



ZERO WASTE PROGRAMS

WHAT IS ZERO WASTE, WHY IT IS
IMPORTANT, HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION
CAN IMPLEMENT IT

GLOBAL
CLIMATE
Pledge

Table of Contents



[What is Zero Waste?](#)

[Why is Zero Waste Important?](#)

[Debunking the Zero Waste Stigma](#)

[Going from a Linear to Circular Economy](#)

[From the US EPA...](#)

[From the Northeast Recycling Council...](#)

[The 5Rs](#)

[How to Implement Zero Waste?](#)

[Upstream and Downstream Production](#)

[What Else Can You Do?](#)

[Take the Pledge!](#)



What is Zero Waste?

- **Zero waste** can be defined in many different ways by different entities:
 - **Solid Waste of North America:** "...all efforts to reduce solid waste to almost nothing by reducing excess consumption and maximizing solid waste recovery through compositng and recycling."
 - **Zero Waste International Alliance:** "...conservation of all resources by means of responsible production , consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharge to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health."
 - **US Conference of Mayors 2015:** "beyond recycling and composting at the end of a product's life cycle..."

Why is Zero Waste Important?

- From the **Toronto Environmental Alliance**:
 - **Who they are:** a non-profit organization campaigning locally in Toronto to find solutions to their urban environmental problems
 - **Why they think zero waste is important:**
 - Reduces climate impact by conserving resources and minimizing pollution
 - Promotes social equity while building community
 - Redistributing goods to those in need
 - Community gardening
 - Protects community by reducing pollution and toxic waste
 - Creates jobs by supporting circular economy



Why is Zero Waste Important?

- From the **Northeast Recycling Council**:
 - **Who they are:** a multi-state non-profit organization whose programs emphasize source reduction, resusing, recycling, composting, environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP), and decreasing the toxicity of the solid waste stream in northeastern US
 - **Why they think zero waste is important:**
 - Zero waste is one of the fastest, easiest climate action strategies that we can implement today to *immediately* reduce GHG emissions
 - *Cost effective* (curbside recycling can reduce more emissions per dollar spent than energy efficiency & renewable energy projects!)
 - Don't need any new technology or rare natural resources – we *already have the technology of recycling and composting*

Debunking the Zero Waste Stigma

- **Zero waste** is not about an **extreme goal BUT transforming** our behaviors and actions!
 - Zero waste is based on the **journey** towards becoming zero!
- "Zero waste" suggests that we shouldn't be producing any waste at all
 - **This is misleading!**
 - *Zero waste* is a way of examining our lifestyle & reducing waste where it's possible!
- **Living zero waste** does NOT have to be perfect
 - Individual perfection will never be achievable in a *linear economy*
 - We need to come together to make a *collective, systemic impact*



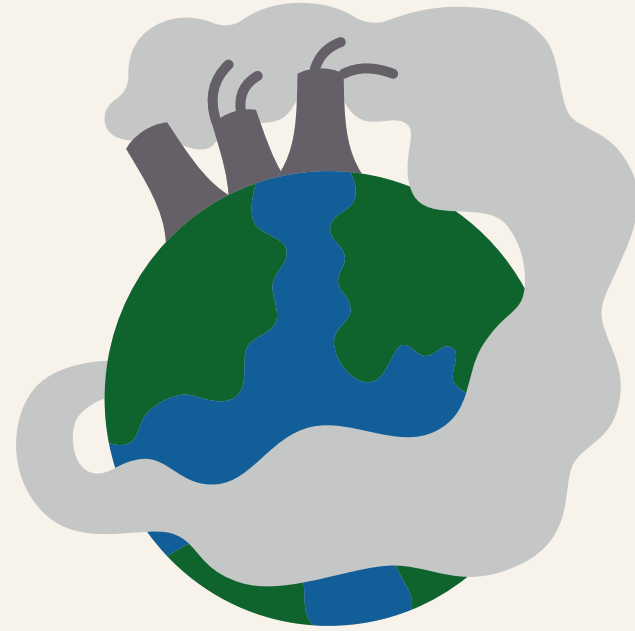
Debunking the Zero Waste Stigma

- Being **zero waste** is NOT about producing *absolutely no waste*
 - Don't hold yourself to ridiculous standards!
- Be more concerned with the **big picture**
- Think about the waste created *upstream* before it reaches your organization
 - There is nothing you can do about that!
- Life is out of your control..
 - ie: Given a gift that has no *zero waste packaging*
- *Don't give up on being **zero waste**!*
 - Focus on the **bigger picture & advocate for systematic changes!**

