GUIDE FOR PILOTING A FOOD WASTE REDUCTION IDEA

U.S. Food Waste Pact
usfoodwastepact.org

This guide walks through how to pilot a Food Waste Reduction idea from selecting and idea to running a pre- and post- food waste audit, to analyzing the pilot data to evaluate the impact of the reduction opportunity.

1 Choose a Promising Food Waste Reduction Idea

Choose a "Quick Win" idea from the Opportunity Register that aligns with your internal goals. Quick Win ideas have the potential to show impact in a short time, have minimal cost requirements, and are easy to implement (see Food Waste Selection Criteria sidebar).

2 Plan the Waste Audit

A waste audit systematically collects, measures, and analyzes waste data before (Business as Usual) and after (Post-Adjustment) implementing changes. Follow these steps for an effective plan.

a) Select the Scope of the Audit
  - **Decide** which process, equipment, location, or shift to focus on.
  - **Choose a time frame** for both business as usual and post-adjustment measurements to be conducted (e.g., 1 week, 1 month) that gives an appropriate, equal, and representative sample for comparative analysis.

b) Assemble a Team
  - **Include relevant sta** in the audit, those directly involved in the area or process being assessed. Additionally, ensure that any employees working nearby or indirectly involved are informed about the audit to prevent any unintentional disruptions.
  - **Assign roles** to specifi c employees who will be responsible for waste collection, sorting, and data recording. Make certain that there will be full coverage on all shifts that are being measured.

c) Prepare Tools and Resources
  - **Gather scales** for weighing waste.
  - **Collect containers** or bins for sorting.
  - **Create waste audit measurement sheets** for recording data. One set will be labeled Business as Usual (BAU) and one will be Post-Adjustment. These will include the date, unit of measure, time of recording, and the name of the person taking measurements.
  - **Write Standard Operating Procedures** to be posted in audit area.
  - **Design and print** waste audit signage to indicate the timing and places where the audit will be happening. See examples in this guide. Modify them to match your unique waste audit needs.

3 Conduct the Waste Audit

Follow these steps to systematically collect and measure food waste data during both **Business as Usual (BAU)** and **Post-Adjustment** periods:

a) Collect data: Use the two waste audit measurement sheets you prepared to measure the weight or volume of waste over the designated timeframe. and accurately document it. Note any discrepancies or missing details.

b) Identify Causes: Record observations or patterns (e.g., inefficient workflows, inventory mismanagement, customer habits).

c) Take Photos and Notes: Document findings for post-audit analysis. If the analyst is off-site, email photos of the waste audit measurement sheets weekly.

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FOOD WASTE SELECTION CRITERIA:

Feasibility:
Can the idea be practically implemented with available resources?

Impact:
How much waste could it realistically reduce?

Cost-Benefit Ratio:
Does the potential savings or revenue outweigh the investment?

Relevance:
Does the idea target significant sources of waste (e.g., unsold goods, portion sizes, spoilage)?

Waste Audit Measurement Sheet

LINE 10 FOOD WASTE AUDIT IN PROGRESS
Food Waste for **Line 10** Only
MONDAY, 9/19 - SUNDAY, 10/2

Waste Audit Signs

Modify and print the signage in the toolkit.

See examples on next page.

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4 Analyze the Data

After collecting waste data, conduct an analysis to understand the root causes of food waste and the impact of implementing the food waste reduction idea.

- Calculate the total weight/volume of waste in each category.
- Identify the most significant sources of waste.
- Compare waste data to historical or baseline figures (if available).

Compare the two separate measurements from BAU and Post Adjustment.

- Did waste volumes decrease?
- What are the cost savings or operational improvements?

Evaluate the potential opportunities for sustained food waste reductions, cost savings, and sellable food products.

5 Document and Share Results

Summarize key findings, including data, photos, and cost-benefit analysis. Share results with stakeholders (e.g., management, store teams, kitchen staff) to gain buy-in for further implementation.

6 Refine and Scale

Based on the results of the pilot waste audit, optimize the process and consider scaling up across manufacturing lines, stores, warehouses, or kitchens.

> *Example Metrics:*
> - Total weight of avoidable waste.
> - Percentage of inventory or food wasted.
> - Cost of food waste per unit or location

EXAMPLE OF WASTE AUDIT SET UP AND ASSETS

EXAMPLE OF SET UP FOR POST-ADJUSTMENT AUDIT

A. Scale for weighing waste or product
B. White bin with signage for usable product
C. Waste audit sheets to track measurement
D. Gray bin with signage for waste product
E. Standard Operating Procedure
F. Waste audit calendar schedule

WASTE AUDIT SIGNAGE (SAMPLES)
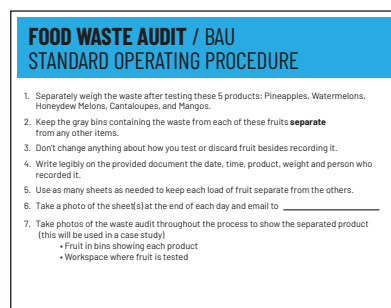
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SAMPLE)

WASTE AUDIT MEASUREMENT SHEET (SAMPLE)

These materials were produced by TripleWin Advisory for the U.S. Food Waste Pact

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SIGNAGE:

These graphics (provided in English and Spanish) in the toolkit can be customized to match your waste audit project. The green sign is used during the first part of the waste audit, the orange sign replaces it for the second part of the audit. Print at high resolution at the largest size you need for your space.

BUSINESS AS USUAL
WASTE AUDIT IN PROGRESS
Text Goes Here About Audit
1/1/2025-1/7/2025

BUSINESS AS USUAL AUDIT SIGN

POST-ADJUSTMENT
WASTE AUDIT IN PROGRESS
Text Goes Here About Audit
1/1/2025-1/7/2025

POST ADJUSTMENT WASTE AUDIT SIGN

SUPPLEMENTAL EXAMPLES - SUPPORTING SPECIFIC USE CASES

Get creative and use icons or images to reinforce your specific audit.

FOOD WASTE AUDIT IN PROGRESS
NO SPATULA
October 2-8

FOOD WASTE AUDIT IN PROGRESS
USE SPATULA
October 9-15

Sample Signage:

- Depending on space, create vertical or horizontal posters to fit walls/space and prominently stand out in the waste audit area.

- Make the two posters for the BAU and Post-Adjustment phases different colors to differentiate them. Each poster will be displayed during the relevant phase..

- There may need to be variations for specific waste audits. In the example below, the **blue** sign is for business as usual, the **red** sign is for disposal, the **white** sign is to show that usable product will be placed in a separate bin.

STOP **FOOD WASTE AUDIT IN PROGRESS** / BUSINESS AS USUAL
Weigh & Record Product Waste for These Fruits
Pineapple • Watermelon • Honeydew • Cantaloupe • Mango

STOP **QA FOOD WASTE AUDIT IN PROGRESS** / POST-ADJUSTMENT
Weigh & Record Product Waste for These Fruits
Pineapple • Watermelon • Honeydew • Cantaloupe • Mango
MONDAY, 6/24 - SATURDAY, 7/6

STOP **QA FOOD WASTE AUDIT IN PROGRESS /** POST-ADJUSTMENT
Usable Fruit for Production
Separate, Weigh & Record
Pineapple • Watermelon • Honeydew • Cantaloupe • Mango
MONDAY, 6/24 - SATURDAY, 7/6

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