THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF
THE ENVIRONMENT
AND LIFE SCIENCES

# FOOD RECOVERY FOR RHODE ISLAND

**Cooperative Extension** 

# **Cultivating Community-led Solutions to Food Access and Food Waste**

NERCRD Webinar, April 8, 2025

Vanessa Venturini, MESM – Program Leader

Amanda Missimer, PhD RD LDN – Clinical Assistant Professor of Nutrition



# THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Bringing <u>science-based</u>
University resources to Rhode
Island communities since 1914.

OUR STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

### **OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

- > We are committed to improving quality of life, livelihoods, and the health of our natural environment through our work.
- > We believe in social and environmental justice.
- > We strive to deepen our cultural understanding and proficiency while building capacity to create inclusive experiences that address diverse community needs.











### FOOD RECOVERY FOR RHODE ISLAND



# Agenda

- I. The Challenge
- II. Food Recovery for Rhode Island
- III. Collaborate with us!
- III. Q & A





Do you have priorities related to the environment?





## **Food Recovery Hierarchy**

### **Source Reduction**

Reduce the volume of surplus food generated

### **Feed Hungry People**

Donate extra food to food banks, soup kitchens and shelters

### **Feed Animals**

Divert food scraps to animal food

### **Industrial Uses**

Provide waste oils for rendering and fuel conversion and food scraps for digestion to recover energy

### Composting

Create a nutrient-rich soil amendment

### Landfill/ Incineration

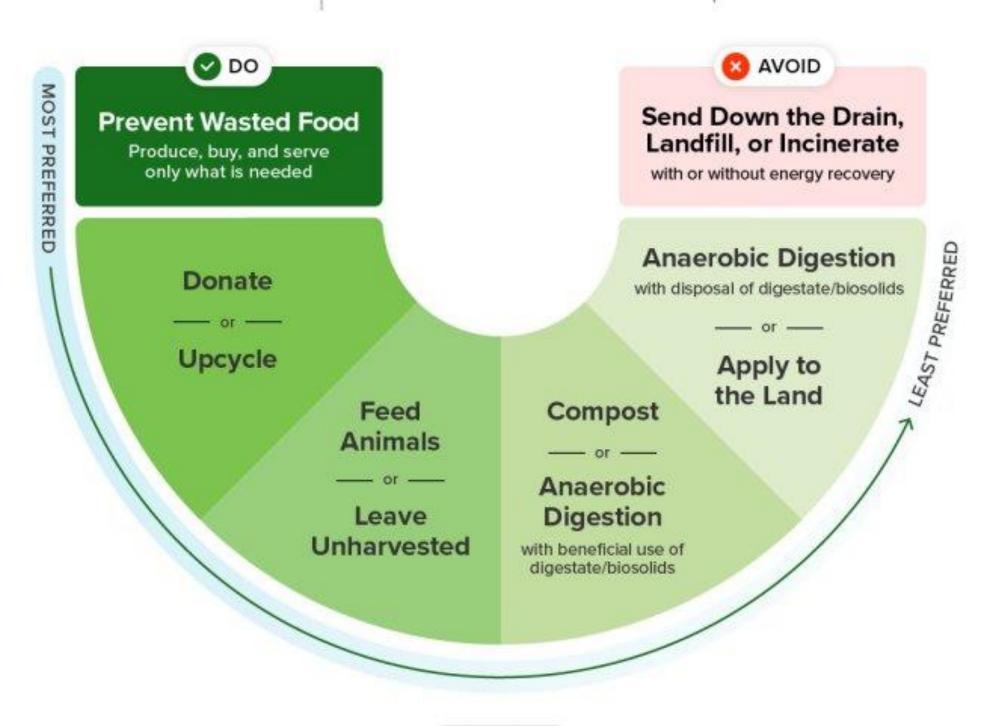
Last resort to disposal

URI received financial support from the EPA under an assistance agreement.



