



Food Waste  
CHARTER



# FOOD WASTE CHARTER

Implementation Report

June 2023 - June 2024

**THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY PROGRAMME**

The Driving Force for Ireland's Move to a Circular Economy



Rialtas na hÉireann  
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# Introduction

Ireland has committed to halving food waste by 2030 under UN Sustainable Development Goal 12.3. Efforts to reduce food waste require a collective response from government, public bodies, food supply chain businesses and households. This is a significant challenge as approximately 750,000 tonnes of food waste are generated in Ireland annually.

The Environmental Protection Agency has a statutory responsibility to report on food waste data and to establish [food waste prevention programmes](#) and these are delivered through the Circular Economy Programme.

In the [National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap 2023-2025](#) the government has identified priority actions to meet Ireland’s commitment to reduce food waste. The Environmental Protection Agency has been given responsibility to deliver various actions under the Roadmap, including to launch a revised Food Waste Charter by Q2 2023, with support from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and other stakeholders.

Sign up to the revised Food Waste Charter is open to businesses across the food supply chain - primary production, manufacturers & processors, retail & distribution, restaurants & hospitality. In 2022, 530,000 tonnes of food waste were generated in Ireland by businesses in these sectors - over 70 per cent of food waste.

This report provides information on the implementation of the revised Food Waste Charter in the first year of its implementation – June 2023 to June 2024.



Signing the Food Waste Charter means you



## PLEDGE

Commit to work together to reduce food waste.



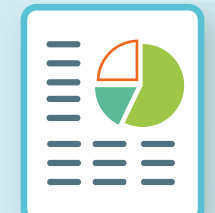
## MEASURE

Monitor and track the food waste and associated cost within your business’ operations.



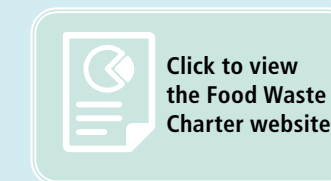
## REDUCE

Identify appropriate interventions, set a target and take action to reduce food waste.



## REPORT

Report annually to the EPA on your progress and achievements.



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# Launching the revised Food Waste Charter

The revised Food Waste Charter was launched in June 2023, calling on all businesses and State Agencies operating across the food supply chain to sign up and commit to reducing food waste.

At the launch the EPA's Director General Laura Burke, Minister Ossian Smyth (Minister of State with responsibility for Public Procurement, eGovernment and Circular Economy), Minister Charlie McConalogue (Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine), and five State Agencies signed the Food Waste Charter. The State Agencies included Bord Bia, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and Teagasc - all have a role in supporting and developing Ireland's food sector businesses.

Food sector businesses need to join the collective response to reduce food waste by signing up to the Charter. Membership of the Food Waste Charter is open to businesses that produce, process, manufacture, distribute or sell food and drink, and to supporting organisations that commit to championing the Food Waste Charter through their activities and networks.

A Food Waste Charter Action Group was established in 2023 and supports the implementation of the Charter. The EPA chairs the group which has members from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Enterprise Ireland and CIRCULÉIRE.



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# State Agencies supporting the Food Waste Charter

## - Year One Activities



Bord Iascaigh Mhara’s focus has been on internal processes and organisation to build a strong foundation for future management and engagement with seafood sector clients in the areas of raw material handling, food waste, bioeconomy, by-products and co-product development. A cross-business unit Circular Seafood Group has been established to support these activities. Notable activities include:

- Development of dedicated resources addressing food waste through the Green Seafood Programme.
- Collaboration with FoodCloud to distribute fresh fish from seafood filleting training courses to charities.
- Investigations into the application of By-Product (Regulation 27) under Waste Framework Directive as a regulatory mechanism to prevent food waste.



Enterprise Ireland have broadened the scope of their Green Transition Fund for client organisations to include circular economy and bioeconomy related activities. Client companies may avail of Enterprise Ireland Sustainability Supports e.g., [Climate Action Vouchers](#) and/or the [Green Start programme](#) to develop a plan to reduce and manage food waste.

