

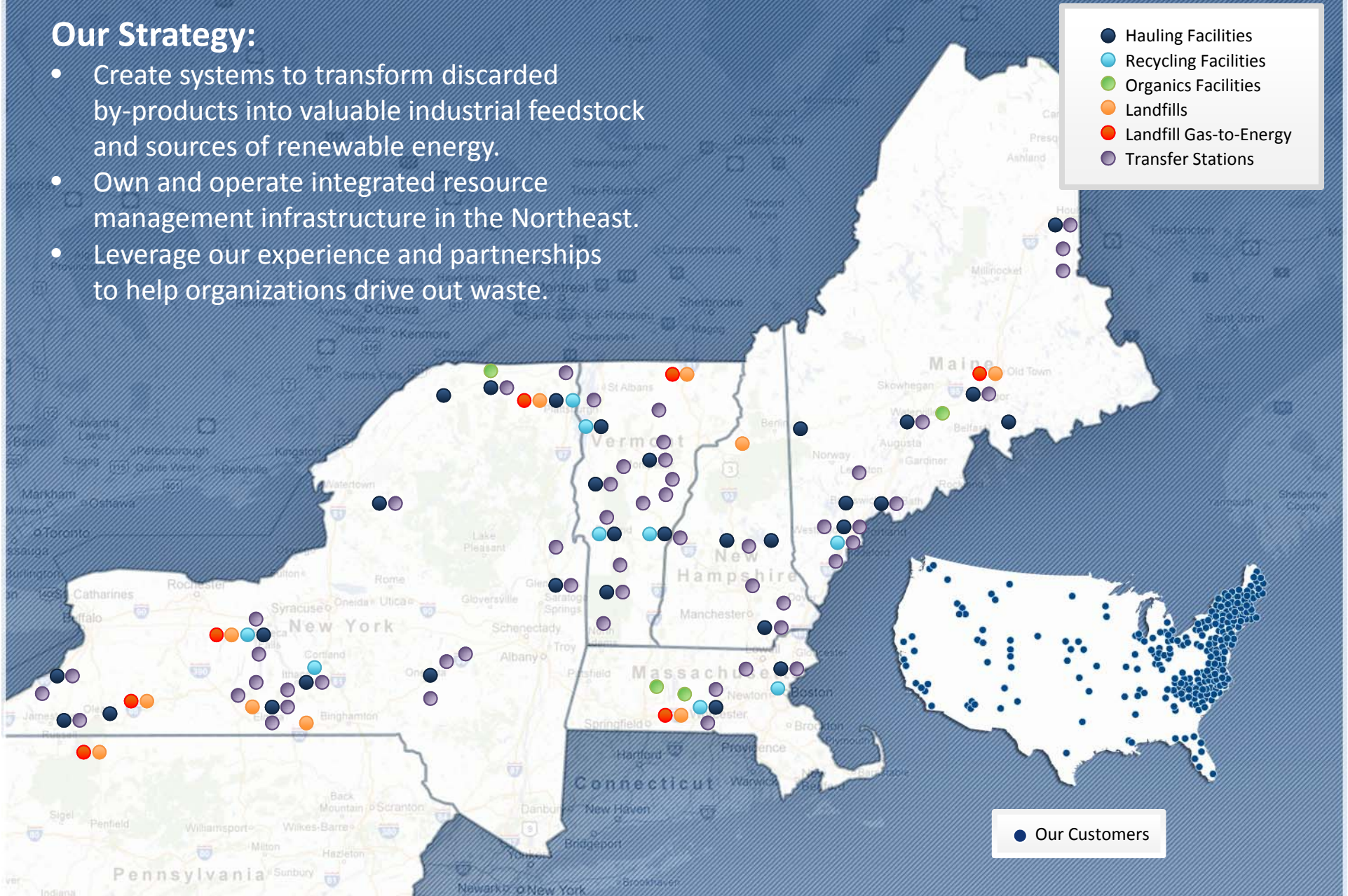
# Food Waste Recycling: Trends & Considerations

NYSASWM Fall Conference – October 5, 2015



## Our Strategy:

- Create systems to transform discarded by-products into valuable industrial feedstock and sources of renewable energy.
- Own and operate integrated resource management infrastructure in the Northeast.
- Leverage our experience and partnerships to help organizations drive out waste.





# CASELLA ORGANICS

Three decades' experience recovering value from organic and mineral byproducts in the northeast

Beneficially diverting >400,000 tons/year

Operate two on-farm digesters receiving over 35,000 tons/year of liquid food processing residuals for nutrient and energy recovery

Collect over 5,000 tons/year of source separated food scraps for diversion to 3<sup>rd</sup> party compost facilities

Actively participated in policy discussions leading up to organics bans in MA and VT

