

# Hotel Food Waste Report

*By Sze Nga Yau and Tara Dalton*

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## QUICK TAKE

**T**he Food Waste Benchmarking Study builds on existing food waste initiatives by the Cornell Hotel Sustainability Benchmarking Index (CHSB), the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of current food waste management practices, the state of data disclosure on food waste performance, and the wide-ranging impacts food waste has within the U.S. hospitality industry. By highlighting key trends, proven strategies, and compelling business cases, the study illustrates how effective food waste reduction not only supports hotels' sustainability goals but also enhances financial performance, paving the way for meaningful industry-wide progress.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. hotel industry faces growing pressure to address food waste due to its significant environmental, financial, and reputational impacts. This report, developed in partnership with the U.S. Food Waste Pact, Greenview, AHLA, and CHSB, aims to evaluate the current state of food waste practices, data disclosure, and reduction efforts across the hospitality sector. It highlights both the challenges and opportunities in advancing industry-wide progress on food waste reduction.

Food waste in hotels stems largely from overproduction, spoilage, and leftover food from guest plates, especially in full-service and resort properties. However, comprehensive data remain scarce, with only 6 percent of CHSB-participating hotels providing food waste data. Although innovative solutions such as AI-powered tracking systems and partnerships with food recovery organizations are emerging, widespread adoption is hindered by logistical and cost concerns.

Despite these challenges, the benefits of food waste reduction are substantial. Hotels implementing proactive waste management strategies achieve an average food waste reduction of 41 percent within six months and a financial return averaging \$7 for every \$1 invested.<sup>1</sup> Environmentally, the importance is clear—food waste accounts for 8- to 10-percent of global greenhouse gas emissions,<sup>2</sup> with landfiling remaining the most common disposal method.<sup>3</sup>

Drawing lessons from successful retail initiatives like the Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment, which reduced unsold food by 30 percent through measurement-based strategies and saved retailers \$1.3 billion in 2023 alone,<sup>4</sup> the hotel industry has a proven roadmap for progress.

The findings in this report confirm that tackling food waste serves both sustainability goals and bottom-line performance. By moving from fragmented efforts to

coordinated industry-wide action, the U.S. hotel sector can lead meaningful change.

The next phase currently being scoped is to engage hotel brands in a scalable food waste measurement pilot, that will test new and improved ways for hotels to report food waste data. The pilot will highlight in detail where are the barriers, and what are the benefits to detailed food waste tracking and reporting

## WHY FOOD WASTE REDUCTION IS A PRIORITY FOR HOTELS

Food waste is a growing concern in the hospitality industry, with significant financial, environmental, and regulatory implications. Hotels, particularly those offering buffet-style dining and large-scale food service, often face high levels of waste due to overproduction and fluctuating guest demand. As regulatory pressures increase, the cost of waste continues to rise, and consumers increasingly prioritize sustainability, reducing food waste is no longer just a best practice but a business priority. The following key drivers highlight why hotels must take proactive steps to minimize food waste.

- **Financial savings.** Food costs for a hotel restaurant typically range from 25 to 35 percent of the restaurant's total revenue,<sup>5</sup> and food waste directly translates into lost profit. In the U.S., food costs average around 16.7 percent of hotel revenue,<sup>6</sup> with full-service hotels seeing food and beverage (F&B) contribute up to 30 percent of total revenue.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, food waste segregation and disposal in line with regulatory requirements increases hotels' operational costs through additional labor, specialized waste services, and potential fines for non-compliance. Encouragingly, a study by Champions 12.3 indicates that investing in food waste reduction returns \$7 for every \$1 spent.<sup>8</sup> Implementing food inventory tracking systems or streamlining menu offerings are

<sup>1</sup> <https://champions123.org/publication/business-case-reducing-food-loss-and-waste-restaurants>

<sup>2</sup> WRAP NGO. Action on Food Waste. WRAP. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://www.wrap.ngo/what-we-do/future-proof-food/reducing-food-waste>

