Food Waste to Energy:
Fast Facts

AMERICAN BIOGAS COUNCIL

Surplus food already makes energy. There's room for 5× more.

404 U.S. facilities turn food waste into biogas today. New research finds that capturing energy from more surplus food could meet the needs of 1.5 million additional households.

KEY NUMBERS

Food waste only facilities

204 facilities
in 45 states make biogas solely from food waste

36 billion ft³
of biogas captured from food waste each year

~$3 billion
in capital investment in these facilities

The opportunity

- **36 billion ft³ a year** captured today by the 204 facilities.
- **181 billion ft³ a year** additional capture, if all 70 million tons of 2024 surplus food were digested.
- **≈5× today's capture:** About 113 million MMBtu of energy — enough for roughly 1.5 million U.S. households a year.

Who's doing it — food waste only facilities

By waste source

- **161 pre-consumer:** mostly wastewater from food processing and beverage making.
- **43 retail:** spoiled, rejected or unsold food, capturing about 8.2 billion ft³ a year.

By end use

- **164** (80%) make power, heat or both.
- **38** upgrade biogas into RNG, which can be used anywhere conventional natural gas is.

How it works

Uneaten food from manufacturers, grocers, restaurants → **Sealed digester** microbes break it down without oxygen → **Biogas** a renewable fuel gas → **Energy** electricity and heat, or renewable natural gas (RNG)

Growing, and getting bigger

42
facilities have opened since 2020. They produce 32% of annual biogas and account for 45% of total investment.

2×
Newer projects capture nearly twice the biogas of earlier ones and cost about three times as much to build.

7
new projects started in 2025, all producing RNG. They added more than twice the capacity of any other year since 2020.

Notes:

The 181 billion ft³ figure is ABC's estimate of potential if all surplus food were digested. It is not a forecast.

The 5× comparison covers the 204 food-waste-only facilities. 200 farms and wastewater plants that co-digest food waste are counted separately.

References:

Surplus food figure (70 million tons, 2024): ReFED, 2026 U.S. Food Waste Report.

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