Other notable activities include:

- Promotion of the Food Waste Charter internally and to client companies by direct email, in newsletters and at internal meetings.
- Promotion of the Food Waste Charter at a Bakery Sector event in April 2024 and the Food Innovation Summit in June 2024.
- Providing expert advice through participation in the EPA-chaired Food Waste Charter Action Group.



Teagasc provides a range of technical support services to over 200 food sector businesses annually (testing, training, consultancy, product development). This is providing opportunities to assess current practices and encourage the introduction of practices for monitoring, reducing and preventing food waste.

Other notable activities include:

- Promotion of the Food Waste Charter internally and to client companies.
- As part of its tender process for the provision of catering services for its canteens, Teagasc has included sustainable criteria which has resulted in the current provider (The Q Café) signing the Food Waste Charter.
- Hosting the Food Waste Charter networking event in June 2024 at their Ashtown campus.

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# State Agencies supporting the Food Waste Charter

## - Year One Activities

### **BORD BIA** IRISH FOOD BOARD

Bord Bia have undertaken extensive engagement with client companies in promoting the Food Waste Charter and broader food waste prevention resources provided by the EPA.

Food waste reduction targets are being established through Origin Green Plans and during the annual review process. In Origin Green members' annual verification reports they are being encouraged to sign up to the Food Waste Charter and to use the EPA Food Waste Measurement Protocol when establishing food waste baselines.

Other notable activities include:

- Incorporation of the EPA Food Waste Measurement Protocol into Origin Green 'Pathways to Food Waste Prevention' guidance and hosting an associated webinar.
- Supporting projects to test the EPA Food Waste Measurement Protocol in manufacturing & processing sub-sectors.
- Promotion of the Food Waste Charter internally and to client companies through Origin Green Mentors; a dedicated webinar for members in May 2024; by direct email; in newsletters, social media channels and relevant publications including an advertorial in Business Plus magazine in August 2023.



Fáilte Ireland have been exploring opportunities for incorporation of the Charter into their Climate Action Programme, which offers businesses within the tourism sector a variety of mentoring and other supports to help develop their tailored action plans and empower those businesses to operate more sustainably.

Activities include:

- Promotion of food waste tracking and minimisation to businesses through online training videos and guides for tourism businesses.



# Build Knowledge & Develop Capacity

Businesses that sign up to the Food Waste Charter commit to **measure** (monitor and track their food waste using standardised EPA measurement methodologies), **reduce** (identify and take at least one target-based action to reduce food waste) and **report** (to the EPA annually on progress towards measurable outcomes and achievements) on their food waste.

## Food Waste Charter Resources for Measuring & Monitoring Food Waste

Before deciding on any course of action to reduce food waste, businesses need to know **what** food waste is generated, **where** it is being generated and **why** it is arising. To support a consistent approach to monitoring and measuring, the EPA has developed standard methodologies based on internationally recognised measurement standards. They are designed to bring consistency to measurement by following a step-based approach.



- EPA Food Waste Measurement Protocol – guidance and associated workbook for the food & drink manufacturing sector.



- EPA Food Service Pathway to Less Food Waste and Better Margins – simplified version of the Protocol designed for the hospitality sector with associated workbook.



- Food Waste Prevention for Public Sector Offices – guidance and associated workbook, to support the obligation on certain public bodies under the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2024 to measure and monitor their food waste.

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# Build Knowledge & Develop Capacity

The EPA Food Waste Measurement Protocol has been tested in several manufacturing & processing sectors and the following guidance documents are available:

**Food Waste Charter Guidance:  
BAKERY SECTOR**

THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY PROGRAMME  
The Driving Force for Ireland's Move to a Circular Economy

epa Rialtas na Míreann  
Government of Ireland

Bakery Sector



**Food Waste Charter Guidance:  
PREPARED FOODS SECTOR**

THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY PROGRAMME  
The Driving Force for Ireland's Move to a Circular Economy

epa Rialtas na Míreann  
Government of Ireland

Prepared Foods Sector



**Food Waste Charter Guidance:  
SEAFOOD SECTOR**

THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY PROGRAMME  
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Seafood Sector



Guidance for brewing sector, distillery sector, meat sector and dairy sector is under development.

