〔研究ノート〕

Recent Strategies for Reducing Food Waste in the United States
アメリカ合衆国における食品ロス削減のための最新戦略

Yoshikazu KIMURA
木　村　義　和

Section I. Introduction

On June 12th 2024, the White House together with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) , the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has released “National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste and Recycling Organics” (EPA, USDA&FDA, 2024). At that time, President Biden was working on building a more circular economy for all. This is one of his policies (EPA, 2025).

This strategy outlines four objectives.

Objective 1: Prevent food loss.

Objective 2: Prevent food waste.

Objective 3: Increase the recycling rate for all organic waste.

Objective 4: Support policies that incentivize and encourage the prevention of food loss and waste organics recycling.

As you can see from these objectives, the aim of this strategy is to reduce food waste.

Section II. Background

Why does the United States begin to take such strategies against food waste?

As we all know, the U.S., with a population of 340 million, has the largest economic power in the world. However, it also has far more food waste than any other country. Surprisingly, 66.2 million tons of food is wasted in 2019 (EPA, 2023(1)). This is a considerable amount compared to the 4.72 million tons of food waste in Japan in 2022, the world's fourth economy with a population of 120 million (Consumer Affairs Agency of Japan, 2024).

In the United States, one-third of all available food goes to waste. The average family of four spends $1,500 each year on food that ends up uneaten in 2010 (Buzby, J., Wells H., & Hyman J., 2014). According to Dr. Rumi Ide, the food waste for a family of four in Kyoto, Japan is about 400 dollars (60,000 yen) per year which shows that the U.S. foods waste is far higher than Japan (Ide R.,2024).

About this situation in the U.S., EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan stated a substantial portion of food produced annually in the United States is discarded in landfills rather than being utilized for consumption. He emphasized that such food waste has adverse economic consequences, including increased food prices, and contributes significantly to environmental degradation through climate-related pollution (EPA, 2024). To improve this situation, the strategy outlines a thorough plan of action by the Biden-Harris Administration to minimize waste, enhance food security, and help families and businesses save money.

Section III. History of the Strategies

On September 16th 2015, the EPA and USDA jointly announced an ambitious national goal to reduce food loss and waste by 50% by 2030 (EPA,2025(2)). By acting on this goal, the U.S. had a plan to reduce climate and environmental impacts associated with food loss and waste while improving food security and saving money for families and businesses.

In 2021, the EPA formally synchronized its food waste reduction initiatives with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3, which aims to halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and to reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses, by 2030(EPA,2025(1)).

In December 2023, EPA, USDA, and FDA published a draft strategy, “Draft Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste and Recycling Organics” (EPA, USDA & FDA, 2023), and solicited public comments. Reflecting the public comments received, the completed strategy was released in 2025 (EPA, 2025(1)).

Section IV The Four Objective of “National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste and Recycling Organics (2025)”

As mentioned above, this strategy has four objectives: “Objective 1: Prevent food loss.”, “Objective 2: Prevent food waste.”, “Objective 3: Increase the recycling rate for all organic waste.”, “Objective 4: Support policies that incentivize and encourage the prevention of food loss and waste organics recycling.” Below is the title and an overview of the four objectives.

(i). Objective 1: Prevent food loss

In the U.S., 38% of all food goes unsold or uneaten—and most of that goes to waste. The food loss is said to amount to about 2% of U.S. GDP, 444 billion dollars in 2021(EPA, USDA&FDA, 2024). Therefore, this strategy says that reducing food loss during the production stages of the food supply chain can generate higher economic gains for producers, manufactures, and distributors (EPA, USDA&FDA, 2024).

(ii) Objective 2: Prevent food waste

Food waste generated by consumers and businesses in retail and food service accounts for nearly half of all food loss in the U.S. (EPA, 2021), and has greater environmental and economic impacts than waste occurring earlier in the supply chain. This is because costs increase as food progresses through production, processing, and distribution before being discarded (EPA, 2023(2)). Regarding “Objective 2: Prevent food waste”, seven strategic actions in total are stated in this strategy. The two actions in Object 2, “Develop, launch and run a national consumer education and behavior change campaign” and “Educate and engage children and youth about strategies to reduce food waste; encourage development and adoption of lifelong best practices in schools to reduce food waste”, are built on the recommendations of the National Academies of Sciences, “Engineering and Medicine’s A National Strategy to Reduce Food Waste at the Consumer Level” (National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, 2020).

(iii) Objective 3: Increase the recycling rate for all organic waste

Recycling organic waste helps restore nutrients, improve soil health, and support environmental justice through community involvement. It can also produce animal feed, compost, energy, and digestate, reducing greenhouse gases and reliance on fossil fuels. Proper organics recycling is key to a circular economy and lowering landfill

methane emissions (EPA, USDA & FDA, 2024).

(iv) Objective 4: Support policies that incentivize and encourage the prevention of food loss and waste and organics recycling

Policies that support food waste prevention, surplus food redistribution, organics recycling infrastructure, and markets for recycled products can help the U.S. reach its national food waste and recycling goals. These policies should align with the EPA's Wasted Food Scale and include initiatives like state and local climate planning, peer learning, cost-benefit tools, and market-based incentives (e.g., "pay-as-you-throw" programs or landfill bans) (EPA, USDA & FDA, 2024). In 2021, 25 U.S. states introduced food waste legislation, showing growing momentum in this area (Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2022).

Section V What is needed to reduce food loss?

U.S. food loss and waste reduction targets aim to reduce domestic food waste by 50% and 74 kg per one person by 2030. To achieve that targets, Kakadellis S. et al. (2025) argue that not only state but also federal government's intervention is needed to reduce food waste (Kakadellis S. et al. , 2025). Their study analyzed existing state policies and found that, under current conditions, no state is on track to meet the 2030 target. If current trends continue, projected per capita food waste will be about twice the federal target of 149 kg. While state policies can help prevent the problem from worsening, they have only a limited long-term impact on reducing per capita food waste. Therefore, federal action is necessary to achieve the national goal. In this context, the White House, in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), published the National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and

Waste and Recycling Organics in June 2024, which is considered extremely important.

Martin insists that consumer education on the broader food system is needed to improve understanding and support effective waste reduction policies (Martin et al. ,2025). The “National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste and Recycling Organics” includes education as an important part of its strategic actions, as indicated in Objective 2: Prevent food waste: “A. Develop, launch and run a national consumer education and behavior change campaign,” and “B. Educate and engage children and youth about strategies to reduce food waste; encourage development and adoption of lifelong best practices in schools to reduce food waste.” In this way, the strategy uses consumer education to reduce food waste, and in this sense, it can be expected to be effective (Martin et al., 2025).

Reducing food loss and waste requires coordinated actions from federal, state, and local governments, as well as businesses, schools, and consumers. Federal leadership—through policy, funding, and education—is essential to achieve the 2030 target and build a more sustainable and circular food system.

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