



A Guide to Certification Standards for Food Waste Reduction

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**A practical resource for businesses, NGOs, and state & local governments
to advance food waste reduction efforts through certification**

Acknowledgements

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About the Environmental Law Institute

The Environmental Law Institute makes law work for people, places, and the planet. Since 1969, ELI has played a pivotal role in shaping the fields of environmental law, policy, and management. Today, we are an internationally recognized, nonpartisan research and education center working to strengthen environmental protection by improving law and governance worldwide.

ELI's Food Waste Initiative

ELI's Food Waste Initiative conducts research and develops evidence-based resources that build the capacity of state and local governments, NGOs, businesses, and communities to prevent food waste, rescue surplus food, and recycle food scraps. To learn more about the Initiative's work, visit: <https://www.eli.org/food-waste-initiative>.



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Introduction

The Food Waste Problem

[Over 30%](#) of all food in the United States goes uneaten, at enormous financial, environmental, and social cost.¹ Annually, the [food wasted](#) across the supply chain equates to 1.3% of U.S. GDP, represents 115 billion lost meals, and accounts for 3.5% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, 15.5% of all freshwater use, and 16% of all cropland use in the United States. At the same time, [roughly 14%](#) of American households face food insecurity.

Notably, diverting food waste from landfills and incinerators [reduces methane emissions](#), a potent greenhouse gas. In fact, due to its rapid decomposition, food waste is responsible for [58%](#) of methane emissions from municipal solid waste landfills. And since food waste accounts, on average, for [almost a quarter](#) of the material at municipal landfills and incinerators, the food waste problem can be linked to the [harmful public health impacts](#) of these facilities, which are [disproportionately sited](#) in low-income communities and communities of color.

[Food waste reduction strategies](#) can lead to financial and social benefits as well. For example, preventing food waste—e.g., through better meal planning or storage practices—can lead to [substantial savings](#). Food rescue and redistribution efforts can combat [food insecurity](#) and strengthen local food systems. And [food scrap recycling](#) can create local jobs and fill service access gaps while producing [compost](#), a valuable soil amendment.²

Certification Standards for Food Waste Reduction

In general, [certification standards](#) provide a basis for businesses and other organizations to be evaluated on certain grounds by an independent third party. These third parties may assess products, operations, and/or organizational practices, including by verifying that certain requirements are met and/or by assessing performance across various categories. When businesses achieve certification to a verifiable standard, it can help them better highlight certain attributes that might otherwise be less visible or difficult to substantiate.

This guide provides an overview of select certification standards that have a food waste reduction component.³ Whereas some standards focus entirely on food waste reduction, others are designed to incentivize waste diversion or sustainability more generally. Because the standards each have differing scopes, priorities, and methodologies, this document is intended to help readers understand the array of certification standards that exist, as well as help identify which may best suit their interests and needs.

¹ Note that, throughout this guide, sources are cited via hyperlink. Footnotes are used to provide additional information, examples, and considerations.

² For more on the co-benefits of food waste reduction, see the ELI/NRDC [Model State Law on Reducing Food Waste in K–12 Public Schools: Background Memorandum and Commentaries](#).

³ Certification standards exist in a wide array of domains—from animal welfare and energy efficiency to fair trade and supply chain traceability—but only those with a food waste reduction component were included.

These standards can be used by a variety of entities—including restaurants, manufacturers, and universities—to verify food waste reduction claims. In addition, state and local governments and NGOs may find this document helpful when pursuing efforts to encourage or require businesses and other organizations to reduce food waste as part of a business challenge, sustainability program, or mandate;⁴ compiling resources for local businesses and organizations;⁵ or developing their own recognition programs or standards.⁶

Because certification standards often synthesize relevant best practices, this guide can also help inform the design of food waste reduction policies at the federal, state, and local levels.

This guide can **(1)** help businesses and organizations find the right certification programs to verify and earn recognition for their food waste reduction efforts; **(2)** serve as a resource for entities, including local governments and NGOs, when deciding which existing standard(s) to incorporate or reference in developing their own recognition programs; and **(3)** inform the design of food waste reduction policies at the federal, state, and local levels.