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# Build the Evidence Base

The EPA’s food waste prevention programmes are underpinned by evidence and behavioural insights. Under the government’s National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap the EPA is tasked to deliver studies to build the evidence base for food waste prevention actions in food sector businesses. Qualitative research\* provided the following insights on key drivers and barriers to measuring food waste, to setting and implementing reduction targets, and providing an understanding current approaches to measuring and reporting food waste.

	Managing food waste in businesses is a challenge. However, there is significant motivation from the business community to keep food waste as low as possible with reducing costs and ‘moral duty’ being the most significant motivators.
	Machinery faults or limitations, climate, harvest challenges, raw material packaging, human error, order issues with retailers, and the learning curve during new product development are considered the main causes of food waste in businesses.
	There is a real openness from businesses to innovate, with many businesses exhibiting high levels of innovation to extract as much value as possible from their core product and reduce waste along their supply chain.
	Most businesses have at least some food waste strategy in place. Larger businesses are more likely to have specific KPIs that they are working towards – often tied in with overarching sustainability goals.
	Staff are considered as either key enablers or inhibitors of a successful food waste reduction strategy. Businesses strive to achieve a ‘culture of waste minimisation’.
	Measuring food waste is a considerable challenge for businesses. Measuring food waste using batch yields is common practice, but most stop short of analysing the specific causes.

\* Research conducted by Ipsos B&A on behalf of EPA. One-to-one interviews conducted with 10 medium-large and SME food manufacturing businesses.




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# Spotlight on Charter Members

Many Irish food and drink businesses are actively looking at opportunities to prevent food waste – it makes sense as an opportunity to reduce costs and support environmental sustainability goals such as climate action, with food waste generating up to 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

In this section we spotlight three Charter members and their activities to prevent food waste in their own business and in co-operation with their supply chain.



Specialising in baked goods and breads, Aryzta's Ireland facility works to the global group target of 20% food waste reduction by 2028 (from a 2022 baseline).

Data capture and synopsis is incorporated into the performance control system and is integral to everyday processes. Along with key metrics such as safety and quality, waste/material loss is measured and monitored at each stage along the production lines, and reviewed at different time intervals, e.g. by shift, by day, by week to identify root causes and inform actions.

With around 50% of waste arising due to breakdowns, regular preventative maintenance is scheduled to avoid equipment breakdowns, prevent waste and other impacts due to costly downtime.



Tesco have set a target of 50% reduction of food waste from their own operations by 2025 (from a baseline of 2017). Currently food waste is 0.77% of food handled within Tesco's own operations.

Tesco Ireland are working in partnership with seventeen of their largest Irish fresh food suppliers to reduce food waste at their manufacturing sites. In September 2020, the first twelve suppliers to sign up to this commitment each published their food waste data for their own operations for the first time.

Measurement is a fundamental principle for these activities, recognising that we must understand where food is wasted from farm to fork, and in what quantities, before we can act together to tackle it.



O'Brien Fine Foods produce cooked meats and have set a target to reduce food waste by 50% by 2026 (from a 2022 baseline). The measurement Protocol provided data and evidence for changes in practice, as efforts to prevent food waste requires support from all business departments.

With 70% of food waste arising at the slicing lines, waste prevention actions included operational efficiency projects and working up the process line to optimise the product for better slicing efficiency.

Developing new 'Trim' products prevented 35-45% of operational food waste. Agreement with a grocery retail partner to take these on an 'as available' basis was important to this project.

The company undertakes regular reviews to monitor progress and identify areas for further improvement.

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# Networking and capacity building

Under the government’s National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap, the EPA has responsibility to co-ordinate the Forum on Food Waste, with support from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and various stakeholders. The Forum is a national platform to bring policy leaders, businesses and experts from across the food supply chain together and provides a valuable network for information exchange on food waste prevention and reduction activities.



## FORUM ON FOOD WASTE 2023

In November 2023, an online Forum was held with the theme Countdown to 2030: together against food waste.

There was a panel session with the five State Agencies and the EPA. There were presentations by Charter members Tesco, O’Brien Fine Foods and Ayzta on their practical experiences of measuring and setting targeted actions to reduce food waste. There were also presentations on the introduction of mandatory food waste reporting by the Finnish Ministry of Environment and an overview of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive.