<sup>3</sup> Food Waste Index Report 2024. 2024. United Nations Environment Programme. <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/food-waste-index-report-2024>

<sup>4</sup> Progress in Reducing Food Waste: A Data Report from the Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment and the U.S. Food Waste Pact. U.S. Food Waste Pact. March 31, 2025. <https://foodwastepact.refed.org/uploads/pcfwc-usfwp-2024-eoy-data-report-final.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> How Can Hotels Optimize Restaurant Costs? 2025. FIN-MODELSLAB. <https://finmodelslab.com/blogs/operating-costs/hotel-restaurant>

<sup>6</sup> Profit Matters: U.S. Annual Hotel Performance Tracker. Hot-Stats Limited. 2019. [Profit Matters - US Annual Hotel Performance Tracker 2019.pdf](https://www.hotstats.com/Profit-Matters-US-Annual-Hotel-Performance-Tracker-2019.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> 5 Trends in Hotel F&B Profitability. CoStar. <https://www.costar.com/article/830429841/5-trends-in-hotel-fb-profitability>

<sup>8</sup> <https://champions123.org/publication/business-case-reducing-food-loss-and-waste-restaurants>

just some examples of how restaurants can satisfy customer demands, reduce costs, and significantly minimize future food waste.

- **Increasing regulatory pressure and reporting requirements.** Across the U.S., regulatory requirements around organic waste are becoming increasingly common and stringent. These regulations aim to limit food waste and associated methane emissions. Examples include the following:
  1. **California's** short-lived *Climate Pollutant Reduction Law* requires all businesses to subscribe to an organics collection service and separate their green waste, food scraps, and food-soiled paper.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling Law requires businesses generating significant organic waste to recycle their organic waste.<sup>10</sup>
  2. **Maryland's** *Food Residuals Diversion Law* mandates certain entities generating significant food residuals to separate and divert them from general solid waste, contingent upon specific thresholds and proximity to recycling facilities.<sup>11</sup>
  3. **Washington's** *Organic Waste Recycling Laws* require businesses generating significant organic waste (at least four cubic yards weekly) to arrange for collection services or manage waste on-site.<sup>12</sup>
- **Increasing accounting and reporting pressure.** Expanding regulations will require hotels to disclose information on their sourcing practices and demonstrate efforts to reduce the impacts of their business operations. This includes mandatory Scope 3 emissions ac-

<sup>9</sup> State of California. "California's Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy." CalRecycle Home Page. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp/>

<sup>10</sup> "AB 1826 - Commercial & Multi-Family Organics Recycling." AB 1826 - Commercial & Multi-Family Organics Recycling | Placentia, CA - Official Website. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://www.placentia.org/688/AB-1826---Commercial-Organics-Recycling>

<sup>11</sup> "Maryland Department of the Environment." Department of the Environment. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/land/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Pages/Solid-Waste-Management---Organics-Recycling-and-Waste-Diversion---Food-Residuals.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> "Washington's Organics Management Law Ramps up Business Requirements for 2025." Washington State Department of Ecology. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://ecology.wa.gov/blog/november-2024/nov-19-washington-s-organics-management-law-ramps-up-business-requirements-for-2025>

counting, including those related to food sourcing and waste. For instance, hotel groups with properties in Europe may be subject to the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), and EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). While compliance may initially involve higher costs, non-compliance will lead to significantly greater financial and reputational risks in the long term.

- **Environmental impact—climate.** Today's food systems are responsible for one quarter of all GHG emissions, and food waste specifically contributes to 8- to 10-percent of that total.<sup>13,14</sup> Hotels alone contribute 1 percent of global food-related emissions and 3 percent of global food waste.<sup>15</sup> More than 60 percent of hotel-related food emissions come from food sourcing, while waste disposal, plastic packaging, and kitchen energy use contribute the remainder.<sup>16</sup> Excess GHG emissions worsen climate change and strain food production. For instance, erratic rainfall and higher temperatures from climate change and El Niño caused cocoa production to drop sharply, quadrupling cocoa prices in April 2024, as compared to the previous year.<sup>17</sup> A Persefoni report further emphasizes that Scope 3 emissions—particularly from purchased goods and services—often surpass hotels' Scope 1 and 2 emissions combined, with the food and beverage supply

