

## Reducing business waste – Supermarkets



# How to reduce your waste by more than 80%

Retailers in NSW could recover an extra 31,911 tonnes of food waste each year instead of sending it to landfill. That's 63.8 million meals that could be saved from landfill – enough food to fill 20 Olympic-sized swimming pools each year<sup>1</sup>.

A typical supermarket or grocery store waste bin contains paper, cardboard and food that make up around 80% of the contents. An additional 6% is plastic, showing that almost 90% of what is discarded as rubbish could actually be recycled<sup>2</sup>.

Fifty-three per cent of businesses agree that efficient waste and recycling gives them a competitive edge<sup>3</sup>.

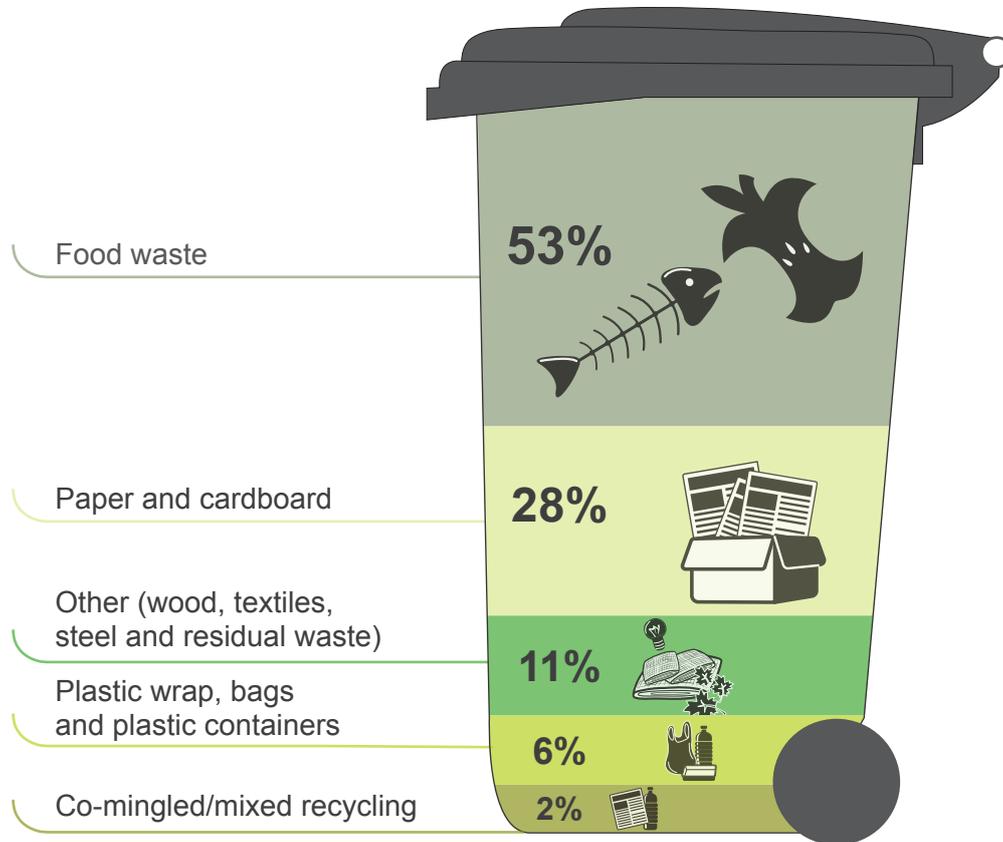
Forty-four per cent of retailers have discussed waste and recycling with their staff<sup>3</sup>.



### Quick fact

Each year a typical supermarket generates up to 1.8m<sup>3</sup> of waste for every 1m<sup>2</sup> of floor space<sup>2</sup>.

# Contents of a typical waste bin in a supermarket



*Contents of a typical waste bin in a supermarket or grocery store (% weight of waste generated)<sup>2</sup>*



## Want to save on waste?

Join 20,000 businesses already recycling more with the EPA's Bin Trim Program. Get free advice and support to waste less and recycle more. Get up to \$50,000 back on recycling equipment. [Find a Bin Trim assessor online.](#)



## What you can do

### Avoid – how can you do it?

- Promote reusable bags rather than handing out single-use plastic bags.
- Improve your stock control and order exactly what is needed.
- Order smaller quantities of fresh produce more frequently to minimise spoilage.
- Consider weekly and seasonal variations and how this impacts on the quantity of stock required.
- Check stock deliveries to make sure goods are not damaged. Store or refrigerate produce straight away.
- Offer ripe fruit and stock near its expiry date at a discount rather than throwing it away.
- [Love Food Hate Waste](#) has easy-to-follow advice on how to reduce your business food waste.

