



# Chief Science Advisor's recommendations to the Prime Minister on food waste

Summary for attendees

## Background

The Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor (PMCSA) Professor Dame Juliet Gerrard, published her final reports on food waste at an event hosted by the New Zealand Food Waste Champions 12.3 Trust on 27 June 2024. The PMCSA collaborated with experts and stakeholders and drew on international expertise to understand Aotearoa New Zealand's food waste problem. This work resulted in [four reports](#) and 27 independent, evidence-informed recommendations to government to alleviate food lost or wasted (referred to as food waste) throughout the food system.

[New Zealand Food Waste Champions 12.3 Trust](#) supported the series of reports and, at the event, invited industry to hear how the recommendations can be utilised as guidance for action on food waste and produce better outcomes for business, community, and our environment.

## How the recommendations help businesses

The recommendations reflect the global trend towards stronger food waste policy and regulation to create more sustainable global and local food systems. Food waste reduction has emerged as a pathway to mitigate climate change and food insecurity. Examples of global policy trends include more coordinated action on food waste through national and sector plans, mandated food waste measurement within businesses and landfill bans on organic material. Globally, companies are prioritising food waste reduction as a pathway to reduce costs, capture value, avoid risk, and stay ahead of regulations. Economically, avoiding resource waste, capturing value from surplus and by-products and reducing disposal costs can create value for businesses and stakeholders. Ensuring unsold food reaches people and empowering staff to facilitate this adds value to staff and communities. Actions such as matching production to demand and reducing value chain emissions, especially methane from landfill food waste, help mitigate emissions.

Businesses need not wait for government action. The first step is understanding your food waste, its causes, and where to direct resources for change. From there, food waste reduction activity across your business can support your strategic agenda, business improvements, sector leadership on environmental and social issues, staff engagement and other ESG goals. To do this, the Target Measure Act Collaborate (TMAC), is established international best practice for businesses and is used by the Kai Commitment Signatories to align actions with business priorities.

As a leading organisation on food waste action in Aotearoa New Zealand, NZFWC12.3 is committed to working with government and industry through our [Kai Commitment](#) programme to ensure the recommendations translate into tangible activities. Please contact us for further details on the recommendations or their application to your organisation.

## Summary of recommendations

### THEME 1

#### Systems problem, systems solutions

Combating food loss and waste requires people throughout the food system and in the waste management sector to work collaboratively towards a shared vision. To achieve this, we need a national food loss and waste strategy and reduction target, and coordination mechanisms that empower stakeholders to bring the shared vision to life.

#### **National food waste strategic action plan for Aotearoa New Zealand (S1)**

Develop, implement and evaluate a comprehensive food waste reduction plan by 2030 (separately, or as part of a national food strategy) including sector action plans, potentially creating an independent body to oversee its implementation (e.g. End Food Waste Australia, UKWaste & Resource Action Programme).

#### **Collaborative sector action plans (SAPs) (P1)**

Develop and trial (in the next 12 months) a collaborative sector-specific action plan to understand the drivers of food waste across unique sectors/supply chains and potential interventions across the food system. Implement SAPs across all key sectors by 2030 (e.g. bakery, dairy, horticulture SAPs led by End Food Waste Australia).

#### **Interagency food rescue strategic action plan (R1)**

Develop an inter-agency plan to support food rescue operations, aligning efforts across MSD, MfE, and MPI having regard for the government's role in resourcing food rescue into the future and core partnerships while also identifying the root causes of surplus food and food insecurity in communities.

#### **Boost food waste-related research and innovation (P8)**

Prioritise food waste prevention in research and funding schemes, including new technologies for domestic and international use (i.e. as an export product). Implement mechanisms to extend the adoption of technologies to reduce food waste, including within SMEs.

#### **Set national food waste targets (C10)**

By 2028 develop a strategy to halve food waste by 2030 and establish a realistic timeline for a longer-term goal of zero food waste (linked to overall national strategy).

#### **Grocery Code review on trade-term driven food waste (P2)**

Commission an evaluation of drivers of food waste across the grocery sector. Identify where amendments to the Grocery Code could improve these drivers by 2028 (amendments and evaluation by 2030), ahead of possible stronger regulation and monitoring mechanisms.

### **A national Food Recovery Hierarchy and approach to food waste valorisation (C1)**

Establish a nationally consistent approach to valorising food waste, shifting towards a circular economy and utilising all food as a valuable resource. An inter-agency plan, policies and investments should align to an evidence-based Food Recovery Hierarchy for Aotearoa New Zealand, informed by lifecycle assessments. Policies and publicly available resources to enable the life cycle assessment approach, to be in place by 2028.

### **Government leadership and procurement (C2)**

Use central and local government procurement to increase market demand and supply of food waste valorisation (e.g. upcycled foods, compost products) and mandate landfill diversion in public institutions by 2028.

