

# Divert food waste from landfills

Help communities reduce food waste, increase organics processing, and avoid long-term landfill costs.

## What's the issue?

More than 30% of what we throw away is organic material, such as food waste. A large portion of that food could be "rescued" and used to feed people. The rest can be used for animal feed or processed into value-added products such as compost. None of it belongs in landfills. Removing organics from the waste stream will reduce our need for expensive landfills in the future.

While collection of organic waste more than doubled from 2011 to 2015, according to data from Minnesota counties, access to organics recycling remains a challenge. Only 17% of state residents had access to curbside organics recycling in 2017 (most recent data).



## Proposal

A \$1.5 million biennial General Fund ongoing appropriation is proposed. It would be used for grants to reduce the amount of food waste going to landfills, including:

- \$1 million to support increased retail and prepared food rescue, and to advance proven methods for preventing business and residential food waste
- \$369,000 for analyzing emerging technologies (e.g., anaerobic digestion, pyrolysis, etc.), addressing contaminants of emerging concern (e.g., PFAS), and other barriers
- A one-half FTE for grant administration and policy support in food waste reduction

The proposal also includes policy initiatives:

- Educating businesses and organizations on the Good Samaritan law and food safety regulations for handling prepared and perishable foods
- Designating a state food waste hierarchy
- Revising labeling requirements for compostable plastics to ensure they meet industry standards, and improve product quality for professional composters
- Measuring progress by requiring composition studies at solid waste facilities

## Why is it important?

Organics are the largest single source of solid waste in Minnesota, and state law establishes a goal for metro-area counties to recycle and compost 75% of solid waste by 2030. Moreover, 9.2% of Minnesotans lack a secure source of food for their families; their annual food-budget shortfall is \$258 million. In addition to the benefits of food rescue and organics recycling, the proposal could:

- Reduce waste hauling costs for businesses; recycling is not subject to the solid waste management tax
- Give more state residents access to curbside organics recycling
- Support the production of compost. The Minnesota composting industry adds an estimated \$148 million in gross economic activity each year, according to a 2014 study.
- Keep organic waste out of landfills, slowing the growth of both costly landfills and greenhouse gas emissions. Organic waste in landfills produces methane, and food waste is responsible for at least 2.6% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.
- Prevent wasting the resources used to produce and transport the food

## For more information

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