

THE PROBLEM

Food waste accounts for about 25% of the 2.5 million tons of solid waste the state generates every year. In 2022, the MIRA trash-to-energy plant in Hartford, which handled about 1/3 of the state's waste, shuttered. This has placed the state in a waste crisis by relying on out-of-state landfills and aging infrastructure. Roughly half of the waste stream comes from commercial sources and the other half, residential.

CT's current commercial composting law has thus far been largely ineffective. It lacks any kind of enforcement and exempts some of the biggest food waste generators including food courts, hospitals, universities and stadiums.

Additionally, CT DEEP recently awarded 15 towns and 2 regional authorities with \$5M to jump-start residential composting programs. This allocation is hoped to be just the beginning, but that will rely on future budgetary support from the CT legislature.

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

The Commercial Organics Ban, Public Act 11-217, should be amended in order to strengthen its effectiveness, create an incentive for new composting facilities, and to support sustainable waste management:

Remove Exemptions for Commercial Industries.

Currently the law only applies to commercial food wholesalers and distributors, industrial food manufacturers and processors, supermarkets, resorts and conference centers. This exempts some of the largest food waste producers, including universities, hospitals, restaurants, food courts and stadiums, among other entities.

Remove the Geographic Requirements.

The current law only applies within 20 miles of a composting facility in CT. There is no scientific or economic reason why the ban should not be statewide. Rather than a geographic requirement, Connecticut should allow businesses to apply for an exemption if they are too far away from a composting facility.

Administer Fines for Non-Compliance

There have been no penalties for non-compliance, making the current law unenforceable.



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 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 needs to be the priority.

Fund Sustainable Materials Management Programs

Cities and Towns need help starting and sustaining programs that help residents separate food scraps at the curb. The legislature can ensure that there are resources for making that switch.

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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