

CPR Resuscitate the Climate through Zero Waste & Circular Communities

The path to meeting net-zero emissions targets offers a unique opportunity to adopt sustainable, far-reaching climate protections while transforming food security and our trash-dependent society. Food and waste systems are among the most significant climate change contributors - we cannot address these interconnected issues separately. A narrow approach to planning will stifle impactful mitigation and limit cross-cutting benefits to individuals, communities, and our planet.

Decarbonization movements must center sustainable, community-based strategies that can quickly halt rising temperatures and lead us toward a just transition. A Zero Waste framework embedding waste prevention, reuse, recycling, and composting strategies rooted in and serving local communities will protect the climate while enhancing social equity, economic opportunities, food systems resilience, and quality of life.

[Click here for resources on climate action planning and the Climate Pollution Reduction \(CPR\) grants.](#)

Strategies to Connect Wasting and Materials to a Just Transition

Sample waste reduction and materials conservation actions to enhance equity, food system resilience, quality of life, local economic opportunities, and a just transition. Urge these be included in Climate Action Plans.

- Adopt zero-waste goals as a cross-cutting climate solution that builds equity and local economic development opportunities
- Acknowledge the importance of reducing waste and materials consumption to climate protection
- Support local decentralized food rescue and composting
- Help urban and rural farmers in producing and utilizing compost
- Build understanding of the connections of healthy soils to food system resilience
- Fund and contract with existing independent reuse, recycling, and composting enterprises
- Educate the public to reduce and conserve materials
- Embrace a transition from single-use to durable products
- Encourage reuse, repair, and repurpose projects
- Commit to closing any trash incinerators and stemming the flow of materials to landfills
- Promote reuse of building materials and reduce construction and demolition waste

Spotlight on Cross-Cutting Benefits of Reducing & Composting Wasted Food

Methane emissions are responsible for roughly one-third of warming impacts in US.

Landfills make up 14% of methane emissions in the US. Food waste accounts for 58% of these landfill emissions.

Wasted food – if it were a country – would be the third largest source of GHG in the world.

- Reduces GHG emissions by cutting landfill pollution, increasing carbon storage in soils, curtailing carbon-intensive fertilizers, and limiting transport distance for hauling
- Breaks dependence on landfills and incinerators disproportionately affecting poor and BIPOC communities and addresses disinvestment and environmental injustices by employing and serving BIPOC, LGBTQ+ communities, and at-risk youth while filling hunger gaps in food deserts
- Promotes public health and safety with improved air and water quality, more green space and natural environments, and physical and outdoor activity, especially in underserved neighborhoods
- Local composting builds healthy soils and supports farmers, cultivating a more economical and resilient food system, encouraging community reliance, and enhancing food security
- Stimulates local economy by creating many more jobs than landfills or incinerators, promoting innovation, developing green markets, and supporting local farmers and small businesses
- Improves climate resiliency for communities and crops against extreme weather and natural disasters like flooding and heat island effects that often hit frontline communities hardest
- Spurs community and youth engagement, education, and hope; connects neighbors to earth, food, and each other; uplifts social fabric with inclusive gathering spaces, connection, social support, and local stewardship
- Local, decentralized efforts keep profits and benefits nearby creating a sustainable ecosystem responsive to community needs with greater personal investment and higher-quality product
- Far less expensive than landfills or incinerators and can be launched and scaled up more quickly