

Food Loss Prevention Options for Grocery Stores

Information about Actions to Prevent Creation of Food Waste for Grocery Stores and Supermarkets

[as required by Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 18985.2(b)(1)(D) Edible Food Recovery Education and Outreach]



What is the new law?

State regulations established by Senate Bill 1383 went into effect on January 1, 2022. The statewide goal is the recovery of 20% of edible food that would otherwise go into landfills.



Who does this apply to?

Commercial edible food generators, which includes most grocery stores and supermarkets, can help meet this goal by taking actions that prevent the creation of food waste. Information provided in this guide should be considered and incorporated into your operations as appropriate.



For more information, please visit www.slocounty.ca.gov/solidwaste

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Here are some ideas and activities that grocery stores may consider implementing to help prevent food loss and waste



Date Marking Tips

Suggested Activity: Perform a food waste assessment. See what's being thrown out and why.

- Identify what is being thrown out
- Track the quantity or number of items
- The reasons food is being disposed
- The expiration date of the items when applicable
- Whether the food was still wholesome/edible before being thrown out
- Rank the items from most wasted to least wasted



Based on the results of your assessment, consider changing procedures to minimize loss (e.g., reduce order quantities of low sold or otherwise tossed items).

Tips for helping customers reduce food waste at home:

- Clarify date labeling to reduce confusion for customers. Understanding dates printed on food packaging will help reduce edible food from being discarded early (e.g., create signage that explains the difference between expiration dates and quality dates)
- Use more “freeze by” dates where applicable
- Remove quality dates from shelf-stable non-perishable foods, if appropriate
- Make sure all printed dates on products have descriptive language, not just a date

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Purchasing Tips

- Take an accurate inventory before placing an order
- Buy surplus or odd shaped produce that would otherwise be wasted and sell them at a discount
- Send order estimates to suppliers to better align production planning with order timings



- Communicate on strategies with suppliers to reduce food waste
- Revise your supply contracts to require the supplier to have a food waste reduction or food donation program
- Change contracts to include methods that prevent food loss (e.g., use packaging techniques such as vacuum sealing meat)
- Make food waste reduction a key performance indicator in operations

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Prep and Storage Tips

- Maximize leftovers (e.g., Steak one day can be used for beef stew the next day)
- Train on knife skills to make more efficient knife cuts that use more of the food being prepared
- Use as much of an item as possible (e.g., Leave the peels on cucumbers or potatoes)
- Train staff on product rotation; FIFO (first in first out)



- Marinate meats to extend their shelf life, if appropriate.
- Extend shelf life by reviewing proper food storage techniques with staff.
- Use see-through storage containers to track availability and freshness.
- Cook, freeze or juice foods that are approaching the end of their peak freshness to prolong their useful life.

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Store Display Tips

- Set up a discount shelf for ripe, near-to-expire, or discontinued (safe) food. Provide signage or labeling about this reduced-price section.
- Redesign product displays with less items. (e.g., use a back support design in the produce area to create the illusion of piles of fruit)
- Allow prepared foods to run out near store closing. Track these items and only make as much as you can sell.



Engaging with Customers Tips

- Provide taste samples. Offer customers samples to see if they like a product before they buy it to prevent potential waste at home.
- Provide guides on best storage practices for all foods, including how long food should last when stored properly.
- Offer various options to your customers on produce (e.g., whole, sliced and mixed fruit). This will assist them in eliminating food loss in their own homes.