Building partnerships, driving change

A voluntary approach to cutting food waste
The Resource Efficient Food and Drink for the Entire Supply Chain (REFRESH) project has brought together 26 partners from 12 European countries, and China, to tackle the growing problem of food waste.

Our five national platforms – in Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Spain and China – have demonstrated the huge impact of collective action. These countries have all used a voluntary agreement approach – bringing together a group of committed businesses and stakeholders to collaborate across the supply chain with the aim of cutting food waste rapidly and cost-effectively.

This approach has already been used effectively in the UK, where the Courtauld Commitment has achieved business savings of around €117 million by reducing food waste.

We now want to expand this successful model across the globe. In this guide, we explain the five key stages of setting up an agreement, and provide examples from around the world of how agreements work in practice.
**Introduction**

**Foreword**

Through the internationally acclaimed Courtauld Commitment 2025 voluntary agreement and the successful projects delivered for REFRESH, we at WRAP are proud of our proven track record in bringing the food industry together to reduce food waste.

With around one third of all food produced going to waste, it’s an issue we can’t afford to ignore.

There is a growing global momentum to tackle food waste: one of the most pernicious environmental, economic and social crises we face. But much more remains to be done. The challenge is how.

This guide distils the expertise and proven practice WRAP has gathered since we first started working in this field in 2005. We know that the five-step process outlined in this document works, and has already helped save millions of Euros. By following it, companies can fulfil their environmental commitments through the UN Sustainable Development Goals, while also delivering impressive returns on investment of around 14:1.

We owe it to our world and future generations to tackle food waste head on and sow a sustainable future. Only by working together can we achieve this rapidly and cost-effectively. So please, let’s unite in the food waste fight.

“This guide distils the expertise and proven practice WRAP has gathered since we first started working in this field in 2005. We know that the five-step process outlined in this document works, and has already helped save millions of Euros.”

**DR RICHARD SWANNELL**

**DIRECTOR, WRAP GLOBAL**

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**Dr Richard Swannell**

Director, WRAP Global
Food waste
Why we need to act

Food waste is a monumental challenge which we all have a responsibility to tackle urgently.

We currently waste around a third of all the food produced on our planet – around 13 billion tonnes annually. This costs the global economy around €812 billion a year.

The food that is grown but not consumed puts huge pressure on natural resources and contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. If food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest CO₂ emitter on the planet, after the US and China.

There is also an overwhelming business case for reducing food waste. Research in 17 countries around the world has shown that half of the businesses achieved a return on investment for food waste prevention programmes of 14 to 1 or better, with 99% of activities delivering a net positive return. Working together businesses can achieve real change faster and more cost-effectively.

Every €1 invested → €14 in return

- Measuring waste
- Training staff
- Improving inventory management
- Changing packaging

- Selling imperfect produce
- Creating new products
- Reducing waste management costs
- Avoiding cost of food not sold

“UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 12.3
In 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), designed to achieve a more sustainable future. SDG 12.3 calls for a 50% reduction in per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level, along with reduced food losses along production and supply chains by 2030. This goal is now a priority for the European Union and governments around the world.

“The UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 is an ambitious target, which is not only achievable but also essential. Reducing global food waste is one of the key issues facing our generation.”

DR RICHARD SWANELL
DIRECTOR, WRAP GLOBAL
Voluntary agreements
A collaborative approach to cutting food waste

A voluntary agreement is a proven method for tackling food waste, focusing on prevention rather than diversion.

By working together to achieve collective goals, organisations from across the food and drink sector can learn from each other, collaborate, and deliver change in the most efficient, effective way. Voluntary agreements can:

➔ be set up without the need for new legislation;
➔ be implemented quickly and easily adapted to changing circumstances; and
➔ provide a safe, pre-competitive space for companies to work together.

By uniting, voluntary agreement members can cut food waste far more rapidly, cost-effectively and at greater scale than by working alone.

“The Courtauld Commitment has established the UK as a leading light in the global fight against food waste. This model is being replicated around the world, and an important part of WRAP’s mission is to support many more countries to set up voluntary agreements to reduce food waste.”

MARCUS GOVER
CEO, WRAP

The Courtauld Commitment is an award-winning voluntary agreement to tackle food and packaging waste in the UK. More than 150 organisations including major retailers, brands, hospitality and food service companies, trade bodies and local authorities have worked together to help reduce waste by over 3.5 million tonnes – saving around €5.8 billion.