### **Wasted Food Scale**

How to reduce the environmental impacts of wasted food



October 2023

## Wasted Food

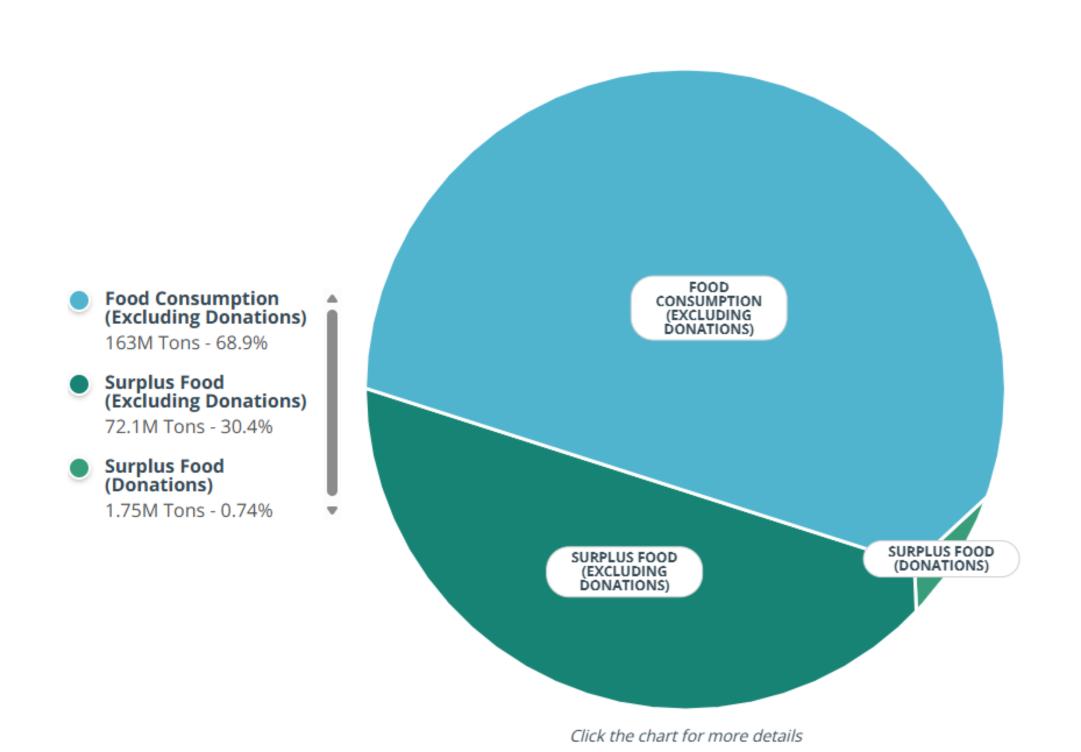
THE CHALLENGE

Environmental Impacts

Food Insecurity



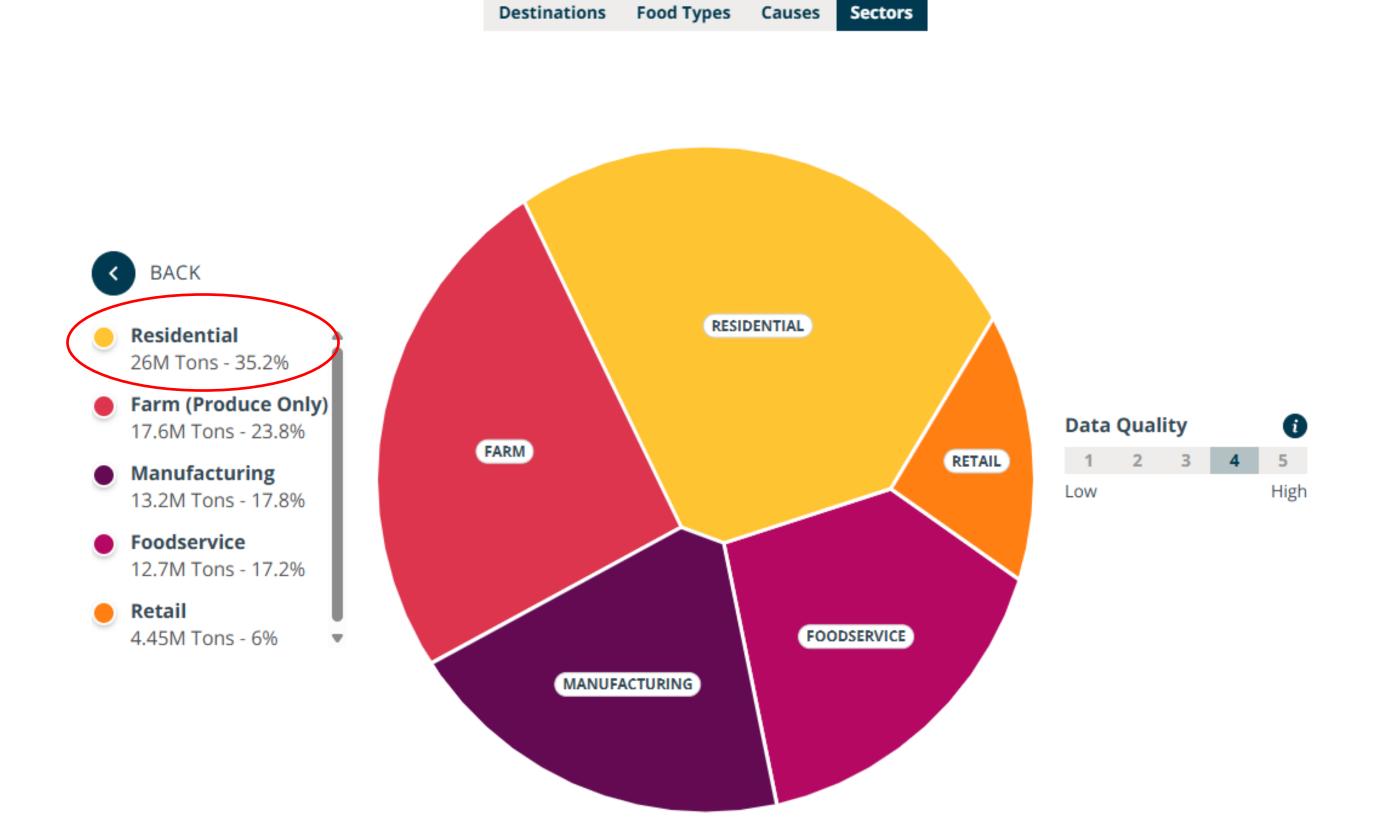
# The U.S. generated 73.9 million tons of surplus food in 2023, which is 31% of total production



