



Shop Rite Supermarkets New Jersey

80% Recovery of Food Discards and Other Organics



In New Jersey, 25 Shop Rite stores divert 3,000 tons of organics per year. They collect a wide array of materials for off-site composting and rendering. As a result, participating stores divert approximately 80% of their organics to a composting facility and 90% of their total waste stream through recycling, including composting. On average, stores realize a net savings of \$57 per ton in avoided disposal costs.

Shop Rite Supermarkets began a pilot composting program in 1994. By summer 1997, Shop Rite's compost program had grown to include 25 stores. They **off-site compost** a wide variety of organic materials, including floral and produce trimmings and spoils, out-of-date bakery items, old seafood, soiled paper products, waxed corrugated cardboard, food spills, and out-of-date dairy and deli products. Composting responsibilities are integrated into employee job descriptions. Each store runs its composting program differently, but typically staff in each department collect compostables in waxed corrugated cardboard boxes. These boxes are not recyclable but are compostable. Using original produce boxes to collect compostable produce allows the stores to avoid buying special collection containers. Staff put the whole, full box in a compactor, which is emptied once or twice a week.

Compactors vary in size, with the largest holding 20 tons. These compactors were previously used for garbage. Because of the high diversion rate, stores now only need small dumpsters (12 cubic yards) for their garbage. A

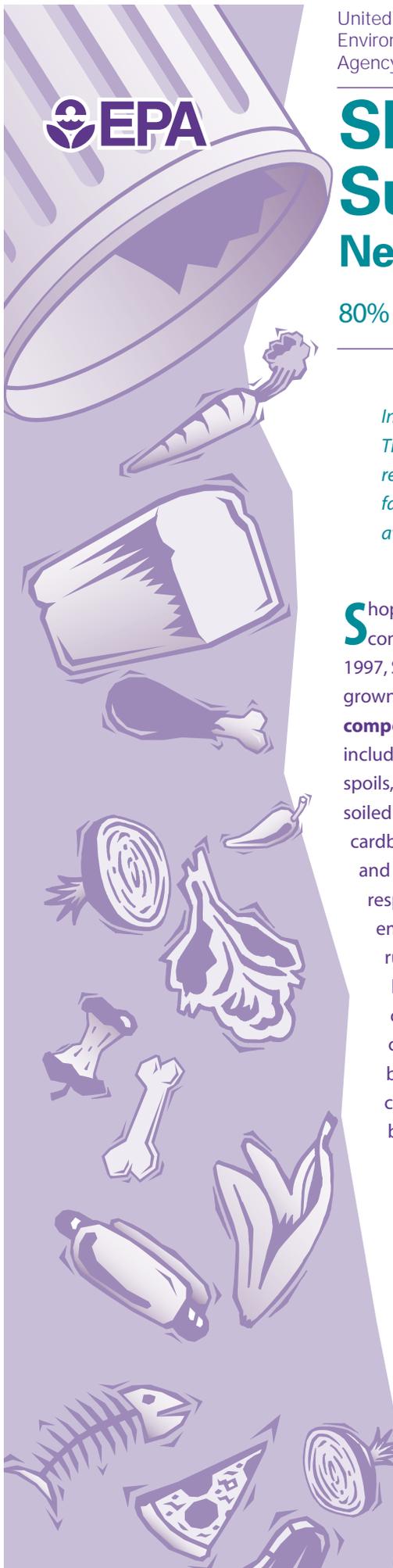
hauling company takes compacted organics to a composting site where they are ground with yard trimmings and windrow composted. The nutrient-rich finished compost is screened to remove contaminants. It is sold to farmers, golf courses, municipalities, and people involved in land reclamation.