<sup>13</sup> J. Poore, T. Nemecek, "Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers." *Science* 360,987-992(2018). DOI:10.1126/science.aag0216; WRAP NGO.Action on Food Waste. WRAP. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://www.wrap.ngo/action-on-food-waste/>

<sup>14</sup> WRAP NGO.Action on Food Waste. WRAP. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://www.wrap.ngo/taking-action/food-drink/actions/action-on-food-waste>

<sup>15</sup> Iberostar Hotels & Resorts, and Ferra Carta Sustainable Markets Initiative. Rep. Decarbonizing Hotel Food Systems. World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, December 2024. [https://sustainablehospitalityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Iberostar\\_WSHA\\_DecarbonizingHotelFoodSystems\\_vfinal.pdf](https://sustainablehospitalityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Iberostar_WSHA_DecarbonizingHotelFoodSystems_vfinal.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Tabe-Ojong, Onasis Tharcisse Adetumi Guedegbe, and Joseph Glauber, Martin Paul, Onasis Tharcisse Adetumi Guedegbe, and Joseph Glauber. "Soaring Cocoa Prices: Diverse Impacts and Implications for Key West African Producers." Ifpri.org. Accessed January 3, 2025. <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/soaring-cocoa-prices-diverse-impacts-and-implications-key-west-african-producers>.

chain being the largest contributor for full-service hotels.<sup>18</sup>

- **Environmental impact—biodiversity.** One million species are at risk due to human activities, with agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, and mariculture identified as primary drivers.<sup>19</sup> According to a recent study conducted by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), agricultural expansion accounts for 90 percent of global deforestation.<sup>20</sup> By reducing food waste, hotels can make a significant positive impact on biodiversity and ecosystem degradation.
- **Food security.** Food waste exacerbates global food insecurity by discarding edible food that could be redistributed to those in need. At the same time, producing food that goes uneaten consumes vast amounts of natural resources—including land, water, and energy—only to contribute to landfill waste. This not only squanders resources but also leads to environmental degradation, including soil depletion, water pollution, and increased GHG emissions. By reducing food waste, hotels can help alleviate pressure on global food systems, conserve natural resources, and contribute to broader efforts to ensure equitable food distribution and long-term food availability.
- **Customer expectations.** Eighty-one percent of travelers believe sustainable travel is important, and 64 percent of travel buyers are tracking emissions from their business travel programs. These trends are especially pronounced among younger consumers. According to research by the *Harvard Business Review*, Gen Z and Millennial customers are 27-percent more likely than older generations to purchase from a brand they believe prioritizes its impact on people and the planet.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Persefoni. Hospitality Carbon Footprint: Emissions Profile Insights, February 2025. <https://www.persefoni.com/blog/emissions-profile-hospitality>

<sup>19</sup> E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 2019. Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). 1148 pages. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3831673>

<sup>20</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2022. The State of The World's Forests – Forests, Biodiversity and People. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/dfb12960-44ee-4ddc-95f7-bec93fbb141e/content>

<sup>21</sup> Sustainable Travel Report 2024. Booking.com. <https://www.gstcouncil.org/booking-sustainable-travel-report-2024/>

- **Reputation.** Hotels that responsibly manage food sourcing and waste can significantly enhance their reputation by supporting local communities and economies. Locally sourced food is fresher, helping to reduce waste, while also supporting local farmers and suppliers—fostering goodwill and strengthening ties with the surrounding community.