Source: ReFED Insights Engine

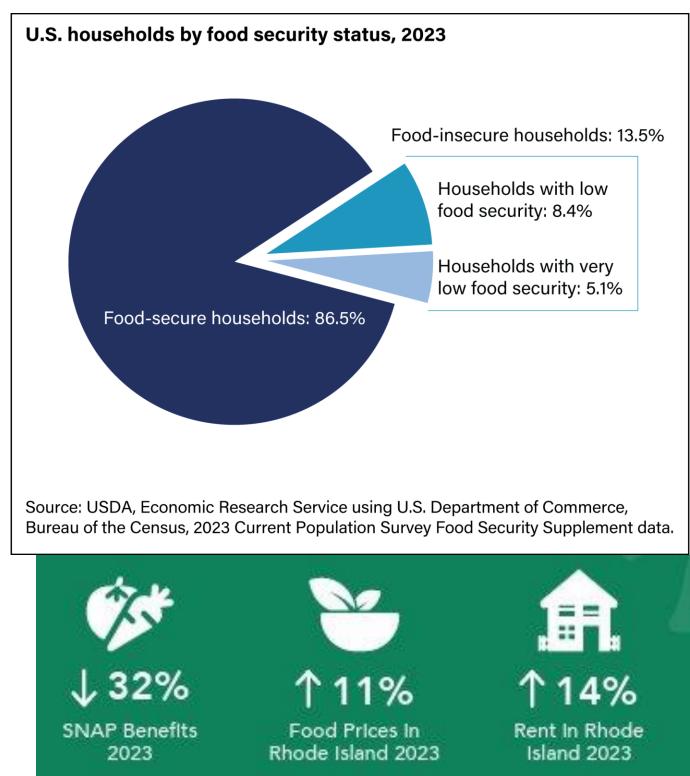
### 73.9 million Surplus Food Tons

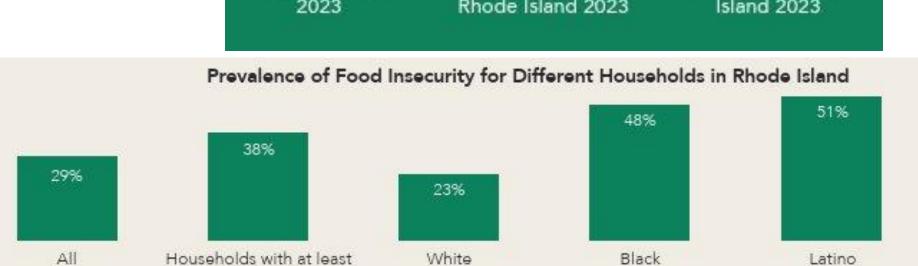
were generated in All Sectors vacross All States vain 2023 value



Source: ReFED Insights Engine

# Missed Opportunity: FOOD INSECURITY





Households

Households

one child under 18

\*All remaining households include Asian, Native American/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and more than one race/ethnicity.

Households

Households

40%

All Remaining

Households\*

# SAVINGS: Family of 4 spends \$3000/year on food that goes uneaten



EPA report, 2025 "Estimating the Cost of Food Waste to American Consumers"

# Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste: EPA

What resources go into a year of food loss and waste in the U.S.?

