

Testimony of Jesse Fink  
Before Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
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Thank you Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Peterson, and the entire House Agriculture Committee for the opportunity to testify today, I am honored.

My name is Jesse Fink, and I am here as a representative of the ReFED multi-stakeholder food waste initiative. I would like to dedicate my testimony to my wife Betsy Fink, a farmer like many members of Congress who have committed their lives to growing food. I also would like to dedicate this testimony to the 50 million Americans who struggle with hunger. In a resource endowed country like ours, we should be able to conquer hunger, conserve fresh water, and create new jobs through food waste innovation.

My journey to become a food waste evangelist has been long, and shaped by my career as an entrepreneur, a farmer, an investor, and a philanthropist. Twenty years ago I helped co-found Priceline.com, a business model innovation powered by the Internet linking perishable airline seats with consumers looking for cheaper tickets.

For the past decade, Betsy and I have learned first-hand how challenging and rewarding it is to be a farmer. Similar to Priceline, we see valuable, perishable products going to waste. Two years ago we asked the team at MissionPoint Partners to develop a strategy to address the food waste issue systematically, focusing on the most cost effective and scalable solutions. The huge gap in data needed for solution identification was apparent.

What resulted was the creation of ReFED, a nonprofit initiative that recently released a *Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste by 20%* in conjunction with Deloitte Consulting and RRS. ReFED built an advisory council of over 30 leading organizations committed to solving food waste. This

includes farmers, manufacturers, retailers, waste haulers, foundations, nonprofits, and government leaders.

Addressing food waste can help solve three of our nation's largest problems.

- First, and foremost, is HUNGER – Our research found that solutions feasible today could nearly double the amount of food donated from businesses to hunger relief organizations.
- Second is ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – Reducing food waste boosts the economy, with a conservative estimate of over 15,000 jobs created from innovation. In addition, solutions available today can create \$100 billion of net economic value over the next decade. This includes \$6 billion in annual savings for consumers, \$2 billion in increased annual profit potential for businesses, and a reduced burden on taxpayers, including lower municipal disposal costs. Much of this economic development will go towards food recovery, composting, and anaerobic digestion infrastructure.
- Lastly is the ENVIRONMENT – Commonsense food waste solutions will conserve up to 1.5% of our country's freshwater use, or 1.6 trillion gallons per year currently lost on farms. In addition, reducing food waste will decrease methane emissions from landfills and increase the health of our soils through composting.

Four crosscutting actions are needed to quickly cut 20% of waste and put the U.S. on track to achieve the broader USDA/EPA goal of a 50% food waste reduction by 2030.

- First, EDUCATION for consumers, and employees of food businesses.
- Second, INNOVATION – ReFED has an innovation database of over 200 companies. Incubators, accelerators and large companies are supporting entrepreneurs. There is also an opportunity for government mechanisms to support their ingenuity. Right here in Washington D.C., companies like Misfit Juicery, Fruitcycle, and Hungry Harvest are examples of start-ups that utilize produce that would typically go to waste.
- Next is, FINANCING – The ReFED *Roadmap* highlights that we need the full spectrum of capital, including philanthropic grants, government incentives, and private investment to accelerate the transition to a low waste economy. Financing innovation is required to

galvanize the \$18 billion needed to achieve a 20% reduction in food waste nationwide. There are opportunities to explore public-private partnerships; innovative impact investing to support companies expanding local energy infrastructure or composting facilities; and government funding for research into early stage technologies.

- Lastly is, POLICY – Food waste is a complex issue, but three federal policy priorities stand out as highly impactful and achievable today. First, make it easier for food businesses to donate food for the hungry. Second, standardize date labeling through legislation or voluntary industry action. Finally, strengthen incentives and procurement for food waste solutions at the local level, such as tax incentives for composting and anaerobic digestion projects to accelerate economic growth.

I would like to close by emphasizing that there is huge momentum and growing awareness around the issue of food waste. The time is now for our country to embrace this solvable problem and, by working together, turn it into an opportunity. We can take steps to alleviate hunger, boost our economy and preserve our great natural resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

1. ReFED: Rethink Food Waste Through Economics and Data, “A Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste by 20 Percent”, <http://www.refed.com/>
2. ReFED: Rethink Food Waste Through Economics and Data, “A Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste by 20 Percent - Executive Summary”
3. ReFED: Rethink Food Waste Through Economics and Data, “A Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste by 20 Percent - Key Insights”