

FOOD RECOVERY FORUM

April 7, 2025

Florida Polytechnic University
Lakeland, Florida



Moderator and Speaker Compendium

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Thank You Sponsors and Supporting Organizations:



Agenda

Sunday, April 6, 2025
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3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Pre-Forum Compost Tour

The best way to learn about advancements in organics recycling is to visit a state-of-the-art compost facility.

We will be holding a Pre-Forum Compost Tour at Veransa's facility in Seffner, Florida. Veransa turns yard waste into valuable resources that nurture growth and enrich soil health.

Where:

Veransa
6727 County Road 579
Seffner, FL 33584

When:

Sunday, April 6, 2025
3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

How to Join:

RSVP by March 31st that you will be joining to:

Gene Jones
gene@swixusa.org
850-386-6280

Monday, April 7, 2025

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8:30 am - 9:00 am Registration

9:00 am – 9:15 am **Welcome and Overview of the Forum**

Christopher Perry, Recycling Education & Outreach Coordinator,
Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Invited)

9:15 am – 10:15 am: **Panel Discussion:**
Procurement and Gleaning: Reducing Food Waste at the Source

- Key challenges and opportunities in food procurement
- Best practices for gleaning surplus from farms and suppliers

Moderator: **Christopher Perry**, Recycling Education & Outreach
Coordinator, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Invited)

Panelists:

Megan McEwen, Florida Program Coordinator, Society of St. Andrew
Dr. Anne Miller, Acting Executive Director, Community Harvest SRQ

10:30 am – 11:30 am: **How to Donate Surplus Food Effectively**

- Navigating donation regulations and liability
- Building partnerships with food banks and community organizations

Presenters:

Emily Grant, Director of Florida Operations, FoodRecovery.org
Karena Bozarth, Sustainability Manager, Food and Nutrition Services,
Orange County Public Schools

11:30 am – 12:00 pm: **Material Circularity: Focusing on Lifecycle Benefits of Food Waste
Composting**

Dr. Malak Anshassi, Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental
Engineering, Florida Polytechnic University

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm: Lunch and Networking

Monday, April 7, 2025 (Continued)

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1:00 pm – 1:45 pm:

Composting as a Food Waste Solution

Moderator: **Lauren O'Connor**, Waste Registration Section,
Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Invited)

Presenter:

Charlie Pioli, Founder, O-Town Compost

- Setting up a community or organizational composting program
- Leveraging compost for local agriculture

1:45 pm – 2:00 pm:

Coffee Break

2:00 pm – 2:45 pm:

Anaerobic Digestion as a Food Waste Solution

Patrick Serfass, Executive Director, American Biogas Council

- Overview of Anaerobic Digestion
- Why Food Waste?

2:45 pm – 3:00 pm:

Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

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Post-Forum Tours

We are offering two post-Forum Tours for those that might like to know more about food recovery on local farms as well as information on organic farming.

See below for tour options:

Option 1: Wish Farms



Understanding the importance of food recovery on local farms is vital to enhance state recovery efforts. Join us at Wish Farms for a guided farm and packaging tour at Wish Farms in Plant City, FL.

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 (Continued)

Where:

Wish Farms
2262 Pixie Way
Plant City, FL 33563

When:

Tuesday, April 8, 2025
10:00am to 11:00am

What to Wear:

Closed toed shoes and no jewelry (a plain ring is fine), as well as a light jacket for the cooler. Wish Farms will provide hair/beard nets.

How to Join:

RSVP by March 31st that you will be joining to:

Gene Jones
gene@swixusa.org
850-386-6280

Upon RSVP Confirmation you will receive parking instructions and a sign-in QR code

Option 2: Meacham Urban Farms

Join us for a guided farm tour at Meacham Urban Farm in the heart of Tampa, FL. You will learn about the history of the land, organic farming techniques and successful sustainable food production in an urban setting.

Where:

Meacham Urban Farm
1108 E Scott St
Tampa, FL 33603

Other Important Notes: On-site parking lot available with additional on-street parking on perimeter streets if necessary.





Tuesday, April 8, 2025 (Continued)

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When:

Tuesday, April 8, 2025
11:00 am to 12:00 pm

What to Wear:

Closed toed shoes and sun protection.

How to Join:

RSVP by March 31st that you will be joining to:

Gene Jones
gene@swixusa.org
850-386-6280

FOOD RECOVERY FORUM



Moderator and Speaker Profiles

PANEL DISCUSSION:



PANEL DISCUSSION - PROCUREMENT AND GLEANING: REDUCING FOOD WASTE AT THE SOURCE

Moderator: Christopher Perry, Recycling Education & Outreach Coordinator, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Invited)

Panelists:

Megan McEwen, Florida Program Coordinator, Society of St. Andrew
Dr. Anne Miller, Acting Executive Director, Community Harvest SRQ

- Key challenges and opportunities in food procurement
- Best practices for gleaning surplus from farms and suppliers

Session Description:

Food waste reduction begins at the source, where strategic procurement and gleaning practices can prevent surplus food from being discarded. This panel discussion will explore the key challenges and opportunities in food procurement, including balancing supply and demand, minimizing over-purchasing, and fostering supplier partnerships that prioritize waste reduction. Additionally, experts will share best practices for gleaning surplus from farms and suppliers, ensuring that excess food is redirected to those in need rather than wasted. Attendees will gain practical insights into implementing effective sourcing strategies and collaborating with local producers to create a more sustainable food system.

CHRISTOPHER PERRY



Christopher Perry

Christopher Perry, Recycling Education & Outreach Coordinator, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Invited)

Perry Bio:

Christopher Perry is a planner with Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Waste Reduction and Recycling Program. He manages the Public Sector Recycling reporting program, the Recycling Business Assistance Center, and specializes in education and outreach through partnership initiatives including Florida State University's Sustainability Fellowships Program, Florida Food Recovery Coalition, and a variety of the department's campaigns to reduce food waste and increase recycling participation.

MEGAN MCEWEN



Megan McEwen

Megan McEwen, Florida Program Coordinator, Society of St. Andrew

McEwen Bio:

Megan McEwen serves as the Florida Program Coordinator at the Society of St. Andrew, where she works to fight hunger, reduce food waste, and support equitable food distribution. Her role aligns with her deep passion for sustainability and faithful stewardship, as she helps connect communities with fresh, nutritious food through gleaning and food rescue initiatives.

Beyond her work with the Society of St. Andrew, Megan is dedicated to helping individuals cultivate a life rooted in purpose, wellness, and resourcefulness. Through social media content she shares her journey of living sustainably while embracing biblical principles of stewardship. She is committed to creating a community centered on education and practical steps toward sustainable living—whether through whole-food cooking, beginner gardening, financial stewardship, sustainable sewing, or budget-friendly home projects.

By merging her faith with action, Megan seeks to inspire others to be good stewards of their resources and to build a life of abundance through mindful, sustainable choices.

DR. ANNE MILLER



Dr. Anne Miller

Dr. Anne Miller, Acting Executive Director, Community Harvest SRQ

Miller Bio:

Dr. Anne Miller first discovered gleaning as a volunteer with Transition Sarasota (now known as Community Harvest SRQ) over a decade ago. It aligned with her desire to learn more about local food. She continued to volunteer with the organization as a gleaner and later as part of the Eat Local Week planning committee. Community Harvest SRQ's Eat Local Week is an annual celebration of the best of local food and farming. They offer events, including farm and garden tours, farm-to-fork dinners, workshops, educational programs, community discussions, and hands-on activities. Later she joined the Board of Directors. She now serves as Interim Executive Director as they seek out new leadership for the organization.

Anne and her husband have a 5-acre livestock farm in DeSoto County and she also teaches new farmers through the Sarasota IFAS Extension Small Farmers Startup School. Since she is the daughter of a Vietnam Veteran and the proud mother of 2 Naval Nuclear Submariners, Anne also works with local Veterans groups that introduce Veterans to agriculture.

FOOD DONATION SESSION:



How to Donate Surplus Food Effectively

Presenters:

Emily Grant, Director of Florida Operations, FoodRecovery.org
Karena Bozarth, Sustainability Manager, Food and Nutrition Services, Orange County Public Schools

- Navigating donation regulations and liability
- Building partnerships with food banks and community organizations

Session Description:

Food donation is a powerful tool in the fight against food waste and food insecurity, but many businesses face challenges in navigating regulations, liability concerns, and building strong partnerships with local organizations. This session will provide practical guidance on donating surplus food safely and effectively.

Experts will discuss the legal protections available to donors, including the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act and how to safely donate products with FoodRecovery.org.

Attendees will also learn how to establish and strengthen partnerships with food banks, community organizations, and redistribution networks to maximize impact.

The session will feature FoodRecovery.org and its successful partnership with Orange County Public Schools, highlighting how technology-driven solutions and strategic collaboration can streamline food donation efforts. Whether you're a restaurant, retailer, or food producer, this session will equip you with the knowledge and resources to make food donation a seamless and sustainable part of your operations.

EMILY GRANT



Emily Grant

Emily Grant, Director of Florida Operations, FoodRecovery.org

Grant Bio:

I am deeply passionate about food recovery, social justice, gardening and art. I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in Urban Studies and Spanish, and I am currently learning Portuguese so I can speak with my husband's family in Brazil. I have over 7 years of experience program planning and over 5 years of professional work in the Florida food system. When I am not coordinating the donation of excess food, you can find me taking care of my 40+ plants, playing with my dog Ziggy, or being a cookie monster.

KARENA BOZARTH



Karena Bozarth

Karena Bozarth, Sustainability Manager, Food and Nutrition Services, Orange County Public Schools

Bozarth Bio:

Karena Bozarth began her career at Orange County Public Schools - Food and Nutrition Services, in 2010. During this time, Karena has had the opportunity to work in several departments, which include Food Service Operations, Procurement and currently in Sustainability. Karena has connected Food and Nutrition Services to school garden activities by creating waste diversion strategies for students and school teams, educating students on the importance of good nutrition in our school meal program, and building sustainable partnerships for our waste and recovery programs.

