



## REA Press Release

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# Global alliance of organics recycling associations call for immediate action at COP26

- **Global alliance of organics recycling associations call for immediate action on food and garden waste recycling at COP26;**
- **The recycling of unavoidable organic wastes will help put the brakes on greenhouse gas emissions;**
- **Alliance includes associations from the UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and Europe.**

A global alliance of organics recycling associations is calling for world leaders to make COP26 a turning point in history for the recycling of food and garden waste.

The alliance says that every country, business and person can help mitigate climate change by recycling their unavoidable food and garden waste into fertilisers and soil improvers, and that action needs to be taken immediately to get the maximum benefits from these valuable resources. This can be achieved by recycling them through garden, on-site or large-scale systems to create valuable carbon-rich organic matter for return to our soils for carbon storage, biodiversity, water conservation and food security. The alliance call for action to be taken now to implement systems to recycle organic waste back to soils.

[According to data from the World Bank](#), 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2016 (1.6 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) equivalent) were generated from solid waste treatment and disposal, with food waste accounting for nearly 50% of

overall emissions. The recycling of unavoidable organic wastes will reduce this significant source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate stabilising benefits are also realised when compost and organic matter are returned back to our soils. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 95% of our food is directly or indirectly produced on our soils with organic matter being fundamental to its overall health, soil structure, biodiversity and biological activity of soil organisms and plant nutrient availability. The fact that the world's soils act as the largest terrestrial carbon sink, reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, intensifies this role to significantly offset the rapid rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Importantly, organic recycling is a highly affordable carbon capture tool and can be done at many different scales, accessible to all through local solutions which can also deliver added benefits in renewable energy production, improved water quality and conservation and food security.

The global alliance is comprised of: The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA); The Australian Organics Recycling Association (AORA); Compost Council of Canada (CCC); European Compost Network (ECN); International Solid Waste Association (ISWA); CRÉ - Composting and Anaerobic Digestion Association of Ireland; WasteMINZ (Waste Management Institute of New Zealand); The United States Composting Council (USCC); and The Compost Research & Education Foundation (CREF).

**On behalf of the global alliance, Jenny Grant, Head of Organics and Natural Capital at the Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA), said:** *“COP26 offers a turning point in history for the recycling of food and garden waste.*

*“Our global alliance is urging world leaders to use this unique opportunity to make a major step change, by collectively agreeing to a major increase in the recycling of unavoidable food and garden waste back to soil as fertilisers and soil improvers.*

*“This can be achieved by recycling them through garden, on-site or large-scale systems to create valuable carbon-rich organic matter for return to our soils for carbon storage, biodiversity, water conservation and food security.*

*“With such a significant proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions being generated from waste treatment and disposal, it’s crucial that an agreement is reached in Glasgow.*

*“With a decisive intervention, the recycling of unavoidable organic wastes is an immediate opportunity to help put the brakes on global temperature rises.”*

**—ENDS—**

**For more information or to request an interview, please contact:**

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**Notes to editors**

- The use of landfill space and incineration can be reduced by at least one-third when organics are recycled. Focused attention on recycling organic residuals is key to achieving high waste diversion rates.
- Methane, a potent greenhouse gas and climate pollutant, responsible for about 25% of the human-caused global warming we feel today, can be significantly reduced through the elimination of organics being landfilled.
- Soil health and productivity are dependent on organic matter – the essence of compost - to provide the sustenance for the biological diversity in the soil. Plants depend on this soil life to convert organic matter into plant-available nutrients and to keep the soil well-aerated. Additional benefits include the reduced need for pesticide usage to ward off soil-borne and other plant diseases.
- Compost offers a significant answer to climate change mitigation. Compost's return to the soil serves as a "carbon bank," helping to store carbon, thereby removing it from the atmosphere. Globally it has the potential save 98 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents every year through carbon stored in soils and avoided emissions from fertilisers, compared to the current level of 9 million.
- Compost helps soils grow more nutrient-dense, nutritious crops. Results from the 5-year agricultural trials in Manitoba, Canada using compost manufactured from source-separated organics clearly shows that the addition of compost to food-growing soils produced higher yields with better nutritional values, energized through improved plant metabolism – the process by which plants live and grow.
- Compost contributes to both water conservation and quality. When used in water quality projects, compost binds pollutants to the organic matter and prevents them from entering our lakes, wetlands, streams and rivers. Soil erosion is mitigated, and water-holding capacity improved, through compost's enhancement of soil structure, binding soil particles together. Reports have shown that for every 1% of organic matter content, the soil can hold around 75,000 litres of plant-available water.
- Digestate (the output of anaerobic digestion) contains readily available nutrients and can be used as a replacement for mineral fertilisers.

**About the Organisations:**

- **The Australian Organics Recycling Association (AORA)** is the national voice for businesses across the organics recycling supply chain. AORA envisions a future where recycling and reuse of organic materials within a circular economy is widely understood and supported by Australians. AORA works to facilitate an operating environment which maximises the recycling and reuse of organic materials, and promotes the benefits of compost, soil conditioners and mulches across the Australian community and business.
- **Compost Council of Canada.** Compost Council of Canada serves as the central resource and network for the organics recycling industry in Canada. The Council's involvement in standard-setting and regulatory developments, operator training and certification, communication and networking help to support their charter to advocate and advance organics residuals recycling, digestate and compost use and assist their members to contribute to the environmental sustainability of the communities in which they operate.
- **European Compost Network ECN-** The European Compost Network is the leading European membership organisation promoting sustainable recycling practices in composting, anaerobic digestion and other biological treatment processes of organic resources. ECN represents more than 4.500 biological waste management plants in 27 European countries with a treatment capacity of more than 45 million tonnes per year.
- **International Solid Waste Association Working Group on Biological Treatment.** ISWA is an international network of waste professionals and experts from around the world whose mission is "To Promote and Develop Sustainable and Professional Waste Management Worldwide and the Transition to a Circular Economy". The working group on biological treatment specifically focusses on composting and anaerobic digestion.
- **Cré the Composting and Anaerobic Digestion Association of Ireland** is a non profit association of public and private organisations, dedicated to growing the biological treatment sector in Ireland.
- **WasteMINZ** (Waste Management Institute of New Zealand) is the largest representative body of the waste, resource recovery and contaminated land management sectors in New Zealand. Formed in 1989 it is a membership-based association with over 1,500 members – from small operators through to councils and large companies, including industrial and community composting facilities.
- **The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA)**  
The REA is the UK's largest trade association for renewable energy and clean technologies with members operating across heat, power, transport, and the circular bioeconomy. REA Organics forum promotes the benefits of composting, aerobic and anaerobic digestion, and other biological treatment techniques and the use of biologically treated materials for the enhancement of the environment, business and society.
- **The United States Composting Council**  
The (USCC) is a non-profit trade organization dedicated to the development, expansion, and advocacy of the composting industry. The USCC achieves this mission by encouraging and supporting compost related research, promoting best management practices, establishing standards, educating professionals and the public about the benefits of composting and compost utilization, enhancing compost product

quality, and developing resource materials for compost manufacturers and markets for compost products.

- **The Compost Research & Education Foundation**

The Compost Research & Education Foundation (CREF) is a US non-profit charitable organization that supports initiatives that enhance the stature and practices of the composting industry by supporting scientific research, increasing awareness, and educating practitioners and the public to advance environmentally and economically sustainable organics recycling. The CREF increases awareness and educates the public through supporting public outreach and targeted activities including updating and creating compost resources and publications as well as developing local and national campaigns to raise public knowledge of composting and its importance to long-term sustainability.