

Recycling won't get us to Zero  
Waste

**Refocus:**

**Waste Prevention**

(Not making waste in the first place)

**With emphasis on Food**

**EPS Ban = EPS Alternatives: Other plastic/bioplastic containers** (“bioplastics” also called “compostable plastics”)

## **Bioplastics food containers:**

Wholly/partially made from plant/biological material vs. petroleum.

## **Sounds great but:**

1. Can't distinguish from conventional plastics without very expensive equipment so are considered contaminants in curbside programs.
2. No standard labeling: some display resin codes 7 or 0.
3. NO SoCal industrial composting facilities process bioplastics because they break down at different – slower – rate than other compostable materials.

1. Many paper containers include PFAS: chemicals that resist grease, oil, stains and water and are linked to cancer.
2. Some paper containers (beverage cups) have plastic (polyethylene) linings, so few recycling processors accept them.
3. Glendale does not recycle paper food containers, clean or dirty.
4. Few SoCal composters accept food-soiled paper.
5. Paper containers are still single-use and inherently wasteful.
6. Paper is an organic material that generates methane (a GHG)



Gable Boxes - 8 x 4  
7/8 x 5 1/4", White...



"GenPak HL3LG -  
Hinged Lid Take...



Chinese Take-Out  
Boxes - 1/2 Pint,...



Take Out  
Containers 100%...



3 Compartment  
Taco Fiber...



Biodegradable  
Food Trays 6.5" x ...

## Is an EPS ban feasible?

1. Restaurants like EPS: it's cheap, retains heat, doesn't leak.
2. The pandemic has decimated restaurant industry; EPS single-use disposable alternatives cost 4 – 5 x EPS; need cooperative purchasing to cut cost differential.

### **Short-term options:**

1. An ordinance making all single-use items (napkins, utensils, condiments) available only upon request, and/or requiring restaurants to charge for them.

Either would save restaurants money, reduce usage of the products, reduce waste, call attention to single-use items, and educate consumers that nothing is “free.”

2. A phased-in EPS ban: large restaurants (by employees or revenue).

out.

2. **FYI:** CA AB 619 *allows but not require* restaurants to let customers bring their own reusable durable containers.

3. Ask if your favorite restaurants allow reusables.

(Restaurants have likely suspended this due to pandemic.)

**Note:** Few restaurants seem to know about AB 619. (LA County Health has not yet promoted this or developed guidelines.)

**Helpful hint:** After the pandemic, take your own reusable container and try it! I've never been turned down

# Recycling was a good first step but it won't get us to zero waste

## A quick history

1. CA AB 939 required a reduction in landfill disposal.
2. Cities launched residential curbside recycling programs.
3. Recycling is expensive: trucks, staff, bins.
4. That said, for many years, we made a lot of revenue selling recyclables to China.

## But:

1. Source reduction (waste prevention) was short-changed.
2. Recycling was rarely *mandated*.
4. Most cities did not address *commercial sector* recycling.
5. West Coast relied upon China to buy our recyclables, so we didn't develop sufficient domestic processing

1. Didn't address our "culture of convenience" that has led to on-the-go meals, single-use items, over-packaging, non-recyclables.
2. Doesn't require changing our purchasing habits to make less waste, to select durable, recyclable items or practice reuse.
3. Everything is *externalized*: Buy it, use it and toss it into the "magic bin" for "someone else" to manage.
4. Lets manufacturers off the hook: They are free to over-package, use non-recyclable materials, sell difficult-to-recycle materials and externalize post-usage materials management costs.
5. We ignored the human health and environmental impacts to China.
6. We took advantage of China: hiding hazardous materials and trash inside loads of recyclables.

# Focus on Food: Biggest Bang for



OUR WORK

OUR EXPERTS

OUR STORIES

GET INVOLVED

ABOUT US

1. U.S. wastes about 40% of all food while 1 in 8 Americans and 1.5 million in LA County (including about 25% of kids) are food-insecure.

2. Californians throw away nearly 6 million tons of food scraps or food waste each year, or about 18 percent of all the material that goes to landfills