## FOOD WASTE DATA— CURRENT COLLECTION AND REPORTING PRACTICES

In the hotel industry, food waste is driven by overproduction, spoilage, food preparation, and plate waste from guest services. Hotels typically collect food waste through back-of-house segregation in kitchens and buffets, where organic material is to be separated from general waste. This waste is either sent to a landfill or incinerated, or it may be diverted to more sustainable alternatives. Diversion strategies may include partnerships with food waste recycling providers for off-site composting or anaerobic digestion, which converts waste into useful outputs like compost or biogas. Some hotel chains have also partnered with food recovery organizations to redistribute surplus edible food, reducing waste at its source. Additionally, in-house technologies, such as food dehydrators, biodigesters and in-vessel composters, are also gaining popularity for reducing waste volume on-site and sometimes recovering energy.

### *Barriers to Implementation and Data Collection*

Despite these advancements, implementation continues to face hurdles. Key challenges include contamination, limited staff training, space constraints, logistical complexities, and costs related to waste management partners. These barriers also make consistent food waste data collection difficult.

### *Current Approaches to Food Waste Tracking*

Currently, food waste data collection is primarily managed through third-party waste management providers, who supply high-level reports based on collected waste streams. These reports typically include total waste volume or weight and diversion rates, but lack detailed insights into the specific sources or causes of food waste. To fill this gap, many hotels perform manual tracking, where staff members log food waste by type and origin (e.g., food preparation, plate waste).

## Examples of food waste intensity by country

Country	Count	Food Waste per OCRM (kg)*
India	32	1.29
Indonesia	10	1.11
Mexico	45	0.89
Japan	22	0.85
Italy	17	0.77
China	181	0.55
U.S.	154	0.25
Canada	13	0.20

\* *Note:* The median tends to be more representative for benchmarking than the mean. Medians are less sensitive to outliers and skewed data, providing a more reliable central tendency.

While this provides more context, it is time-consuming and prone to inconsistencies.

A small but growing number of hotels are adopting AI-powered solutions like Winnow and Leanpath. These technologies use smart scales and sensors to automatically identify and quantify food waste at the source, providing detailed, real-time data. This allows for more targeted interventions, but uptake remains limited due to costs, space requirements, and integration challenges, especially in smaller or legacy hotel operations. As a result, many properties continue to rely on a hybrid approach that combines vendor data with selective internal tracking.

### CORNELL HOTEL SUSTAINABILITY BENCHMARKING (CHSB) AND INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION

Since 2014, the CHSB study has been analyzing environmental data across the global hospitality industry. In the CHSB 2025 edition, more than 31,500 hotels and resorts participated. While data on energy, water, and GHG emissions were generally robust and included in the benchmarking analysis, waste data remain limited. Of the 9,800 properties that submitted general waste data, only 1,940 included food waste data. After data quality screening, 976 properties passed the validity test for the food waste per occupied room metric. This means that fewer than 10 percent of participating properties that submitted waste data provided valid food waste data—underscoring the significant data collection challenges previously noted.

Notably, only 212 entries reported non-diverted food waste, with the majority of the participants reporting diverted food waste only. As a result, just 39 sanitized records met the criteria of reporting both food waste disposal and diversion.

To address this, CHSB has introduced a Waste Index, aiming to balance meeting the demand for actionable insights with the need for reliable data. The methodology for waste data collection, harmonization, validation, and analysis are detailed in the Hotel Sustainability Benchmarking Index 2025 report.

#### *Regional and Property-Level Insights*

Based on the validated food waste dataset, Latin America and the Caribbean reported the highest food waste intensity at 0.69 kg per occupied room (OCRM), closely followed by Asia at 0.61 kg/OCRM. The Middle East recorded the lowest reported intensity at 0.18 kg/OCRM.

#### **At the Country Level:**

- **India** reported the highest food waste intensity at 1.29 kg/OCRM
- **Indonesia** followed at 1.11 kg/OCRM
- **Mexico** reported 0.89 kg/OCRM
- In **North America**, the U.S. generated 0.25 kg/OCRM, slightly above Canada's 0.20 kg/OCRM, and about half of China's 0.55 kg/OCRM.

Examples of total food waste intensity, disaggregated by country, are presented in Exhibit 1. The complete dataset can be accessed through the CHSB Index, which

Total waste and food waste data set by asset class included for U.S.

