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Reducing food waste in your municipality

Building Blocks for your approach

All United Nations Member States have committed to the goal of reducing food waste by 50% by 2030 compared to 2015 (SDG 12.3). It is not only at the national or international level that action can be taken to reduce food waste. Especially at the local level, for example as a municipality or city, much can be done to promote food waste reduction. In this document, we briefly outline the steps that can help municipalities develop policies and take actions towards residents, businesses and other organisations and in education.

We describe the approach that is suitable for Dutch municipalities and was written specifically for this purpose. There will of course be differences between countries and the size of the local government you work for. Take what is valuable to you; hopefully, this will provide you with a starting point. We use the term 'municipalities' in this paper, but it can also be valuable for other forms of local government.

This document is a summary of the Dutch Building Blocks document. When you wish to read all the information, you could open the original document and translate it to your language. [Download the original Dutch document \(PDF\) here.](#)

Reading guide:

where should you start reading in this document?

- Is this topic (relatively) new on your municipality's agenda? Then start at [building block A](#).
- Is the topic already on your municipality's radar, but are you looking for ways to plan, set goals, apply focus and develop policies? Then go to [building block B](#).
- Does your municipality want to get started with projects against food waste and are you looking for inspiration to do so? Then go to [building block C](#).

Step-by-step plan for municipalities

[Building block A: raising the issue and putting it on the agenda](#)

[Building block B: data, focus, target group and policy](#)

[Building block C: getting started with different target groups](#)

Building block A: raising the issue and putting it on the agenda

The aim of this first step is to create awareness and support in relation to the issue of food waste.

For policymakers

- Show how tackling food waste can benefit the municipality.

Tool: [this Dutch infographic](#) provides a good illustration of the impact of food waste within the Netherlands. See if this can be displayed for your municipality.

- Food waste has links to topics such as food, health, waste, circularity, the economy, sustainability, poverty and employment. Connect the topic of food waste to these already existing topics on the municipality's agenda.

Example: the municipality of Deventer developed a plan to investigate how food waste can be incorporated into its environmental vision at the beginning of 2025.

For local politicians such as the city council

- Include food waste in coalition agreements, election programmes and portfolios.

Example: in the Dutch municipality of Ede, an alderman responsible for nutrition has been appointed.

Tip: use databases or AI to explore how food waste is included in these type of documents and texts in different parts of the world, to learn from.

- Use national goals as a basis for the approach within your municipality.



Building block B: data, focus, target group and policy

Diagnosis

To determine the right approach, you first need figures on the current situation.

- See what data are already available, and determine what additional information could be helpful. For example:
 - Is there insight into the amount and type of waste within your municipality? Or are there national figures that can be translated to a municipality level?
 - Have waste-sorting analyses been conducted in the past?
 - Have residents or businesses answered questionnaires before on this topic?

Tip: you can use the [Food Loss & Waste Protocol](#) to map the amount of food waste.

Example: Denver, Nashville and New York have mapped their food waste and have [shared their approach and findings in a report](#).

- Find out what civil and other initiatives and projects there are on food waste in the municipality and whether they have figures on waste in your municipality.

Target Group(s)

There are several target groups to focus on while tackling the issue of food waste, such as businesses, residents, education and local organisations. When creating an approach, research which target audience suits your municipality and where the most impact can be made.

Tip: items to think about:

- What is the identity of the municipality; what are you proud of? Could this link to a specific target group to focus on?
- What are the municipality's major goals? And how can you link food waste to these goals?
- What is already happening and what approaches get a lot of enthusiasm? What can you piggyback on?
- What do the figures say in your municipality? In which sector or with which audience would you make the most impact?

Example: the Dutch municipality of Harderwijk has many restaurants. Therefore, the municipality financially supported restaurant entrepreneurs to work on food waste under guidance.



Target

Almost every country has national targets on food waste, such as SDG 12.3, and more recently [the EU's binding targets](#). See what the national targets are, what your municipality wants to achieve within them and what is possible within the available resources. Set your goal based on the Diagnosis and chosen Target Group(s).

Connecting

To reduce food waste, you need to work on complementarity between all stakeholders: governments, farmers, producers and residents. Find the connection at the national level, in the region, within the municipality and/or within the municipal organisation. Engage with initiatives and individuals who are also working on this and see in what ways you can support each other.

Polycymaking

Integrate food waste into existing policies such as waste, environmental or social policies, or develop new food policies. Look at the resources within the municipality (money and time) and determine the scope based on the steps mentioned above. We recommend involving the whole chain if capacity allows.

Examples:

- International food policy tools: 199 cities signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. [The Monitoring Framework](#) helps cities define and measure food policies. On this basis, a [practical implementation manual](#) was developed.
- ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network working with more than 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. It has published a [handbook](#) with concrete tools for local governments to facilitate the transition to a circular food system.
- Within Europe, 11 major cities are collaborating in '[Food Trails](#)' to achieve healthy and sustainable food chains in cities. The aim is to make the journey 'from farm to fork' more sustainable, strengthen communities, encourage sustainable behaviour and ensure everyone has access to healthy and safe food.



