

## THE PROBLEM

Food waste accounts for about 22% of the 2.5 million tons of solid waste the state generates every year, roughly 500,000 tons. Of that, less than 5% of this so-called “waste” is composted. The vast majority is landfilled or incinerated creating an environmental impact estimated at over 58,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e or equivalent to about 12,700 passenger vehicles. Our state is currently experiencing a waste crisis because we create more waste than we manage within our borders, and both the cost and environmental footprint are increasing.

Roughly half of the waste stream comes from commercial sources and the other half from residential. At scale solutions exist for both, but they need to be ramped up faster to meet the issue.

The main policy tool is CT’s Commercial Organics Ban, Public Act 11-217, passed in 2011. This ban currently applies to large generators of food waste within a narrow focus. Thanks to recent legislation (Public Act 23-170), the ban will soon apply to all institutions that generate more than 26 tons of material per year within the state.

However, to this day, not a single enforcement action has been undertaken against a generator that is in violation of the law. DEEP doesn’t employ a compliance tech, and no one at the Agency is in charge of compliance or enforcement. The ban has been largely ineffective.

In 2022, CT DEEP awarded 15 towns and 2 regional authorities with grant funding to jump-start residential composting programs. The funding helped to implement pilot programs that collected food scraps curbside and through drop off sites at municipal transfer stations. Some, but not all, of these programs have moved towards permanency.

**More funding is needed to help our towns and cities move in a more sustainable direction for their waste.**

## IMPROVE AND ENFORCE THE LAW

The Commercial Organics Ban could be a very powerful recycling tool, but it needs help. Here’s what should be done:

### **Administer Fines for Non-Compliance**

There is no use in having a law if it isn’t enforced. DEEP needs to be compelled to perform compliance checks and, if necessary, fine those in violation of the Commercial Organics Ban.



### **Employ a Full-Time Compliance Tech at DEEP.**

DEEP needs to put boots on the ground to assist businesses with starting waste reduction and composting programs. DEEP should be analyzing the state’s waste generators the same as they monitor our air and water polluters.



## INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

### **Invest in Recycling, Not Pollution**

There are powerful interests that would like to see new trash-to-energy and or “Material Recovery Facility” plants rather than investing in composting and recycling. It is important to let our legislators know that recycling, reduction, and composting need to be the priority.

### **Fund Sustainable Materials Management Programs**

Municipalities need help to start and sustain programs that help residents separate food scraps at the curb or at centralized drop-off sites. The legislature can ensure that there are resources for making that switch.

### **Fund Community Composting**

Small food scrap collection and processing organizations play a vital role in this ecosystem. There are often very few resources allocated to support this work, and a little can go a long way.

## FAST FACTS

- ❖ 40% of food grown in the U.S. is thrown away. Food waste makes up about 20-25% of the national waste stream and is the largest recyclable material stream that we don't currently separate from trash at a significant scale.
- ❖ Connecticut throws away about half a million tons of food per year, or about **20%-25%** of total municipal solid waste, according to DEEP.

## MORE INFORMATION

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