3. Residential food waste disposal has been increasing.

4. About 1.5 million tons of food is thrown out/year by CA caterers, hotels and restaurants.

OUR WORK > FOOD WASTE > FOOD MATTERS: EMPOWERING CITIES TO TACKLE FOOD WASTE

## Food Matters: What We Waste and How We Can Expand the Amount of Food We Rescue

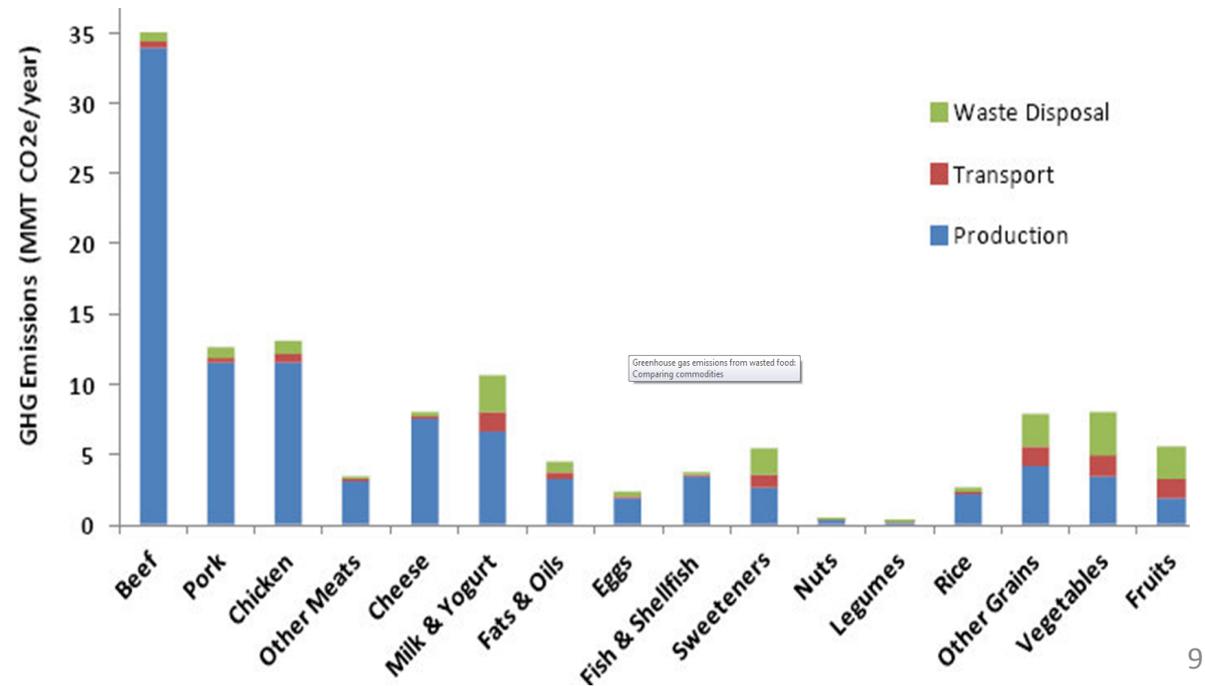
Report | by JoAnne Berkenkamp & Darby Hoover & Yerina Mugica | October 24, 2017



iStock

# Get the Connection: Food = climate change

1. There are greenhouse gas emissions associated with all phases of food: production, transportation, and disposal.
2. "Organic waste" means food waste, green waste (landscape and pruning waste), nonhazardous wood waste, and **food-soiled paper waste** (including to-go paper food containers).
3. Organic waste disposed in landfills creates [methane](#)—a greenhouse gas with 21 times the global warming potential (GWP) of carbon dioxide.
4. Landfills produce > 20% of methane emissions in the US.



# Why food is wasted: Understanding Food Dates

Food dates: Like many people, you may be discarding food that's still good, because you rely upon the "sell by," "use by," or "best by" dates.

The dates *are a manufacturer's suggestion for **when food is at peak quality or freshness**, not when it is unsafe to eat.*

Note: CA AB 954 simplifies date labels by promoting two standard types of phrases, "BEST if Used by" or "BEST if Used or Frozen by" to indicate peak freshness, and "USE by" or "USE or Freeze by" to indicate food safety.

The use of "Sell by" date labels that are visible to consumers will also be discouraged, because these date labels are only meant for stock rotation but are often mistaken as an indication of food safety. The new law also provides consumer education, which is a key component that will result in a more complete understanding of food date labels among the public.

## The Dating Game:

How Confusing Food Date Labels Lead to Food Waste in America



# We've neglected the basics

We buy single-serve meals versus buying in bulk and cooking.

We rely on dates versus “sniff” test to determine freshness.

We've forgotten how to store food:  
(blanch and freeze vegetables)

We let backyard produce go to waste instead of signing up for free gleaning services (Food Forward) or picking and donating.

**There's insufficient donation of surplus edible food from catered events, restaurants and grocers due to unfounded concerns about liability (donations are protected by the Good Samaritan Law), even though no food donor has ever been sued.**

**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STORING FOOD IN THE FREEZER**

**MAXIMUM STORAGE TIMES**

- White fish - 6 to 8 months
- Oily fish - 3 to 4 months
- Beef, lamb and pork - 4 to 6 months
- Sliced bacon - 2 to 3 months
- Ham/bacon joints - 3 to 4 months
- Chicken/turkey - 4 to 6 months
- Soups/sauces - 3 months
- Prepared meals - 4 to 6 months
- Bread - 4 to 6 months
- Ice cream - 2 to 4 months

Never freeze slightly warm foods, or more than  $\frac{1}{10}$  of your freezer's capacity in 24 hours, as this will cause a rise in temperature.

