Time to Talk Trash: The Top Barriers and Solutions for Composting in Faster-Food Restaurants

Background

- Landfill waste generates leachates and methane, leading to air, water, and soil pollution.
- Countries are increasing faster-food consumption and creating higher amounts of landfill waste.
- In the United States, food generating businesses throw out approximately 24 million tons of food waste per year.
- Composting reduces the amount of landfill waste that emits harmful gases and produces a renewable resource.

Results: Barriers

- Employee turnover: causes need for consistent training for new employees

Results: Solutions

- Local government subsidies for participating businesses
- Updated signage and pamphlets from composting facilities offering services
- Affordable packaging + supplies from large manufacturers

Research Question

What are the common barriers affecting faster-food restaurants’ willingness to compost, and what are the potential solutions to overcome these barriers?

Internship and Methods

- I interned with Cedar Grove as an outreach intern.
- Developed and administered surveys to faster-food restaurants within the King County region.
- Defined faster-food restaurants as locations as take-out style, fast-paced, limited seating, and low cost
- Conducted a literature review on current research of composting programs.

Broader Implications

- Local governments and programs could provide solutions to these obstacles while highlighting the benefits of composting.
- More restaurants may be more motivated to participate in composting and the program could expand to other cities.
- Other municipalities can enact codes like Seattle, WA by requiring all businesses to compost all organic waste.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my site supervisor, Maggie Brown, the Cedar Grove team, my faculty advisor, Eli Wheat, my cohort, and my family. I am so appreciative of the knowledge and support you have all provided me throughout this journey.