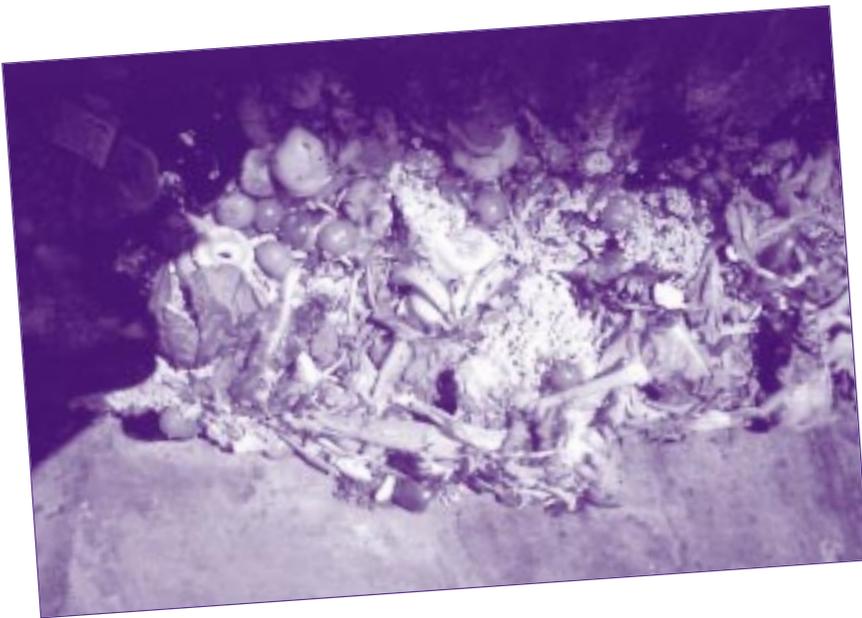
Shop Rite has no major problems with odors, vectors, or contamination. The compost site allows 5% contamination per load; it rejects highly contaminated loads, forcing stores to pay the additional costs of landfill disposal. Compactors are kept locked until a designated time each day when staff are directed to unload their compostables. This allows management to watch and ensure there are no contaminants.

Rendering companies provide collection barrels and pick up meat product discards at no cost.

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Tips for Replication

- Analyze your waste management practices; understand the economics of your garbage.
- Manage your organics recovery program on a continuing basis. Pay attention to it. The process does not run on its own.
- Train employees well.

Costs/Benefits

Start-up and operating costs for the organics recovery program are minimal. Most stores already had compactors, which they used for garbage and did not need to buy collection containers. Stores also avoid disposal costs for the waxed cardboard boxes, which are composted along with organics. There are some costs for

employee training and for signs explaining the program. Some stores have bought and installed an additional compactor.

Through its food recovery program, each store avoids

\$15,000 to \$40,000 per year in disposal costs. The lower cost avoidance may be at a smaller store or in an area with a lower tipping fee. New Jersey Shop Rite stores pay an average tipping fee of \$90 per ton for garbage and \$33 per ton for composting. Hauling fees for garbage and recovered organics range from \$11 to \$17 per ton.

Store employees typically live in the same town as the store in which they work. Participating in this hands-on recycling program allows them to contribute to their community by reducing its waste stream and recovering valuable raw materials.

Program Summary, 1997

Sector	Supermarket
\$ sales per year*	4.3 billion - Wakefern Food Corp./Shop Rite Supermarkets
Start date	1994; 25 participating stores 1997
Dedicated Employees**	0
Method	Off-site windrow composting, private hauler; rendering
Materials collected	Floral and produce trimmings, out-of-date food, soiled paper, waxed corrugated cardboard
Part of comprehensive waste reduction program?	Yes
Total waste generated (TPY)	4,167 tons (projected)
Food and other organic discards generated (TPY)	3,750 tons (projected)

RESULTS:

Food and other organic discards recovered (TPY)	3,000 tons (projected)
Food and other organic discards recovered (%)	80%
Total waste recovered (TPY)	3,750 tons (projected)

COSTS:

Average compost tip fee	\$33 per ton
Average avoided landfill tip fee	\$90 per ton
Net savings	\$57 per ton

* Wakefern Food Corporation is the largest retailer-owned supermarket food cooperative in the United States, with 190 supermarkets trading under the Shop Rite banner.

** A dedicated employee is one whose primary responsibility is working with the food discard program. Shop Rite did not need to hire anyone specifically to run this program.

TPY = tons per year