Potential Benefits and Concerns

Obtaining certification to a standard can help businesses, organizations, and academic institutions [increase credibility and appeal](#) among consumers, investors, prospective employees or students, and others. In some cases, when businesses change certain practices to achieve certification (or a better rating), it can also help [reduce costs](#), improve [employee morale and retention](#), and improve [regulatory readiness](#).

Additionally, certifications can provide [streamlined, verified information](#) to consumers and investors, thereby facilitating better informed purchasing and investment decisions—and, in some cases, even direct comparisons of scores or ratings across businesses.

Certification standards can also serve to incentivize certain practices [throughout a sector](#), especially where regulations may not sufficiently do so. These standards can provide businesses with a structured framework and standardized best practices, reducing the need for businesses to design their programs from scratch. In addition, by publicly recognizing leading entities, certification standards can [signal broadly](#) the importance and benefits of taking certain actions—such as reducing food waste.

However, the process of finding the right program and pursuing certification often requires time and effort. Many certification programs also have an [associated cost](#) or [membership fee](#), which can present a barrier, especially to smaller and resource-strapped entities. Furthermore,

⁴ See, e.g., Seattle’s [Living Building Pilot](#); and King County, WA’s [Green Building Ordinance](#).

⁵ See, e.g., Nashville’s [Waste Services Business Resources](#).

⁶ See, e.g., San Francisco’s [Green Business Program](#); Coral Gables, FL’s [Green Business Program](#); Plano, TX’s [Green Business Program](#); and Mexico City’s [Zero Food Waste Certification Program](#).

there may be concerns regarding certification standards about [methodological weaknesses](#) that allow entities to neglect certain areas, a [lack of rigor in third-party audits](#), the potential for [misleading claims](#) about impact by certified entities, and a [lack of motivation or incentive for continued progress](#) by entities after achieving certification.

Methodology

Only programs with both a uniform standard and certification component were considered; other tools, such as methodologies,⁷ frameworks,⁸ implementation guides,⁹ standards without a certification component,¹⁰ and certification systems without a uniform standard,¹¹ were excluded. Additionally, only standards that can be used by entities across the United States were considered;¹² standards designed primarily for regions outside the United States were excluded.¹³ Local and regional standards and recognition programs were considered beyond the scope of this guide, but there are plenty of excellent local programs that can serve as models.¹⁴ Furthermore, certification standards were only considered if sufficient information was available to assess their merit.¹⁵

The standards outlined in this guide were selected not only for their relevance to food waste reduction but also because they were developed by experts, provide a clear methodology and process for certification, and, in many cases, are in widespread use.

This guide does not purport to be exhaustive, and inclusion in this guide does not constitute an endorsement of any particular standard. See Appendix A for a summary table of the certification standards outlined below.

⁷ See, e.g., the [Hotel Waste Measurement Methodology](#); [UNEP Food Waste Index Report](#); and the [VM0046 Methodology for Reducing Food Loss and Waste](#).

⁸ See, e.g., the [Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction](#).

⁹ See, e.g., [Why and How to Measure Food Loss and Waste: A Practical Guide](#).

¹⁰ See, e.g., the [Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard](#).

¹¹ See, e.g., the [Biosphere Certification](#).

¹² This includes international standards that can be used by entities in any country, including the United States.

¹³ See, e.g., AENOR's [Certificación Desperdicio Alimentario Cero](#) (Zero Food Waste Certification); AFNOR's [Label Anti-gaspillage Alimentaire](#) (Food Waste Reduction Label); Rainforest Alliance's [Sustainable Agriculture Certification](#); and France's [Écotable](#).

¹⁴ See, e.g., Green Dining Alliance's [sustainability certification program](#) for restaurants in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area; and [Project Green Fork](#), a certification program run by Clean Memphis.

¹⁵ For example, some certification standards address food waste reduction but do not provide enough accessible information about the methodology, certification process, and/or usage. These programs nevertheless may be worth considering. See, e.g., ACERTA's [Food Waste Saver Certification](#); the Applus+ [Zero Food Waste Certification](#); Bureau Veritas' [Food Waste Management System Certification](#); the [NSF Landfill-Free verification](#); and the [Carbon Trust Standard for Zero Waste to Landfill](#).

A Guide to Certification Standards for Food Waste Reduction¹⁶

The certification standards outlined in this guide are organized into four categories: (I) Food Waste Reduction Standards; (II) Foodservice & Food Production Sustainability Standards; (III) Waste Diversion Standards; and (IV) Multi-Sector Sustainability Standards.¹⁷ Note that standards in Section IV are included as examples and do not represent a comprehensive list.

I. Food Waste Reduction Standards

A. [Food Recovery Verified](#)

Overview: The Food Recovery Verified (FRV) program was designed by the Food Recovery Network to recognize food businesses and events in the United States that work to reduce waste and feed people through food recovery. FRV serves as a third-party verification for surplus food donation to nonprofit organizations. Through the program, the Food Recovery Network offers support and resources to businesses and events seeking verification, including help in designing and implementing custom food recovery programs.

Key Components: Food businesses interested in [becoming verified](#) must recover and donate edible, surplus food to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization at least once per month. Food businesses must also track and report [food donation data](#).

Examples: Examples of FRV entities include [Wesleyan University](#), [University of Pittsburgh](#), and [Furman University](#).

B. [ISO 20001: Food Loss and Waste Management System Standard](#) (*upcoming*)

Overview: The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is currently developing a standard that will provide a framework that organizations can use to structure and continually refine their efforts to curb food loss and waste. It will also guide organizations in meeting stakeholder expectations and communicating clearly about their food loss and waste efforts. A broad range of entities, including farms, food processors, distributors, retailers, foodservice providers, and food recovery organizations, will be able to pursue certification.

Note: While ISO 20001 is not yet available, ISO also has a general sustainability standard, [ISO 14001: Environmental Management Systems](#), which is outlined in Section IV.

C. [The PLEDGE on Food Waste](#)

Overview: The PLEDGE on Food Waste is a Singapore-based third-party certification and benchmarking system, tailored to foodservice businesses and hotels. The PLEDGE is designed to

¹⁶ This guide is based on research into the most recent versions of each certification standard around the time of publication (July 2026). Note that updated versions of standards are released relatively frequently.

¹⁷ For each certification standard, it is important to pay attention to whether food waste reduction components are: (1) required; (2) offered as optional credits or possible points, which can contribute to an overall score based on specific criteria; or (3) part of a performance-based system, which assesses broader outcomes rather than methods.

help restaurants, hotels, and canteens reduce food waste, cut costs, boost brand image, and foster collaboration with complementary food waste solution providers. There are four levels of certification based on total points earned across criteria: Bronze (60–79%), Silver (80–89%), Gold (90–99%), and All-Star (100%).

Key Components: [The PLEDGE for Restaurants](#) and [The PLEDGE for Hotels](#) consist of many criteria across six pillars: Planning & Reporting, Staff Engagement, Monitor & Measure, Preparation & Service, Inspiring Guests, and Circularity. The PLEDGE on Food Waste also offers [The PLEDGE for Events Certification](#), which incentivizes food waste prevention, plate waste reduction, surplus food rescue and donation, and food waste diversion from landfills.

Examples: Examples of hotels and restaurants certified to The PLEDGE include [Hyatt Regency Beijing Wangjing's Market Café](#), [Sheraton Heathrow](#), and [Johnny's Speakeasy](#).

D. [Upcycled Certified Standard](#)

Overview: The Upcycled Certified program is designed to highlight upcycled ingredients and products produced with surplus food or food by-products. Operators that grow, produce, manufacture, process, and trade in food, beverages, and other food-related products are eligible. The Upcycled Certified Standard was created by the Upcycled Food Association and is now part of the [Where Food Comes From](#) family of standards.

Key Components: To receive the [Upcycled Certified](#) mark, ingredients must be composed of at least 95% upcycled inputs by weight, defined as: “any food material, product, or byproduct of food production, or portion within, diverted from, but not limited to, an agricultural, aquaculture, or food production setting, that would typically be destined for a food loss or waste destination, that instead is used in the production of an ingredient or consumer good.” Certified products must be composed of at least 10% upcycled ingredients by weight or divert a certain tonnage of food that would be otherwise lost or wasted.

