



Down to Brass Tacks

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BRASS TACKS INITIATIVE



Hogs from a local farm are eagerly waiting for feeding time. A small portion of their feed is comprised of food scraps from Minnesota based food producers.

Waste-to-Feed: Not a Standalone Strategy

Waste-to-feed is often celebrated as a promising solution for reducing food waste, but is it always the best solution? On the EPA's Wasted Food Scale, animal feed falls after donation or upcycling and before composting. This means that if the food isn't fit for human consumption, the next best thing is to use it as animal feed before considering composting or anaerobic digestion. As a project manager for Innovative Waste Recycling (IWR), Todd Fischer has spent years working with farmers and food processors to understand the intricacies of waste-to-feed practices. "There is no doubt that waste-to-feed is an effective way to repurpose food that might otherwise go to waste," says Fischer. "However, it is not always a viable option and should be incorporated into a broader waste management strategy."

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Rachel Houck, Executive Director of the Brass Tacks Initiative, acknowledges the growing interest in this practice but points out the lack of accessible information and awareness about its proper implementation. She notes, "The interest is there, but information is limited, and the public often isn't aware that you can't always send your food waste to animals." She points out that there are many factors to consider when deciding whether to use this method, such as nutritional value, potential for contamination, and logistics.

Dietary Restrictions

Fischer highlights the necessity of considering animals' dietary restrictions in waste-to-feed practices. According to Fischer, even within the same species, nutritional requirements can vary based on their use. For instance, dairy cows have limited feed options as certain flavors can impact the taste of the milk, potentially deterring consumers and affecting the farmers' livelihood. *(continued on page 3)*

BTI Spring Updates

Webinar

In April, we hosted our second webinar in honor of Food Waste Prevention Week. "The Path to Sustainability," a follow-up to last year's webinar, provided food producers and processors with actionable steps to start incorporating sustainability into their processes. Industry experts from Innovative Waste Recycling provided valuable insights, practical strategies, and success stories to inspire and guide business leaders in adopting sustainable practices.

To view the recorded program, scan the QR code to the right or visit our events page: <https://www.thebrasstacks.org/events/>



Plate-to-Garden Event

On May 10, in celebration of International Compost Awareness Week, we proudly hosted our second annual Plate-to-Garden event! This year, the event took place at the New Prague Farmers Market, where we sold compost to generate funds for upcoming programs. We assisted market attendees in signing up for the local household organics drop-off site, and children who attended had the chance to plant a seed in a pot and take it home. All these activities aimed to foster a circular food system. This event was made possible thanks to the support of our partners: Innovative Waste Recycling, Minnesota Composting Council, SMSC Organics Recycling Facility, and the New Prague Farmers Market. Thank you also to all our dedicated volunteers who helped to make this event a success!



Images from left to right: Volunteers filling bags with compost donated by the SMSC-ORF; The BTI booth at the New Prague Farmer's Market, where we sold compost, provided a free kids craft, and helped residents register for the local organics drop-off site; Finished bags of compost waiting to be picked up.



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

Waste-to-Feed

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Fischer notes, "Consumers expect their milk to taste a certain way, and if the taste is off, even a little, they stop buying it, which can be detrimental to the farmers."

Fischer also sheds light on the sophisticated and efficient nature of farming, likening the dietary requirements of animals to that of athletes. "These animals have to eat a regular diet like athletes - they eat specific foods at specific times. They are on a path for growth; consistency and high volume are key."

Addressing Safety Concerns

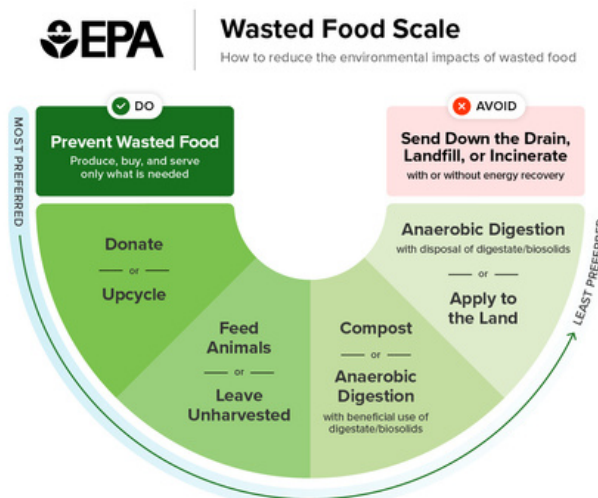
Safety is another critical concern, as farmers prioritize the health of their animals. Contaminated foods and those known to cause health complications for animals are unsuitable for waste-to-feed, underscoring the need for strict quality control both on the farm and at the point of origin.

Logistical Challenges

The success of waste-to-feed hinges on sound logistics. Proximity between the food producer and the farmer is crucial in maximizing the climate and economic advantages associated with waste-to-feed. According to Fischer, large-scale farmers want high volumes of homogeneous products on a regular basis so that they can work the nutrients into their feeding regimen. This means that smaller food producers or producers with small, mixed, or intermittent loads are not compatible. On the other hand, farmers with smaller-scale operations may be willing to accept mixed or intermittent loads because it will offset their feed costs, but they aren't willing to travel as far, putting pressure on the processor to manage the shipping.

A Balanced Approach

While waste-to-feed presents an opportunity to minimize food waste, its effectiveness relies on meticulous planning and collaboration between stakeholders. Considerations such as dietary restrictions, safety, and logistics are essential for its successful implementation. Until



more information and guidance become readily available for producers and consumers alike, Fischer recommends reaching out to experts such as himself for advice on the best outlet for your organics.

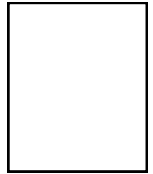
Make a contribution and help us continue our mission!

BTI's mission is to promote sustainability in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration. You can help us continue this mission by contributing today! Any donation, no matter the size, enables us to offer free and affordable programs to families, small businesses, and various organizations, as well as participate in community events.

Scan the code or visit www.thebrasstacks.org to learn more and to donate!

Scan Me





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.