Chill out! Keep everything frozen at  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$ . This is the correct operating temperature for your freezer.

When freezing large quantities, use the 'fast-freeze' setting on your freezer, if it has one.

**7 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD FREEZE**

	Use within
1. Egg whites	6 months
2. Milk	3 months
3. Butter	3 months
4. Bananas	3 months
5. Chopped onion	6 months
6. Pesto	3 months
7. Wine	6 months

Thawing frozen food needs to be done carefully

- Never leave food to thaw in a warm place (a fridge or cooler is ideal)
- Cover loosely
- Make sure food is thoroughly thawed before cooking

For more information, go to [goodhousekeeping.co.uk/institute](http://goodhousekeeping.co.uk/institute)

# What to do: Legislative and Policy Remedies

Topic		Local	State	Notes
Hazardous	Classify PFAS as hazardous material or ban their use in food containers		x	
	Offer cleaning materials and latex paint donated to HHW programs to local nonprofits	x		Allowed per SB 726
Recycling				
	Support curbside recycling program with robust EPP (environmentally preferable purchasing) programs	x		
	Standardize curbside recycling programs (voluntary) throughout state (and West Coast) to facilitate domestic processing infrastructure, incentivize manufacturers		x	
	Facilitate identification of bioplastic products with large stripe or mark		x	
	Mandate that paper recyclables be protected from elements	x	x	Uncovered cardboard is ruined by rain; cardboard is one of the most valuable recyclable materials
Waste prevention	Ban single-use disposable food containers for all dine-in meals	x	x	May require changes to building codes to allocate space and infrastructure for dishwashers
	All single-use disposables (straws, utensils, napkins, condiments) to be provided only upon request	x	x	
	Mandate a fee for single-use disposables (straws, utensils, napkins, condiments)	x	x	Berkeley charges 25 cents for single-use cups
	Strengthen existing EPR (Extended producer responsibility or "take-back") programs such as those for mattresses, electronics and motor oil		x	

# Legislative and Policy Remedies

Topic		Local	State	Notes
Climate change	Mandate that restaurants, grocery stores provide info about embedded energy, water and associated GHG emissions for different foods		x	
	Mandate that grocery stores provide info about freezing foods and food dates.		x	
	Mandate that restaurants/concessionaires operating on government property offer minimum percentage of meat-free entrees/meals		x	
Food	Strengthen AB 954 (food dates) with mandate versus voluntary program		x	
	Put limits on food waste/wasted food (overages) for catering, meals, and concessionaire contracts (1%-3% are common limits)	x		
	Mandatory participation in food rescue program by grocers, restaurants, food facilities	x		
	At airports, install refrigeration units outside security zones to facilitate food donations and pickups			
Building design/codes	To reduce transportation of food waste for off-site processing, facilitate on-site management of food waste through technologies such as EcoVim and ORCA, by modifying building codes as necessary, for malls, campuses, large multi-family and commercial buildings	x		
Franchise	Facilitate food rescue with centrally-managed "escrow account" funded by franchised haulers	x		
Education	Full-disclosure product and package labels: Disclose all constituent materials in product and package AND ratio of packaging:product		x	

## References/Links

**EPS Alternatives** Clean Production Action/Toxic-Free Future fact sheet

[https://www.cleanproduction.org/images/ee\\_images/uploads/resources/Alternatives\\_Food\\_Packaging\\_PFAS\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_CPA\\_1-23-18\\_v2\\_FINAL\\_with\\_logos.pdf](https://www.cleanproduction.org/images/ee_images/uploads/resources/Alternatives_Food_Packaging_PFAS_Fact_Sheet_CPA_1-23-18_v2_FINAL_with_logos.pdf)

**Reducing Food Waste** <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/reduce-food-waste>

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/uk/house-and-home/household-advice/a676340/foods-you-can-freeze-and-for-how-long/>

**Food-related GHG emissions (slide 9)** <https://www.cleanmetrics.com/pages/ClimateChangeImpactofUSFoodWaste.pdf>

**Water and energy usage for food production** <https://www.watercalculator.org/footprint/foods-big-water-footprint/>

<https://www.treehugger.com/green-food/energy-required-to-produce-a-pound-of-food.html> **Food Dates** <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/dating-game-IB.pdf>

**Food Safety** <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/basics-for-handling-food-safely>

**Food Donations** <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/docs/WhatsNew/FoodDonations.pdf>

Good Samaritan Law (text): [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201720180AB1219](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB1219)

Good Sam Summary: <https://www.cawrecycles.org/recycling-news/s8dhppb5g2xdnz8x52jx8c5jcy7a8a>

**Food Gleaning** [foodforward.org](http://foodforward.org)

**Disposed food/food waste** <https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/food>