GOAL 4

Why compost food waste?
Every year, about 373 tons of food scraps is generated at the Snohomish County Jail. If all of that uneaten food is not composted, it goes straight to a landfill where it would produce about 13\(^1\) tons of methane emissions.

Methane is the second most prevalent greenhouse gas emitted in the United States from human activities. In landfills, methane is generated as waste decomposes. Landfills are anaerobic environments (lacking oxygen) where organic materials do not decompose or decompose very, very slowly. Organic waste is the second highest component of landfills, which are the third largest source of methane emissions in the United States.

By composting food waste from the jail, Snohomish County is helping reduce our greenhouse gas emissions generated from County operations. When composted, the food waste from the County jail is turned into nutrient rich soils for growing plants and crops. Compost material also helps prevent soil erosion and absorbs carbon dioxide - another greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming.

Finally, composting saves the County money! If food waste went into the garbage (landfill) instead, Snohomish County would pay about $25,000 more every year in garbage hauling fees.

For more information about composting, visit this link on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s website.

\(^1\) Food waste in a landfill emits an estimated 0.035 lbs. of methane per pound (2006 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories).