



Global Unilever Food Waste Report - 2021

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1st January 2021 – 31st December 2021

Introduction

The Unilever Compass, our sustainable business strategy, is set out to help us deliver superior performance and drive sustainable and responsible growth, while improving the health of the planet through taking climate action, protecting and regenerating nature and creating a waste-free world.

Food loss and waste is a global crisis with one-third of all food produced globally lost or wasted. Tackling food waste is an opportunity to address food insecurity, protect natural resources and mitigate climate change – and it requires a holistic approach. It means focusing on the systems by which food is produced, consumed and disposed of, by our industry and others across the whole chain from farm to fork.

Our approach to food waste reduction

We have long-standing programs in place that address food waste in our manufacturing operations.

We have sent zero waste to landfill from our factories since 2014 and since 2016 we have been sending zero waste to landfill across more than 600 sites, in 70 countries, including factories, warehouses, distribution centers and offices.

Alan Jope, our CEO, is a member of [Champions 12.3](#), a global coalition of leaders dedicated to accelerating progress towards achieving sustainable development goal 12.3, which calls for halving per capita food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food losses along the production and supply chains by 2030.

It is our ambition to protect and preserve food to feed the world. Our accelerated plan of action to reduce food waste was fuelled by the urgency of what is not only a humanitarian but also an environmental and economic crisis.



In September 2020 we adopted the Champions 12.3 'Target–Measure–Act' approach and signed up to the 10x20x30 commitment, as well as pledging to publicly report our food waste footprint using the Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard.

In November 2020 we announced our Future Foods strategy where we pledged to halve food waste across our global direct operations from factory to shelf by 2025 – five years ahead of the UN's SDG 12.3.

This report builds on our earlier published food waste reports covering our baseline year 2019 and 2020.

This current report covers 2021 food waste performance for all Unilever Foods and Refreshment manufacturing and logistic sites across the globe: 122 manufacturing sites and 235 Distribution Centres (DCs). We are reporting the food waste in our global direct operations from factory to shelf – extending our impact beyond manufacturing operations and including our DCs.

Our food waste commitments

In addition to halving food waste in our global direct operations by 2025, we want to drive wide-reaching change beyond the boundaries of our business and tackle food loss and waste across the food chain. We are focusing on the following four additional areas of action:

- Maintain zero waste to landfill and ensuring no good food is destroyed
- Enrol key supply partners to follow our lead and tackle food loss and waste in their operations
- Help our food service customers avoid food waste through education, partnerships and services and finding ways of redistributing surplus food
- Through our brands, help consumers waste less food at home.

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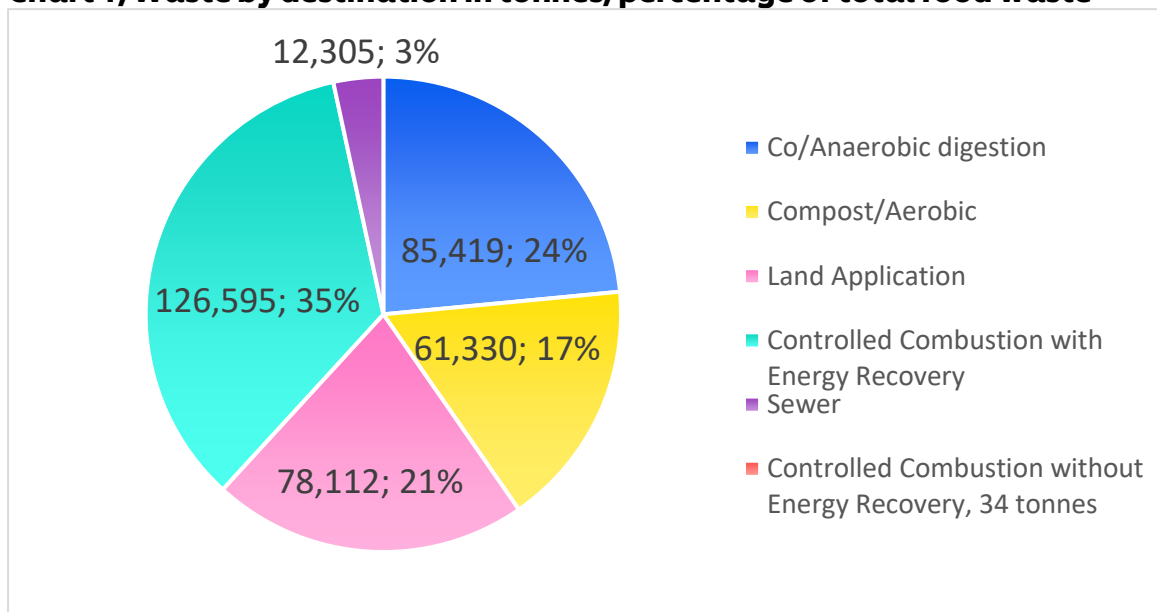
Total food handled

