

# Kids in Nutrition

HEALTH BEGINS IN YOUTH.

Food Sustainability Program  
Weekly Newsletter

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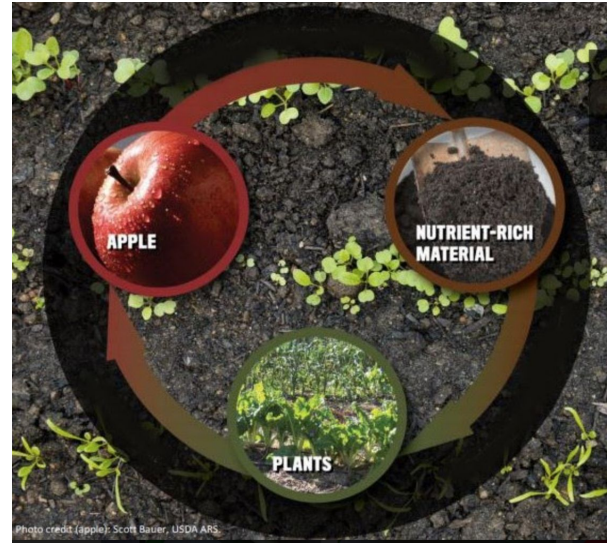
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# Lesson 4: Food Waste

America wastes around 40% of its food, much of which is perfectly edible and nutritious. This food waste is both inefficient and expensive, costing approximately \$218 billion per year in America. This places a strain on the environment by wasting valuable resources like water and farmland.

Only 5% of food is composted in America. Any other uneaten food is the single largest component of solid waste. Food waste mixed with garbage in landfills disrupts the nutrient cycle: decomposers cannot access oxygen needed to break down the food into nutrient-rich soil for plants. Instead, food in landfills gradually produces methane, a greenhouse gas that is up to 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide and contributes to nitrogen pollution and algae blooms. According to the [World Wildlife Federation](#), the production of wasted food in America is equivalent to the greenhouse emission of 37 million cars. Individuals can make a difference and mitigate the environmental impact of food waste by reducing food waste at home and leading by example in local communities.



The Nutrient Cycle

## Lesson Objectives

- Know how much food is wasted.
- Know why food waste is bad and what happens to food in the landfill.
- Learn ways to reduce individual food waste.

## Food Loss vs. Food Waste

There are two main types of wasted food:

- 1) **Food loss** includes any edible food that goes uneaten, crops left in fields, spoiled food during transportation, and food that does not make it into stores. It also takes up the majority of wasted food.
- 2) **Food waste** includes half-eaten plates at restaurants and food scraps from meal preparation.

## Weekly Challenge!

This week, try one of the following to reduce food waste at home:

- Make a list of how much food you throw out, whether leftovers, paper scraps at each meal, or unused food. Aim to buy or cook less of these foods until your food waste reaches zero.
- Instead of throwing out bruised or overripe fruits and vegetables, try freezing, cutting off the bad parts, or eating ugly produce!
- Try making a compost with your child or teach them about it!

## Where is Food Lost?

- **Before Harvest** – Before food is harvested, crops may be lost to pests or bad weather, farmers may plant too many crops, or there may be a shortage of workers to help with harvesting.
- **After Harvest** – A large portion of produce is discarded because it does not meet consumers' expectations for size, shape, sweetness, or color.
- **Processing** – When food is processed and packaged, edible parts like the skin, peels, and fat may be trimmed and discarded.
- **Grocery Stores** – Stores try to keep shelves stocked with food at all times, even if it means stocking more food than can be sold before spoiling.
- **Restaurants** – Restaurants tend to serve large portions that may be too much for one sitting. On average, diners leave about 17% of their meals uneaten.
- **Retail and Consumption** – Stores and consumers regularly toss food that has passed its “best by” date, even food that is perfectly edible. In fact, expiration labels are just recommendations for peak quality and generally have nothing to do with food safety.