[Watch the video](#)

# Networking and capacity building

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## FORUM ON FOOD WASTE 2024

To mark the first anniversary of the Charter launch, a [Food Waste Charter Networking Event](#) took place on 27 June 2024, hosted at Teagasc’s Ashtown conference facility.

There were panel sessions with State Agency and EPA representatives and with Charter members Tesco and Panelto Foods.



[Watch the video](#)

A breakout session with attendees provided suggestions on how to get more sign up to the Charter and insights into the challenges and opportunities for food waste reduction within business sectors, which included:

- Importance of integration of the Food Waste Charter with other State funded food sector development programmes.
- Case studies needed to show the benefits of signing up to the Charter, the potential savings and benchmarking information.
- Concern regarding data confidentiality and reputation around food waste reporting.
- Importance of consistency of language across sectors, including a common understanding of food waste.

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# Reporting on Year One Implementation

At the end of June 2024, there were 43 Charter business members<sup>1</sup>, representing over 50,000 employees.

Breakdown of Charter members at end June 2024 by sector

<b>Primary Production</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Manufacturing and Processing</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>Retail &amp; Distribution</b>		<b>5</b>
<b>Restaurants &amp; food services</b>		<b>16</b>
<b>Other supporting members</b>		<b>3</b>

1. Not including EPA, DECC, DAFM and five State Agencies who are also signatories to the Charter.

To gain a baseline understanding of Charter members' approach to implementation of Charter commitments, members who had signed up by end May 2024 (31) were asked to report on activities for the period June 2023 to June 2024 and these responses are represented in the table below.








## KEY INDICATORS

 <b>MEASURE</b>	% of members tracking their food waste	<b>84%</b>
	% with a baseline year for food waste measurement	<b>77%</b>
 <b>REDUCE</b>	% with specific food waste reduction target	<b>74%</b>
	% members implementing food waste reduction initiatives in 2023	<b>87%</b>
	% collaborating with supply chain partners to reduce food waste	<b>45%</b>
 <b>REPORT</b>	% supporting National Stop Food Waste Day (1 <sup>st</sup> March 2024)	<b>42%</b>
	% reporting Food Waste Charter activities to EPA	<b>94%</b>
	% reporting 2023 food waste data to EPA	<b>65%</b>



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# Key Findings & Insights

 <p>PLEDGE</p>	<p>There were 43 Charter members at end June 2023. <i>Increasing membership is important to have a high representation of businesses across the food supply chain and make the Food Waste Charter an impactful and successful voluntary initiative.</i></p>
 <p>MEASURE</p>	<p>Members are at different stages of food waste prevention activity. While many are tracking food waste and undertaking initiatives to reduce food waste, many are not yet using the insights from monitoring food waste to identify appropriate interventions in waste generation hot spots. <i>Stronger focus is needed on evidence-led actions in targeted areas, informed by consistent measurement.</i></p>
 <p>REDUCE</p>	<p>74% of members have set a food waste reduction target, and 45% have set a target aligned to SDG 12.3 (50% reduction by 2030). <i>Setting a target forms part of the Charter pledge, all members need to set an evidence-based target.</i></p> <p>Some members set food waste reduction targets without specifying a baseline year. <i>To tackle food waste prevention in a meaningful way, food waste reduction must be benchmarked against a baseline year to measure progress.</i></p>
 <p>REPORT</p>	<p>Many businesses can see the benefits of signing the Food Waste Charter, but some have concerns in relation to data confidentiality and potential reputation risk around food waste reporting. <i>Providing assurance that the EPA will only publish data and information from reports in an aggregated format needs to be clear to prospective members.</i></p>
	<p>Most members reported how they are working to address food waste within their operations, but less than half (45%) reported working with supply chain partners to reduce food waste: <i>There are opportunities through customer-client relationships to target food waste prevention activities through co-operation across the supply chain.</i></p>
	<p>Over 40% of members supported <a href="#">National Stop Food Waste Day</a> on 1st March 2024, providing information to their staff and/or promoting it through their social media platforms. <i>Many members recognise that building a culture of food waste prevention within their business influences staff to support food waste reduction initiatives.</i></p>
	<p>The five supporting State Agencies carried out activities to raise awareness of the Charter within their own organisations, in their client bases and to embed the Charter within their existing programmes. They have also supported the EPA in Charter activities such as the launch and the Forum on Food Waste events.</p> <p>Three supporting members (not directly in the food &amp; drink sector) have pledged their support for the Charter – <b>FoodCloud</b>, <b>TooGoodToGo</b> and <b>PrepSheets</b>. Such organisations can play an important role in raising awareness of the Charter with their clients and networks.</p>



