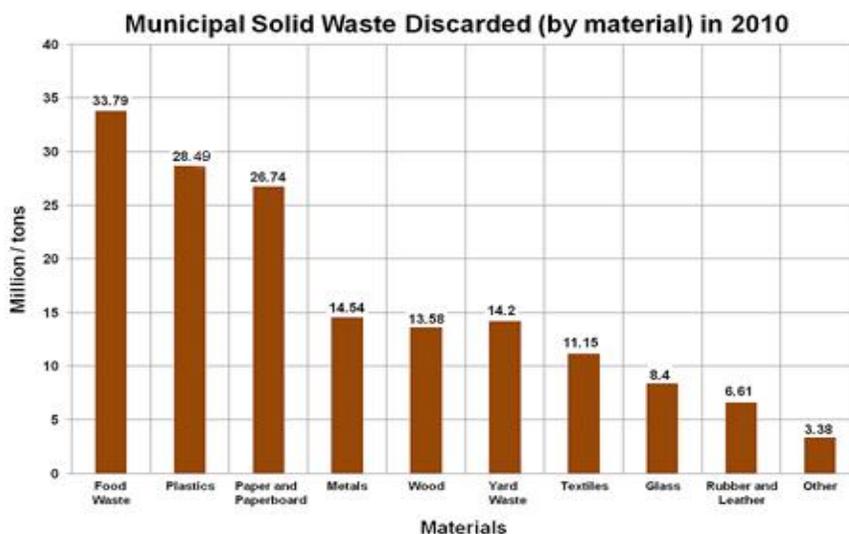


## Basic Information about Food Waste

The amount of food wasted in the United States is staggering. In 2010, more than 34 million tons of food waste was generated, more than any other material category but paper. Food waste accounted for almost 14 percent of the total municipal solid waste stream, less than three percent of which was recovered and recycled in 2010. The rest —33 million tons— was thrown away, making food waste the single largest component of MSW reaching landfills and incinerators. Generating food waste has significant economic as well as environmental consequences. **Whether you are an individual, family, or business, chances are a considerable portion of your budget goes towards buying food — either for you, your family, or your customers.** That means we are throwing away a lot of our money. Often, simple changes in food purchasing, storage and preparation practices can yield significant reductions in food waste generation. Not only will this reduce waste, but it will make your food dollars go further. **Food waste cost savings have even greater potential at commercial establishments.** Saving food means saving money. Food waste includes uneaten food and food preparation scraps from residences or households, commercial establishments like restaurants, grocery stores, cafeterias and industrial sources.



### Environmental Benefits

Not only does this wasted valuable resource have huge economic impacts, it also has huge and immediate environmental impacts. When food is disposed in a landfill it quickly rots and becomes a significant source of methane — a potent greenhouse gas with 21 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. Landfills are a major source of human-related methane in the United States, accounting for more than 20 percent of all methane emissions. Reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste diverts organic materials from landfills and incinerators, reducing GHG emissions from landfills and waste combustion. The use of recycled food waste (compost) has many environmental benefits such as: improving soil health and structure; increasing drought resistance; and reducing the need for supplemental water, fertilizers, and pesticides. An additional benefit of food waste reduction, donation, and composting is improved sanitation, public safety and health for both your facility and community

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/consERVE/materials/organics/food/fd-basic.htm>

Last updated on Tuesday, July 24, 2012