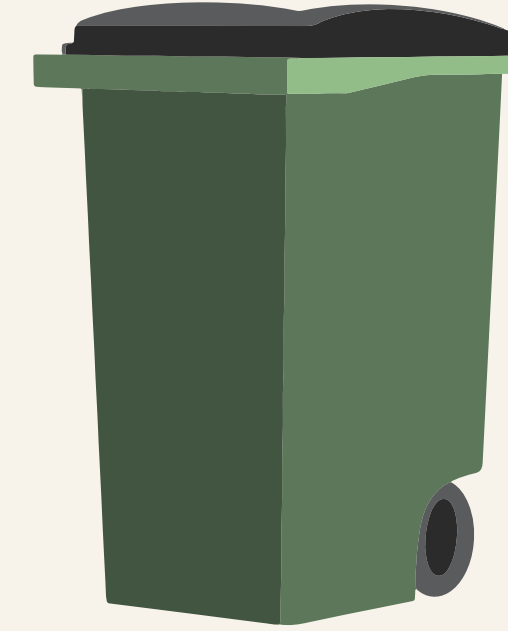
Going from a Linear to Circular Economy

- **Linear economy** = Traditional model where raw materials are collected & transformed into products that consumers use until discarding them as waste
 - Prioritizes *profit over sustainability*
- **Circular economy** = Production that has as little impact as possible on the environment
 - Prioritizes *sustainability over profit*
- In a circular economy, **waste is the new raw material!**
 - ie: Sharing more products that are not often used or stand still
- **Consumer behavior change is needed for a circular economy!**

From the US EPA...

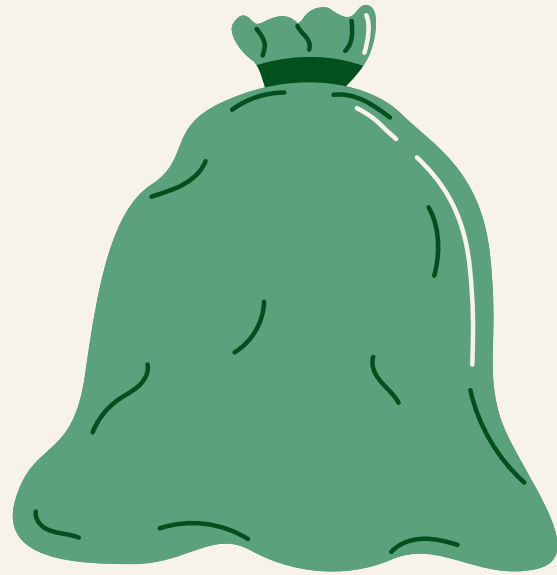


**Landfills are the
3rd biggest
source of human
related methane
emissions**

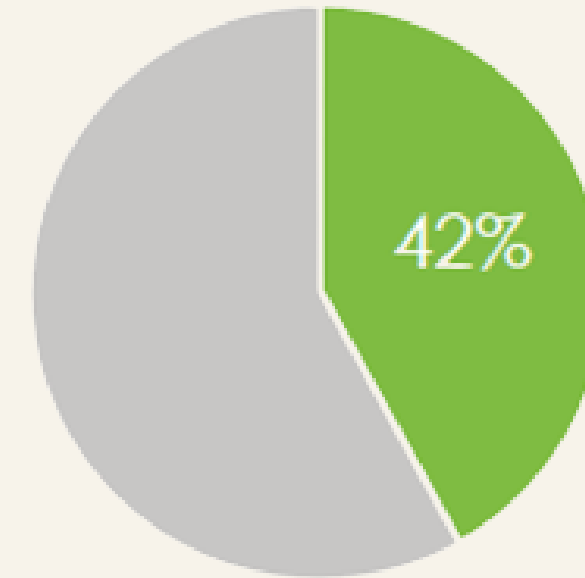


**US municipal
waste accounts
for
approximately
14% of human
caused methane
emissions**

From the US EPA...



The Average American produces 4.4lb of trash per day...even if it's biodegradable, it will still emit GHGs, which contribute directly to climate change!



42% of all GHG emissions are from production & use of goods (including food, products, packaging)

From the Northeast Recycling Council...



80% of discarded consumer goods in municipal solid waste ends up burned or landfilled because of *poor design, failure to include recyclable materials & lack of end-of-life solutions*

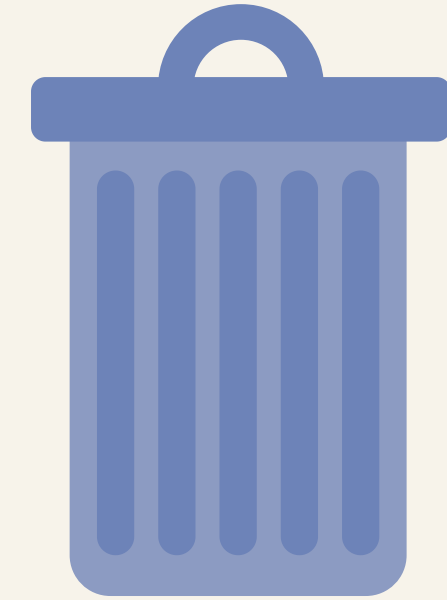


It takes 1.5 years to regenerate the natural resources we consume in a year

From the Northeast Recycling Council...



