Let’s talk trash.

Cut back on food waste and loss to save money, improve access to food, and protect natural resources.

About 90 billion pounds of edible food goes uneaten each year.*

That weighs 123x the Empire State Building.

This cost consumers $370 per person each year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Group</th>
<th>Cost per Person (in $)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grains</td>
<td>$22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>$45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein Foods**</td>
<td>$140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>$66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added Fat &amp; Sugar</td>
<td>$37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data from the United States Department of Agriculture.
Reduce **wasted food** in your home with simple shopping, storage, & cooking practices.

**Plan & Save**
Plan your weekly menu and make a grocery list. Does the list include food that you already have at home? Buy only what you need and stay within your **budget**.

**Set Storage Reminders**
Track storage times for different foods using [The FoodKeeper Application](#). This tool will remind you when foods are near to the end of their **storage date**.

**Check for Quality**
The date on a food package helps the store determine how long to display the product for sale. It can also help you to choose a product at its best quality.

**Re-purpose**
Give leftovers a makeover when you reuse them in recipes. Add broccoli stems to a salad or blend overripe fruit into a low-fat smoothie. **Freeze** extra food.

**Be Food Safe**
Shop refrigerated or frozen foods just before checking out. Transport items that spoil easily in a cooler or thermal bag and refrigerate or freeze within two hours of shopping.

**Be Organized**
Foods are less likely to go bad when you use the older items first. Keep your pantry and **refrigerator** clean and organized so you can see what needs to be eaten first.

**Donate**
Many shelters, food banks, and faith-based organizations will accept food donations to feed others who need a meal.

**Recycle & Compost**
Instead of throwing out food, create a **compost** bin. Don’t have a yard? Your city may help you find composting or recycling options that are right for you.

*In homes and away-from home eating places.
**Protein foods includes meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and nuts.

Sources:
All sources are available at [ChooseMyPlate.gov/lets-talk-trash](#).

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(continued) The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion infographic—Let’s Talk Trash—highlights food loss and waste.
the United States by 50% by the year 2030, the USDA Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services will do its part and continue to promote food waste reduction by working with national- and community-based organizations. Registered dietitian nutritionists are encouraged to consider how they can promote these efforts and inspire future generations to become concerned about reducing food waste and producing environmentally-stable communities.

References