Examples: Examples of entities with Upcycled Certified products include [Matriark Foods](#), [Outcast](#), and [Barnana](#).

II. Foodservice & Food Production Sustainability Standards

A. [EIC Sustainable Event Standards](#)¹⁸

Overview: The Events Industry Council (EIC) Sustainable Event Standards are a set of eight standards designed to evaluate different types of events across a wide range of sustainability criteria. The eight standards—Accommodation, Audio Visual & Production, Destination, Event Organiser, Exhibition Services, Food & Beverage, Integrated Property, and Venue—generally include criteria in several categories, including Climate Action; Water Management; Materials and Circularity; Supply Chain Management; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Social Impact.

¹⁸ Additional sustainable event certification standards, [ISO 20121](#) and [The PLEDGE for Events](#), are mentioned later in this guide.

Events can achieve various levels of certification based on the percentage of applicable criteria fulfilled: Bronze (50%), Silver (65%), Gold (80%), and Platinum (90%).

Food Waste Component: Most of the [eight standards](#) include several criteria on food waste reduction, but this differs by standard. For example, the [Event Organiser](#) standard includes criteria on food waste reduction signage, food waste minimization planning, and pre-set meals. The standard for [Food & Beverage](#) has criteria on food donation, food labeling, food waste measurement and audits, and composting.

Examples: Examples of events certified to the EIC Sustainable Event Standards include [Amazon Accelerate](#), [IAEE's Annual Meeting & Exhibition](#), and [Workday Rising](#).

B. [Food Made Good Standard](#)

Overview: The Food Made Good Standard is a sustainability certification program designed by the Sustainable Restaurant Association for foodservice businesses around the world. The standard evaluates performance in ten areas across three pillars: Sourcing, which consists of Celebrate Provenance, Support Fishers and Farmers, More Plants & Better Meat, and Source Seafood Sustainably; Society, which consists of Treat Staff Fairly, Feed People Well, and Support the Community; and Environment, which consists of Reduce Your Footprint, Waste No Food, and Reduce, Reuse & Recycle. There are three certification levels based on total points scored: One Star (50–59%), Two Stars (60–69%), and Three Stars (over 70%).

Food Waste Component: The “Waste No Food” component under [Pillar 3](#) offers points based on performance on food waste reduction.

Examples: Examples of entities certified to the Food Made Good Standard include [Caruso's at Rosewood Miramar Beach](#), [London School of Economics and Political Science](#), and [Hawksmoor](#).

C. [FSSC 22000 Certification Scheme](#)

Overview: FSSC 22000 is an international certification program for food safety management systems, developed by the Foundation FSSC and recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative. FSSC 22000 requires entities to meet the ISO 22000:2018 Food Safety Management System standard, as well as additional standard-specific requirements, including in the categories of Product Labeling and Printed Materials, Food Fraud Mitigation, Management of Allergens, Environmental Monitoring, Traceability, and Food Loss and Waste. Certification is granted on the basis of compliance with mandatory requirements across categories, with a three-year cycle that includes an initial certification audit followed by annual surveillance audits.

Food Waste Component: [FSSC 22000](#) requires almost all entities to meet certain food loss and waste requirements above what is required in ISO 22000, including having a documented food waste reduction policy and properly managing surplus food for donation and animal feed.

Examples: Examples of entities certified to FSSC 22000 include [Cargill](#) and [General Mills](#).

D. Green Restaurant Association Certification Standards

Overview: The Green Restaurant Association (GRA) Certification Standards are designed to help restaurants measure and improve their environmental performance. The standards offer points across eight categories of performance: Energy, Water, Waste, Disposables, Chemicals, Food, Building, and Education & Transparency. Minimum requirements include recycling, composting (depending on the city), and a ban on polystyrene foam. There are four levels of certification, based on points earned in specific categories and in total: Level 1, 2 Star, 3 Star, or 4 Star. Restaurants can also earn any of six additional certification badges: SustainaBuild, Sustainable Seafood, Vegetarian, Vegan, Clean Chemicals, and Near-Zero Waste.