**Implementing
zero waste could
help save
materials worth
up to \$700B/year**



**20% of the municipal
budget is spent on
waste
management...with
less waste, money
could be diverted to
other essential
needs/projects/etc.**

From the UN Environment Program...



Around 1/3 of the 2.24B tons of municipal solid waste produced globally in 2020 *was not managed in a sustainable manner*

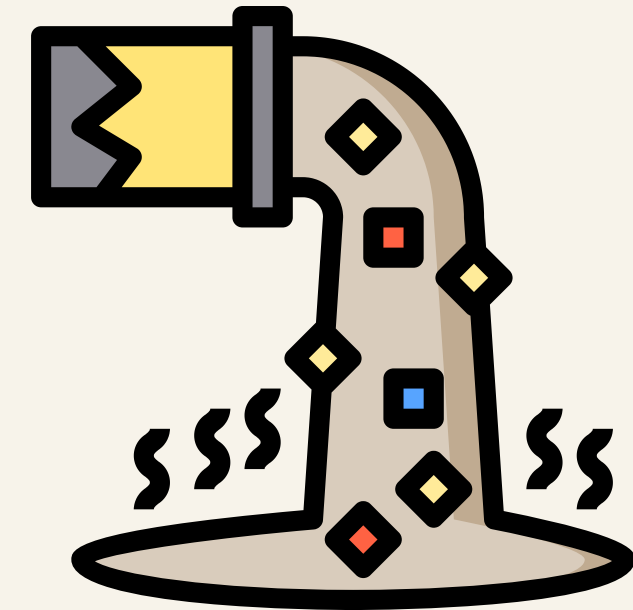


Plastics account for 12% of global waste, equivalent to the weight of 3.4M adult blue whales

From the UN Environment Program...



**The global
recycling
rate is *under*
16%**



**If current trends
continue, the
amount of waste
will reach 3.38B
tons per year by
2050**

How to Implement Zero Waste?: The 5Rs

Refuse



Reduce



Reuse



Repair



Recycle

Do this first!

This is your last resort!



How to Implement Zero Waste?

- **The 5Rs:**

- **Refuse...**what you don't actually need
 - ie: Buying timeless pieces for your closet instead of trendy clothing items
- **Reduce...**what you use
 - ie: 'Sell by' or 'Best by' dates don't mean you have to throw your food out right away
- **Reuse...**until it no longer works
 - ie: Switch to disposable items for reusable & permanent alternatives
- **Repair...**what we can
 - ie: If an electronic device, such as a laptop, try to fix it before buying a new device
- **Recycle...**only when all options have been exhausted!

