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BACK TO SCHOOL: Food Waste Composting at Schools

Did you know?

As local composting infrastructure increases, business and government institutions have begun dipping their toes into the compost pile. There are multiple benefits to diverting organics - reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving zero waste are primary considerations. Organic materials- comprised of yard trimmings, food scraps, wood waste, paper and paperboard products-are the largest component of our trash and make up about two-thirds of the solid waste stream. Landfills are the third largest source of methane in the U.S.[1]



Schools are huge generators of food waste. According to a study by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, food waste makes up 23.9% of the total waste generated by Minnesota public schools, and is the single most common type of waste found in their wastestream.[2]

What can you do?

Find out if your local schools system has a composting program, and the infrastructure to support it. Help school officials understand the importance and utility of a composting program. Some schools have the capacity to create their own composting operation on school grounds in the absence of a commercial compost provider. For an excellent guidebook on how to set this up at your school, visit <http://www.greenmountainfarmtoschool.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Staring-a-School-Compost-Program.pdf>. And, here is a similar guide from Connecticut: http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/compost/compost_pdf/schmanual.pdf. For case studies on school composting programs, see citations, below.[4]

Policy

Currently there are 23 states, including Nebraska, that ban some combination of organics disposal in landfills, mostly leaves, grass and other yard debris, but not including food waste. The Vermont legislature passed Act 148, the Universal Recycling & Composting Law, that will require haulers to offer curbside food scrap collection by 2017 and ban food scraps from landfills entirely by 2020.[3]

1 U.S. EPA

2 <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=14235>

3 <http://cswd.net/about-cswd/universal-recycling-law-act-148/>

4 Case Studies on School composting programs:

<http://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/webinars/K-12/Webinar.pdf>

<http://www.biocycle.net/2015/03/31/school-district-rolls-out-food-waste-reduction/>

<http://www.biocycle.net/2014/05/15/food-scraps-diversion-goes-to-school/>

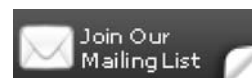
<http://www.biocycle.net/2015/05/13/composting-pilot-expands-in-north-carolina-school-district/>

<http://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/biocycle-stateofcomposting-us-article-july-2014.pdf>

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