Food Waste Component: Restaurants can earn points toward certification under the [food waste diversion category](#) by, for example, diverting food waste for reuse as animal food, reprocessing or repurposing food waste into soil amendments, and maintaining an on-site composting program. Restaurants can earn points toward certification under the [food waste reduction category](#) by, for example, making weekly donations to food banks, offering smaller portions at a reduced price, and offering plates less than ten inches in diameter for buffets.

Examples: Examples of GRA-certified entities include [Lehigh University](#), [Carleton University](#), and [Carvers' Café at Mount Rushmore](#).

E. LEAF Marque Standard

Overview: The Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) Marque Standard was designed by LEAF to recognize sustainably farmed products. To achieve certification, entities must meet minimum requirements in nine areas of integrated farm management: Business Planning and Resilience, Soil and Substrate Management, Crop Health and Integrated Pest Management, Waste and By-Product Management, Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Water Management, Landscape and Biodiversity, Engaging Society, and Livestock Management.

Food Waste Component: The [Business Planning and Resilience category](#) includes requirements to demonstrate resource efficiency, including in waste management, and to consider use of compostable materials. The [Waste and By-Product Management category](#) includes requirements to implement strategies to prevent food waste and to reuse or redirect surplus food where possible.

Examples: Examples of entities certified to the LEAF Marque Standard include [Naturipe Berry Growers](#), [Brixworth Farming](#), and [Jersey Royal Company](#).

F. Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard

Overview: The Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard is an agricultural sustainability certification system developed by the IPM Institute to evaluate growers, producers, packers, and shippers across a broad range of sustainability issues. To receive certification, entities must meet certain minimum requirements and achieve a passing score based on performance across

numerous categories, including: Air Quality, Water Conservation, Energy Conservation, Waste and Recycling, Worker Safety and Welfare, Sustainability and Stewardship, Fertilizer and Pesticide Drift, Soil Health, and Integrated Pest Management.

Food Waste Component: The [Waste and Recycling category](#) includes points for food loss and waste mitigation strategies—including “donating to food banks, shelters, schools, or other organizations, feeding animals or leaving unharvested, composting, [and] anaerobic digestion with beneficial use of digestate/biosolids”—and for use of sustainable packaging.

Examples: Examples of entities certified to the Sustainability Standard include [Naturipe Berry Growers](#), [Pacific Tomato Growers](#), and [Sun Glo of Idaho](#).

III. Waste Diversion Standards

A. [SCS Certification Standard for Zero Waste](#)

Overview: The SCS Certification Standard for Zero Waste is designed to verify waste diversion performance at facilities, projects, and events. For facilities to participate in the certification program, a minimum of 50% waste diversion is required over a twelve-month period. For projects and events, a minimum of 75% waste diversion is required over the course of the project or during the event. Once a facility, project, or event achieves 99% waste diversion, it can achieve the Zero Waste designation. Diversion of hazardous waste can “count toward diversion, on a case-by-case basis.”

Food Waste Component: The [Certification Standard for Zero Waste](#) requires that entities track food waste separately and divert waste through certain acceptable pathways, including food waste prevention, donation or sale of edible food, and composting or anaerobic digestion. Food waste that is incinerated and converted to energy—a method known as waste-to-energy¹⁹—can be used for up to 25% of total diversion.

Examples: Examples of facilities that have achieved certification to the SCS Certification Standard for Zero Waste include [AC Foods Silver Mountain Packing Facility](#), [AC Foods Suntreat](#), and [PacificBlu](#).

B. [GreenCircle Certified Waste Diversion from Landfill Certification](#)

Overview: The Waste Diversion from Landfill Certification was developed by GreenCircle Certified to evaluate “waste minimization and end of life material management practices with a goal to provide companies with a percentage of waste they divert from landfill.” If a facility reaches 100% diversion through acceptable methods, it can receive a Zero Waste to Landfill designation.

Food Waste Component: Acceptable methods for the [Waste Diversion from Landfill Certification](#) include source reduction, composting, and anaerobic digestion with energy

¹⁹ Note that waste-to-energy methods are considered a form of disposal, rather than diversion, by the [Zero Waste International Alliance](#) and the [EPA Wasted Food Scale](#).

recovery. GreenCircle Certified only allows for waste-to-energy methods if materials are “non-recoverable” and “all means to find alternative management methods have been evaluated.”²⁰

Examples: Examples of entities that have achieved a Zero Waste to Landfill designation through the Waste Diversion from Landfill Certification include [Perdue Foods](#) and [Alcon](#).