\*excluding impacts of waste management, such as landfill methane emissions



**Greenhouse gas** emissions of more than 42 coal-fired power plants

**Enough water** and energy to supply more than 50 million homes







The **amount of fertilizer** used in the U.S. to grow all plantbased foods for U.S. human consumption

An area of agricultural land equal to California and New York



**Learn more:** www.epa.gov/land-research/farm-kitchen-environmental-impacts-us-food-waste

Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste: What resources go into a year of food loss and waste in the U.S.? \*excluding impacts of waste management, such as landfill methane emissions. Impacts include: greenhouse gas emissions of more than 42 coal-fired power plants; enough water and energy to supply more than 50 million homes; the amount of fertilizer used in the U.S. to grow all plant-based foods for U.S. human consumption; and an area of agricultural land equal to California and New York.





Are there ways to simultaneously address all of these issues?



# INSTRUCTORS

Cooperative Extension Professionals

+

Community Experts/Practitioners













# CHANGE MAKERS Any community member 18+ (Consumers)

Community members



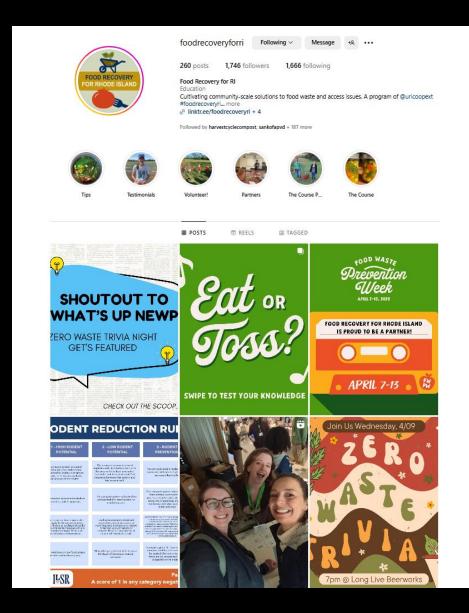
Food system professionals Lou the pig farmer



Peer Educator
Bruce from Sankofa Initiative at
West Elmwood Housing
Development Corp.



## PUBLICITY







#### Fall 2025 Food Recovery for RI Course

#### Uplifting Community-Led Wasted Food Solutions

Food Recovery for Rhode Island (FRRI) is a community education program for Rhode Islanders. This 6-week course includes online coursework + field experiences designed to be completed at your convenience. Make changes at home and volunteer in the community!

- \* "At home we have made a conscious effort to plan how to make the most of everything we buy."
- "I will help start a food recovery program at my son's elementary school with RI Schools Recycling project"
- \* "I have started to compost at home but have also encouraged people I know to use composting services if they are unable to compost at home."

#### What you'll gain:

- Skills to preserve the harvest and make the most of your food (e.g. food storage, preservation, composting)
- Learn outdoors in beautiful places through hands-on field experiences
- Take action on community-based projects to feed people not landfills
- Meet new people with similar interests networking for food system professionals

Course is open to all RI residents 18+. FINANCIAL AWARDS are available (and simple to apply for).

APPLY for early acceptance by June 1, 2025; Final deadline is August 1, 2025

Questions? Email foodrecoveryri@gmail.com or call (401)874-2900













Apply Here:







COMMUNITY PARTNERS
who already have solutions



# COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CHANGE



# FOOD RECOVERY FOR RHODE ISLAND

Est. 2021

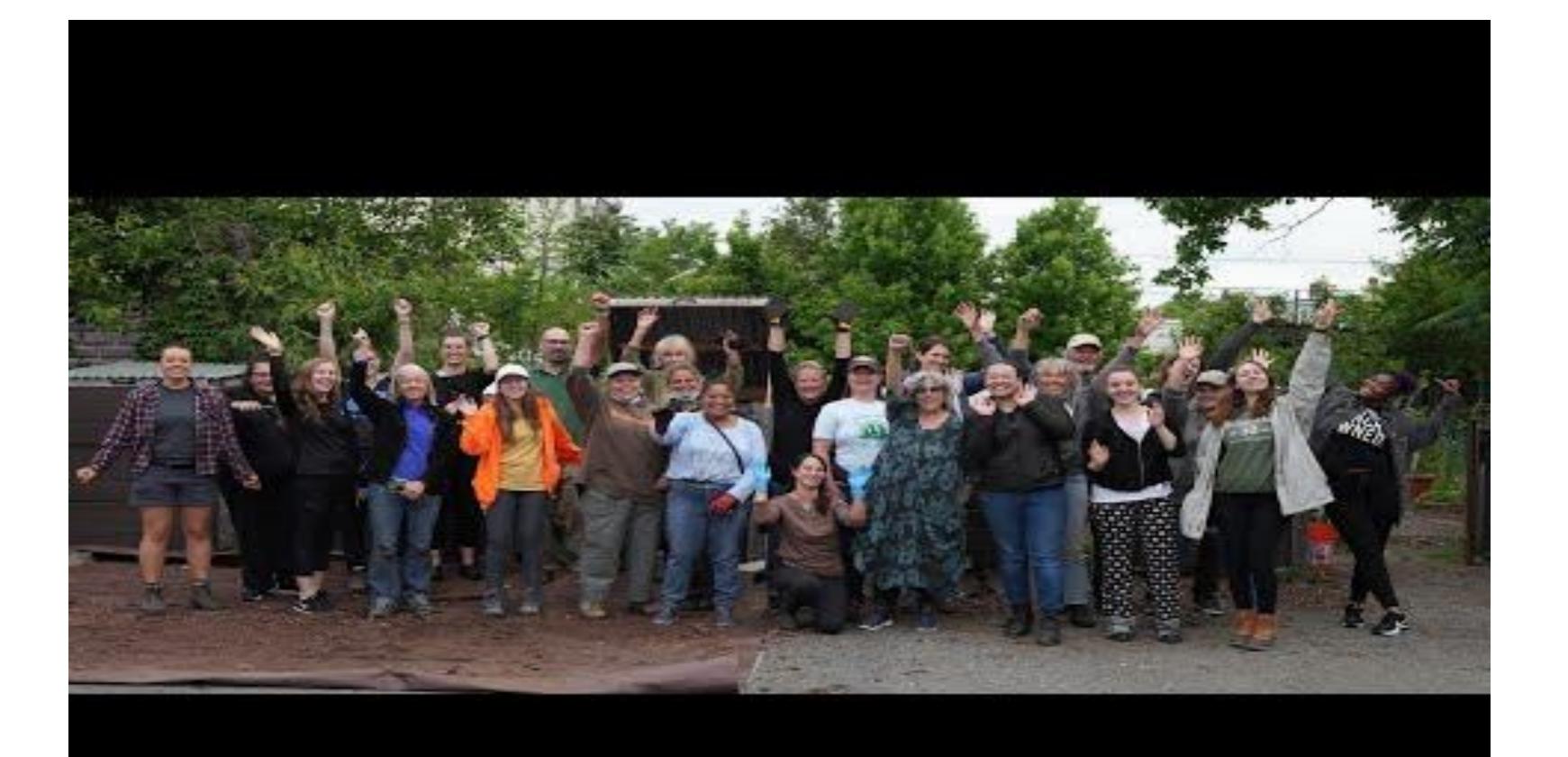
A consumer education program that trains people to uplift community-led wasted food solutions.

