



CHUCK GRASSLEY

UNITED STATES SENATOR FOR IOWA

THE REDUCE FOOD LOSS AND WASTE ACT

U.S. Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Dick Durbin (D-Ill.)

Background: The United States produces and imports close to 241 million tons of food each year, but 33 percent of it—equal to 80 million tons—is never sold or eaten. Instead, most of this food is left on the farm field or ends up in a landfill or incinerator.

Issue: Food waste is a complex issue because it occurs at each stage of the supply chain. For example:

- Farms leave crops in the field when it is unprofitable to move them to market.
- Processors trim foods of stems, peels, and bones to refine them into finished products.
- Retailers stock more than 35,000 items on average, but stock rotation challenges can lead to excess, old, or damaged products.
- Foodservice establishments can struggle with inventory, production, or spoilage issues, in addition to consumer plate waste.
- Consumers purchase perishable items and let them spoil in the refrigerator, or throw items out due to date labeling confusion.

This waste has significant economic, environmental, and social costs:

- Economic: More than \$440 billion (nearly 2% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product) is spent annually to produce and dispose of food that is never sold or eaten.
- Environmental: Food waste is the most common material sent to landfills or incinerators. It is responsible for the use of more than 20 trillion liters of water (equal to the annual water use of 50 million homes) and 560,000 square kilometers of agricultural land (an area the size of California and New York combined).
- Hunger: About 34 million Americans, including five million children, are food-insecure. Less than one-third of food waste, if saved from disposal, could feed each of them, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Solution: In 2020, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) entered into a formal agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency and Food and Drug Administration to “leverage the private and the non-governmental sector to influence national change to reduce food loss and waste.” To build upon these efforts, the *Reduce Food Loss and Waste Act* would establish a “Food Loss and Waste Reduction Certification,” and direct the USDA to create:

- Criteria, which businesses and organizations would have to meet to receive the certification;

- A verification process, to confirm that businesses and organizations have achieved the criteria; and
- A label, which certified businesses and organizations would be authorized to use on their products, buildings, and websites.

The “Food Loss and Waste Reduction Certification” would be similar to existing certifications, such as ENERGY STAR® and the BioPreferred Program®. The *Reduce Food Loss and Waste Act* would direct the USDA to promote the certification to ensure that consumers are informed about which businesses and organizations have received it.

Endorsements: National Restaurant Association; Consumer Brands Association; FMI – The Food Industry Association; ReFED; Kellanova National Resources Defense Council; the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic.