

Reducing waste in the fresh meat sector

As part of [WRAP's Hospitality and Food Service Agreement](#) businesses are looking for ways to improve their environmental performance, use resources wisely, and strengthen the industry's resolve to continuously reduce its impacts. Signatories have targets to meet as part of this commitment, and are looking to you, their suppliers, to help them achieve these. We encourage you to take action, become more resource efficient, and benefit from saving money in the process. We specifically want to prevent food waste and optimise packaging wherever possible.



The fresh meat sector has been identified as the largest producer of waste arisings in the food and drink industry. It accounts for 25% of the waste arisings¹. Many companies underestimate how much waste is costing; it could be as high as 4% of turnover². Causes of waste include¹:

- Line stops which can lead to scalding
- Damage in processing
- Quality control (appearance)
- Promotions
- Bad housekeeping (floor waste)
- Mechanical issues with wrapping machines
- Returns by customers
- Weather changes and forecasting accuracy

What can you do to reduce your waste?

Step 1: Find out where and why waste is being created. The first step towards improved resource efficiency is to identify the waste currently being generated as part of your business's activities. The best way to do this is to carry out a waste 'walk-around'. A walk-around will allow you to gain an overview of the main processes, and will probably identify areas in which rapid, no-cost or low-cost improvements can be made.

Step 2: Calculate the cost. The true cost of waste isn't limited to the charges for disposal. It also includes wasted raw materials, energy and labour. The real value to the food and drink retail and manufacturing sector of a tonne of waste is between £820 and £1,600 per tonne³. Calculating your current waste costs will give you a baseline figure that you can use for benchmarking and against which you can compare future performance and help you to prioritise the most impactful changes you can make.

Step 3: Develop an action plan with targets, timescales and responsibilities. Your action plan can take the form of a written document or a table; make sure it is clear what is to be done, who needs to do it and what you aim to achieve.

Step 4: Review progress on the plan each month. Speak to staff and get their feedback on the progress being made. This will keep people involved and motivated. Measure the amount of waste produced regularly and work out how much money is being saved.

Step 5: Share your good work with stakeholders. Keep up-to-date on the good practice being carried out across the sector by looking online e.g. the [WRAP websites](#). Apply anything you learn to the plan and update it regularly.

¹ <http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/WRAP%20Meat%2010%20final.pdf>

² http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/WRAP_Food_Drink_Manufacturers.pdf

³ <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/estimates-waste-food-and-drink-supply-chain>

Not sure how to get started? For more information download the WRAP guide: [Self-Assessment Review for Food and Drink Manufacturers](#) or visit the [Business Resource Efficiency hub](#) to access a range of tools and guides to help you to improve your business resource efficiency.

Solutions in the fresh meat sector

- **Apply Lean manufacturing;** WRAP has developed '[W.A.S.T.E](#)', a straightforward problem-solving approach to help reduce waste in the food and drink supply chain. Follow this process to help your business understand the **root causes** of waste and develop **solutions** to reduce waste. [Tip sheets are available](#) to help you at each stage in the process.
- Develop **new products** using material that currently does not have wide appeal in home markets. Although widely practised, there is greater potential to **utilise the pet food market**, particularly dry food, which is an area that has been growing in the UK.
- Align **production and sales planning** more closely in the supply chain, including **order timing** and the production of mutually agreed **forecasts** to reduce discrepancies between actual sales and orders.
- Apply **efficiency improvements** in the **cutting and packing lines** with better visual reporting, e.g. charts and the rollout of a programme of total preventive maintenance.
- There is further scope to '**light-weight**' trays and include more **recycled content**. However, a real step change is possible through the greater use of '**skin packs**' or '**flow wraps**' for retailing, because they reduce packaging weight, extend shelf-life and deliver benefits to eating quality.
- Ensure that packaging contains **clear and appropriate information** on **storage** and **date** labelling to assist consumers and users of the product. Use the [Product Action Finder](#) to help you identify potential actions you can take to change your products' **labelling, packaging and merchandising** to help your customers waste less food.
- Abattoirs with low throughputs or in rural locations could benefit from **collaborative programmes** designed to **optimise collection of waste** or exploit market opportunities.
- Improve the separation of meat from carcass. An estimated **200,000⁴ tonnes of residual material from animal carcasses is being rendered unnecessarily**. Some of this could attract a lower disposal cost or a financial benefit if a market can be found.

See how others have taken steps to reduce their waste

Underwood Meat Company are working towards eliminating waste to landfill through more detailed recording of each waste stream; separating food waste from general waste produced in canteens; recycling broken pallets; and separating and cleaning plastic film packaging, contaminated plastic sheeting and mesh. They are also replacing cardboard boxes with re-useable plastic crates. [Read more here](#).

Spread the word and let us know!

Promote best practice and the reduction of food and associated packaging waste wherever possible. Try and influence others in the Hospitality and Food Service sector using the information provided.

Please record what you have done to reduce food waste – we would be interested to know what activities you have undertaken and any achievements that have been made.

If you would like to get in touch, contact us at hafs@wrap.org.uk

⁴ <http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/WRAP%20Meat%2010%20final.pdf>