Metric	Hotel Type	Count	Mean	Q1	Median*	Q3
Food Waste POR (kg/OCRM)	Full Service–Resort	21	0.7787	0.2388	0.3787	0.9543
	Full Service–Non-Resort	82	0.6448	0.0671	0.2734	0.7231
	Limited Service	51	0.5074	0.0432	0.1227	0.5934
Waste POR (kg/OCRM)	Full Service–Resort	63	3.5705	1.9940	2.6748	3.7100
	Full Service–Non-Resort	18	6.8444	2.8398	5.5279	7.3886
	Limited Service	3,663	1.5799	0.4146	1.1184	2.1474

\*Note: The median tends to be more representative for benchmarking than the mean. Medians are less sensitive to outliers and skewed data, providing a more reliable central tendency.

also provides a comprehensive suite of metrics covering energy use, carbon emissions, water consumption, and waste generation.

*Impact of Hotel Type on Food Waste Generation*

Within the U.S., full-service hotels produced 2.2 times more food waste than limited-service hotels, reflecting their larger and more complex food operations, including multiple restaurants and banquet service. In contrast, limited-service hotels typically offer minimal dining options. Details are provided in Exhibit 2.

From a property type perspective, resorts generated 75-percent more food waste than non-resort hotels. This disparity can be attributed to the nature of resort operations, where more buffet services are offered and guests are more inclined to dine on-site due to the remote locations, whereas urban hotel guests have more off-property dining alternatives, resulting in smaller restaurant operations. Details are provided in Exhibit 3.

**FOOD WASTE DATA—  
FINANCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPLICATIONS**

A comprehensive analysis of food waste needs to go beyond measuring the amount of waste generated and waste diversion rate. It should also account for the broader financial and environmental impacts.

From a financial perspective, food waste accounts for approximately 8 percent of total food costs in hotels, according to unpublished data provided by Winnow (2025).<sup>22</sup> On average, food costs make up 26 percent of food sales in hotels and 39 percent in resorts. This equates to a profit margin impact of roughly 2.1 percent for hotel restaurants and 3.1 percent for resort restaurants. Without any food waste measurement or reduction initiatives, each food cover generates 167 grams of waste. However, hotels and resorts that actively track and manage food waste have achieved up to 41 percent reduction within just six months, clearly demonstrating the value of proactive food waste management for cost savings.

From a sustainability point of view, reducing food waste conserves the vital resources and ecosystems involved in food production. By easing the demand for land, water, energy, and chemical inputs, reducing waste helps lessen the need for agricultural expansion and landfill expansion, reduces the stress on freshwater habitats, potential contamination of natural habitats by agrochemicals, and lowers GHG emissions. For example, the U.S. EPA’s 2023 report *From Field to Bin: The Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste Management Pathways* found that 55 percent of food waste generated by retail and food service operations ends up in

<sup>22</sup> Winnow, unpublished data. 2025.

**Total food waste data set by hotel type for U.S.**

Metric	Hotel Type	Count	Mean	Q1	Median	Q3
Food Waste POR (kg/OCRM)	Resort	21	0.7787	0.2388	0.3787	0.9543
	Non-Resort	133	0.5921	0.0553	0.2169	0.6846

landfills.<sup>23</sup> The emission factor for landfilled food waste is 3.9 times higher than that for composted food waste, underscoring the climate benefits of diverting food from landfill.

Together, these insights reinforce that food waste is not only a cost and operational issue but also a major lever for advancing environmental and climate goals in the hospitality industry.

**LEARNINGS FROM OTHER FOOD INDUSTRIES**

*Success in Grocery Retail Food Waste data Collection*

The Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment (PCFWC) has seen great success collecting grocery retail food waste data, utilizing ReFED’s calculators and methodology. The PCFWC has published four years of [reports](#) (since 2019) on unsold food rates and destinations in the retail sector, based on data from PCFWC retail signatories that was aggregated and anonymized. Together, the retail signatories make up more than 50 percent of the U.S. grocery market share.

