The Growing Community Composting Movement

Clarissa Libertelli
Community Composter Coalition

258 members

42 states
+ D.C., Puerto Rico, Canada, Australia, Costa Rica, Iran, Lebanon, New Zealand, U.K.
Benefits

ilsr.org/composting

On-Farm Composting & Compost Use Webinar Series

- **On-Farm Composting Fundamentals (Aug 24)** with Dr. Robert Rynk
- **Integrating Composting Into Your Farming Business (Sept 16)** with Ellen Polshuk
- **Composting Recipes & Integrating Food Scraps (Oct 5)** with James McSweeney
- **Compost & Soil: Rebalancing the Climate (Oct 23)** Calla Rose Ostrander and Jean Bonhota
- **Profiling With Compost & The Importance of Compost Quality (Nov 16)** with Dr. Greg Eason and Jayne Marce
- **Compost - Soil - Plants: Putting the Many Facets Together (Dec 7)** with Dr. Will Brinton

Find out more at ilsr.org/on-farm-composting-webinar-series

Community Composting 101

Neighborhood Soil Rebuilders Composter Training Program

Institute for Local Self-Reliance

Yes

- **Greens**
  - FRUIT & VEGETABLE SCRAPS (No bones)
  - COFFEE GROUNDS & PAPER FILTERS
  - TEA BAGS (No strings or plastic)
  - GARDEN TRIMMINGS (6" or smaller)

- **Brown**
  - FALL LEAVES
  - PLANT STALKS (6" or smaller)
  - WOOD CHIPS & SHAVINGS (Not chemically treated)
  - SHREDDED NEWSPAPER & BROWN BAGS (No glossy pages)

No

- **Greens**
  - MEAT, FISH, OR BONES
  - EGGS OR DAIRY PRODUCTS
  - COOKED FOOD
  - PET WASTE & KITTY LITTER
  - TREATED OR PAINTED WOOD
  - HERBICIDE-TREATED PLANTS
  - DRYER LINT
  - "COMPOSTABLE" TABLEWARE & PLASTIC BAGS

- **Brown**
  - FATS, OIL, OR GREASE

Developed by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Why a census?

- Representation
- Data for composters themselves
- Baseline for growth
- Document benefits
- Identify challenges
Participants

86 complete responses
33 states (+DC, PR, Canada)

Offer both composting and collection
## Top 5 Revenue Sources

1. **Collection service fees**
2. **Sales of compost**
3. **Trainings/ workshops/ speaking fees**
4. **Sales of compost-related products**
5. **Grants**

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Community composters have diverse & dynamic operations.
Community composting tackles wasted food.

Food = single largest component of solid waste in landfills and incinerators.

Food scraps = only around 10% of the total municipal solid waste composted in the U.S.

71% of U.S. composting operations compost only yard trimmings vs. 97% of Census respondents report handling food scraps.
Community Impact

- 82% of composting sites located within areas served by collection
- 72% use some, most, or all of their product on-site
- 71% provide community engagement opportunities
Jobs

Job creation compared to waste industry:

1 job per 10,000 tons per year of material incinerated
2 jobs per 10,000 tons per year of material landfilled
6.2 full-time jobs per 10,000 tons per year of material composted

Respondents report an average of 32% LGBTQ+ staff.
That's over 4.5x the national percentage of LGBTQ+ identifying adults in 2021 (x).

Waste industry: 83% male
Community composters: 33% male
Growth

- Over 90% of programs started since 2010
- Over half since 2017
- Operations scaling up food scrap processing 2021-2022

Average annual growth rate 1988-2010: 11%
Average annual growth rate 2010-present: 19.6%
Challenges

#1: Scaling up (63%)  Graphic included = Over 40%

Scaling up operations  (Business / financial & site)

- Lack of adequate equipment available for small-scale operations
- Meeting demand for compost
- Lack of diversity in staff / volunteers
- Insurance
- Outreach / education
- Partnerships with local government

Funding / financing

- Access to best management practices and experience of others
- Adequate carbon feedstocks
- Business planning & sustaining business operations
- Client billing, tracking, routing (e.g., adequate apps)
- Contesting / qualifying for government contracts
- Site maintenance

Marketing / outreach / education

- Advocacy
- Government franchise solid waste districts
- Local government regulations
- Volunteer coordination
- Staffing / staff turnover
- Contamination of feedstocks

Stating / staff turnover

- Lack of adequate equipment available for small-scale operations
- Competition with other collection service providers
- Lack of demand for compost & compost-based products
- Odors

Access to processing sites (for tipping)

- Space constraints
- Identifying appropriate equipment
- Partnerships with other organizations

Access to land

- State enforcement agency regulations
- Customer's willingness to pay / price sensitivity
- Staff / operator training

Access to land

- Critters
- Local government regulations
What's next for the Community Composter Coalition?
What's next for the Community Composter Coalition?

Communication
- Census results
- Networking
- Pledge
- Leveraging collective power
- Peer Learning Community Events
- Knowledge-sharing

Collaboration
- Grants
- Circle.so?
- Working groups
Thank you & let's chat!

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