



# 4 takeaways from the NYC Food Waste Fair

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New York City is widely recognized for its size, rich history, diverse population, and perhaps soon - a strong commitment to food waste reduction. With a rapidly expanding [residential organics collection program](#), and legislation requiring high-volume food waste generators [to divert that material from the landfill](#), the Big Apple has quickly become a leader in the space.

That leadership was on display last week when the [NYC Department of Sanitation](#) (DSNY) and the [Foundation for New York's Strongest](#) hosted the [NYC Food Waste Fair](#) on July 25. The event, which attracted over 1,200 registrants, was designed to provide the food business community with the [knowledge, tools, and connections](#) to start or

enhance waste prevention programs. Between a full schedule of **panels and workshops**, and over **70 exhibitors** (including Spoiler Alert), attendees were inundated with information on how to prevent, recover, and recycle wasted food.

Reflecting on the day's activities, we identified four takeaways to share with our followers.



## 1. Strong public interest in food waste action

Given that over two million New Yorkers currently have access to curbside collection of food waste, and another million or so will get access by the year's end, it makes sense that the city's population is aware of the food waste issue. Even still, it was incredible to see such strong public engagement at the fair. Multiple students, community activists, or general 'sustainability' supporters stopped by our booth to simply express support for food waste action, and inquire about Spoiler Alert's offering. In addition, dozens of news and media outlets were on hand to cover the day's happenings, including industry publications such as *Waste Dive* and *BioCycle*, as well as local news outlets like *WNBC 4 New York*. The excitement and energy

around connecting food waste generators with solution providers was clear.

On the national stage, campaigns like [Save the Food](#) are continuing to drive public awareness of the food waste issue. As food businesses strive to differentiate and build customer loyalty, tackling food waste could be a perfect solution.

## 2. Diversity of food waste generators

The [NYC Commercial Organics Rules](#) that took effect in July 2016 impact large arenas and stadiums, food manufacturers, food wholesalers, and food service operators in hotels with 150 or more rooms. But last Tuesday, the Brooklyn Expo Center was packed with representatives from K-12 schools, corporate cafeterias, universities, and many others, all seeking answers on how to reduce food waste within operations. The diversity of attendees speaks to the fact that regardless of size, pretty much any entity that handles food will deal with waste to some degree.

### Establishments Covered by Commercial Organics Rules

**ATTENTION:** If your business meets the minimum requirements outlined below, you must comply with the business organics rules.

 <p><b>Arenas and Stadiums</b> 15,000 or more seats</p>	 <p><b>Food Manufacturers</b> 25,000 sq. ft. or more</p>	 <p><b>Food Wholesalers</b> 20,000 sq. ft. or more</p>	 <p><b>Food Service in Hotels</b> 150 or more rooms</p>
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### What Organics To Separate

 <p><b>Food Scraps</b> <small>Does not include material sold to farmers or rendering companies, or food that is donated.</small></p>	 <p><b>Plant Trimmings</b></p>	 <p><b>Food-Soiled Paper</b></p>	 <p><b>Certified Compostable Products</b> <small>Must meet processor certification requirements.</small></p>
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Image from NYC Department of Sanitation.

The question then becomes what type of solution provider will create effective outcomes for each individual entity - and this gets to the heart of the NYC Food Waste Fair and why these types of events can be so effective. Rather than

encouraging generators to figure out how to combat food waste on their own, the event organizers decided to bring the solution providers to them and allow for connections to be made naturally. It will be interesting to learn about some of the new relationships that were developed as a result.

### 3. Full spectrum of food waste solutions

The NYC Food Waste Fair was described as “‘A soup to nuts’ approach to food waste prevention, recovery, and recycling,” which is absolutely fitting given the range of solution providers that were represented. Entrepreneurs and nonprofits operating at nearly every stage of the [EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy](#) promoted offerings to attendees, while the panels and workshops (organized by Prevention, Recovery, and Recycling) provided information on the ins and outs of establishing an effective food recovery program. Nearly every person that stopped by our booth began with, “So what do *you* do?”, an indication of the number of different solutions represented.

Still, a number of the exhibitors in attendance were focused on the prevention or recovery of prepared foods, as well as value-added processing of inedible food waste (e.g., composting or anaerobic digestion). At Spoiler Alert, we are taking a different approach. Our [enterprise software solution](#) helps food distributors, manufacturers, and grocery retailers - food businesses higher up the supply chain - better manage unsold inventory and reduce the volume of food sent to the landfill.

### 4. It takes a village

Effectively implementing food waste legislation in America's largest metropolitan area is no easy task, and it certainly can't be done by one agency alone. In addition to DSNY, the [NYC Business Integrity Commission](#), [NYC Health Department](#), [NYC Department of Education](#), and the [NYC Small Business Services](#) were all in attendance to share expertise and answer questions. It was great to see this type of collaboration to ensure that all stakeholders are on the same page and all voices are represented. In addition, the diversity of representation from within the sanitation department was something to behold. From DSNY Police, to truck drivers, to office staff, and interns, everyone was pitching in to making the event as successful as possible.



Image from NYC Food Waste Fair.

## What's next?

In mid-July, DSNY Commissioner Kathryn Garcia announced a [proposal](#) to require additional commercial food establishments to separate and divert organic waste. One can only expect that if this legislation passes, the NYC Food Waste Fair will become even larger and more influential in the years to come.

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