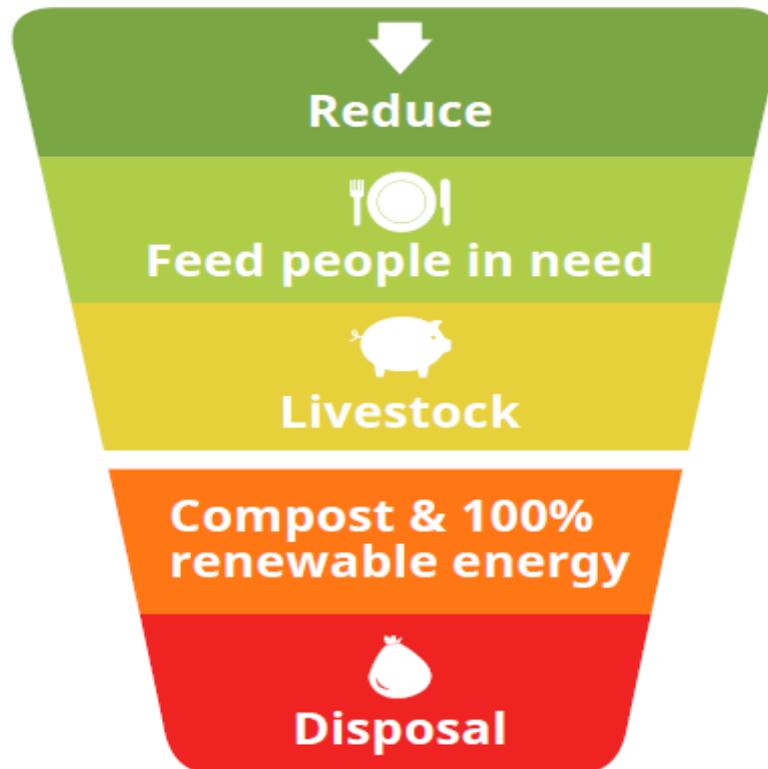


# Food Use Hierarchy

The Food Use Hierarchy highlights the best use for surplus food; taking measures to reduce food surplus, followed by diverting surplus food to charities or livestock feed and finally sending food to digesters to produce bio-gas.



The food use hierarchy holds that surplus food that is fit for human consumption should be sent to charities and organisations that redistribute food. However, redistribution is not a solution to food waste. Redistribution is a pragmatic response to an inherently wasteful food economy and is necessary to avoid massive losses of food from the system while it remains in its current state. Reducing how much food becomes surplus in the first place, by altering farming and buying practices so that waste is designed out of the system, should be the priority.

Food surplus that is unfit for human consumption should be used to feed animals, namely pigs and chickens. Research shows that using food waste as animal feed scores better than AD or composting on 12 out of 14 environmental and health indicators (Salemdeeb et al. 2017). Research by Cambridge University concludes that changing the law and feeding our food waste to pigs could save 1.8 million hectares of global agricultural land, including hundreds of thousands of acres of South America's biodiverse forests and savannahs – and provide a use for the 100 million tonnes of food wasted in the EU each year (zu Ermgassen et al. 2016).

The food use hierarchy is one key set of principles to follow in building a more sustainable food system. As well as thinking about how we prevent and best reuse or dispose of waste, a future-proof food system will consider how to use fewer scarce environmental resources in the production of our food in the first place. In fact, a defining principle of Feedback's circular food system is that food that was previously seen as 'waste' has value and can be used as a resource. Ideally this surplus food should be used for the purpose it was originally intended, as per the food use hierarchy. As what was formerly seen as 'waste' is reused, less waste pollution through landfill disposal is created, and less resources are needed to produce food in the first place. This stable, constrained system, requiring less land mass, since resources are more efficiently used within the food system, will leave more of nature free to flourish, as well as providing healthy and sustainable diets for all.

Salemdeeb, R., zu Ermgassen, E.K., Kim, M.H., Balmford, A. and Al-Tabbaa, A., 2017. Environmental and health impacts of using food waste as animal feed: a comparative analysis of food waste management options. *Journal of cleaner production*, 140, pp.871-880.

Zu Ermgassen, E.K., Phalan, B., Green, R.E. and Balmford, A., 2016. Reducing the land use of EU pork production: where there's swill, there's a way. *Food policy*, 58, pp.35-48.