

## 10 Reasons Retailers, Manufacturers & Restaurants Can Do Much More to Conserve Food

Written by Jordan Figueiredo of EndFoodWaste.org &  
Nicole Civita of the Food Recovery Project at the University of Arkansas

As Americans are becoming increasingly sensitive to the twin problems of food waste and food insecurity, food service businesses have recognized that they need to change their wasteful ways. In November 2014, the [Food Waste Reduction Alliance](#), a working group of food service giants and trade associations, released an [Analysis of U.S. Food Waste Among Food Manufacturers, Retailers, and Restaurants](#). The statistics and claims in that report are worthy of a closer look.

### Retailers

1. Despite handling mostly packaged food – the easiest type of food to donate – only 13.5% of surplus food is donated while 29.4% is recycled (p14).
2. Thus, **for every 1 pound (lb) donated to those in need and 2.2 pounds recycled, retailers chuck 4.4 pounds of surplus food in the trash!** Though plenty of food rescue programs will take excess food for FREE, retailers are paying hefty tipping fees to landfill while their surplus food is failing to reap valuable [tax benefits](#) available to businesses that donate food.
3. Donating surplus food is a low-risk activity: The [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act](#) (BEA) provides robust, nationwide liability protection to donors and non-profit recipients of food.
4. Since the passage of the BEA, there have been no lawsuits related to food recovery or donation in the United States ([University of Arkansas School of Law](#)). Nevertheless, 54% of retailers claim that they do not donate because of “liability concerns” (p16).

### Manufacturers

5. Happily, 93.4% of manufacturers’ surplus food & food residues – what remains after processing – is recycled. But only 1.5% is donated (p11). **For every 1 lb donated to people in need, manufacturers send 62.3 lbs of surplus food to animals or industrial applications.** Whenever possible, suitable food should be put to its best use: feeding people.
6. 67% of manufacturers cite liability concerns as a barrier to donating (p13). Over 2/3 of food manufacturers are not donating based on mistaken ideas about liability and risk. (See #3)

### Restaurants

7. Only 1.4% of restaurants’ surplus food is donated; only 14.3% is recycled (p19).
8. Thus, **for every 1 pound donated to those in need and every 10.2 pounds recycled, restaurants chuck 60.2 pounds of surplus food in the trash.**
9. While restaurant donation is more challenging than others, it is possible through organizations like [Campus Kitchens](#), [Food Recovery Network](#), [Zero Percent](#) and others.
10. Again, despite protections and an absence of lawsuits, 67% of large and 56% of small restaurants are concerned about donation-related liability (p20).

The low level of donation is both a challenge and an opportunity for all businesses that manage food. Because U.S. food sector businesses are fortunate to operate within one of the most favorable legal environments for donation in the world, there is no excuse for the status quo.

**Do your part: urge the retailers, manufacturers, and restaurants at which you spend your hard-earned money, to save more food, compost, and donate. Tweet, email, talk to management when you are on location. Social pressure drives change!**  
**#TheSaveFood10**