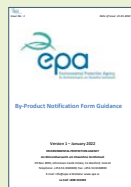
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# Key Findings & Insights



Building awareness and understanding of the food use hierarchy across the food supply chain is important. This will ensure there is a focus on the reduction and prevention of food waste.

A common understanding of terms is important when engaging with food supply businesses and in developing sector-specific guidance (e.g. a by-product in one sector is called a co-product in another) and reporting on food waste. Business and State Agency input into guidance and templates developed to support Charter members is vital to ensure it is fit-for-purpose for the relevant sector.



Where a production residue can be considered a by-product instead of a waste, this is a waste prevention activity. There are potential applications within the food & drink sector to prevent waste through the application of Regulation 27.

The concept of a by-product was established by the EU Waste Framework Directive and transposed into Irish law through Regulation 27 of the EC (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011 as amended. Only a production residue can be considered a potential by-product and the initial assessment of whether a production residue is a by-product or a waste is generally conducted by the material producer. The economic operator is required to notify the EPA if they decide the material is a by-product, and they must demonstrate that:

- The material can have a further use and will not be defined as waste.
- The material can be used as a secondary resource in place of and fulfilling the same role as a non-waste derived or virgin 'primary' resource.
- The material can be used without causing overall adverse impacts to the environment or human health.



Implementation of green public procurement under the national policy 'Buying Greener: Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2027' will help drive food waste prevention activity within the food supply sector and encourage sign up to the Charter.

The [Irish GPP criteria for food and catering services](#) (updated July 2024) now include a reference to signing up to the Charter.

The Office of Government Procurement's Multi-Supplier Framework Agreement for Catering and Hospitality Services has included a requirement for food services operators to be members of the Food Waste Charter. *This has resulted in sign-up by food service operators.*



The [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2024](#) includes a requirement for public bodies to measure and monitor food waste generated on premises from 2024, using the EPA standard methodology. The mandate guidance includes a recommendation to 'make canteen operators aware of the Food Waste Charter and encourage them to sign up.'

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# Priority implementation activities

<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Focus on increasing Charter membership.</b></p> <p>Action is needed from the EPA, DECC, DAFM, Bord Bia, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Teagasc, existing Charter members and other stakeholders with a role in supporting and engaging with food supply chain businesses (such as industry associations) to increase Charter membership.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Embed the Charter into relevant State-supported programmes.</b></p> <p>State Agencies to target membership increases from within their client base and further embed the Charter membership into existing programmes given their significant food sector client base.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Build knowledge and capacity</b></p> <p>The EPA will work with the Food Waste Charter Action Group and State Agencies to build knowledge and develop capacity for Charter activities such as food waste measurement, setting evidence based targets and reporting. Data and case studies will build the evidence base for food sector businesses.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Provide networking opportunities</b></p> <p>The EPA will co-ordinate an in-person Food Waste Forum networking event in June 2025 with the support of DECC, DAFM and the supporting State Agencies.</p> <p>The supporting State Agencies to provide opportunities for raising awareness and networking through their conferences and events.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Reporting</b></p> <p>The EPA will publish a report on Food Waste Charter implementation for calendar year 2024 by mid-2025.</p>