6,338 ktonnes

Waste as percentage of food handled: 5.7%

Overall Food Waste: 363,873 tonnes

Chart 1, Waste by destination in tonnes; percentage of total food waste



Our total food handled for the year 2021 was 6,338 ktonnes.

Our food waste was 363,873 tonnes which equates to 5.7 % of the total food handled. In line with the Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard, this includes all waste destinations except donations, animal feed and biomaterial processing.

We are covering food waste from our distribution centers, in addition to our manufacturing sites.

By the end of 2021, we managed to reduced food waste per tonne of food handled in our operations by 3% versus 2019¹.

¹ Our 2019 baseline food waste data have been restated as we continue to improve our metrics. Overall food waste in 2019 is now 350,128 tonnes versus 335,051 reported previously. This is 5.9% of waste as percentage of food handled (total food handled was corrected to 5,944 ktonnes).

As per Chart 1, our Food Waste is managed in different ways. We are always trying to move up the food waste hierarchy to find the most sustainable solutions to dispose of what cannot be eliminated at source.

Below are some examples of waste recycling from our sites:

- 24 % of our food waste goes to anaerobic digestion where we are capturing and using the biogas generated as a green energy source.
- 17 % of our food waste goes to composting solutions. In some instances, the output is used directly on site to grow vegetables.
- Where possible, our food waste is also applied directly to land as a fertiliser.
- Finally, 35 % of our waste cannot be moved up the waste hierarchy and is sent to incineration with energy recovery.

Our 2021 food waste results in context

With only 3% reduction in the percentage of food waste per tonne of food handled versus our 2019 baseline we are currently running behind our goal of halving food waste by 2025, which is 5 years ahead of the SDG 12.3.

The achieved reduction was driven by a robust decrease of finished food products being sent to waste at the end of shelf life in our distribution centers. The set-up of dedicated teams and application of predictive analytics and automation helped us to better manage our inventories.

However, food waste in our factories did not go down yet. Our progress in reducing manufacturing food waste has been hampered by Covid-related disruptions. For example, in some of our factories Covid driven shortages of trained personnel who are also equipped to ensure food waste reduction, turned out to be an important factor slowing down reduction efforts. Covid-related supply disruptions also led to unwanted stoppages and production inefficiencies and consequently more food waste.

Nevertheless, a number of factories were able to reduce their waste significantly. This was done by setting clear targets, real-time waste monitoring, a new culture and mindset, and investing in training and maintenance. This provided clear best practices to implement in other factories going forward.

We started our internal Food Waste Warrior movement to direct focus and energy and share best practices to tackle Food Waste. We also invested in understanding our food waste hotspots to help us focus our actions. Going forward we need to step up in our approach, strengthen our Food Waste Warrior movement and roll out the best practices – some shared below – rigorously in our organisation to translate effort into results. When it comes to waste destinations, we were able to maintain our zero food waste to landfill commitment also in this atypical year.

A snapshot of our food waste program

Our mission to protect and preserve food is not one we can achieve alone. That is why we are working with our brands and partners across the food chain to transform the system and help end the food waste crisis. The examples below outline some of our key achievements in 2021.

Change in mindset to reduce food waste in our factories

Leadership driven change in culture and mindset has been the key to successful reduction of food waste in several of our factories. This in combination with clear target setting, training of teams and digitisation of results to allow for real time monitoring of waste, often lead to not only having less food waste but in many cases, better efficiency too.

Good examples are our ice cream factories in Gloucester (UK) and Sikeston (US) as well as our foods factory in Pouso Alegre (Brazil) where we saw clear reductions in food waste compared to previous years.