## **THEME 2**

### **Measure and monitor**

We need to know more about food loss and waste in Aotearoa. Not just how much food is wasted, but where in the food system that waste occurs, current diversion practices, dominant food waste types, and geographic variation in loss and waste volumes. Good data is crucial to articulating the challenge, galvanising action, designing well-targeted interventions, and monitoring progress.

### **Standardise and digitalise data on food waste and destinations (potential mandatory reporting) (S2)**

Standardise food waste data across the supply chain, develop a digital platform and integrate it with other data (e.g. industry supply chain data, environmental, economic and social data) with potential mandatory food waste reporting across the food supply chain.

### **Strengthen data and understanding on surplus food, food insecurity and food rescue capacity and impact (R2, R3)**

Develop comprehensive data and analysis of the national food rescue situation, including surplus food, food insecurity, to assess the food rescue sector's capacity and impact, including environmental, cultural and social suitability and fitness for purpose.

### **Strengthen data and understanding of the scale of food waste in Aotearoa New Zealand to inform valorisation opportunities (C3)**

Improve national data on food waste volumes and the current state of waste management to build on the national baseline calculation (expected in 2024) through primary research and surveys (by 2028). By 2030, consider the adoption of ISO/WD 20001 on standardisation for measuring food loss and waste across the supply chain.

### **Data platform for the sector (P3)**

Support the creation of a sector-wide food waste data platform for collaboration and forecasting, piloted by 2026 and fully implemented by 2030.

## THEME 3

### Prevent food loss and waste at source

Preventing food loss and waste at the source has scope to deliver the greatest environmental, social, and economic benefits throughout the food system, and everyone has a role to play. A high degree of connectivity means that New Zealanders can contribute to food waste prevention not just at their stage of the food supply chain, but throughout the system.

#### **Encourage novel and emergent consumer food purchase models (P4)**

Scope and evaluate alternative food purchase models (e.g., refilleries, consumer-supported agriculture, farmers markets) with implementation and promotion of mechanisms by 2028.

#### **Weather event food waste mitigation (P5)**

Identify mechanisms to reduce food waste from extreme weather events, to be implemented by 2028.

#### **Review and incentivise reform of specification practices driving food waste (P6)**

Review best practice for specifications and reducing food waste. Support (and explore mechanisms to incentivise) stakeholder groups to review specifications practices where they lead to edible food being discarded. Explore best practices in consumer communications to encourage the use of imperfect products.

#### **Explore alternatives to traditional date labelling (P7)**

Review the current use of date labelling and implications for food waste and explore possibilities for alternatives where labelling is driving waste across the supply chain or in households. Explore possibilities for an evidence-based consumer education campaign around date labelling.

#### **Evidence-based consumer food waste reduction campaigns (P9)**

Support evidence-based design and evaluation of consumer communications to prevent food waste, capturing and building on existing work.

## THEME 4

### Save good food for people

Good food is not a waste stream to be managed – it is a resource for nourishing people. Surplus food, imperfect but nutritious produce, and edible by-products are examples of food, not food waste. Resources, systems, and enabling conditions that promote food rescue and upcycling are crucial to ensuring edible food is never treated as loss or waste. If nourishing people is not practical, using the food as feed resources for animals is the next best alternative.

### **Food rescue empowerment (R4, R5)**

Promote food rescue via tax incentives, review legislative barriers to food donation and support the sector with resources and training.

### **Foster the upcycling sector, prioritising sustainability, nutrition and whole food utilisation (C4)**

Support upcycling innovations and establish a certification scheme by 2028, with a network for linking producers and processors by 2030.

## **THEME 5**

### **Capture value from unavoidable food loss and waste**

There will always be some waste in our food system, which must be managed to capture value in alignment with circular economy thinking and the food recovery hierarchy. Diversion to animal feed and investment in material, nutrient, and energy recovery from food waste will ensure there are decent end-of-life options for unavoidable food loss and waste. Landfilling food loss and waste has no place in our waste management future.

### **Link food rescue with food recovery options (R6)**

Ensure food rescue organisations have access to food waste management solutions aligned with the Food Recovery Hierarchy for management of waste from their activities.

### **Utilisation of food waste for animal feed (C5)**

Replace purpose-produced animal feed with safe, nutritious waste from the human food supply chain (including byproducts) and provide regulatory clarity for innovative options such as insect bioconversion.

### **Material recovery (C6)**

Support collaborations between research and industry for recovery options for unprevented food waste, aligning with government and industry definitions and international standards.

### **Nutrient recovery (C7)**

Support the expansion of opportunities, pathways and processes for the safe return of nutrients within inedible food waste to the environment through composting and other methods, with supporting technical guidelines, resources and removal of barriers, whilst maintaining soil health and safety and productivity of land (a staged process to 2030).

### **Supplement natural gas (C8)**

Investigate the potential for expanded investment in unprevented food waste as a feedstock to supplement or displace natural gas, with a guide and plan by 2026.

### **Potential ban food waste to landfill (C9)**

Evaluate the feasibility of banning food waste from landfills by 2030 (including alternatives). Clearly signal the intention to industry to galvanise market activity in value capture.