C. [TRUE Certification for Zero Waste](#)

Overview: Total Resource Use and Efficiency (TRUE) certification was designed by Green Business Certification Inc. to assess facilities’ performance in minimizing their non-hazardous solid waste and maximizing their efficiency in the use of resources. Certification is available for any physical facility or building and its operations. To be eligible, the entity must have achieved an average of 90% or greater overall diversion for the most recent twelve months. From there, the facility is assessed across criteria in [sixteen categories](#), including Reduce, Compost, Zero Waste Reporting, Diversion, Zero Waste Purchasing, Zero Waste Analysis, Closed Loop, and Innovation. There are four levels of certification available, based on total points earned: Certified (31–37), Silver (38–45), Gold (46–63), and Platinum (64–81).

Food Waste Component: Actions to reduce food waste can contribute to points in the Reduce (e.g., food waste prevention), Compost, and Diversion (e.g., surplus food donation) categories.

Examples: Examples of TRUE-certified facilities include [Taylor Farms](#), [Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.](#), and the [Mercedes-Benz Stadium](#).

D. [UL 2799: Zero Waste to Landfill](#)

Overview: UL 2799, or The Standard for Environmental Claim Validation Procedure for Zero Waste to Landfill, was designed by UL Solutions to measure material flows that are not part of an entity’s final product at the facility level. UL 2799 tracks non-hazardous waste generated at a specific site and measures its diversion from landfills based on reuse, recycling, composting, and energy production via incineration.²¹ There are three major types of designations for facilities based on level of diversion: Silver (90–94%), Gold (95–99%), and Platinum (100%).

Food Waste Component: Designations under UL 2799 are intended to validate entities’ performance on waste diversion using acceptable diversion methods. Depending on the type of

²⁰ See note 19 for additional perspectives on waste-to-energy methods.

²¹ See note 19 for additional perspectives on waste-to-energy methods.

facility, actions to reduce food waste such as donation and composting can play a significant role in achieving higher diversion rates.

Examples: Examples of entities that have received a Zero Waste to Landfill designation include [Tyson Foods](#) and [Swire Pacific](#).

IV. Multi-Sector Sustainability Standards (select)²²

A. [B Corp Certification Standards](#)

Overview: The standards for B Corp Certification, also known as the B Lab Standards, were designed by B Lab to evaluate social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. In order to become a Certified B Corporation, companies must meet both foundational requirements and specific requirements across seven Impact Topics: Purpose & Stakeholder Governance; Climate Action; Human Rights; Fair Work; Environmental Stewardship & Circularity; Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion; and Government Affairs & Collective Action. The standards also require companies to demonstrate year-over-year progress and to meet additional requirements after three and five years.

Food Waste Component: The [Environmental Stewardship & Circularity](#) category requires companies to pursue waste diversion, set quantified targets, and design a plan for meeting those objectives—and for companies that produce or trade food products, to measure food waste and track waste destinations or diversion pathways. The [Climate Action](#) category requires companies to track and set targets for scope three greenhouse gas emissions, including from waste disposal.

Examples: Examples of Certified B Corporations include [Too Good To Go](#), [Ben & Jerry's](#), and [Pete & Gerry's Organic Eggs](#).

B. [BREEAM Standards](#)

Overview: The Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is designed to incentivize built environment and infrastructure projects to reduce carbon emissions, manage health and social impacts, boost circularity, and support disclosures and reporting. BREEAM has a variety of standards—New Construction, In-Use, Refurbishment & Fit Out—which are designed to address the full lifecycle of commercial and residential buildings, as well as community and infrastructure projects. Additionally, BREEAM standards can be adapted to a specific country's building regulations (see, e.g., the [BREEAM USA standards](#)). BREEAM standards provide credits across ten weighted sustainability categories, contributing toward an

²² This section provides, by way of example, a non-exhaustive list of well-known sustainability certification standards that include a food waste component.

overall score. The certification levels are generally: Pass (30–44%), Good (45–54%), Very Good (55–69%), Excellent (70–84%), and Outstanding (over 85%).

