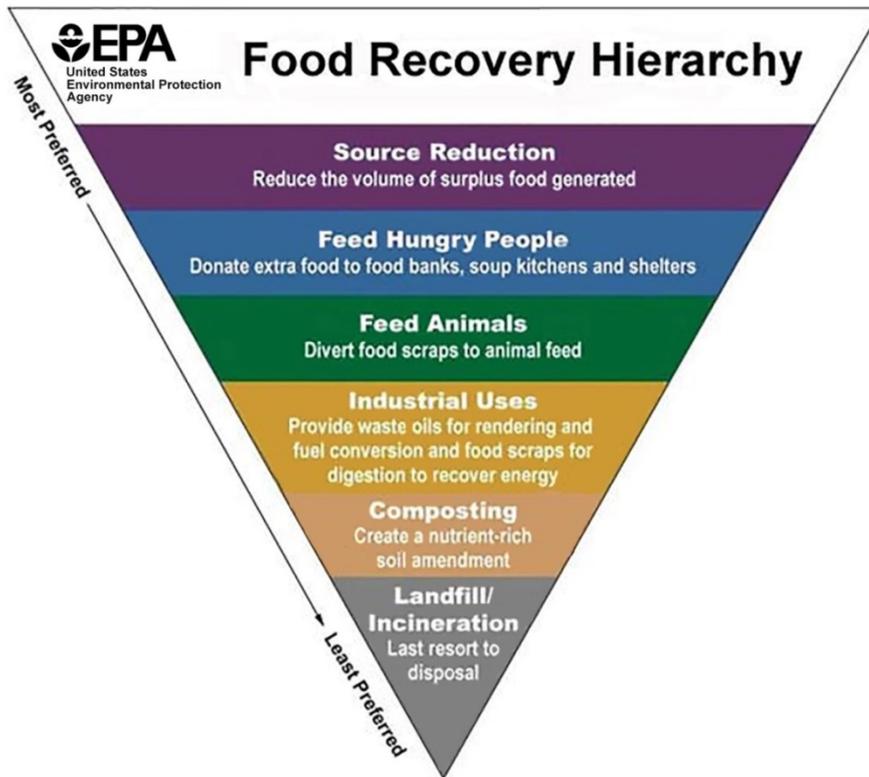


## Opportunities for Composting Food Scraps in the Region

The amount of food Americans throw away each year is staggering. In 2014 alone, more than 38 million tons of wasted food was generated, with only 5% diverted from landfills or incinerators to compost. The good news is that the composting rate is on the rise from only 2% in 2000, but there is much work to be done. The New England region is showing leadership in this arena, with state policies and programs to increase diversion of food scraps for composting, and the Upper Valley is now joining this Regional trend. When food scraps are landfilled, they produce methane, a strong greenhouse gas with more than 25 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. (Source: [US EPA](#))

EPA estimates that food represents almost 22% of municipal solid waste, or, more simply stated, about 20% of what an average American throws into the trash every day. This comes with a cost of \$1,600 a year for a family of four. (Source: Kumar Venkat, "The Climate Change and Economic Impacts of Food Waste in the United States." *International Journal on Food System Dynamics*, April 2012). Much of this food is wholesome and edible, simply wasted from farm to fork. At the same time, approximately 10% of all men, women and children in the Granite State are food insecure, meaning they do not know where their next meal will come from. (Source: [NH Food Bank](#))

As shown in the EPA graphic below, there is a "Food Recovery Hierarchy" to prioritize the best options for unwanted food. Source reduction is the first and best option for reducing food waste. This is simply buying only what we need and storing it properly so it does not spoil. One local organization, Willing Hands, helps us with the next best option which is collecting unwanted food from local businesses and delivering the food for use at local food shelves. The third option is offered by local farmers especially if they have pigs. The fourth option is not available as yet in our area although the Lebanon Landfill does accept cooking oil for recycling. Surprising to many is that composting is near the bottom of the hierarchy, but a strong composting infrastructure is necessary as the foundation, because it keeps food scraps out of the landfill in this region, preserving our landfill capacity and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from food scraps going to landfill.