Building on PCFWC’s success, the U.S. Food Waste Pact launched a nationwide expansion of the model in 2024. It continues to collect retail data and is now scaling its methodology to the food-service and manufacturing sectors. In 2025, the pact plans to report on its first year of food-service data.

Both initiatives follow a “Target, Measure, Act” approach to food waste reduction. Measurement is core to this approach, because it is used to:

- Establish a baseline for improvement;
- Track progress over time;
- Identify waste hotspots that need action;
- Inform working groups and intervention projects; and

- Determine best practices and highlight success stories for replication.

This data-driven approach has enabled the retail sector to make measurable progress toward food waste reduction goals. From 2019 to 2023, unsold food rates in the region have decreased by 30 percent.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the initiatives have tracked the profile of food waste, the destinations of the unsold food, and its impact in terms of carbon footprint, water use, and lost sales and meals.

The retail sector is more energized than ever to reduce food waste, knowing that their work is having an impact.

**CALL TO ACTION**

Reducing food waste offers a strategic opportunity for U.S. hotels—including individual properties, hotel companies, and the broader hospitality industry—to reduce environmental impacts, lower operating costs, meet emerging regulatory demands, and align with evolving guest expectations.

*For Individual Hotels*






Individual properties can begin by implementing basic food waste tracking systems. Back-of-house waste segregation, manual logging, and staff training on food waste reduction can serve as immediate entry points. More advanced options, such as using AI-powered tools, allow for precise waste identification and actionable insights, especially in high-volume operations like resorts and full-service properties.

Despite the limitations of space, cost, and integration, case studies have shown that tracking food waste at the source can result in reductions of up to 41 percent within six months and an estimated \$7 in savings for every \$1 invested. These benefits extend beyond cost, helping conserve natural resources and reduce emissions.

<sup>23</sup> From *Field to Bin: The Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste Management Pathways 2023*. U.S. EPA, <https://www.epa.gov/land-research/field-bin-environmental-impacts-us-food-waste-management-pathways>

<sup>24</sup> *Progress in Reducing Food Waste—A data Report from the Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment and the U.S. Food Waste Pact*. U.S. Food Waste Pact. <https://foodwastepact.refed.org/resources/progress-in-reducing-food-waste/>

Changes in Pacific Coast unsold food

Impact of Pacific Coast Retail Unsold Food in 2023		Change from 2019	Change from 2022
 <p><b>MEALS DONATED</b>  <b>129 Million</b>                      Enough to feed 118,000 people for one year</p>		<b>21 % Decrease</b>	<b>9% Decrease</b>
 <p><b>TOTAL GHG FOOTPRINT</b>  <b>2.2 Million MTCO<sub>2</sub>e</b>                      Equivalent to driving 514,000 cars for a year</p>		<b>29% Decrease</b>	<b>3% Increase</b>
 <p><b>METHANE FOOTPRINT</b>  <b>26,000 MTCH<sub>4</sub></b>                      Equivalent to powering 98,000 homes' energy use for a year</p>		<b>31% Decrease</b>	<b>5% Increase</b>
 <p><b>WATER FOOTPRINT</b>  <b>141 Billion Gallons of Water</b>                      Equivalent to 222,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools</p>		<b>35% Decrease</b>	<b>2% Increase</b>
 <p><b>LOST SALES</b>  <b>\$3.92 Billion</b>                      Equivalent to 3.6% of annual regional food sales</p>		<b>0.4% Decrease</b>	<b>8% Increase</b>

Source: U.S. Food Waste Pact

To further support these efforts, hotels can apply the resources available through HotelKitchen, an industry initiative developed by WWF in partnership with AHLA. HotelKitchen offers a comprehensive suite of tools designed specifically for hospitality operations, including step-by-step waste reduction guides, staff engagement materials, signs, and case studies. These resources are tailored to help hotels of all sizes, from boutique properties to international chains, build internal capacity for food waste management. By adopting HotelKitchen’s strategies, properties can accelerate their sustainability performance, strengthen brand reputation, and contribute meaningfully to industry-wide environmental stewardship.

