MRC du Haut-Saint-François

Department of Environment

**Mouvement J’y participe!**

The « J’y participe! » Movement aims to encourage citizens, associations and industries, businesses and institutions (IBI) to reduce their waste by sorting more efficiently their residual materials and adopting more ecological and economical behaviors.

**Its goal :**

To reduce as much as possible the residual materials that end up in landfills.

Each article deals with a theme related to waste reduction and sorting of residual materials.

Join us in the Movement, follow us on Facebook and at mouvementjyparticipe.com

Composting instead of landfilling:

**everybody wins!**

**Both the population and IBI (industries, businesses and institutions) produce organic residues that should be composted. However, at present, a large proportion of organic matter ends up in landfills. Did you know that in Quebec, approximately 60% of the residual materials sent to landfills are organic in nature?**

**Precisely, 47% of food surplus and food waste ends up in landfill, compared to only 23% in compost.** The majority comes from fruits and vegetables, but the small percentage of meat and poultry alone emits more than half of the greenhouse gases associated with food surplus and waste.

The problem with buried organic matter is not only greenhouse gas emissions, but also the production of contaminated leaching water. In common parlance, leachate is sometimes called “garbage juice”.

**The problem with leachate**

Not all leachate is necessarily toxic, but leachate from landfill cells is!

In a landfill cell, leachate forms when rain and snow enter an open mountain of waste. Leachate can also be created from decomposing wet organic waste, even if the landfill cell is closed. This liquid seeps into solid waste and accumulates various contaminants.

Leaching water could contain heavy metals, pesticides, pharmaceutical compounds, pathogens, oils, PFAS\*, etc. To avoid contaminating the environment, leaching water must absolutely be treated.

***Did you know that a landfill cell can produce leachate for up to 30 years after its closure?***

Decomposing organic matter is an important element in the formation of landfill leachate. It is therefore essential to remove organic matter from landfills by composting them to reduce leachate production. In addition, composting organic matter eliminates the majority of unpleasant odors and greenhouse gas emissions at the landfill!

**In the MRC du Haut-Saint-François**

Percentage of organic matter produced by sector in the HSF MRC (2021):

• Farming: 12%

• Manufacturing: 18%

• Wholesale and retail: 27%
• Lodging and catering service: 33%

**What can we do?**

At home, we can install compost bins to collect food waste, tissues and all other organic matter. Businesses can do the same. Installing the brown bin is simple and economical. Compostable materials can be cafeteria scraps, hand paper, newspaper as well as food waste or processing residues such as wood shavings.

***Did you know that landfilling costs more than composting?***

Currently, in the municipal sector, it costs around $137 per ton to bury waste, while the rate for compostable materials is around $62 per ton. With the ever-increasing cost of landfilling, it is high time to compost in all sectors of activity. In addition, in 2021, only 8% of IBI in Quebec (excluding the agri-food industry) have composted or recycled their organic materials. We can do so much better!

**IBI assistance programs**

To recycle organic materials or for the integration of the brown bin, RECYC-QUEBEC offers different subsidies; get informed!

The Conseil régional de l’environnement de l’Estrie and the MRC HSF Environment Department can also offer advice and support to help out in your composting initiatives.

In short, composting instead of landfilling is an effective way to reduce greenhouse gases, foul odors and leachate. It is also an opportunity to reflect on our consumer habits and our needs. Every gesture counts and contributes to a global action to reduce landfilling.

**Together, let's reduce landfilling and leachate production by composting, everywhere!**

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Texte rédigé par Audrey Thériault

\*PFAS: The per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of chemicals used to make fluoropolymer coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. They are very stable, making them resistant to degradation thus persistent in the environment.