In 2018, the agreement was awarded the International State-of-the-Art Partnership of the Year Award at the Partnership for Growth (P4G) Copenhagen Summit (see picture, left).

The latest phase of the agreement, Courtauld 2025, could help deliver cumulative savings of €23 billion to UK food and drink businesses and households by 2025.
Setting up a voluntary agreement

“By following the five stages, and with the support of WRAP and the REFRESH team, we have identified and engaged with influential stakeholders to form the Save 12.3 China Against Food Waste Platform. We are now preparing to engage with those sectors where the biggest impact can be achieved.”

GAO SI
IVL, COORDINATOR FOR THE CHINESE NATIONAL PLATFORM

The diagram below illustrates the five key stages involved in developing an effective voluntary agreement.

Each step in the diagram above links to the section of the guide with further information and examples.
**Step 1: Initiation and Set-up**

### Checklist

- **1.1** Identify a lead organisation
- **1.2** Enlist government support
- **1.3** Research the food and drink sector
- **1.4** Recruit members from across the supply chain

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#### 1.1 Identify a lead organisation

A voluntary agreement needs a trustworthy and independent lead organisation to engage members, manage conflicts, and develop objectives.

In the UK, WRAP fulfils this role with the Courtauld Commitment 2025. In Hungary, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Hungarian Food Bank Association are joint leaders. Leaders of other national agreements include universities and not-for-profit organisations.

#### 1.2 Enlist government support

Governments often hold the evidence for action, have the power to bring organisations together, and can add a long-term perspective, so it’s valuable to engage them early in the process. Aligning the objectives of a voluntary agreement with Government policy and legislation can lead to quicker implementation and greater impact.

Governments may also be able to provide funding support: see Step 3: Governance and funding.

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**THE HOSPITALITY AND FOOD SERVICE AGREEMENT**

The success of the UK’s Hospitality and Food Service Agreement (HaFSA) shows how collaboration within a specific sector can drive rapid change.

HaFSA was an ambitious, three-year voluntary agreement developed by WRAP with the hospitality and food service sector and supported by all UK governments.

In 2012, HaFSA set a target to reduce food and associated packaging waste by 5% in three years. By working together, developing joint approaches and sharing best practice, signatories succeeded in cutting waste by 11% - saving an estimated €78 million.
Step 1: Initiation and Set-up

1.3 Research the food and drink sector

It’s important to understand the size and structure of the food and drink sector in your country or region, as well as the key organisations, their roles and how they interact. Ideally having data to identify the broad ‘hotspots’ of waste and where they arise in the whole supply chain can help determine, for example, whether a voluntary agreement should focus on the entire industry or target particular sub-sectors.

1.4 Recruit members from across the supply chain

Successful voluntary agreements involve key players from industry and beyond. These can include retailers, manufacturers, wholesalers, food service organisations, waste management companies, trade bodies, agricultural businesses and farmers, policymakers, charities and other non-governmental organisations.

To promote engagement and spread good practice, it’s useful to involve organisations that are seen as sustainability leaders.

What should you do next?

- Get in touch with WRAP to discuss Step 2 further
- Read about Step 2: Ambitions, goals and targets

Step 2
Ambitions, Goals and Targets

2.1 Involve members early

Setting ambitious but achievable goals and targets is a vital step but can be challenging. It helps to involve members early in the process to enable them to influence objectives.

2.2 Identify national initiatives and plans for cutting food waste

It’s important for voluntary agreement goals to take account of the wider policy and legislative landscape. Each country or region will have its own challenges. In Spain, for example, as well as a national food waste reduction plan, the region of Catalonia has its own target to halve food waste between 2010 and 2020. In Hungary, there is no national food waste target, but the National Waste Management Plan outlines broad priority areas.

2.3 Align with wider goals, such as UN SDG 12.3

2.4 Consider the type of target and level of ambition

SETTING GOALS TO SUIT LOCAL NEEDS

The leaders of the Hungarian national platform found that there was very little food waste data available for their country. This made it hard to set concrete waste reduction goals. Instead, the initial goals and priorities included:

- highlighting the importance of food waste and raising public awareness;
- identifying priority areas and solutions along the whole supply chain; and
- identifying examples of good food waste prevention practice in Hungary and abroad.
2.3 Align with wider goals

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 12.3 aims to halve per capita food waste by 2030. It’s a good idea for voluntary agreements to align with this goal by setting their own 50% reduction target and/or setting intermediate aims that contribute to that long-term goal.

