

# Recycling means business: Connecticut signals food scrap recycling facilities are welcome

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Connecticut is sending a clear signal that the state is open for business, especially when it comes to the food scrap recycling business. Governor Malloy signed Public Act 11-217\* into law last spring, sending a message that Connecticut wants organics recycling facilities to operate in Connecticut.

The new law makes simple but important changes to advance statewide recycling goals by strengthening Connecticut's infrastructure for recycling commercial food residuals. The law simply requires that certain large commercial food scrap generators divert food residuals to recycling facilities, thus assuring potential investors that there will be no shortage of feedstock if a facility is constructed.

## Purpose and Expectations of the Law

The purpose of the law is to incentivize companies to establish facilities in Connecticut so that businesses will have the option to reduce the costs of disposal by recycling food scrap rather than disposing of it. Connecticut anticipates the law to integrate the environmental benefits of food waste recycling and the economic value of capturing this material. Specifically, the law is expected to:

- Save businesses money through avoided disposal cost savings;
- Promote clean energy investments because it provides certainty of feedstock to businesses employing anaerobic digestion for the purpose of turning greenhouse gases into clean energy;

- Encourage businesses to locate in Connecticut and therefore create jobs;
- Get a valuable resource out of our trash and into local commerce as valuable products such as compost and clean energy.

## Environmental Value with Economic Development Opportunity

The environmental benefits of a statewide network of organics recycling facilities are important. Capturing and recycling the food residuals segment of the waste stream means we will divert organic materials from resource recovery facilities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from traveling to more distant recyclers. The use of soil amendments produced through recycling can help control soil erosion and improve the overall health of our soils allowing for reduced or elimination of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Economic development opportunities exist by providing fuel for clean energy anaerobic digestion plants and composting facilities as well as creating a marketable commercial product for local retailers, and making it economically sensible for existing businesses to separate food scraps for recycling rather than disposal. The law provides certainty and predictability to potential new businesses considering establishing operations in Connecticut because it guarantees feedstock (materials) and properly conveys the importance of such a facility to the state, both of which are important elements when securing financing.

## Target Sectors

The law applies to large-scale businesses that generate more than 104 tons of food scrap per year (about two tons per week), specifically:

- Commercial food wholesalers or distributors,
- Industrial food manufacturers or processors,
- Supermarkets (large stores, typically with 69 employees or more),
- Resorts and conference centers.

While these target sectors produce the largest share of commercial food residuals, any commercial entity may choose to deliver their food scrap to a recycling facility. The expectation is that once such facilities exist in the state the choice to recycle food scrap will be a simple economic decision, as the fee charged by food scrap recyclers is expected to be lower than the fees charged by resource recovery facilities and landfills.

The law does not apply to municipalities, hospitals or schools, because they are not commercial generators, though such institutions are encouraged to recycle food scrap since it will save money through reduced disposal costs and keep materials in the stream of commerce rather than the waste stream. The expectation is that municipalities will benefit from the collection and processing infrastructure that will be developed to serve the commercial generators, with municipal institutions such as schools subsequently becoming sought-after customers.

Currently there is only one permitted permanent food waste recycling facility and one demonstration scale facility in Connecticut. Therefore, as a matter of fairness and reasonable implementation, the law requires commercial generators to divert waste to recyclers only upon the establishment of at least two permitted composting facilities in the state that can handle the quantity of material generated from the four target sectors mentioned above. This means that the combined capacity of two or more food scrap recycling facilities needs to accommodate annual processing of between 71,000 and 125,000 tons of food scrap per year.

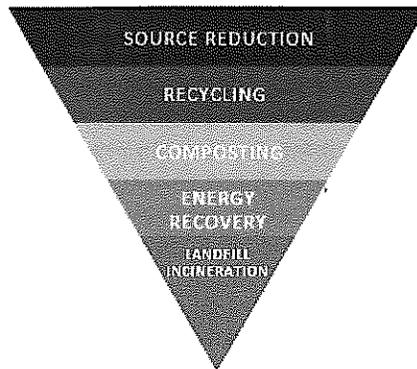
Further, to focus on the need to close the recycling facility infrastructure gap before requiring participation, the law provides that a commercial food residuals generator is not required to divert their food scrap to a recycling facility if there is not a recycling facility within 20 miles of the generator, or if they are composting onsite. Additionally, if a generator is already recycling food scrap, they will not be required to change the facility to which they are taking food scrap.

### Key Steps

Connecticut took three key steps prior to passing this law. First, Connecticut created a GIS-based map and database of large-scale food scrap generators in the state. This demonstrated that the volume from the largest commercial sectors would be sufficient and the location of the generators would be concentrated enough for full-scale facilities to function efficiently.

Second, Connecticut conducted a Waste Characterization Study documenting how much food scrap is thrown away (not donated or recycled) in Connecticut. The study found that food scraps are the single most common potentially recyclable material, by weight, in the current solid waste disposal stream. Food scrap accounts for about 321,481 tons per year of the state's solid waste, or more

than 13%. Collectively, food residuals, other organics, and compostable paper (soiled, waxed, or otherwise unrecyclable) together represent about one-third of the total solid waste sent to resource recovery facilities.



Finally, Connecticut's Solid Waste Management Plan identifies an order of priority for managing solid wastes that gives priority to reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, and energy recovery before land disposal. Further, both the state's Solid Waste Management Plan and Climate Change Action Plan identify food scrap recycling as an important strategy to avoid the need for additional landfills and resource recovery facilities and to reduce emissions.

### Summary

Connecticut's Solid Waste Management Plan establishes that recycling and composting have the greatest potential

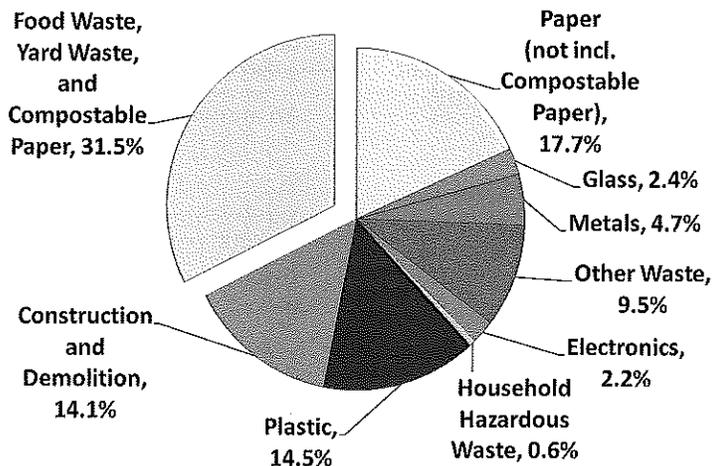
to move Connecticut to its vision of reducing the amount of waste it disposes and treating the waste that it generates as a resource.

This law helps the Connecticut food industry, a large and vital part of Connecticut's economy, to save money in disposal costs, and it will help generate new economic development in organics recycling. It will help keep a resource out of our waste stream and into the stream of commerce where it belongs. Municipalities will benefit from the collection and processing infrastructure that will be developed to serve the commercial generators, creating opportunities for all.

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\* The link provides the text of the law and the history of the bill as it became a law, as well as other information, such as public hearing testimony submitted by this department and others, including the supermarket trade association, the CT Food Association, which supported the bill.

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Source: CT Statewide Solid Waste Composition and Characterization Study Final Report 2009 – Table 6