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION







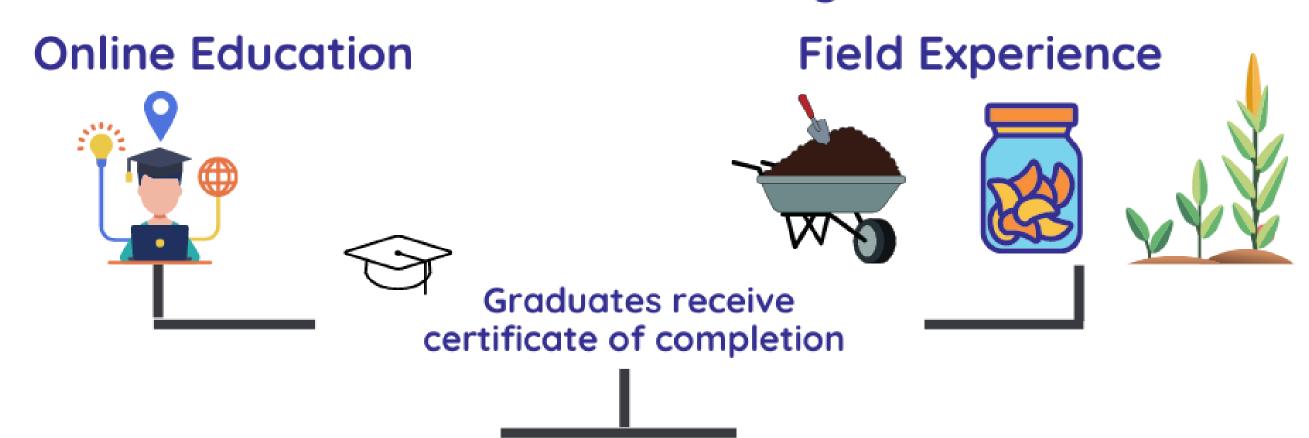


# FOOD RECOVERY FOR RHODE ISLAND COURSE





### 6-week Food Recovery Course

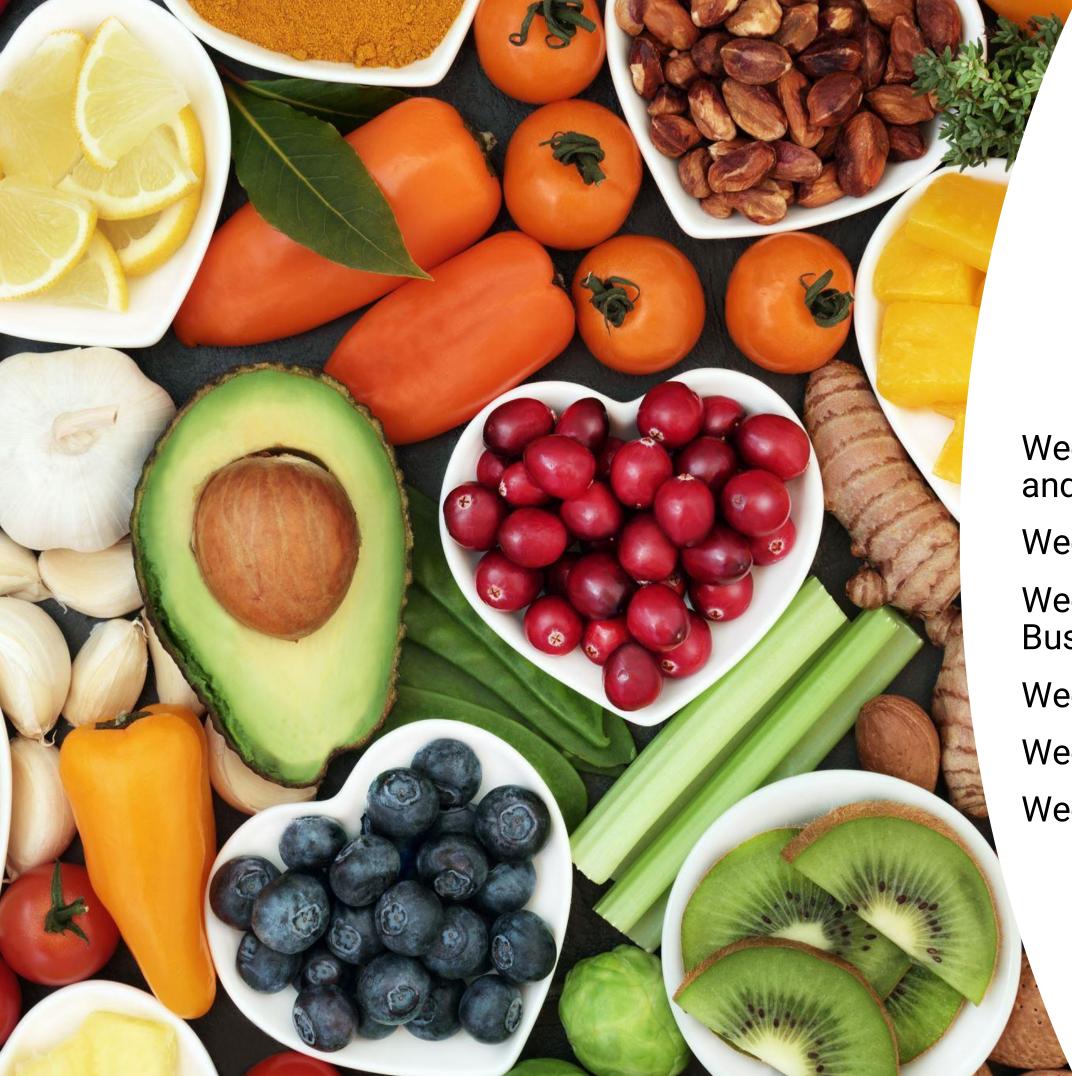


40-HOUR VOLUNTEER INTERNSHIP COMMUNITY-DRIVEN FOOD RECOVERY



**Certified URI Food Recovery Volunteer** 





URI Food Recovery
Course
Held Each Fall

Week 1: The Challenge - Food Waste, Food Insecurity and the Environment

Week 2: Wasted Food Solutions - Farms and Schools

Week 3: Wasted Food Solutions- Communities and Businesses

Week 4: Composting - Commercial and Residential

Week 5: Food Preservation and Nutrition

Week 6: Volunteerism



Table of Contents > Week 4: Composting - Commercial and Residential > Learn: Composting - Commercial and Residential

