

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 12, 2017

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

A significant share of the U.S. food supply is not eaten and instead is wasted or lost. According to the most recent estimate by the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 31 percent of the country's available food supply (about 133 billion pounds of food) went uneaten in 2010 alone. This level of inefficiency has economic, social, and environmental impacts. ERS valued the food wasted and lost in 2010 at more than \$161 billion. Wholesome food that could help to address food insecurity and malnutrition is sent to landfills. As the single largest component of municipal landfills, food waste quickly generates methane—a potent greenhouse gas contributing to climate change.

In June 2013, USDA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) joined together to launch the U.S. Food Waste Challenge to provide a platform to assess and disseminate information about the best practices to reduce, recover, and recycle food loss and waste. In September 2015, the agencies announced the U.S.'s first-ever national food loss and waste goal, calling for a 50-percent reduction in food loss and waste by 2030. As part of this voluntary effort, USDA and EPA agreed to work in partnership with charitable organizations, faith organizations, the private sector, and local, state and tribal governments to reduce food loss and waste, with the aim of improving overall food security and conserving natural resources. Total participation in the U.S. Food Waste Challenge includes participants who join by sharing information on their food waste reduction activities via USDA's U.S. Food Waste Challenge form and participants who join EPA's Food Recovery Challenge, which gives them access to EPA experts to learn how to measure food waste in their operations and attain specific quantitative food-waste reduction goals.

In an era of growing populations, limited resources, tight budgets, a changing climate, and other pressures, we are concerned that Americans may be wasting almost a third of our nation's food supply, which speaks to the importance of government programs that help reduce food waste. We therefore ask that GAO address the following questions:

1. How do EPA and USDA track the results of participants' Food Waste Challenge actions and ensure that these actions indeed reduce, recover and recycle food waste in the United

States? What has been the overall impact of the Food Waste Challenge on food waste and food loss in the United States?

2. To what extent have EPA and USDA measured the effectiveness of actions taken by participants in the Food Waste Challenge to reduce food loss and methane emissions?
3. How, if at all, do EPA and USDA coordinate their actions under the Food Waste Challenge?
4. What efforts, if any, are other federal agencies and Congress undertaking to reduce food waste?

Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rosa DeLauro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chellie Pingree". The signature is cursive and has a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress