

How we do business responsibly – a holistic approach to tackling food waste



Playing our part

A look at the strategy and practices that enable Co-op to adopt the principles of the UK Food Waste Reduction Roadmap – *Target, Measure, Act*.

Key facts

- Reduced food waste by 29% since 2015.
- Committed to UK Food Waste Reduction Roadmap
- Courtauld 2025 signatory.
- Working towards United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12.3.
- Adopted food and drink waste hierarchy.

Target	Measure	Act	Lessons learnt / Q&As

Foreword



Co-op has a purpose - ‘Championing a better way of doing business for you and your communities’.

In line with the [UK Food Waste Reduction Roadmap](#) the organisation has set a target to reduce food waste generated in its stores and depots by 50% by 2030 compared to 2015.

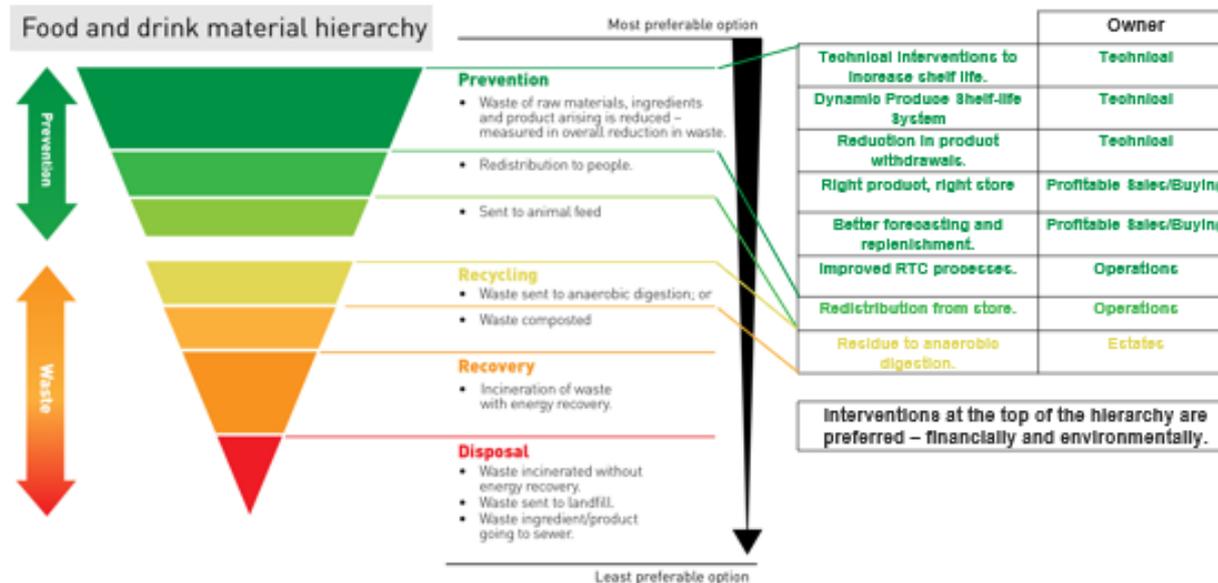
To help meet the target, Co-op has incorporated the Roadmap principles of Target, Measure, Act into day-to-day business and operations.



“Co-op is committed to UK and global initiatives to fight food waste including the Courtauld Commitment 2025 and UK Food Waste Reduction Roadmap; and ultimately the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 12.3. To date, we’ve removed a third of waste through a number of initiatives, such as a new system for reduced pricing when food is about to go past its ‘use by’ or ‘best before’ dates, making sure more gets sold and eaten. Our ambition is that no food fit to eat should go to waste, and we are making great progress to achieve the targets we set.” **Iain Ferguson, Environment Manager, Co-op**

Target

The food and drink material hierarchy is core to Co-op's strategic approach. Integrated across the business, it determines best practice, areas of influence, scale of opportunities and team responsibilities.



A waste and recycling cross-functional working group meets on a quarterly basis to share insights, manage issues and agree interventions as a collective. This approach provides the platform for adoption of Roadmap target and principles.

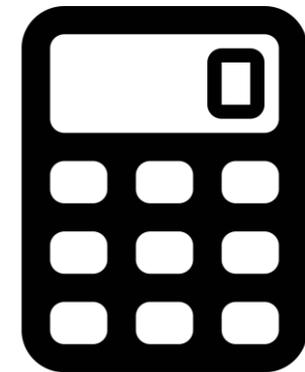
Measure



Understanding and measuring food waste arisings is integral to [The Co-op Way](#). The data collection approach has transitioned from weighbridge data via waste management contractor to the development of a database of product net contents.

This approach is compliant with [UK measurement and reporting guidelines](#) and has enabled an improvement in:

- Setting a robust and comparable baseline
- Accuracy of reporting
- Measuring the effects of interventions
- Understanding the causes of waste
- Tracking store compliance
- Understanding the destination of food waste and surplus
- Calculation of food waste as a % of sales (by weight).



Co-op utilised this information to publicly report their food waste for the [first time](#) in 2019. This was in accordance with the [UK Food Waste Reduction Roadmap reporting template](#).

Act – Trading and operations



Co-op has implemented a number of measures to reduce food waste:



Forecasting & Insight

- Improved forecasting generally.
- Rationalised stock by store.
- Better insight for buyers and suppliers to prevent costs and waste.
- Introduction of ambient specific analysis to aid strategy and charitable redistribution opportunities.
- End to end review of the short coded stock process from depot to store.



Waste Routines Compliance

- Targetted improvement plan for store and field compliance on key waste related KPIs.
- Working with the consistently underperforming stores to close the gap with better performing stores.
- Weekly KPI report is embedded and is used to coach store teams and drive compliance forward.
- Reviewed 'reduce to clear' procedures to simplify process.



Code checking

- Simplified and improved code checking and subsequent reductions using store tablet. Compared to manual checking, this cuts time and avoids missing relevant product.

Overview/ foreword	Target	Measure	Act	Lessons learnt / Q&As
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Act – Technical intervention



Co-op has been working directly with suppliers to identify, pilot and embed technical interventions that reduce food waste and extend shelf life.

Examples include:

- Including edge pieces in packs of brownies and flapjacks cuts waste up to 4%.
- Sandwich project: changing ways of working to capture all the filling first time – e.g. in a BLT sandwich, putting the mayonnaise on both slices of bread so more filling sticks and less falls out onto the belt.
- Ready Meal work to reduce food waste:
 - Including ends of aubergine in moussaka
 - Reviewing line standards
 - Aligning raw materials to reduce food waste on line change-over e.g. moving all core Italian lines to non-egg pasta to match other factory production.
- Using different cuts of pork in savoury snacking lines to reduce animal waste and ensure carcass utilisation.

Act – Managing food surplus from store



In May 2018, Co-op launched [Co-op Food Share](#) - a new, national food redistribution programme that enables stores to partner with local community groups to donate surplus good quality food.

Achievements to date:

- **Over 1,100 stores with Food Share Partnerships donating to nearly 800 local community groups***
- Over 2.8 million products donated
- Best Before & Use By products donated allowing for a higher volume of nutritional food donated to the community
- Reduction in back haul costs
- Estimated reduction of 20%-30% of store level food waste.

**as of 7th May 2019*



Overview/ foreword	Target	Measure	Act	Lessons learnt / Q&As
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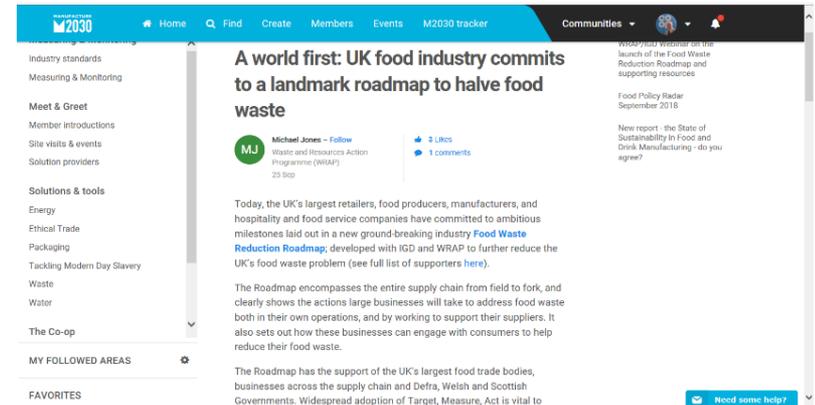


Act – Engaging with suppliers



The Co-op’s “[Co-op Future of Food](#)” supplier platform shares best practice, resources and tools to prevent food waste. Supplier food waste prevention achievements are captured in case studies and the platform allows suppliers to report food waste data on an annual basis to monitor progress.

[The Co-op Way](#) and [UK Food Waste Reduction Roadmap](#) have also been actively promoted via Co-op supplier conferences.



Overview/
foreword

Target

Measure

Act

Lessons learnt /
Q&As



Act – Engaging with customers



The most significant proportion of food waste arising in the UK occurs in the home. The most common reasons for food waste in the home are 1. Buying too much, 2. Storing incorrectly and 3. Cooking more than is needed.

As such, Co-op interventions include:

- Prominent storage advice on 350 fresh fruit & vegetables.
- Clear advice on freezing/suitable for freezing in line with [WRAP/FSA guidance](#).
- Top tips on 230 products, e.g. sliced bread – one of the top 10 waste products.
- Regular slot in our customer magazine for using up odds & ends of recipe ingredients.
- Articles on food waste reduction, also in the customer magazine.



Eat Well Waste Less

For any apples past their best, stew with raisins and serve with a low fat yoghurt or try grating on muesli. Apples are good added to pickles and chutneys or eaten with cheese and cooked meats. For more handy hints and tips, visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com



Overview/ foreword	Target	Measure	Act	Lessons learnt / Q&As
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Lessons learnt



- **It's hard work to generate the data for product net contents, but the information is invaluable in measuring the effect of interventions.**
- **A whole system approach is very important to deliver success and to capture the interdependencies. Everyone needs to be involved.**
- **Meetings celebrate success as well as identifying problems. Success creates the energy to do more.**
- **Using the food waste hierarchy as a lens to view interventions helps. The “best” interventions are always at the top.**
- **Attaching monetary value to results is important in a commercial business. It makes us look at wins that are commercially AND environmentally beneficial.**

The amount of food waste we generate has decreased by 29% since 2015. We believe this is due to a considerable amount of colleague time and effort being invested in prevention and diversion to reduce the amount of waste that we send back to our depots from food stores.

Overview/ foreword	Target	Measure	Act	Lessons learnt/ Q&A's
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Target, Measure, Act – Q&A's



- **Why did you choose to use the Roadmap approach for food waste reporting?**
It provides a clear and logical approach to reporting on interventions. Having a common approach through the chain provides consistency in understanding.
- **Who provided the data and analysis for reporting?**
The data was generated internally from the specification system for Co-op brand, and from product description information for branded goods.
- **Who did you seek support from (internally and externally)?**
Analysis was through internal team members, and data integrity improvements from our Data Analyst with help from Technical Managers. WRAP provided scrutiny and advice.
- **What additional skills did you need?**
Apart from the skill of the data analyst, the biggest asset was dogged determination to work through the data!
- **How did your business respond to the publication of data?**
Clearly, we are delighted with the progress we have made. The response from the cross-functional team has been that we can and will do more to make further reductions.

WRAP is not-for-profit, working with governments, businesses and citizens to create a world in which we source and use resources sustainably. Our experts generate the evidence-based solutions we need to protect the environment, build stronger economies and support more sustainable societies. Our impact spans the entire life-cycle of the food we eat, the clothes we wear and the products we buy, from production to consumption and beyond.

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This represents Co-op's reported approach and published data as a case study.



wrap.org.uk/food-waste-reduction-roadmap
wrap.org.uk/courtauld2025

