

Guidance for food waste collections from businesses

This documents sets out some steps you can take to ensure your food waste collections can both save money and generate good quality food waste which is free from contamination.

The guidance is aimed at organisations that are collecting food waste that is destined for treatment by organics recycling.

Why is quality important?

- **Cleaner food waste saves money for you and your customers** - The food that is collected goes to a processing site (usually composting or anaerobic digestion) to be transformed into a soil conditioner or biofertiliser. If the food waste is contaminated with non-target materials, then these processing sites have to take extra steps to remove the contamination and this can lead to an increased cost for processing the food waste and reduce the value and limit the market for the outputs. These costs may be reflected in the gate fee.
- **It's part of the food chain** - Food waste that is collected for recycling is processed and ultimately ends up going back to soil which may be used to grow crops that are eaten by humans and animals so it is essential that it is high quality.
- **Cleaner recycling and less residual waste** - An added benefit of properly segregating materials in the correct bin, is that all the waste streams will be clean and the costs for disposing of the residual waste will be lower.

"Maintaining a high quality of feedstock is vital to a successful AD plant. Biogen has specialist equipment, processes and trained staff to remove contaminants, but our customers can have the greatest impact by reducing contaminants in feedstocks supplied. Higher contamination means higher processing costs and we charge more for contaminated feedstocks, so working with our customers to improve quality helps them save money too."

Graeme Vincent, Biogen Operations Director

Legal obligations

A failure by food waste collectors to deal with contamination also risks breaching legal obligations. [The Waste Duty of Care Code of Practice](#) makes it clear that it is illegal to dispose of food waste in a way that is likely to cause pollution or harm human health. Stricter requirements are in force in Scotland where collection schemes must promote 'high quality' recycling (see the [Duty of Care Code of Practice](#)).

Focussing on quality not only saves money, but also mitigates compliance risk.

If your customers are non-compliant, in Scotland you can report this to SEPA using zerowaste@sepa.org.uk

Guidance – What you need to do.

✓ Agree what materials are acceptable

It is very important to discuss with the food waste treatment facility what types of waste they are able to accept so that this can be communicated back to the food waste producers. A positive list of acceptable and, separately, unacceptable feedstocks can be useful. The level of acceptable packaging and type of packaging should be agreed in advance as this can vary from site to site. This should be agreed and detailed in input supply agreements.

✓ Tell your customers (food waste producers) what they can put in the bin

Provide clear information to the food waste producers on what materials they can and can't include with their food waste collection, and make sure it reflects the agreement with the waste processor. This could take the form of a written contract with supplementary information like stickers, posters, leaflets etc. to ensure all users of the food waste bin are aware of what can be accepted. Free to download posters and bin stickers are available at: <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/sme-food-waste/6-resources>



Make sure that customers are aware that contamination of the recycling could cost them more for disposal. Define with your customer the quantity of contaminants that are acceptable by type and agree a methodology for assessing contaminant levels. Provide one to one training and ongoing communication and feedback on the quality to the food waste producers.

✓ Implement a food waste collection policy

Have a clear policy on what will happen if food waste presented for collection does not comply with requirements. This could include refusal of collections, labelling rejected bins, how this will be communicated to the waste producer, what steps can be taken to resolve the issue (customers removing contamination and rescheduling uplift or additional charges for alternative disposal). Feedback from the processing

facility can also be used to determine if more communication and training is needed. Make sure all staff and customers are aware of the policy. See 'What a food waste collection policy should consider' for more details.

✓ Staff training

Make sure that all the team (sales staff agreeing contracts and the waste collection crew) are aware of what has been agreed with the waste producer and waste processor. Collection crews should check contents of bins prior to collection. Staff should be aware of what actions to carry out when material presented for collection does not comply, for example:

- Label the rejected containers.
- Take a photo of the bin.
- Inform customer why their bin was not uplifted and what the alternative options are.
- What advice and training is available for the customers.

✓ Liners

Research has shown a 32% increase in food yields <http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/food-waste-collections-guide-section-11-increasing-food-waste-capture-existing-separate-week> where a collection service comprises caddy liners, supporting communications and residual bin stickers.

It is important to agree with the food waste processor what liner should be specified because some liners can be problematic in waste de-packaging and processing systems. Liners made from a range of materials can be used, including polyethylene, bioplastics and paper. Waste processors assured under the Compost Certification Scheme will have additional requirements if biodegradable or biobased liners are used.

Whichever liner is specified, check that it is suitable for the food waste containers used. Additional guidance on liners is available from [WRAP](http://www.wrap.org.uk).

