



Whole Foods Market Turns Food Scraps into Fertilizer

Whole Foods Market® is a leader in natural and organic foods, with more than 310 stores in North America and the United Kingdom. Whole Foods Market consistently strives to set an example in sustainability and environmental responsibility in the food and retail industry.

Customer Challenge

The sustainability team for Whole Foods Market was interested in pursuing composting solutions for its Illinois stores. Prior to 2011, there were no sites available to process large-scale commercial food waste in Illinois. As interest from conscientious grocers grew, Illinois approved legislation outlining a permitting process. Whole Foods Market took advantage of this opportunity and decided to launch a new composting initiative in Chicago.

WM Sustainability Plan

Whole Foods Market approached Waste Management (WM) to develop a customized program for food waste and help turn it into useful soil enrichment material. WM trucks would collect all compostable material and mix it with yard waste. After a six-month processing period, the waste would be converted into beneficial compost for use in landscaping.

WM consultants conducted store visits and waste assessments to determine the prime candidates for a composting pilot program in Chicago.

In February 2011, WM and Whole Foods Market rolled out the pilot program at the Sauganash and Schaumburg stores. WM took the following steps to help Whole Foods Market achieve its sustainability efforts:

- Trash compactors were replaced with composting compactors
- All personnel were trained on the new composting program
- Appropriate signage was posted for employees and customers
- The composting compactors were co-branded by Waste Management and Whole Foods Market to demonstrate project partnership
- WM provided ongoing monthly data to help monitor store progress

The Green Outcome

By the end of 2011, the composting program implemented by WM included eight Whole Foods Market locations, which increased the average diversion rate from 10% to 80% by composting over 2,660 tons of food scraps. In 2012, WM added three more Whole Foods Market locations to the program, bringing total composting volume to over 2,240 tons in just seven months.

WM is continuing its partnership with Whole Foods Market with the goal of implementing the composting program, as well as other innovative recycling solutions, throughout the Midwest stores.



Composting Program Accomplishments

- Average diversion rate increased from 10% to 80% by composting over 2,660 tons of food scraps
- Composting program now being implemented throughout the Midwest stores

“As a leader in the environmental solutions industry, Waste Management remains committed to serving and facilitating forward-thinking companies like Whole Foods Market who see the benefits of responsibly transforming food waste into new products.”

Ella Plahm, Account Manager,
Waste Management

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