

Connecticut Commercial Organics Recycling Law



Legislation Overview: As part of its efforts to ensure adequate infrastructure to process waste, and to encourage the development of more food scrap processing facilities in the state, the state of Connecticut requires certain businesses to recycle their organics. Per the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP), this can be achieved through methods like:

- Preventing the generation of wasted food through more efficient operations
- Donating edible food to shelters and food pantries
- Composting or anaerobically digesting food scraps on-site
- Working with a hauler to take food scraps to a facility that will use it as animal feed, anaerobically digest it, or compost it

Businesses who generate enough organics to comply with the law (see side bar) are only required to do so if they are within 20 miles of a permitted facility. A map of permitted facilities in the state can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2bfU006> and a list of facilities can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2a58szz>.

More information on the law can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1YomzNc>

1. How do I know if this law applies to me?

The most accurate way of knowing if you must comply is to conduct a waste audit and measure your organics. However, this can be time consuming and may require hiring someone to do this for you. DEEP developed calculations for certain business types to estimate their organics generation. Unfortunately, resorts and conference centers were not included. However, the state of Massachusetts (which has a similar law in effect) estimates that resorts and conference centers may generate two tons of organics per week if they have 475 seats or serve 4,000 meals. Details available here: <http://bit.ly/2aWQ83F>

2. What does this mean for resorts and conference centers with foodservice operations, who are covered by the law? And how does packaging fit in?

Businesses who generate more organics than the specified threshold may not send this material to landfills. This means that whatever organics remain after donations must be collected separately or sorted out of the trash; they must be composted or digested – on-site or off. Given the environmental benefits of compost (see side bar) and the simplicity with having a hauler transport organics to a commercial composter, many resorts and conference centers may find off-site composting an attractive option.

When thinking about how to separate food scraps from trash, keep in mind that asking the public to put food scraps in its own separate bin is an uphill battle. Many people simply put everything in one bin and don't take the time to read bin signage. If you use conventional packaging, it is very likely that non-compostable plastic cups and cutlery will end up with the food. Most composters have a limit on the level of "contamination" they will

Connecticut Public Act 11-217, as amended by Section 4 of Public Act 13-285

If you are a:

- resort or conference center
- supermarket
- commercial food wholesaler or distributor
- industrial food manufacturer or processor...

AND you generate 104 or more tons or organic material per year (approx. 2 tons per week)...

AND you are located within 20 miles of a permitted facility that can accept the material...

Then you must ensure your organics are recycled.

In 2020, the threshold for compliance will drop to 52 or more tons or organic material per year (approx. 1 ton per week).

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accept because it is incompatible with their system, is expensive to remove, and can decrease the value of the finished compost. No one wants bits of plastic in their garden.

This is where compostable packaging can help. It allows people to put their half uneaten sandwich in the same bin as the compostable plate because this type of packaging will break down into healthy nutrients for soil. This makes things much easier for the resort or conference center. While a sort to remove non-compostable contamination may still be necessary, shifting to all compostable packaging significantly reduces the foodservice operator's efforts to compost their organics.

3. I'm required to comply with this new law. What do I do to get started?

a. Sign up for composting service. The best place to start is the company that is picking up your landfill and recyclable materials. They may offer hauling services for composting as well.

b. Switch to compostable packaging. As explained, this will make composting food scraps much easier. It is important to try to get as close as possible to using only compostables for your packaging. Any items that must be separated present an opportunity for contamination.

The first step is understanding all of your packaging needs, then reaching out to your distributor or provider of packaging to see which compostable items they offer. Be sure to look for packaging certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute. BPI is the only third-party certification program in the U.S. to verify compostability.



c. Obtain new bins and signs. Once you've secured composting services and have switched to compostable packaging, you will need to provide bins for collecting organic materials. Be sure to think through front-of-house and back-of-house collection areas. In front-of-house, make sure you offer an organics bin in every location you provide landfill and recycling bins. People like to dispose of all materials in one place.

Signage is key – for both your customers and your staff. Be sure to include photos or images of the actual products you use. For example, don't just show a picture of a generic compostable cup. Show a picture of your compostable cup.

d. Educate your staff. Employees play a very important role successful composting programs. They need to understand the proper destination for all materials generated at your operation. This includes understanding where to empty bins in back-of-house collection areas or large containers outside. Depending on the level of contamination allowed by your compost facility, employees may need to go through organics to remove non-compostable items. Employees can also help educate customers as they interact them. Provide training on composting when you launch the program, as well as on an on-going basis.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Eco-Products' Sustainability Maven at sustainabilitymaven@ecoproducts.com.

Benefits of Composting Food Scraps

Food scraps provide beneficial nutrients for compost - organic matter that has the unique ability to improve the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of soils. Healthy soil treated with compost:

- Supplies nutrients to plants
- Reduces the need for artificial fertilizers
- Conserves water
- Reduces storm water run-off and erosion
- Improves plant health
- Stabilizes soil pH

In addition, keeping food scraps out of landfills helps address climate change. Food rotting in landfills emits methane – a greenhouse gas that is over 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

Source: US Composting Council