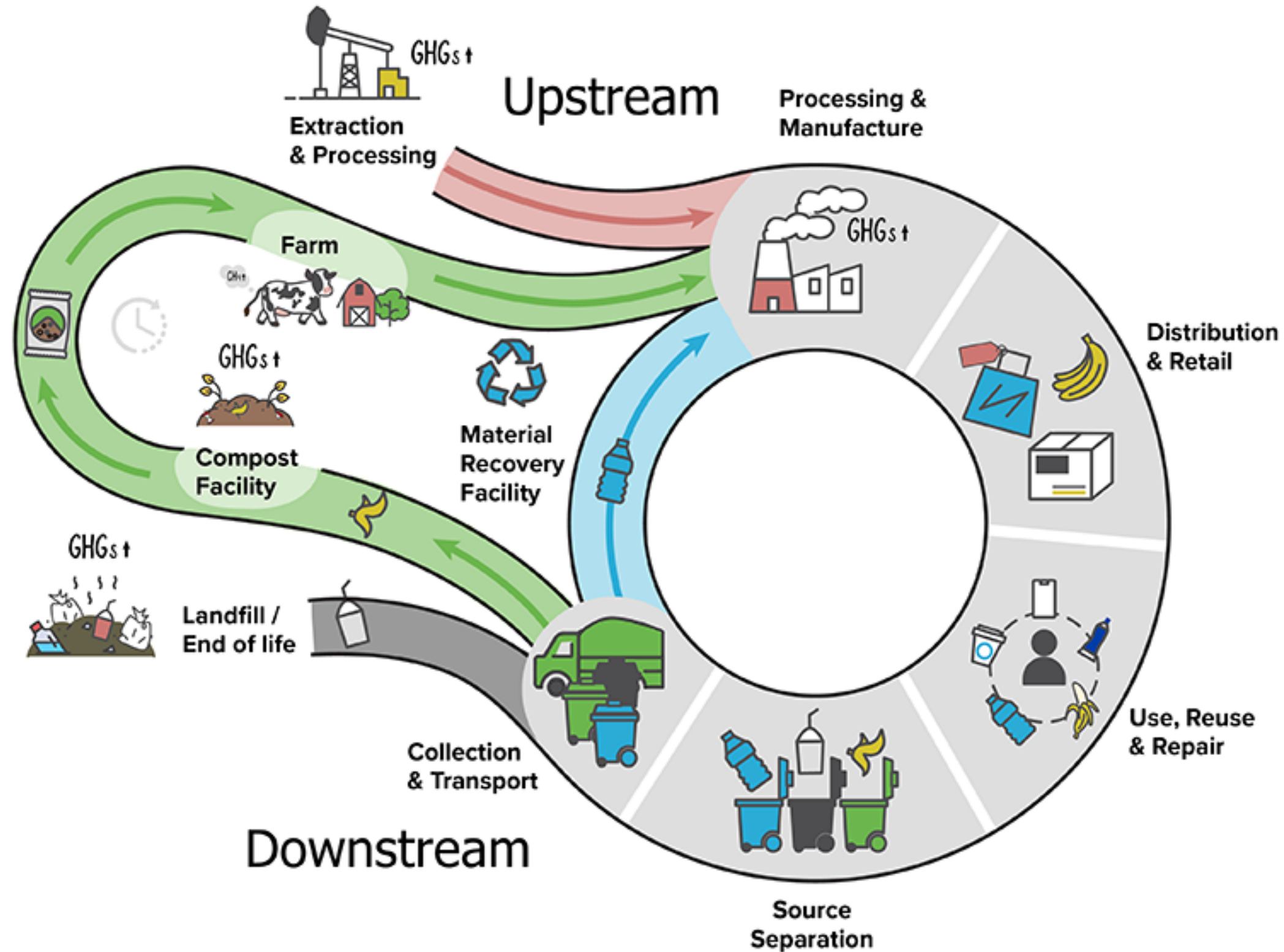


How to Implement Zero Waste?

- Zero waste should include redesigning our one-way industrial system into a **circular system**
 - ie: Creating durable packaging that can be reused
- **Upstream and Downstream:**
 - **Upstream** redesign strategies – reduce volume and toxicity of discarded materials & products
 - Improve **downstream** recycling of end-of-life products and materials



Upstream and Downstream Production



What Else Can You Do?

- Go paperless!
 - You can download various apps such as e-signature, to do list app, note-taking apps, etc.
 - Buy tablets for the office!
 - This does not have to be expensive as there are affordable options such as reMarkable, rocket notebook, homestec, etc.
- Share supplies!
 - ie: One stapler for everyone (Think of items you only need one of!)
- Buy "green" products
 - 100% recycled paper, non-toxic cleaners. etc

Take the Pledge!

Sign the Pledge at
<https://www.globalclimatepledge.com>

Share the Pledge!

- Encourage your coworkers, family members, loved ones, etc. to move from *awareness to action!*
- Spread the pledge through social media!

GLOBAL CLIMATE Pledge

Individual Pledge QR Code:



Organization Pledge QR Code:



Contact Us!

U.S. Green Chamber of Commerce
National Headquarters 249 S.
Highway 101 #420 Solana Beach,
CA 92075

<https://usgreenchamber.com>

<https://www.globalclimatepledge.com>



@GlobalPledge



@GlobalClimatePledge

Sources

- <https://www.epa.gov/transforming-waste-tool/how-communities-have-defined-zero-waste>
- <https://www.usmayors.org/the-conference/resolutions/?category=b83aReso050&meeting=83rd%20Annual%20Meeting>
- https://www.torontoenvironment.org/zerowaste_benefits
- <https://www.missionzeroacademy.eu/circular-economy/debunking-common-myths-zero-waste/>
- <https://nerc.org/news-and-updates/blog/nerc-blog/2015/12/15/10-reasons-why-zero-waste-is-a-priority-climate-solution>
- <https://www.centerforecotechnology.org/zero-waste-lifestyle/>
- <https://www.government.nl/topics/circular-economy/from-a-linear-to-a-circular-economy>
- <https://www.santander.com/en/stories/linear-and-circular-economies-what-are-they-and-whats-the-difference>
- <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/speech/towards-zero-waste-society-30-years-unep-ietc>
- <https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/about/plans/solid-waste/2022-plan-update>