Food Waste Component: All three BREEAM standards offer credits that encourage food waste reduction. For existing buildings, the [In-Use](#) standard rewards performance, while the [New Construction](#) and [Refurbishment & Fit Out](#) standards recognize the design and construction of facilities that allow the separation of food waste from the waste to landfill.

Examples: Examples of entities and sites certified to BREEAM standards include [The Oaks Mall](#), [The Landmark](#), and [Expo 2020 Dubai](#).

C. [ISO 14001: Environmental Management Systems](#)

Overview: ISO 14001 is ISO’s core certification system that is designed to incentivize a systematic approach for establishing, implementing, maintaining, and continually improving an environmental management system—which includes taking action “to minimize [an entity’s] environmental footprint, comply with relevant legal requirements, and achieve [its] environmental objectives.” ISO 14001 includes mandatory requirements across ten clauses, including: Leadership, Planning, Support, Operation, Performance Evaluation, and Improvement. Entities “of all sizes and across all sectors” can adopt ISO 14001. To maintain certification, entities must “undergo surveillance audits annually, with a recertification audit every three years.”

Food Waste Component: Under the ISO 14001 standard, entities must evaluate the environmental impacts of their activities, including waste generation and management; set measurable objectives, such as a food waste reduction target; and monitor performance, for example, through waste audits.

Examples: Examples of ISO 14001-certified entities include [Hilton](#) and [Smithfield Foods](#).

Note: ISO is also in the process of developing a standard on food loss and waste management systems, [ISO 20001](#), which is discussed in Section I. ISO has also published a sustainability standard for events, [ISO 20121](#).

D. [LEED Rating System](#)

Overview: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a sustainability rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. It provides a framework for sustainable, efficient, and cost-saving buildings, development projects, and operations. LEED includes a cohort of standards geared toward: Building Design and Construction (BD+C), Interior Design and Construction (ID+C), Operations and Maintenance (O+M), Neighborhood Development (ND), Residential, and Cities and Communities. LEED standards typically include a mix of

prerequisites and credits that can contribute points to an overall score, leading to a designation of LEED Certified, Silver, Gold, or Platinum.

Food Waste Component: [All LEED standards](#) incentivize waste reduction in some manner, and some criteria pertain directly to food waste reduction. For example, [ID+C](#) requires space to be provided for storage and collection of recyclables, which can include organic waste. [O+M](#) includes a credit for diverting waste through, for instance, offering composting services and/or food donation. [ND](#) offers a credit to encourage community-scale recycling and composting infrastructure.

Examples: Examples of LEED-certified entities include the [City of Kansas City](#), [Bentley University](#), and [RMZ Ecoworld](#).

E. [Green Globes Building Certification System](#)

Overview: Green Globes is a building certification system administered by the Green Building Initiative that assesses sustainability, occupant health, and resilience in new construction, existing buildings, and interiors. The Green Globes family includes the New Construction, Existing Buildings, Core & Shell, and Sustainable Interiors standards, which evaluate performance across criteria in multiple categories, including energy, water, emissions, site, and waste management. Based on overall points earned, entities can receive a certification of One Globe (35–54%), Two Globes (55–69%), Three Globes (70–84%), or Four Globes (85–100%).

Food Waste Component: Each standard includes at least one waste management criterion. For example, the [Existing Buildings certification](#) includes a waste management criterion that awards points for development of a waste reduction workplan, which can include food waste reduction strategies such as composting or food donation.

Examples: Examples of Green Globes-certified buildings include [D 92 Korean BBQ](#), [Whole Foods Market – Hollywood](#), and [1540 Broadway – New York City](#).

F. [Living Building Challenge](#)

Overview: The Living Building Challenge (LBC), developed by the International Living Future Institute, is a building certification system that establishes rigorous standards for sustainability and regenerative design. To achieve certification, projects must demonstrate performance over twelve consecutive months across seven Petals: Place, Water, Energy, Health & Happiness, Materials, Equity, and Beauty. Each Petal contains specific Imperatives that address criteria such as net-zero energy, water use, and waste, along with material transparency and social equity. LBC certifies only those buildings that generate more resources than they consume and contribute positively to their environment.

