

Goal 1: Prevent Food Waste Before it starts

Objective 1.1: Encourage smart consumer behavior at the household level

- Promote planned purchasing for grocery shopping
- Educate households on freezing, prepping, and storing food

Objective 1.2: Support food waste prevention in institutions, businesses, and producers

- Advocate for improved supply chain planning in schools and hospitals
- Reuse leftover menu items creatively in food service
- Provide more freezer and refrigeration capacity to preserve surplus food through reuse programs, grants, and partnerships.
- Collaborate with food manufacturers and distributors to improve forecasting and inventory management
- Incentivize secondary markets for imperfect or surplus produce

Objective 1.3: Integrate food waste reduction into school curriculum and student habits

- Develop programs to teach kids about food waste and the importance of reduction
- Promote food waste competitions in schools
- Let students choose which items they want to reduce waste
- Provide food scrap recycling education in schools
- Encourage participation in 10 Cents a Meal and Michigan Green Schools initiatives

Goal 2: Divert Edible Food Waste and Organics from Landfills. Promote feeding livestock when possible

Objective 2.1: Strengthen food donation and redistribution systems

- Connect restaurants and grocery stores with food pantries, shelters, and soup kitchens
- Provide funding for businesses that redistribute edible food
- Promote donation to schools, seniors, fire stations
- Raise awareness of the Good Samaritan Law protections

Objective 2.2: Establish and expand organics infrastructure and programs

- Initiate and encourage the development of food scrap recycling sites, digesters or other food waste reduction sites
- Develop food scrap recycling drop off programs for communities over 5,000 residents
- Develop food scrap recycling curbside programs for communities that have demonstrated interest

Objective 2.3: Pilot and scale composting programs

- Support pilot programs that convert food waste into compost for community gardens
- Engage FFA and 4H clubs in composting efforts
- Provide residential backyard composting tools and resources

Goal 3: Build Public Awareness and Education on Food Waste

Objective 3.1: Deliver consistent, empathetic, and transparent education

- Adopt a region-wide color/shape/signage food waste reduction scheme
- Work with Conservation Districts, Parks Departments, institutions, businesses, etc. to increase education on food scrap diversion.
- Promote transparency and correct misinformation

Objective 3.2: Foster a culture of responsibility and change social norms relating to food waste

- Add existing information, best practices & food waste reduction efforts to the County website
- Create strategies to reduce waste and collect food scraps at County events and properties
- Normalize food scrap recycling and food donation behavior in schools, restaurants, and households
- Recognize and promote businesses who adopt food waste reduction practices

Goal 4: Develop and Align Infrastructure and Policy for Food Waste Solutions

Objective 4.1: Identify and promote food scrap recycling policies

- Provide and promote ordinances that ensure a reduction in food waste to the landfill.
- Support policies for donation and food scrap recycling at public institutions

Objective 4.2: Track Organics Diversion Rates over time

- Create a method for reporting organics diversion
- Track organics diversion year to year

Objective 4.3: Encourage entrepreneurial and public investment in food scrap recycling

- Fund startup and expanding food scrap recycling businesses
- Support and encourage the Nextcycle program

Goal 5: Connect and Support Local and Regional Solutions

Objective 5.1: Map and promote existing local resources

- Create a comprehensive , interactive map of food and yard waste sites in Cass, Berrien, and Van Buren Counties
- Provide details on what materials each location accepts

Objective 5.2: Encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing

- Support awareness campaigns for food pantries
- Collaborate with other counties with similar goals and initiatives
- Share best practices from other communities for municipalities looking to enhance food waste reduction efforts
- Share resources from MSU Extension, Conservation Districts, and Health Depts