

From: Agency Info, <AgencyInfo@gov.sc.gov>
To: Veldran, KatherineKatherineVeldran@gov.sc.gov
Smith, AustinAustinSmith@gov.sc.gov
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From: S.C. DHEC
Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2016 10:10:49 AM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
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Subject: State Partnership Launches "Don't Waste Food S.C." Campaign to Reduce Food Waste

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Contact: DHEC Media Relations
media@dhec.sc.gov
803.898.1127

State Partnership Launches "Don't Waste Food S.C." Campaign to Reduce Food Waste

Columbia, S.C. - The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, S.C. Department of Commerce and S.C. Department of Agriculture today announced Don't Waste Food S.C. - a collaborative campaign to reduce the number one item thrown away in the state: wasted food.

One out of six people struggle with hunger in the United States, yet food waste is the single largest component being sent to landfills and accounted for 21 percent (35.2 million tons) of the nation's waste in 2013. South Carolina alone produced an estimated 607,000 tons of food waste in fiscal year 2015.

Don't Waste Food S.C. is aimed at educating and empowering individuals, businesses and communities to take action by preventing, composting or donating surplus food. The campaign is working towards a goal of reducing food waste in the state by 50 percent by 2030.

"South Carolina is positioned to be a leader in tackling the complex environmental and health challenges of food waste," said Catherine Heigel, Director of DHEC. "The Don't Waste Food S.C. campaign is building awareness and partnerships to help our state make a collective impact on this 607,000-ton issue. Working together, we can reduce the amount of food being added to our landfills and connect food resources with

communities in need."

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley proclaimed July 13, 2016 as "Don't Waste Food S. C. Day" as the state agencies launched the initiative and invited all South Carolinians to join the effort. The campaign has already gained momentum with early involvement from several private stakeholder partners, including Harvest Hope Food Bank, Re-Soil and Loaves & Fishes.

"Composting is not only important for South Carolina's environmental health, it also has the potential to become a significant driver of our economy," said Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt. "As many as 1,400 new jobs can be generated for every one million tons of composted materials, so this is a critical issue for Team South Carolina; and, I urge all businesses within our state to do what they can to donate and compost unused food."

The partners are working together to connect food surpluses to those in need, enhance infrastructure for composting and educate consumers, communities and businesses about what they can do to join the initiative.

"I see firsthand the amount of hard work, dedication and time that farmers put into growing food, and I see the needs of other South Carolinians who all too often go hungry. I truly believe that through this campaign, we can sustain our state's economy by eliminating wasted food and further empower our own neighbors as we feed the hungry," said S.C. Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers.

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S.C. Department of Health & Environmental Control, 2600 Bull St., Columbia, SC 29201

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