



Down to Brass Tacks

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BRASS TACKS INITIATIVE



Fresh produce is one of the most commonly recalled food items due to environmental exposure.

Recalls and Food Waste: Impacts and Opportunities

The recall process is an important safety mechanism that protects consumers from potential health risks. However, it also has the often-overlooked consequence of increasing food waste. This situation raises questions about what happens to food after it is recalled and about the future of the safety and sustainability of our food system.

What are Recalls and Why Do They Happen

Food recalls occur when a product is found to have potential health risks. Todd Fischer from Innovative Waste Recycling explains that there are several types of contamination: "Physical contamination such as wood, metal, glass, rubber, etc.; biological contamination from microbes; chemical contamination; and even undeclared allergens can be a type of contamination." Fischer, who has extensive experience in food safety and the associated regulations, emphasizes that our food system is incredibly complex. Technological advancements continually improve our ability to detect even small amounts of contaminants. According to Fischer, the complexity and sophistication of food safety technology and regulations should reassure consumers who may doubt the quality and safety of the U.S. food supply.

Impacts of Recalls on Food Waste

While recalls are essential for protecting public health, they result in significant food waste that typically ends up in landfills. This contributes to the loss of valuable resources and to the generation of greenhouse gases, such as methane. Often, entire batches or shipments of food are discarded, even if only a small portion is affected. Fischer notes, "If a recalled product needs to be destroyed, it is typically landfilled. It's not that it can't go somewhere else, but there is a lack of education among processors about alternative options." This underscores the need for innovation and education to convert recall waste into useful resources. *(continued on page 3)*

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Education Kit Giveaway

The Brass Tacks Initiative is excited to announce a special giveaway for schools located in Scott and LeSueur Counties! We're offering a limited number of FREE education kits designed to help teachers bring composting and sustainability lessons directly into their classrooms.

Why participate?

Our education kit provides engaging, hands-on materials that make learning about food waste and composting fun and impactful. It's a fantastic opportunity to inspire students with practical environmental stewardship skills.

Who can enter?

Any school within Scott or LeSueur County, MN is eligible to register.



REGISTER TODAY!

Make learning about food waste fun with a free education kit from the Brass Tacks Initiative.

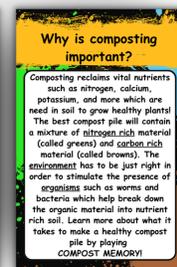
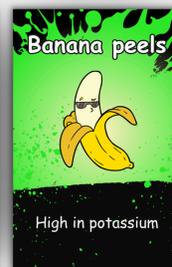


How to enter:

Complete our short registration form and share a brief explanation of how your school would benefit from receiving the kit.

Important details:

- **Deadline to register: March 31, 2026**
- Winners will be selected through a fair and transparent process combining eligibility checks, merit assessment, and a random drawing.
- Limited kits are available—so don't wait!



For more information visit our website www.thebrasstacks.org
or email info@thebrasstacks.org

Food Waste and Recalls

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What Can Be Done to Help Reduce Impacts

Regarding recalled food waste, Erin Skelly of Dakota Prairie Composting (DPC) states that "composting is an excellent solution for these types of materials. Consumers can dispose of recalled items in home compost bins or drop them off—without packaging—at local composting facilities." For larger commercial volumes, Skelly recommends using facilities like DPC that offer depackaging services, which separate packaging from food so the organic material can be composted, and the plastics can be recycled.

Looking Ahead With Optimism

While recall-related food waste presents challenges, it also offers opportunities to

rethink how we manage food safety and sustainability together. Advances in technology, such as rapid contaminant detection and more precise recall scopes, help reduce the volume of recalled food. Increased public awareness also encourages responsible consumption and disposal habits. Experts like Todd Fischer and Erin Skelly demonstrate that solutions—from better education about disposal options to improved composting infrastructure—are within reach. As consumers, staying informed and proactive can transform our response to recalls—helping to safeguard our health while minimizing waste. Together, we can foster a food system that is both safe and sustainable, ensuring quality food reaches those who need it without unnecessary loss.



JOIN US!

The Brass Tacks Initiative is seeking volunteers for the following committees to help us continue our mission to support sustainable practices in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration.

Marketing

Establishing, maintaining, and growing the visibility of the BTI. Helps promote our programs, products, and services.

Development

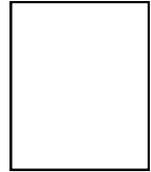
Helps BTI achieve its mission by developing new resources and funding opportunities for the organization.

Outreach/Education

Plans and implements educational events that inform and engage communities on sustainability in the food system.

For more information visit our website www.thebrasstacks.org/volunteer or email Rachel@thebrasstacks.org

The Brass Tacks Initiative
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About BTI

The Brass Tacks Initiative is a 501c3 nonprofit founded on a mission to support sustainability in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration.

Our name comes from the phrase "let's get down to brass tacks." The phrase means to address the most important facts of a project or problem. The fact is food waste is a problem with environmental, economic, and social impacts. We believe the only way to make an impact on food waste is to **research** best practices and new methods of recycling, **collaborate** with the companies who are generating waste to find alternatives to the landfill, and make sure that current and future leaders are equipped with the **education** needed to make sustainable impacts in their community.

For more information about BTI visit our website www.thebrasstacks.org or contact us via email at info@thebrasstacks.org.