Learn: Composting - Commercial and Residential -

UNIVERSITY Food Recovery for Rhode Island Fall 2024 \text{em} \text{ \infty} \text{ \infty}





#### Welcome to Week 4: Composting - Commercial and Residential

This week you will learn concepts and techniques of composting on commercial and residential scales. You will engage in one new food recovery behavior as part of Food Recovery Challenge Project.

#### Learning Objectives

**O1** Exhibit understanding of the Food Recovery Hierarchy concepts in order to apply to food recovery techniques and engage in community volunteer efforts

O2 Describe food recovery efforts across Rhode Island

O3 Demonstrate an understanding of a food recovery skill, such as food preservation or composting

Market Ma

#### What is Compost?

Compost is a term for organic matter that has decomposed into a form that plants can use. Compost can be used in potting mixes or mixed in with garden soil. It has many benefits for your plants and recycles materials that may otherwise be thrown into landfills.

Components.

- "Green" material
- "Brown" material:
- Carbon/Nitrogen ratio

Review the Home Composting Guide Here or Chere.

Learn How to Start a Home Compost pile, step-by-step here.



# Example Week Composting

- Content
   Learned online
- Local field
   experiences for
   hands on
   experiences





















Kitchen Compost Schools

## Personal BEHAVIOR CHANGE Project

## THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

# Community Partners Volunteer or Paid

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

























## Methane Footprint

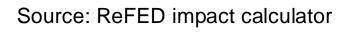
1.56 metric tons which = 6 homes' energy use for 1 year











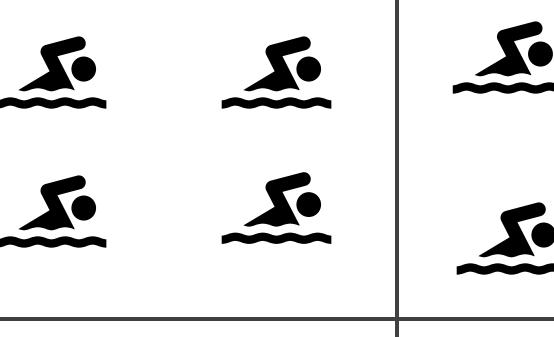


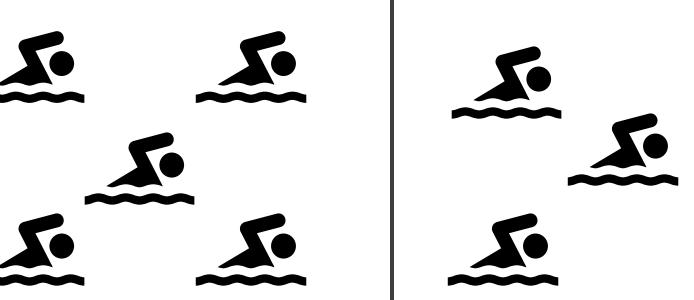


2024

## Water Footprint

17.84 Million gallons which = 27 Olympic swimming pools

















Source: ReFED impact calculator

2024
Meals
Recovered
13,297

Source: ReFED impact calculator



### Partnerships

"I plan to use the materials from the food recovery course to use in my position as **Indigenous Empowerment Coordinator at Tomaquag Museum**, to teach the native community about modern composting methods, highlighting their differences and similarities to traditional composting techniques.

Additionally, I will share both modern and traditional food preservation techniques, such as canning and smoking, as well as emphasize the importance of foraging, growing, and utilizing produce in its entirety."

-Laurel Spears, FRRI Class of 2024



## Career Pipeline

"My career has completely changed since taking the food recovery course!

I get to work with kids of all ages, teach them about sorting their cafeteria waste to save the planet and help people in their own school communities with the share table.

The kids teach me so much every day and I feel like I am making a real difference in the world.

I love my new career and I owe it all to the food recovery course!"

