



Fact Sheet

Oregon Compost Infrastructure and End-Market Study Findings

To better understand Oregon's capacity to recover food waste and the infrastructure and market conditions needed to increase recovery, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality commissioned a statewide Compost Infrastructure and End-Market Study. Conducted by Eunomia Research & Consulting in March 2026, the study assessed existing composting infrastructure, available processing capacity, compost end markets, and potential future infrastructure needs. The analysis included 35 facility interviews/surveys and modeled infrastructure needs under multiple food waste recovery scenarios.

What the study found about Oregon's food waste processing system

DEQ's existing data provide context for Oregon's food waste recovery system. The study builds on this information by assessing current processing capacity, identifying barriers to expansion, and modeling future infrastructure needs.

Oregon already has a strong foundation for food waste recovery

Across the state there are:

- 51 DEQ-permitted compost facilities (including 2 anaerobic digesters)
- Of which, roughly 25%, currently accept food waste as a feedstock

Overall, organic waste recovery is 52%. In 2023, yard waste had an 84% recovery rate, and food waste had a 9% recovery rate.

Capacity to process additional food waste

Oregon has capacity today—but it is not evenly distributed across the state

Facilities surveyed reported approximately 130,000 tons of additional food waste processing capacity that could be accommodated without infrastructure upgrades. However, available capacity is not evenly distributed across Oregon. Much of the existing processing capacity is in the Metro and Willamette Valley regions, while many rural and Eastern Oregon communities have fewer nearby processing options. Additional analysis is needed to identify where future capacity investments would be most beneficial.

The study modelled increases in the food waste recovery rate at 25%, 50%, and 75%

The study modeled the additional processing capacity needed to achieve food waste recovery rates of 25%, 50%, and 75%. The scenarios estimate the combined number of new composting facilities and expansions to existing facilities needed to accommodate each recovery level. These are modeled scenarios, not forecasts or proposed facility locations.

Recovery rate	Modeled additional food waste entering the composting system annually	Modeled infrastructure needs
Business as usual with the 2023 baseline (9%)	40,200 tons of food waste	N/A
25%	76,000 tons of food waste	4 new composting facilities AND 8 site expansions to existing composting facilities
50%	203,900 tons of food waste	6 new composting facilities AND 4 site expansions to existing composting facilities
75%	328,100 tons of food waste	7 new composting facilities AND 3 site expansions to existing composting facilities

* These are modeled scenarios, not intended to reflect specific forecasting or programs.

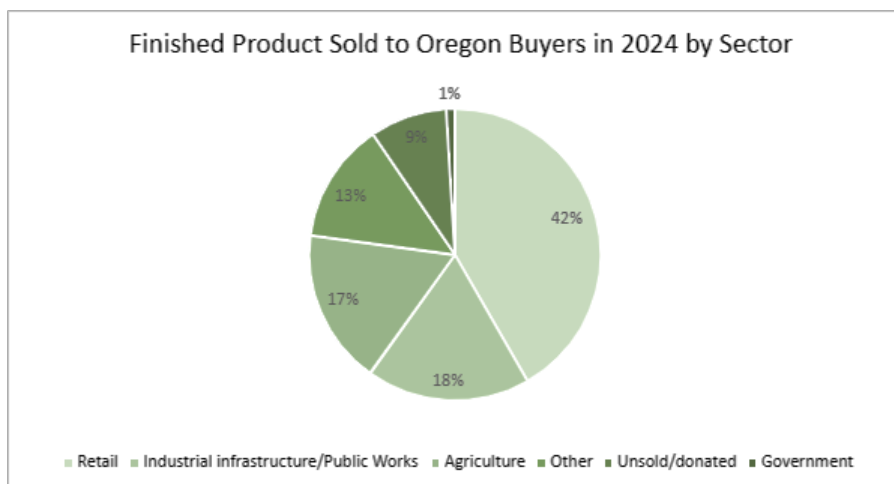
More processing capacity is only part of the solution

The study identified four interconnected areas that can constrain food waste recovery rates

- **Contamination** - Incoming contamination can range from 0-25%, with plastics identified as the most common contaminant. Finished compost contamination was generally reported at 1-2% after screening. A contaminated finished compost can make end users hesitant to purchase.
- **Limited end market demand** - Oregon facilities produced approximately ~450,000 tons of finished compost in 2024. The average amount that went unsold or donated was 9%, but answers varied greatly from facility to facility.
- **Infrastructure & permitting** - Facilities identified barriers to expansion, including: equipment, space, funding, permitting, and local approvals. Some upgrades and new facilities may take multiple years to develop.
- **Geography** - Processing capacity and compost demand are not always in the same places. Transportation costs can make it difficult to move food waste to processors and finished compost to agricultural markets.

Compost markets are diverse, but demand varies across facilities

Oregon facilities produced approximately 450,000 tons of finished compost in 2024. Of the compost produced at Oregon-based compost facilities, 73% is sold into Oregon markets. Compost is used across multiple sectors, including retail, agriculture, infrastructure projects, etc. The amount of unsold finished compost varies considerably amongst surveyed facilities, ranging between 5-30%, indicating that market demand is not consistent statewide. The table below represents an aggregate analysis of all the surveyed facilities.



What the study suggests

To increase food waste recovery in Oregon, the study identified the following potential strategies:

- Expand food waste collection, education, and contamination reduction
- Invest in facility upgrades and new processing capacity
- Improve permitting and siting assistance
- Consider equipment-sharing or rental options for smaller facilities
- Develop compost markets through outreach, procurement, and agricultural incentives
- Explore ways to connect compost producers with markets across the state

Conclusion

Oregon has existing infrastructure and untapped capacity to recover more food waste, but future growth will require more than building new facilities. Increasing recovery will depend on expanding access to processing, reducing contamination, strengthening compost markets, and directing investments to the regions where they are needed. Additional analysis can help identify where future capacity investments and what type of processing facilities will have the greatest benefit.

More information

For more information on composting and food waste, please visit our webpages:

- [Composting Program and Permitting Requirements](#)
- [Statewide Organics Management Strategy Development](#)

Please contact sustainablefoodsystems@deq.oregon.gov if you have any questions.

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