

# Whole Cycle Tuesday

## Takeaway

The United States has a substantial composting sector, but the evidence suggests we trail Europe in the extent of municipal organics recycling; it does not establish a definitive worldwide economic ranking. For businesses, that gap represents opportunity.

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*"Nature does not hurry,  
yet everything is  
accomplished."*

— Lao Tzu

## Compost's Economic Value—Is The US Ahead or Behind?

Composting turns discarded organic materials into a product with economic value. Its annual contribution reaches beyond compost sales to include processing fees, transportation, equipment purchases, and employment. But how does the United States compare with the rest of the world? The available evidence points to a mixed answer: The US operates at substantial scale, yet has considerable room to improve organics recovery. A precise ranking by total economic impact remains difficult because countries and market researchers measure the industry differently.

Globally, compost is a multibillion-dollar business. The Business Research Company estimates the worldwide compost market at \$8.7 billion in 2025, with growth to \$9.36 billion in 2026. Its definition includes producer revenues from compost products and related services, rather than the full economic value of employment, avoided disposal, or improved soils. The report identifies Asia-Pacific as the largest regional market in 2025. These figures include the US. A comparable U.S. figure is not disclosed in the report's public summary, so assigning The US a specific dollar share would require additional data.

[Compost Market Report](#)

The US operating scale is clearer than its annual dollar contribution. EPA reports that the United States composted approximately 25 million U.S. tons of municipal waste in 2018, including 22.3 million tons of yard trimmings and 2.6 million tons of food waste. These are historical figures, not a current annual estimate, and exclude wastewater sludge and industrial process wastes. [EPA National Overview](#)

Europe provides a useful benchmark. The European Compost Network's 2022 report describes nearly 40 million metric tonnes of separately collected municipal bio-waste processed into compost and digestate, representing about 17% of municipal waste. US composting represented roughly 8.5% of municipal waste in EPA's 2018 dataset. This suggests that Europe has integrated biological recycling more extensively into municipal waste management. However, the comparison uses different years and includes anaerobic digestion on the European side. [European Compost Network](#)

Europe's industry network estimates that collecting and composting or digesting an additional 60 million metric tonnes of municipal bio-waste could create up to 50,000 jobs. Those are potential jobs, rather than existing annual impact, but it illustrates how expanded organics recovery can support economic development. [ECN Job-Creation Assessment](#)