Building block C: taking action

International examples:

Several cities share the way they determined their approach:

- The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) has created [an overview](#) of the actions cities have taken on this theme.
- Central Ohio describes in [this document](#) which actions they have identified to get to work on many different fronts.
- ReLondon is a partnership in London to improve waste and resource management and transform the city into a leading circular economy. Food waste in [households](#), through [municipal services](#), and within [restaurants](#) are key pillars, as it has been shown that there is significant impact to be gained and influence to be exerted in these areas.

Legal

Explore what opportunities exist in terms of procurement, events policy, grants or subsidies, and other funding.

Tip: [CircuLaw](#) (Dutch) has identified 19 legal tools on (Dutch) laws and regulations to better use regulations to reduce and prevent food waste, within municipalities, provinces and on a national level.

Organisations

Make choices regarding at what level(s) you want to work on food waste.

Option A:

Refer businesses to tips and information that they can use to get started themselves; these may have been developed in your country and/or language, by an organisation such as ours, for example.

If not, you will find our information here in Dutch, which you can translate yourself.

- [Web page with general tips for all businesses](#) (Dutch)
- [Tackling food waste in your business: a step-by-step plan](#) (Dutch)
- [Web page on employee and consumer behaviour and awareness](#) (Dutch)
- [Overview of support, funding and platforms for Dutch businesses](#) (Dutch)

Option B (preferred option):

Initiate a municipal project in which the municipality itself is an active party, as well as businesses; this can also be done jointly with several municipalities. On the following pages you will find inspiring examples of these types of projects.

Companies

Choose a project setup for the type of businesses you chose in building block B.

Tip: how do you discuss this topic with companies? The steps:

- Explain what food waste is.
- Investigate what the level of support is from these companies.
- Companies are mainly about making money. Put the focus on this in conversations.
- Explain how businesses can get started with this and make sure there is a follow-up.
- Also, consider what role you want to play as a municipality in contacting businesses about this.

Hospitality

Engage businesses that can encourage the hospitality industry to waste less, help measure food waste, raise staff awareness and implement changes to reduce food waste.

Tip: work with consultancies or technology solutions such as [Orbisk](#).

Example: the municipality of Amsterdam has tackled food waste at a group of hotels. Participating hotels could choose between support from Orbisk or [Winnow](#) or purchasing from [InstockMarket](#) (Dutch).

Healthcare

Engage companies that can encourage hospitals and healthcare facilities to waste less, help measure food waste, raise staff awareness and implement changes to reduce food waste.

Tip: work with consultancies or technology solutions such as [Orbisk](#).

Example: the municipality of Rotterdam has partnered with [Greendish](#) (Dutch) to train health-care workers and caterers to offer a more sustainable and healthy supply.



Other companies

Municipalities can make a lot of impact within SMEs in their communities. For example, start projects with bakeries, greengrocers, small food producers, etc.

Example: in the Rotterdam-The Hague metropolitan region, employees of small and medium-sized food production companies were retrained on how to combat food waste within the company.

Example: the municipality of Meppel helps entrepreneurs and farmers add value to residual streams or temporary surpluses.



Social initiatives

Map out what initiatives there are that have a link to food waste and support them. You can also try to find out if it would be possible to connect parties such as, for example, a fruit and vegetable trading company with a surplus-food distribution platform.

Example: [Food Circle Amsterdam](#) (Dutch) provides a full-service solution by collecting and redistributing surplus food to food initiatives and is supported by the municipality.

Education

Ensure a firm commitment to food education and explore opportunities to promote healthy and sustainable offerings in schools.

Example: in the Netherlands, [Jong Leren Eten](#) (Dutch) provides an overview of educational programmes and initiatives on sustainability and healthy eating.

Tip: encourage more sustainable school meals and/or school canteens.

Residents

Residents play a major role in preventing and reducing food waste. Set up a plan to help residents reduce their food waste. See if there are national or other interventions you can deploy in the municipality. You can also further integrate the topic into the communication strategy, for example in waste prevention communication.

Examples:

- View [this table](#) (Dutch) to see all the interventions that can be used by municipalities to activate residents. Or take a look at these international documents:
 - [Knowledge for policy - Toolkit to reduce consumer food waste](#)
 - [Champions 12.3 - Changing behaviour to help more people waste less food](#)
 - [Joint Research Center - Technical Report](#)
- Find out if there are national activities such as a [Food Waste Free Week](#) (Dutch) that you can join as a municipality.
- Find out if any tools have been developed that you as a municipality can distribute to your residents. For example, the Netherlands Nutrition Centre has developed several tools that are distributed by municipalities in the Netherlands. These include a portion-measuring cup for pasta and rice ([Eetmaatje](#)) (Dutch), fridge stickers showing what does and does not belong in the fridge ([Yes/No fridge sticker](#)) (Dutch) and tape to indicate what needs to be consumed first ([Eerst op tape](#)) (Dutch).

Within the municipal organisation

As a municipality, set a good example by making current municipal catering as sustainable as possible and speaking out as a municipality to reduce food waste.

Do you have any questions after reading this document?

Contact us at: office@samentegenvoedselverspilling.nl. We will be happy to help.

We wish you the best of luck in determining your approach!

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