Cutting down finished product waste through rigour, tools & a Food Waste Warrior movement

After our Benelux and German teams had pioneered approaches to minimize waste from finished food products, we saw more and more countries adopt similar approaches with good results.

Dedicated cross-functional teams, involving supply chain, marketing, planning and sales were set up to identify root causes for finished products going to waste and to drive towards different outcomes. Solutions included taking action on slow moving stock much earlier by better use of planning and stock-ageing tools, supported by predictive analytics as well as working closely with customer teams to ensure finished products reached consumers before end of shelf life.

Creating a Food Waste Warrior culture and movement played an equally important role as systems, tools and processes to help reduce food waste.

All this resulted in a decrease in food waste originating from our finished products' stock with strong examples across our business units.

Since adopting this approach we saw stock levels reduce by 69% in Brazil. Similarly, our Eastern Europe ice cream business more than halved their finished food waste and our French Foods business managed to reduce this by roughly a third.



Helping hoteliers manage their food waste footprint

Putting food waste on the agendas of hotel kitchens is a key focus area for our Unilever Food Solutions (UFS) business. They worked with the WWF and three Greek hotel groups to pilot an online hotel kitchen tool to help teams measure their food waste, identify areas of improvement, give advice and tips and take targeted actions with clear milestones to reduce waste.

Total food waste was reduced by 10–25%, kitchen prep waste by 45% and buffet food waste by 13–15%. The cost of food supplies fell by 9% too.

The program will be implemented post Covid in Greece in more than 10 hotels and shared with 200 hotels. It will also be the key theme of one of the seven BBC Global News Sustainability series in Europe which has 41 million unique monthly browsers, helping to inspire hotels and their guests with new habits of managing food.



Hellmann's continues to scale action on household food waste

Hellmann's is leveraging behavioural science to arm families with the tools to be more resourceful with food and reduce the amount they waste.

In 2020 and 2021, Hellmann's partnered with behavioural scientists BEworks and other leading global experts to conduct one of the longest and largest consumer behaviour intervention studies in Canada and the US on household food waste.

In both Canada and the US, the pilot studies of Hellmann's behaviour change programmes showed that simple interventions like adopting a weekly Use-Up Day and using Hellmann's Flexipes (flexible recipes aimed at using up the most wasted ingredients) led to up to a 46% reduction of household food waste over a four-week period.

Hellmann's is scaling the behaviour change programme through a digital solution called Fridge Night to help people be more resourceful with food and reduce the amount they waste. The Fridge Night app (also available as an e-booklet) offers an easy, scalable, digital way for people to reduce food waste in their home by one third. The tool is now live in Canada and the US, and will continue to be rolled out across additional markets, including the UK in 2022.

Through Hellmann's 'Make Taste, Not Waste' campaigns, the brand aims to show how Hellmann's, as a pantry staple, can help bring meals together from what's left in the fridge and make delicious meals out of it instead of throwing food away. In 2021, Hellmann's has been able to inspire more than 200M people across the US and Canada to turn their left-behinds into easy, tasty meals. The campaign is now being expanded across Europe and LATAM.



Advocating for change – US Date Labelling Act

The *Food Date Labeling Act* has been reintroduced in the US Congress to help prevent unnecessary food waste that stems from confusing and outdated labelling practices. Previous studies have shown that Americans are confused by food date labels, which often results in a significant amount of edible food ending up in landfills. The *Food Date Labeling Act* will help to reduce food waste by standardizing date labels on food products. Hellmann's has advocated for this bill and the important role it plays in addressing food waste and eliminating consumer confusion in the US.

Our purpose is to make sustainable living commonplace.

We are focused on improving both the health of the planet and people's health, confidence and wellbeing, whilst contributing to a fairer, more socially inclusive world.

Find out more about our mission to create a waste-free world at <https://www.unilever.com/planet-and-society/waste-free-world/>

Company background

Unilever is one of the world's leading suppliers of Foods and Refreshments, Beauty & Personal Care and Home Care products, with sales in over 190 countries and products used by 3.4 billion people every day. We have 148,000 employees and generated sales of €52.4 billion in 2021. Over half of our footprint is in developing and emerging markets. We have around 400 brands found in homes all over the world – including iconic global brands like Knorr, Magnum, Hellmann's, Walls and Ben & Jerry's as well as Dove, Lifebuoy, OMO and Surf.