



Community Environmental Council Food Waste Study Reveals Opportunities to Feed the Hungry and Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

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October 22, 2015, Santa Barbara, CA – In recognition of [National Food Day](#) on Saturday, October 24, the Community Environmental Council (CEC) is publishing its latest white paper, *Rebalancing the Food Waste Equation: A Case Study for Santa Barbara*. Investigating food waste at both a local and national level, the paper acts as a starting point for potential solutions to the significant amount of food wasted, and to the resulting imbalances this causes at a social, economic, and environmental level.

“Alarming, 40% of all food produced in the U.S. is never eaten, with most of that loss happening on the consumer end,” said Sigrid Wright, CEO/Executive Director for the Community Environmental Council, noting that the U.S. annually spends \$165 billion on edible food that is not consumed.

In addition to the social and economic implications, Wright continued, “food waste has a significant impact on the environment. First, you lose all of the water and energy it took to grow or produce that item. Second, when organic waste ends up in the landfill, it becomes methane -- a potent greenhouse gas that is 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.”

CEC’s exploration into how national trends are reflected at the local level took place over 4 months, and included interviews with charitable organizations about their need, discussions with local grocers about any barriers they may face when donating usable food, an audit of one grocery store’s waste, and a roundtable discussion with community stakeholders to seek potential solutions.

“In interviews, we heard that the drought has caused a 75% decrease in produce donations to Santa Barbara Foodbank and other non-profits who serve at-risk families,” said Wright. “At the same time, City of Santa Barbara staff estimated that 10-15% of the food going into the commercial compost bins from grocery stores was edible -- with much of that being fresh fruits and vegetables. The project confirmed this estimate, and identified some clear opportunities for preventing future loss.”

The white paper was funded by the Santa Barbara Foundation, and is being used to help inform a larger investigation into the entire food system of Santa Barbara County. In partnership with the [Foodbank of Santa Barbara](#), the [Santa Barbara Foundation](#) and the [Orfalea Foundation](#), CEC is in the midst of an 18-



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month process that looks at every aspect of the food system: production, processing, distribution, access, consumption, and waste management. This research is being used to create a [Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan](#), with recommendations for how our region can better support healthy people, a healthy economy, and a healthy environment. Publication of the Food Action Plan is slated for early 2016.

Rebalancing the Food Waste Equation can be read in full at CECSB.org/Food-Waste. For more information on the Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan, visit SBCFoodAction.org

About the Community Environmental Council

Since 1969, CEC has remained at the forefront of the environmental movement, leading the Santa Barbara region – and at times California and the nation – in creatively solving some of the toughest environmental problems. Today CEC pioneers real life solutions in areas with the biggest impact on climate change – most notably energy, transportation and food systems.

For more information on CEC:

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