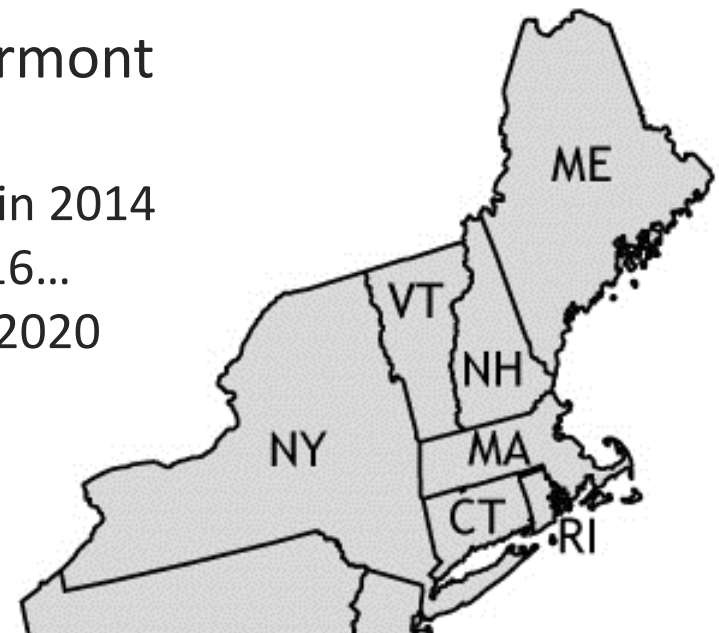
Currently conducting and participating in several pilot studies around collection



# Food Waste Recycling – status in the northeast

Growing interest to recover value from FW in the disposal stream:

- Commercial Organics Disposal Ban in Massachusetts
  - Effective October 2014
  - All commercial generators of >52 tons/year
  - Processors, institutions, groceries, hospitality
- Mandatory Organics Diversion in Vermont
  - Effective July 2014
  - Phased implementation: >104 tons/yr in 2014
  - >52 tons/yr in 2015, >26 tons/yr in 2016...
  - all generators including households in 2020
- Similar activity in CT and RI
- Discussions in NY and ME



# Food Waste Recycling – status in the northeast

We believe that food waste recycling is where traditional recycling was 25 to 30 years ago. Many similarities:

- Lack of infrastructure for processing and collection
- Wide variety of collection & processing approaches
- Patchwork of state and local regulations
- Most believed that “people will never sort their trash”
- Common misperception that recycling should be “free”

Today commercial and residential curbside recycling is widespread and most people can't imagine going back.

# Food Waste Recycling – opportunity

We believe that food waste recycling could become a standard value added service, eventually as commonplace as traditional recycling, delivering a wide range of benefits for people, agriculture, soil, water, energy, and climate.

Four recommendations to consider:

- 1) **Smart policy** can help address the infrastructure “chicken-or-egg” dilemma
- 2) There is **no one-size-fits-all solution** for food waste; Need to allow for innovation
- 3) Overemphasis on diversion **quantity** will negatively impact product **quality**
- 4) We must dispel the myth of cost savings; **Recycling is not free**

# 1) Infrastructure: address chicken-egg dilemma

What comes first? The collection or the processing?

Smart public policy can play a helpful role:

- Financial incentives to build new facilities
- Regulatory coordination for siting facilities
- Thoughtfully-implemented mandates or bans
- Education and outreach to enhance public awareness
- Market measures to encourage recycled-content soil/fertilizer products

Every state is unique; policies must be carefully crafted with effective stakeholder engagement, communication, and professionalism.



## 2) There is no one-size-fits-all solution

Successful strategy will be a combination of multiple solutions:

- Many ways to collect and manage food scraps
  - Food banks, animal feed, composting, anaerobic digestion, rendering, biofuels, on-site processing, and landfills\*
- Every customer and community is unique
  - e.g., population density, disposal economics, level of subsidies

Public policy must be flexible and responsive; can't dictate specific approaches or artificially prop up one solution over others

\*Important to be practical: Some FW not suitable for recycling yet

- Due to poor quality, contamination, distance from processing and markets
- For these, the best strategy is a landfill w/gas capture and energy recovery



### 3) Be mindful of quantity vs. quality

Overemphasis on diversion quantity could harm product quality.

Don't want to end up with large piles of poorly-processed or contaminant-laden food waste at the back end of compost facilities or on farms.

Diversion mandates must be paired with guidelines for responsibly returning materials to the land.

For responsible food waste recovery, we need balanced focus on both quantity and quality.



Photo credits: Green Mountain Compost

## 4) Dispel the myth of cost savings

Myth: Recycling food waste will save customers money. Too many well-intentioned advocates are pushing this idea.

Truth: Recycling food waste usually doesn't save money

- Except in the case of certain large generators
- Tip savings are outweighed by higher collection costs
- We need to be upfront and transparent about this
- Setting unrealistic expectations is short-sighted
- Don't repeat the mistake we made with recycling



Food waste recycling has many important benefits

- Improve environmental impact, support local agriculture, alleviate local hunger and poverty, protect the climate

# Concluding thoughts

As New York evaluates the future of food waste diversion, we recommend consideration of these four points:

- 1) Smart policy can help address the infrastructure “chicken-or-egg” dilemma
- 2) No one-size-fits-all solution for food waste; Need to allow innovation
- 3) Overemphasis on diversion quantity will negatively impact product quality
- 4) We must dispel the myth of cost savings; Recycling is not free

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