2.4 Consider the type of target

Goals can be quantitative targets – such as reducing waste by 25% – or more qualitative, such as identifying examples of good practice from other countries as a way to get started.

Many voluntary agreements choose to set an overarching collective goal or target that individual businesses can work towards in different ways. This acknowledges that not all organisations can reduce waste at the same rate.

“To have the overarching UN SDG 12.3 goal was very important and helped our members focus their priorities.”

NORA BRUGGEMANN
CSCP, COORDINATOR FOR THE GERMAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

What should you do next?

Get in touch with WRAP to discuss Step 2 further

Read about Step 3: Governance and funding
Step 3
Governance and Funding

3.1 Identify sources of funding

Most successful voluntary agreements require some type of funding to help manage and administer the group. Funding can come from governments or members, or both. In Norway, for example, financial contributions to the voluntary agreement come from signatories as well as via a government packaging levy.

In the UK, the first stages of the Courtauld Commitment were funded by government, while the latest phase, Courtauld 2025, is maintained through a combination of government and business funding. Given the excellent return on Investment on food waste reduction, such investment can pay significant dividends to all funders.

Even a small amount of government funding can be helpful to demonstrate support and to encourage industry partners to join.

DUTCH AMBASSADORS PROVIDE GLOBAL LINKS AND SPECIALIST GUIDANCE

One unique element of the Dutch national platform – the Samen tegen voedselverspilling – is its endorsement by a group of ‘ambassadors’. The seven ambassadors are leaders in the field of sustainability, and come from organisations as varied as universities, international food companies, and independent environmental organisations.

Through their contacts and expertise, the ambassadors provide the Platform with valuable links to global networks, including the World Economic Forum and Champions 12.3 Coalition. They also offer insights on strategic issues such as sustainability reporting, and shareholder value.

What’s more, the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality has committed a total of 7million euros over four years via investments in research, innovation, monitoring and education to the ‘United Against Food Waste’ initiative.
3.2 Agree a governance structure

It is important to decide how the voluntary agreement will be run, and to determine the roles and responsibilities of members. Many agreements find it useful to form a steering group – made up of organisations that represent the signatories and other key stakeholders – to agree priorities, review progress and manage risks.

3.3 Plan a recruitment strategy

Recruiting members can be a lengthy process, which involves careful planning. It’s important to communicate a strong business case that spells out the advantages of becoming a member. Recruiting high-profile organisations first is another effective way to build confidence in the agreement and attract members.

“The participation of high-profile agents is always appealing and communicates confidence to the rest.”

FELIU LOPEZ
CREDA, COORDINATOR FOR THE SPANISH PLATFORM

What should you do next?

Get in touch with WRAP to discuss Step 3 further

Read about Step 4: Establishing actions

REFRESH Spanish national platform meeting, October 2018.
Step 4
Establishing Actions

4.1 Explore existing food waste initiatives

First, look at the initiatives and actions already taking place across the supply chain to reduce food waste. These might be led by individual companies or trade bodies, by whole sectors or by government. They could be consumer-focused, such as Germany’s Too Good for the Bin, or aimed at industry like the UK’s Your Business is Food; don’t throw it away.

4.2 Carry out a gap analysis

Next, analyse whether these current initiatives are enough to meet your food waste reduction goals. If not, identify the areas in the supply chain where more action is needed.

It can be useful to track a product from farmer to consumer to identify the ‘hotspots’ where most food waste arises and where it has the greatest environmental and economic impact. This helps to design targeted interventions for key points in the supply chain.
4.3 Agree actions

Collaboration is key when it comes to planning voluntary agreement actions, as the German example shows. In some cases, allowing members to choose their own activities from a predefined selection can be an effective way of encouraging action.

Actions can be agreed within certain subsectors – there can be actions for growers and producers, for suppliers and manufacturers, for retailers and the hospitality and food service sectors, for citizens, and for others such as a food redistribution charities.

A voluntary agreement doesn’t necessarily need to drive all actions, but can act as a powerful forum for collating and coordinating actions.

“We defined priorities for actions in consultation with members. It was important that we focused on the individual potential for each participant and did not set unrealistic goals.”