Karena's free time is spent with her husband and family, which include four fur-babies, maintaining a home garden, and relaxing on the beach.

DR. MALAK ANSHASSI



Presentation Title:

Material Circularity: Focusing on Lifecycle Benefits of Food Waste Composting

Dr. Malak Anshassi, Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Engineering, Florida Polytechnic University

Abstract:

Food waste recovery from the residential waste stream involves diverting organic waste from landfills and utilizing composting to reduce environmental impact and enhance soil health. In our waste-based Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), we incorporated Florida-specific conditions such as local waste management infrastructure to evaluate the benefits of composting, including reduced environmental impacts and improved soil sustainability.

Bio:

Malak Anshassi is an assistant professor at Florida Polytechnic University teaching solid waste management, sustainability, and life cycle assessment courses. Her research focuses on incorporating life cycle thinking into solid waste management. She previously conducted research using principles from sustainable materials management (or SMM) to analyze the application of life cycle thinking into Florida's solid waste management system to achieve the 75% recycling rate target. In her current research she formulates SMM-based solid waste management and policy approaches that decision makers from any region of the world can use to measure their waste management system's environmental and economic impacts.

Website: <https://floridapoly.edu/directory/faculty/malak-anshassi.php>

COMPOST SESSION:



Composting as a Food Waste Solution

Moderator: Lauren O'Connor, Waste Registration Section, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Invited)

Presenters:

Charlie Pioli, Founder, O-Town Compost

Session Description:

Composting is a powerful tool for reducing food waste, improving soil health, and supporting sustainable agriculture. This session will explore how communities and organizations can implement effective composting programs and maximize the benefits of compost for local food systems.

Key topics include:

- **Setting Up a Community or Organizational Composting Program:** Practical steps for launching and managing a composting initiative, including infrastructure, stakeholder engagement, and regulatory considerations.
- **Leveraging Compost for Local Agriculture:** Exploring how compost can enhance soil fertility, improve crop yields, and contribute to regenerative farming practices.

Attendees will gain insights into creating impactful composting programs and fostering a circular economy by connecting food waste solutions with local agricultural needs.

LAUREN O'CONNOR



Lauren O'Connor

Lauren O'Connor, Waste Registration Section, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Invited)

O'Connor Bio:

Lauren O'Connor, Waste Registration & Recycling Program, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL has 20 years of solid waste experience working as a regulator for the State of Florida, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). Lauren's experience includes waste tire management, organics recycling, and food waste diversion. Lauren currently oversees the registration program for organics recycling facilities and rulemaking for Chapter 62-709, F.A.C.

CHARLIE PIOLI



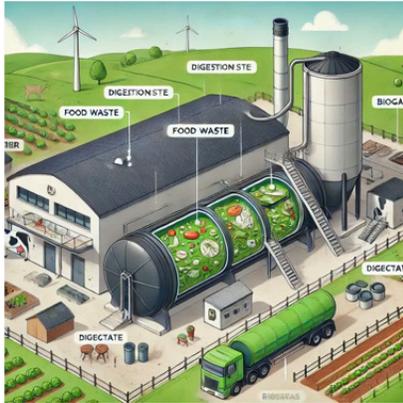
Charlie Pioli

Charlie Pioli, Founder, O-Town Compost

Pioli Bio:

Founder of O-Town Compost, Charlie Pioli, started his career in solid waste & recycling consulting, where he witnessed the egregious waste our country produces firsthand. Spurred to action, he started the company with a pitchfork and Camry to give Central Florida a sustainable option to recycle their food scraps.

ANAEROBIC DIGESTION SESSION:



Anaerobic Digestion as a Food Waste Solution

- Overview of Anaerobic Digestion
- Why Food Waste?

Presenter:

Patrick Serfass, Executive Director, American Biogas Council

Session Description:

Anaerobic digestion (AD) is a proven and scalable solution for managing food waste while generating renewable energy and valuable byproducts. This session will explore how AD technology can help businesses, municipalities, and waste management organizations divert food waste from landfills, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create sustainable energy sources.

Mr. Serfass will discuss the economics of AD, successful case studies, regulatory considerations, and strategies for integrating AD into existing food recovery and waste management systems. Attendees will gain practical insights into how anaerobic digestion can be leveraged to support sustainability goals, improve waste management efficiency, and contribute to a circular economy.

PATRICK SERFASS



Patrick Serfass

Patrick Serfass, Executive Director, American Biogas Council

Serfass Bio:

Patrick Serfass is Executive Director of the American Biogas Council, the voice of the US biogas industry. Patrick has led the American Biogas Council since he helped create it in 2010. The American Biogas Council now represents more than 400 organizations and 5,500 professionals dedicated to maximizing carbon reduction and economic growth using biogas systems. Beyond biogas, Patrick has more than 20 years' experience growing clean energy industries, like solar, hydrogen, biochar, and woody biomass. In Patrick's early career, he was a physical oceanographer, architectural engineer and designed unmanned deep ocean vehicles. Patrick holds a Bachelor of Arts in Engineering Sciences from Dartmouth College.

Food Recovery Forum Contact/Lead Form:

Name: _____

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