Several New Hampshire municipalities offer composting of yard waste, but very few take food scraps, as the State of New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NH DES) regulations currently do not allow meat and dairy in compost unless it has gone through rigorous engineering studies.

At an April 2017 composting gathering hosted by NH DES, it was estimated that it could cost around \$4,000 to get a permit to compost food scraps including meat and dairy. Excluding meat and dairy would require a much simpler permit; however, it is often impractical to pull out meat and dairy from food scraps.

The NH DES is currently working with a consultant to revise the regulations to make it easier to compost food scraps including meat and dairy. Our surrounding states of Massachusetts, Maine and Vermont have already dealt with these regulatory issues. Closest to the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region, the State of Vermont passed the Universal Recycling Law (Act 148) in 2012 which establishes progressive bans to eliminate food scraps from the landfill. The ban took effect in 2016 and by 2020, food scraps (organic compostable kitchen wastes) from all businesses and residents will be banned from disposal in Vermont landfills.

Currently, in Vermont there are [10 facilities](#) composting food scraps including meat and dairy. New Hampshire has zero facilities composting food scraps with meat and dairy—unless the compost is used on-site exclusively.

New Hampshire towns in our region are fortunate to have composting opportunities close by in Vermont. Here are some options available to homeowners who cannot or do not want to compost in the backyard and for businesses that want to reduce their waste disposal bill by removing heavy food scraps and putting them to use as compost.

## **Food Scraps Collection Options**

### *Residential Collection Option*

The Upper Valley Compost Company will begin offering residential compost services starting in August 2017—this will include meat and dairy as the composting facility is in Vermont. Curbside pickup members will receive an Upper Valley Compost bucket for their food scraps, which will be collected once a week. A fresh bucket will be exchanged for the used bucket each time. As an additional benefit, members will also have access to free deliveries of finished compost on a regular basis. Contact Jessica Saturley-Hall for more information at [jessica.saturley.hall@uppervalleycompost.com](mailto:jessica.saturley.hall@uppervalleycompost.com) or visit [www.uppervalleycompost.com](http://www.uppervalleycompost.com).

### *Commercial Collection Options:*

Bob Sandberg in Corinth, Vermont collects food scraps from several Upper Valley businesses in the New Hampshire and Vermont. He leaves large totes at facilities and takes the food scraps back to his farm where he composts them primarily for use by people who buy the compost by the truck load. Full totes are replaced by clean totes. You can reach Bob at 802-439-5563 or [bobsandberg@starprana.com](mailto:bobsandberg@starprana.com). Visit the [Sandberg Farm Facebook](#) or see [The Compost Man – Corinth, VT on YouTube](#).

[Grow Compost of Vermont](#) offers a [food scrap hauling service](#). Customers fill 48 gallon wheeled totes that are picked up weekly and replaced with clean totes. This summer, Grow Compost will start bringing food scraps to its new compost facility in North Hartland, Vermont—close to businesses in the Greater Upper Valley and the region—including New Hampshire. For more information about the new facility and food scrap hauling services, contact Carolyn Grodinsky, [carolyn@growcompost.com](mailto:carolyn@growcompost.com) or 802-595-2333.

The City of Lebanon operates a multi-town solid waste facility in West Lebanon, NH. The facility serves the disposal and waste diversion needs for nearly 90,000 residents and many businesses and institutions throughout its service area in NH and VT. One of the services provided at this facility is organic waste composting. Currently, the City is working with area communities to set up food waste drop off locations at municipal transfer stations/recycling centers. Area businesses are also looking to reduce landfilled wastes and participate in the City's composting program. Composting saves money and increases the "life" of the Lebanon landfill. The compost is used on-site for erosion control. For more information contact Marc Morgan, Landfill Manager at 603-298-6486 or [Marc.Morgan@lebcity.com](mailto:Marc.Morgan@lebcity.com).

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