

Case Study: New Seasons Market

Feeding the Soil and those in Need

In addition to feeding their customers, New Seasons Market feeds the soil and those in need. With the help of Portland Composts!, a city sustainability initiative, every store actively recycles and composts. It is a locally owned and operated grocery with 12 stores in Portland, Oregon, employing over 2,200 staff striving to support the local economy and sustainable agriculture. They have a comprehensive company-wide sustainability program, and actively participates in EPA's Food Recovery Challenge.

Key Drivers for Effectiveness

Conducting a Waste Audit - Most Important Step

Characterizing the sources, types, and amounts of waste produced is "one of the single most important things New Seasons Market has done in terms of waste management because it helps us to manage costs," according to Heather Schmidt, New Season Market's Sustainability Manager.

The annual survey of each store's waste has allowed New Seasons Market to:

- Determine the composition and quantities of their waste;
- Measure the effectiveness of waste diversion strategies;
- Target departments with the greatest waste;
- Identify where resources are wasted; monetary or otherwise;
- Determine if they are focusing on the right areas and asking the right questions about waste reduction and cost savings; and
- Implement new system improvements to increase source reduction and diversion.



Key Topics

- **Composting**
- **Food Donation**
- **Associate engagement in sustainability**

Results

- **Reduction in overall garbage** by volume by 30%
- **Increased organics diverted to compost** by 109 percent since 2006 (They achieved this increase in diversion while growing sales by 55% over the same period.)
- **Diverted 2,410 tons of organic waste** including wasted food, from landfill to compost in 2011
- **Donated 1,040 tons of edible food** in 2011
- **Saved \$26,982 in waste expense** in 2011 while opening two additional stores that same year. By diverting food waste, they saved money because their waste hauler charges 30% less to haul food to composting rather than to landfill.
- **Helped** their community

Sustainable Materials Management

Food Recovery Challenge



CHANGING HOW WE THINK ABOUT OUR RESOURCES FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

Green Teams - Tapping Into Employee Passion

At the center of New Season Market's success are the mandatory "Green Teams." At each store, passionate employees are identified to form a group tasked to reduce their store's environmental impact. Green teams drive cost savings through the identification of waste reducing best practices specific to each department.

Green Teams 101

- At least one staff member is chosen from each department, more from departments that generate the most waste
- Green Teams are mandatory in each store
- Teams meet for 30 – 60 minutes each month
- Teams get up to 40 hours of paid time to choose a community service project each year
- Leaders in each store serve as educators for staff and community about the store's efforts
- Incentive program for staff "caught in the act" of a waste prevention activity.

"It's fast paced, it's complex, there's a lot of waste. We have 17 different categories of recycling, and that doesn't include compost...and so the Green Teams are quite a key to addressing all of those areas," says Schmidt.

Feeding People, Not Landfills - Donations and the Blue Slip Program

Each New Seasons Market store prioritizes food waste prevention and donation. Each store donates food that is nutritious and safe, but not saleable, to up to five Oregon Food Bank-approved organizations on a weekly basis. They also donate food and products to staff through the Blue-Slip Program, a system that allows staff to take home products with the approval of a manager. Last year, food banks and employees received an estimated 1,040 tons of edible food. In addition, New Seasons Market donates 10 percent of its after-tax profits back to the local community, with an emphasis on fighting hunger, protecting the environment and educating youth.

"Hunger and access to nutritious food is at epidemic proportions and the wasting of food taxes food production in ways that cannot be sustained," says Schmidt. "We don't want any food to go to waste and we also want to be environmentally responsible."

Food Recovery Challenge Participant Since 2012

The Food Recovery Challenge asks participants to reduce as much of their food waste as possible – saving money, helping communities, and protecting the environment. Learn more: www.epa.gov/foodrecoverychallenge. The Challenge is part of the EPA's Sustainable Materials Management Program, which seeks to reduce the environmental impact of materials through their entire life cycle, including how they are extracted, manufactured, distributed, used, reused, recycled, and disposed.

*"Prevention of pollution and creating rich soil turns something from **waste into worth** - it is customer service, it serves our communities... it gives people an opportunity to participate in positive change. And that has its own personal rewards, as well as rewarding us as people who work together in this field, in terms of retention and morale and can, and in our case it has, created cost savings."*

Heather Schmidt
Sustainability Manager
New Seasons Market

Food Donation Basics

Liability: The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (Public Law 104-210) provides legal protection to donors of food.

Tax Benefits: Donors can claim significant tax benefits for donating food, which is considered a charitable donation.

Food Banks & Food Rescue Programs: Many local and national programs offer free pick-up of donation food and provide reusable containers to donors.

For more information, visit www.epa.gov/recycle/reducing-wasted-