Food Waste Component: LBC's [Materials Petal](#) includes the Net Positive Waste Imperative (Imperative 16), which mandates a Materials Conservation Management Plan that covers design, construction, operation, and end-of-life phases. Projects must divert construction and

demolition materials at a rate of 80–100%, include dedicated infrastructure for collection of recyclables and compostable food scraps, and prioritize reuse and deconstruction strategies.

Examples: Examples of LBC-certified entities include [RE Farm Café](#), [Gulf State Park Interpretive Center](#), and [Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center](#).

Conclusion

The use of certification standards can provide benefits to both certified entities and the general public, including by helping businesses and other organizations increase credibility and marketability; enabling more informed decision-making among consumers, investors, and others; and motivating the adoption of certain practices—such as food waste reduction—more broadly.

This guide is intended to help readers understand the variety of existing certification standards that focus on or include components related to food waste reduction—and, given their differing scopes, priorities, and methodologies, to help readers identify which may best suit their needs and interests. For example, businesses and organizations can use this guide to help identify the right certification programs to verify and earn recognition for their food waste reduction efforts. And for other entities, including local governments and NGOs, it can serve as a resource when deciding which existing standard(s) to incorporate or reference in developing their own food waste reduction programs.

See Appendix A below for a summary table of the certification standards outlined in this guide.

Appendix A: Summary of Certification Standards for Food Waste Reduction

Standard Name	Standard Developer	Food Waste Component
Food Waste Reduction Standards		
Food Recovery Verified	Food Recovery Network	Requires regular surplus food recovery and donation
ISO 20001: Food Loss and Waste Management System Standard (<i>upcoming</i>)	International Organization for Standardization	Will require efforts to minimize food loss and waste across the supply chain
The PLEDGE on Food Waste	The PLEDGE on Food Waste	Consists of a comprehensive food waste audit and assessment based on criteria across six pillars
Upcycled Certified Standard	Upcycled Food Association	Requires a minimum percentage of upcycled inputs in ingredients and products
Foodservice and Food Production Sustainability Standards		
EIC Sustainable Event Standards	Events Industry Council	Includes food waste reduction criteria across categories
Food Made Good Standard	Sustainable Restaurant Association	Includes points for food waste reduction under the Waste No Food category
FSSC 22000 Certification Scheme	Foundation FSSC	Includes food waste reduction requirements under the Food Loss and Waste category
Green Restaurant Association Certification Standards	Green Restaurant Association	Includes points for food waste reduction under the Waste category
LEAF Marque Standard	Linking Environment and Farming	Includes food waste reduction requirements across categories
Sustainable Food Group Sustainability Standard	IPM Institute	Includes points for various food waste reduction strategies and use of sustainable packaging
Waste Diversion Standards		
SCS Certification Standard for Zero Waste	SCS Global Services	Requires separate tracking of food waste and includes food waste reduction measures as pathways for overall waste diversion
GreenCircle Certified Waste Diversion from Landfill Certification	GreenCircle Certified	Includes source reduction, composting, and anaerobic digestion with energy recovery as acceptable diversion methods

TRUE Certification for Zero Waste	Green Business Certification Inc.	Includes points for food waste reduction under the Reduce, Compost, and Diversion categories
UL 2799: Zero Waste to Landfill	UL Solutions	Consists of a performance-based waste diversion audit to verify claims
Multi-Sector Sustainability Standards (select)		
B Corp Certification Standards	B Lab	Includes requirements relevant to waste diversion and food waste reduction in the Environmental Stewardship & Circularity and Climate Action categories
BREEAM Standards	Building Research Establishment	Offers credits related to waste diversion
ISO 14001: Environmental Management Systems	International Organization for Standardization	Requires monitoring and improvement of waste diversion
LEED Rating System	U.S. Green Building Council	Offers credits related to waste diversion
Green Globes Building Certification System	Green Building Initiative	Offers credits related to waste diversion
Living Building Challenge	International Living Future Institute	Requires dedicated infrastructure for compost collection