# Food Waste Charter Members as of 30 June 2024

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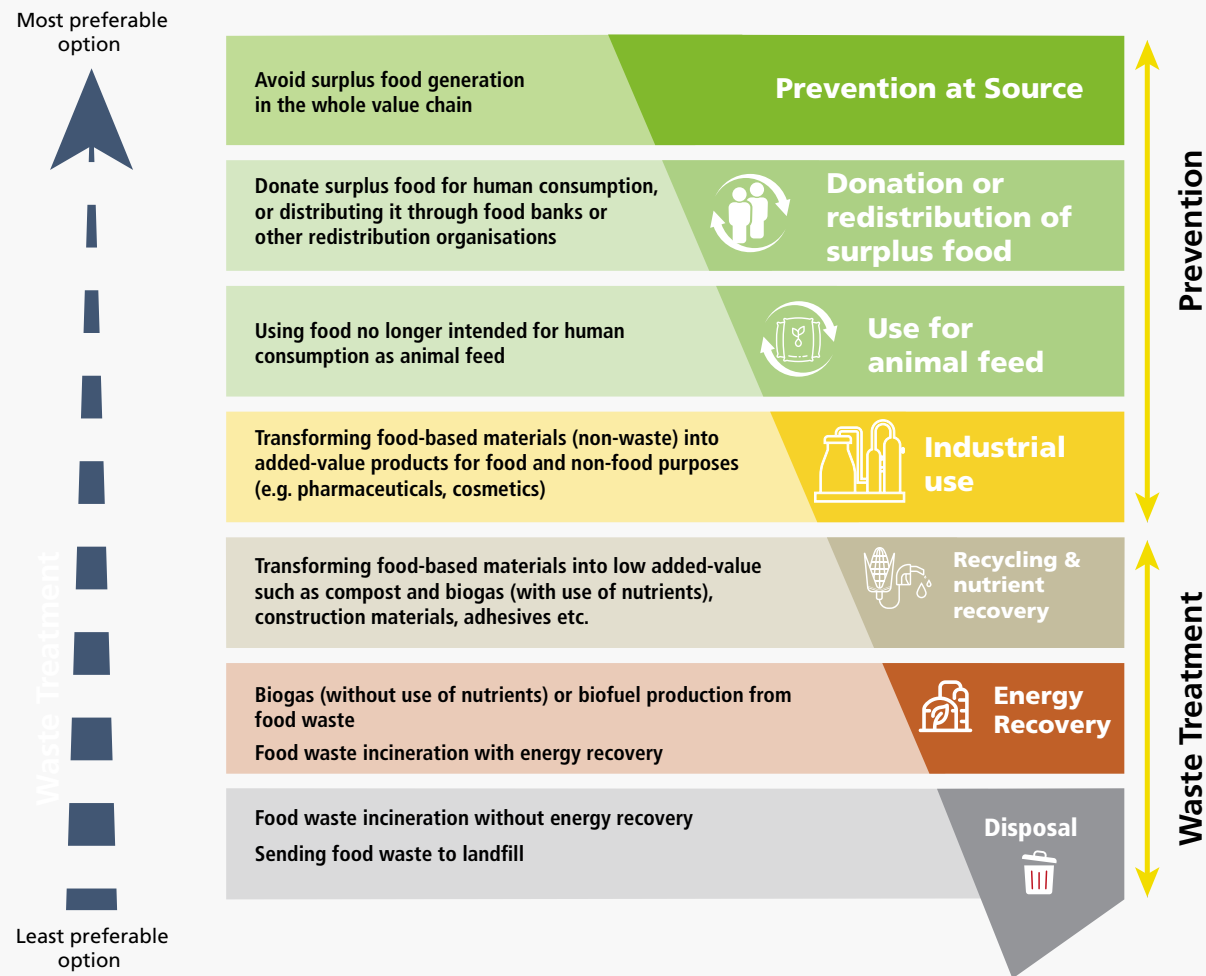


 [Click to view current members on Food Waste Charter website](#)

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# Food Waste and Food Waste Prevention

## Food Use and Waste Hierarchy



Food waste is defined as any food that becomes waste under the following conditions:

1. It has entered the food supply chain (i.e. post-harvesting)
2. It then has been removed or discarded from the food supply chain, or at final consumption stage, and
3. It is finally destined to be processed as waste.

The only way to reduce the tonnage of food waste is through waste prevention and this is why prevention is at the top of the food use hierarchy and the focus of the Food Waste Charter.

## TO FIND OUT MORE:

Email us: [foodwastecharter@epa.ie](mailto:foodwastecharter@epa.ie)

Check our website: [www.foodwastecharter.ie](http://www.foodwastecharter.ie)

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