### Reduce – how can you improve on it?

- Buy in bulk to reduce the quantity of packaging.
- Keep your work areas clean, tidy, labelled and organised.
- Check the temperatures and seals on fridges and freezers regularly. Maintain correct temperatures: fridge 3–4°C and freezer less than minus 18°C.
- Rotate stock: first in, first out!
- Check food labels regularly: 'use-by' and 'best-before' dates.
- Consult the Environmental Health Officer at your local council or the [NSW Food Authority](#) for specific advice on food storage techniques to avoid spoilage and preserve food-safe conditions.

### Reuse – how can you use it again?

- Return pallets to your suppliers for reuse.
- Ask suppliers to deliver goods in reusable containers.
- Clean, undamaged polystyrene packaging and waxed cardboard boxes can be returned to local markets.
- Offer to pack perishables in cardboard boxes for your customers.

### Donate – how can someone else benefit from it?

- If you have surplus, edible food you can [donate](#) it to a food distribution charity. These charities will collect the food from your business and distribute it to those in need.

### Recycle – how can you do more?

- Ask your waste/recycling service provider how they can help you to recycle more. Many have services to educate your staff and can help with signage to support your recycling program.
- Compost bins or large in-vessel composters process food organics on-site. This reduces the volume of waste and also creates a useful soil enhancer (compost).
- Separated food waste can be collected by a commercial contractor for transport to a processing facility or it can be collected directly by the processor.



## Greener Grocer Savings

Waitara Friendly Grocer completed an EPA [Bin Trim waste assessment](#) and found that most of their waste was cardboard and plastic packaging. They now separate out their recyclables and save around \$2000 per year on waste disposal costs. [Join Bin Trim now.](#)

### View video:

[Friendly Grocery, Waitara: Super savings through being a greener grocer.](#)



- Recycle more packaging materials like cardboard and plastic wrap. Consider using a baler for these.
- Make sure staff, contractors and cleaners follow your recycling program and that they put materials in the correct bins.
- Install clear [recycling signs](#) in the bin room, staff areas, stock rooms, and in-store.
- Keep bins and bin rooms clean and uncluttered.
- If you are a tenant in a shopping complex, ask the centre management to set up a recycling service for you.
- Consider sharing recycling bins and equipment with neighbouring businesses.

You are responsible for making sure your waste is transported to a facility that is lawfully able to accept that type of waste. Make sure you understand [your responsibilities under the law](#).

## What else can you do?

- Encourage customers to use their own shopping bags.
- Train your staff in how to handle produce correctly so they reduce or minimise damage.
- Gain commitment from your senior managers to reduce waste and increase recycling.
- Appoint a staff champion to drive your waste reduction and recycling program.
- Regularly [check](#) the amount and type of waste you are putting in the waste or recycling bins.
- Put together a [plan](#) to improve your waste and recycling.
- Reward staff for reducing waste, recycling more and using the correct bins.

## How can you get more information?

Contact the EPA Business Recycling Unit, Waste and Resource Recovery. Phone: 131 555 | Email: [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au)

## References

- <sup>1</sup> EPA 2015, *Disposal-based Audit Commercial and Industrial Waste Stream in the Regulated Areas of New South Wales – Main Report*, NSW Environment Protection Authority, Sydney ([www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/warrlocal/150209-disposal-audit.pdf](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/warrlocal/150209-disposal-audit.pdf)).
- <sup>2</sup> EPA (unpub.), 'Final Report and Attachments: Industry Specific Data Analysis of Bin Trim Round 1, 2016', Environment Protection Authority, Sydney.
- <sup>3</sup> EPA 2016, *Social Research on Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) Waste and Recycling: Summary Benchmark Study*, NSW Environment Protection Authority, Sydney ([www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/waste/small-medium-business-recycling-research-160139.pdf](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/waste/small-medium-business-recycling-research-160139.pdf))



### Reduce costs by sharing recycling equipment

After an EPA [Bin Trim](#) assessment Mirvac installed two organic processing units at its Rhodes Waterside shopping centre. The equipment supplier collects the output from the unit for processing into fertiliser and electricity. Centre management works with tenants to recover around 20 tonnes of food waste each month. [Join Bin Trim now](#).

**View video:** [Rhodes Waterside: Working together to recycle tonnes of food waste](#)



### Find a recycler or equipment supplier

Visit [BusinessRecycling.com.au](http://BusinessRecycling.com.au) or phone the Business Recycling Hotline on 1300 763 768 to find a recycling service to suit your business. Use the Planet Ark resource on [choosing the right recycler](#).

## Photos

page 1: Waitara Friendly Grocer, Jefferson Grainger, Grainger Films  
 page 2: Rhodes Waterside Shopping Centre, Jefferson Grainger, Grainger Films  
 page 3: Waitara Friendly Grocer, Jefferson Grainger, Grainger Films

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