

Reducing waste in the dairy sector

As part of [WRAP's Hospitality and Food Service Agreement](#) businesses are looking for ways to improve their environmental performance, use resources wisely, and strengthen the industry's resolve to continuously reduce its impacts. Signatories have targets to meet as part of this commitment, and are looking to you, their suppliers, to help them achieve these. We encourage you to take action, become more resource efficient, and benefit from saving money in the process. We specifically want to prevent food waste and optimise packaging wherever possible.

Many companies underestimate how much waste is costing; it could be as high as 4% of turnover¹.

The most significant causes of waste are:

- **Poor quality production** (over / under weight);
- **Trimmings** (scrapped cheese trim, milk, buttermilk, whey, leftover fruit);
- **Machinery performance problems** (product jams, mechanical mis-handling);
- **Packaging** (raw material packaging, scrapped product packaging);
- **Good product disposals** (out of life);
- **Market 'imposed'** (last minute customer order cancellations or a sudden demand loss).



What can you do to reduce your waste?

Step 1: Find out where and why waste is being created. The first step towards improved resource efficiency is to identify the waste currently being generated as part of your business's activities. The best way to do this is to carry out a waste 'walk-around'. A walk-around will allow you to gain an overview of the main processes, and will probably identify areas in which rapid, no-cost or low-cost improvements can be made.

Step 2: Calculate the cost. The true cost of waste isn't limited to the charges for disposal. It also includes wasted raw materials, energy and labour. The real value to the food and drink retail and manufacturing sector of a tonne of waste is between £820 and £1,600 per tonne². Calculating your current waste costs will give you a baseline figure that you can use for benchmarking and against which you can compare future performance and help you to prioritise the most impactful changes you can make.

Step 3: Develop an action plan with targets, timescales and responsibilities. Your action plan can take the form of a written document or a table; make sure it is clear what is to be done, who needs to do it and what you aim to achieve.

Step 4: Review progress on the plan each month. Speak to staff and get their feedback on the progress being made. This will keep people involved and motivated. Measure the amount of waste produced regularly and work out how much money is being saved.

Step 5: Share your good work with stakeholders. Keep up-to-date on the good practice being carried out across the sector by looking online e.g. the [WRAP websites](#). Apply anything you learn to the plan and update it regularly.

¹ http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/WRAP_Food_Drink_Manufacturers.pdf

² <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/estimates-waste-food-and-drink-supply-chain>

Not sure how to get started? For more information download the WRAP guide: [Self-Assessment Review for Food and Drink Manufacturers](#) or visit the [Business Resource Efficiency hub](#) to access a range of tools and guides to help you to improve your business resource efficiency.

Solutions in the dairy sector

- **Apply Lean manufacturing;** WRAP has developed '[W.A.S.T.E](#)', a straightforward problem-solving approach to help reduce waste in the food and drink supply chain. Follow this process to help your business understand the **root causes** of waste and develop **solutions** to reduce waste. [Tip sheets are available](#) to help you at each stage in the process.
- **Improve supply chain communications.** Work closely with **suppliers and customers** to minimise instances where produce is out of specification, close to sell by date or returned.
- [Redistribute](#) surplus food to **charities**.
- **Work to optimise packaging.** Look at reducing pack weight and using modified atmosphere packaging or [improved seal integrity](#) techniques. Look at using [returnable, re-usable](#) transit packaging. **Catering packs** can also optimise packaging – but only if this is not going to create food waste due to product deterioration prior to use.
- Ensure that packaging contains **clear and appropriate information** on **storage** and **date** labelling to assist consumers and users of the product. Use the [Product Action Finder](#) to help you identify potential actions you can take to change your products' **labelling, packaging and merchandising** to help your customers waste less food.
- **Recycle more.** Where not possible to redistribute, **compost** food waste or send it to [anaerobic digestion](#) instead of landfill. Use [recycled content materials](#) in packaging and **labelling** to encourage recycling after use.

See how others have taken steps to reduce their waste

Arla has implemented remedial solutions that will **reduce waste by 2,600 tonnes per annum** at their Stourton creamery. The team deployed a structured approach to waste prevention which involved diagnosis, implementation, execution and sustainment of the results following a Plan-Do-Check-Act method. [Read more here.](#)

First Milk has achieved its target of sending **zero process and packaging waste to landfill**. To achieve this, the company installed equipment to process whey that was once a waste product into an ingredient for the food chain and reduced packaging waste on its own brands. [Read more here.](#)

The Federation House Commitment has some excellent case studies on **water use**. [Read more here.](#)

Spread the word and let us know!

Promote best practice and the reduction of food and associated packaging waste wherever possible. Try and influence others in the Hospitality and Food Service sector using the information provided.

Please record what you have done to reduce food waste – we would be interested to know what activities you have undertaken and any achievements that have been made.

If you would like to get in touch, contact us at hafs@wrap.org.uk