-Kendra Gay, FRRI Class of 2023







What's next? Regional & National Expansion

Table of Contents + Week 4: Composting - Commercial and Residential + Learn: Composting - Commercial and Residential

Learn: Composting - Commercial and Residential ~





### National CE Resources

#### **Worm Composting**

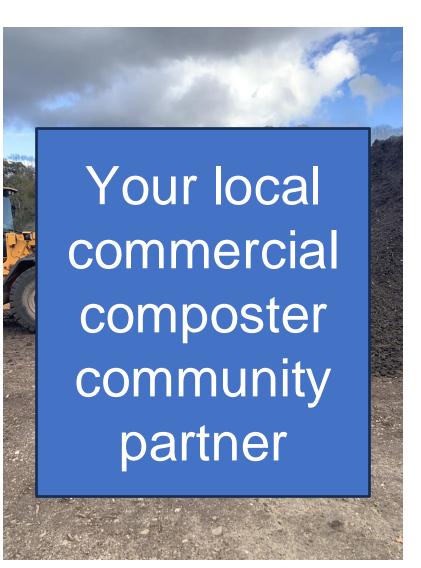


University of Maine Cooperative Extension educator Marjorie Peron composting.



How to set up a worm bin from NC State Extension Educator.

More excellent resources on vermicomposting, here.



# National Course for Replication









## Jean Buzby, PhD., USDA Food Loss and Waste Liaison and National Science Liaison

History of Plate Waste in Schools



Model program

> Olivia Davis, Extension Staff Oregon State University Extension Service

#### Adapting a Preservation Program

### Davis, Olivia

#### Cultural Humility at work

- Being present for community needs- Transparency
- Following Tribal protocols Learning
- Gathering community input- Asking Questions
- Gradual change, test ideas- Listening
- Local Program shift Power shift
- Greater Program Adaptations in works Equitable programing



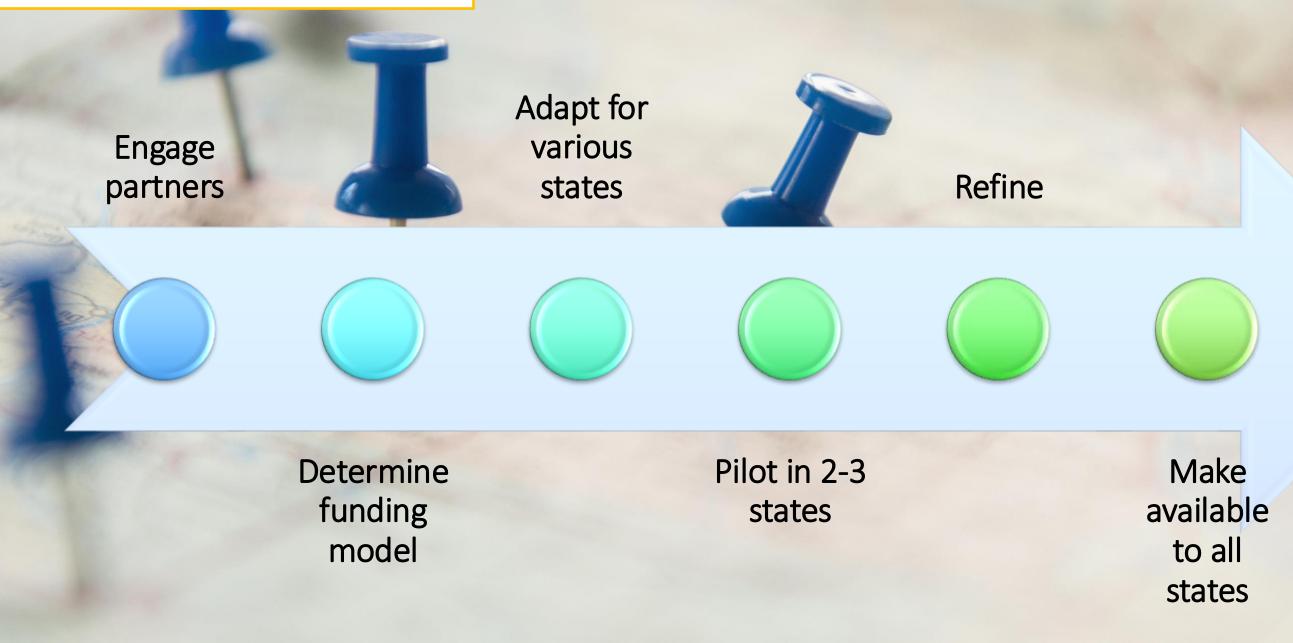








60+ professionals from 25 states have expressed interest in the national version of the course





## THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION







Any Questions?



### Thank you!

Vanessa Venturini vanessa@uri.edu

Amanda Missimer <a href="mailto:amanda\_missimer@uri.edu">amanda\_missimer@uri.edu</a>

Follow us @foodrecoveryforri