*For Hotel Companies and Brands*

Hotel companies are well-positioned to create systemic change by encouraging uniform data collection practices across their portfolios. Investing in scalable waste management technologies, establishing standardized procedures, and aligning corporate sustainability goals with measurement-based food waste initiatives can

position brands ahead of regulatory mandates and future-proof their operations.

Participation in collaborative initiatives such as CHSB can help hotels calculate carbon footprint, review and benchmark energy, water, carbon emissions, and waste performance with peers. Current CHSB data shows that only a small portion of hotel participants submit food waste data, highlighting a clear opportunity for hotel groups to lead by example in improving data quality and disclosure.

Hotel companies and associations are encouraged to sign on to the [U.S. Food Waste Pact](#), a voluntary agreement model for businesses. Launched in 2024 and built upon the regional model of the Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment, the pact supports businesses in accelerating their food waste reduction goals through a “Target, Measure, Act” approach. It represents major food companies across the supply chain and provides the opportunities for pre-competitive collaboration, hands-on support with waste tracking, and access to technical expertise.

### *For the U.S. Hotel Industry as a Whole*

As a collective, the hotel industry has the scale and influence to accelerate food waste reduction by replicating successful models from other sectors. Proven models like the Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment and the broader U.S. Food Waste Pact have proven the effectiveness of a “Target, Measure, Act” framework within grocery retail, where food waste fell by 28 percent over four years. The hotel industry can adapt this model to its context, enhancing both the sustainability performance and public credibility of the sector.

The case for action is urgent. According to the UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2024, hospitality and food-service businesses worldwide generated approximately 290 million tons of food waste in 2022,<sup>1</sup> with hotels accounting for 9 percent, or 26.1 million tons of food waste annually.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, if we can mobilize hotels and make a collective reduction of just 20 percent across the global hotel industry, we could prevent an estimated 5.22 million tons of food waste each year, which underscores the sector's potential to make a large-scale environmental impact.

## **OUTLOOK**

The hospitality industry stands at a pivotal juncture. Food waste is a complex challenge—but one that can be addressed through shared commitment, innovation, and execution.

Let us not aim for perfection at the expense of action. With the tools, technologies, and frameworks now available, as well as the strong business and environmental case established, the time to act is now. ■

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<sup>25</sup> Food Waste Index Report 2024. Mar 2024. United Nations Environment Programme. <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/45230>

<sup>26</sup> Overview of Waste in the UK Hospitality and Food Service Sector. November 2013. WRAP. <https://www.wrap.ngo/resources/report/overview-waste-hospitality-and-food-service-sector>

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Sze N. Yau (Jessica)** is a Director at Greenview. Working in the sustainability sector for 20 years, she has held roles in non-government organizations, consultancy, and in-house sustainability teams, giving her insight into how both public and private sectors approach sustainability. At Greenview, Jessica works on sustainability database management for the hospitality sector, with experience across the data lifecycle – from collection and analysis to internal auditing and performance reporting. She has played a leading role in waste data analysis, such as the development of a calculation model that estimates the positive impacts of Clean the World’s recycling efforts for soap and amenity bottles. In addition to her analytical work, she has led sustainability engagement workshops to help raise awareness and build practical understanding among clients.

Since 2005, she has been involved in over 50 ESG reporting projects either in consultant capacity, verifier capacity or in-house. Before joining Greenview, Jessica held in-house roles supporting hotels in shaping and implementing their sustainability initiatives.



**Tara Dalton** is Circular Supply Chain Manager at the World Wildlife Fund. She has fifteen years of experience working on sustainable food systems and manages WWF food loss and waste work with the private sector. Her portfolio includes individual strategic advisory support and management of the U.S. Food Waste Pact—the nation’s first action driven platforms for private sector collaboration around food waste.

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