PATRIK EISENHAUER
CSCP, COORDINATOR FOR
GERMAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

What should you do next?

- Get in touch with WRAP to discuss Step 4 further
- Read about Step 5: Measurement and evaluation
5.1 Set a baseline

Before you can measure any reduction in food waste, it’s important to establish a ‘baseline’ measurement to work from, or to at least work out how a baseline will be set during the early phase of the agreement. WRAP has developed the Food Waste Reduction Roadmap, which supports businesses to ‘Target, Measure and Act’ on food waste, and helps them measure and report food waste consistently.

The EU Circular Economy Package outlines a commitment to develop a common EU food waste metric by March 2019 and for member states to report waste using the metric from 2020 onwards.
**Step 5 Measurement and Evaluation**

5.2 Seek consent to collect data
A fundamental function of voluntary agreements is to collect and analyse data. Lead organisations need to establish trust among members to encourage them to share accurate data to help track trends in food waste.

5.3 Establish a data collection process
Collecting timely, consistent and high-quality data from a range of organisations can be challenging.
It is important to make it easy for businesses to report data and to set realistic expectations for members.

5.4 Use a recognised accounting standard
The Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard is an internationally accepted standard that helps to quantify food waste across the supply chain. It is recommended that data should be recorded in this way so that it can then be publicly reported, for example via the Food Waste Atlas, which enables organisations across the globe to report and track food loss and waste.

“We believe that what gets measured gets managed. Ultimately, the only way to tackle food waste is to understand the challenge.”

DAVE LEWIS
GROUP CEO TESCO AND CHAIR OF CHAMPIONS 12.3
WRAP is a world leader in helping organisations reduce food waste and recycle more.

Our work with retailers, manufacturers, producers, hospitality services and consumers has helped to reduce food waste in the UK by 19% over the last 15 years, 40% of the way towards SDG 12.3. As well as the Hospitality and Food Service Agreement and the Courtauld Commitment, we’ve worked with the REFRESH project to help set up voluntary agreements in Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Spain and China.

Partnering with WRAP can help you to:

→ build a compelling case to convince businesses, government and other organisations to join;
→ develop an effective governance and finance structure;
→ model the environmental and financial implications of different waste reduction strategies;
→ provide cost-effective suggestions for addressing data gaps;
→ identify the most effective actions and ensure these are delivered;
→ track progress of the VA, gather data, and report against targets; and
→ evaluate the impact of activities and make adjustments where necessary.

“The industry has come a long way in a short space of time and it just shows the value of working together and the impact we can have. The Hospitality and Food Service Agreement, led by WRAP, really helped us work together, share best practice, and continue to come up with solutions.”

WENDY DUNCAN
R&D TECHNICAL MANAGER,
UNILEVER FOOD SOLUTIONS

To find out more about how WRAP can help you build a successful voluntary agreement, email us at VA@wrap.org.uk or visit our website www.wrapglobal.org
Resources

Useful links

- **REFRESH project**
  Includes information about the project, the latest results, and details of the national platforms.

- **REFRESH: Community of Experts**
  A collaborative online space to find and share information about solutions and innovative approaches to preventing food waste.

- **Champions 12.3**
  A coalition of governments, businesses, international organisations, research institutions, and farmer groups dedicated to accelerating progress toward achieving UN SDG 12.3.

- **Courtauld Commitment 2025**
  The UK’s ambitious voluntary agreement that brings together organisations across the food system to tackle food waste.

- **Food Loss and Waste Atlas**
  Developed by the World Resources Institute and WRAP, Atlas enables organisations across the globe to report and track food loss and waste.

- **Food waste measurement principles and resources**
  A set of principles for how to measure food that goes to waste, supported by a guide that answers key questions.

- **Food waste reduction roadmap**
  Milestones for tackling food waste within the UK food industry, together with guidance and templates to help organisations ‘target, measure and act’ on food waste.

**VIDEO LINKS**

- **Interviews with Courtauld 2025 signatories**
- **UN Sustainable Development Goals**
‘Resource Efficient Food and dRink for the Entire Supply cHain’ (REFRESH) is an EU research project taking action against food waste. 26 partners from 12 European countries and China work towards the project’s goal to contribute towards Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 of halving per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level and reducing food losses along production and supply chains, reducing waste management costs, and maximizing the value from unavoidable food waste and packaging materials.

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This publication is a result of the research project REFRESH which has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 641933.

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