Food Scrap Composting Challenges and Solutions in Illinois
February 16, 2016
Air & Waste Management Association Environmental Breakfast Series

Gary Cuneen, Executive Director
Seven Generations Ahead; Founding Board Member, Illinois Food Scrap Coalition
Lost Resources

36 million tons of food scraps in US

21% of MSW is food scraps

Less than 5% diverted for compost

Source: US EPA
Economic Development Opportunities

- Cost Avoidance re: Landfills
- Efficient Use of Discarded Resources
- Local Job Development
- Key Element of Building Local Food Economy
Eco Benefits

- GHG emissions reduction
- Builds healthy soil
- Reduces erosion
- Avoids use of synthetic chemical fertilizers
- Filters and retains water
IFSC Mission and History

- GreenTown Highland Park
- IFSC formed in 2013
- 160+ members
- Mission: Advance Food Scrap Composting Toward Building a Viable Industry in IL
- 2016 Incorporation and Formalization of Board of Directors
IFSC Initial Work

- Monthly Calls – Facilitated by SWANCC
- Mapping of Institutions Engaged in Composting – DuPage County
- WeCompost - Loyola
- IFSC Report – SGA/IFSC
- Policy – IEC/SWALCO
From 8 in 2012 to over 160 in 2016

- Research and Education
- Policies and Permitting
- Communications and Outreach
- End Market Development
- Social Media and Website
WeCompost

- Restaurants
- Hotels
- Hospitals
- Breweries
- Universities
- Museums
Policy Changes

**Public Act 99-0011 (HB 437):** Allow temporary and permanent food scrap drop offs without a state permit

**Public Act 99-0440 (SB 1518):** Provides for 3rd transfer station to accept food scraps on a pilot basis

**Public Act 99-0034 (HB 1362):** Requires state agencies responsible for maintaining public lands to investigate the use of compost and report to General Assembly

**Public Act 99-0306 (HB 2495):** Directs DCEO to work with national consumer groups and trade associations on nationally recognized labeling for compostable products
**End Market Development**

**EDUCATION**  Share what food-scrap amended compost really is - “Get out there and smell it!”

**SCARCE**

**SALES**  Local food scrap amended compost sales at Farmers Markets.

**OUTREACH**  Reaching out to purchasers of soil and compost. Reaching out to processors
Making Progress

5 years ago most “experts” in Illinois said we would not have residential composting – that it was just a “West Coast thing”

- 20 Illinois communities will now be offering this service
Making Progress

5 years ago most schools could only compost fruits and vegetables onsite

- 25+ schools in Illinois have commercial composting programs diverting 80-95% of waste
- Chicago Public Schools switched from polystyrene trays to compostable trays this year
Making Progress

5 years ago most Illinois haulers were in the business of hauling only garbage, recycling and yard waste

- Organics routes with food scraps now exist for many haulers

5 years ago Illinois compost facilities accepted only yard waste

- 10-12 compost facilities now add food scraps to yard waste
Food Scrap Composting Challenges and Solutions in Illinois Report

January 2015

Prepared and submitted by Seven Generations Ahead on behalf of the Illinois Food Scrap Coalition

Guidance and Grant Funding Provided by:
Best Practices Research

Landfill Diversion Rate Mandates

California (San Francisco)
Pennsylvania

- San Francisco: 1989; 40% diversion rate by 2000, 75% diversion by 2010 and 90% diversion by 2020
- Pennsylvania: 1993; statewide mandate on local governments to divert waste from landfills

Food Scrap Composting Across the Country

Composting rates by state

Pilot Commercial Food Scrap Composting Programs

- Charleston County, South Carolina
- New York City’s Food Waste Challenge
- Portland, Oregon

Ohio Food Scraps Recovery Initiative

- Act 156: Increased state compliance
- Landfilling of compostable materials prohibited by 2015
- Prohibits composting on-site if not within 30 miles of a compost facility
- Educational and outreach programs

IFSC
Illinois Food Scrap Coalition

Composting
Connecticut
Massachusetts
Vermont

- Act 158: Increased state compliance
- Landfilling of compostable materials prohibited by 2015
- Prohibits composting on-site if not within 30 miles of a compost facility
- Educational and outreach programs
Statewide Forums

May 21, 2014
- Northeast Illinois

September 16, 2014
- Northwest Illinois

September 22, 2014
- Central Illinois

October 6, 2014
- Southern Illinois

Wrap Up Session: October 22, 2014
- statewide - Bloomington/Normal
Challenges

1. Need for Education
2. Low Landfill Tipping Fees
3. Lack of Demand for Composting
4. Lack of Composting Infrastructure
5. Contamination of Food Scraps
6. Lack of End Market for Compost
Potential Solutions

- Educate about environmental and economic benefits
- Enact landfill diversion mandates/organics ban
- Establish a PAYT model
- Update permitting and regulations to a tiered model
- Marketing and policy re: end market procurement
Searle Funds at the Chicago Community Trust

Food:Land:Opportunity Program with CCT and the Kinship Foundation

- Dissemination of SG A/IFSC Report
- Deep Dive Policy Forums
- Route Density Pilots – Cook County
- WeCompost in West Loop
- Economic Assessment Report
IFSC Moving into 2016

- New Board of Directors
- Fee-based membership
- Seek grant funding
- Events calendar
- Webinars (restaurants and institutions)
- Prioritize “Solutions” from Report
- Road Map to Success
Get Involved!

For more information, please contact:

Gary Cuneen/Jen Nelson
Seven Generations Ahead
708-660-9909

gary@sevengenerationsahead.org
jennifer@sevengenerationsahead.org
http://illinoiscomposts.org

The Chicago Community Trust