



Call our Hotline  
1 (888)-254-5524  
info@recyclingworksma.com  
www.recyclingworksma.com

## Supermarket Case Study

### Big Y Foods, Springfield, Massachusetts

**Summary:** Big Y Foods began diverting food waste from disposal in the mid 1990s. Today, all the stores recycle cardboard, paper, and film plastics, and more than 80 % of the Big Y locations in Massachusetts have active composting programs. In 2011 recycling and composting programs resulted in an estimated \$2.9 million boost to the bottom line, or an average of \$39,300 per store.

**Business Profile:** Big Y Foods is a family owned supermarket chain serving Massachusetts and Connecticut for over 75 years. Big Y has 61 store locations and over 9,000 employees.

**Program Evaluation:** Big Y's waste streams contain large quantities of organic materials, such as produce scraps, floral cuttings, prepared foods, baked goods, and waxed cardboard, all of which can be diverted from landfills. For Big Y, and many other large supermarkets, recycling organics costs less than disposal in landfills and provides a significant opportunity for the supermarket to save money without affecting the quality of other operations. Recycling materials like cardboard and film plastics are both a disposal cost avoidance and source of revenue for Big Y.

**Plan Improvements:** Big Y collaborated with the Center for EcoTechnology (CET), a non-profit environmental organization that provides practical solutions to environmental challenges. In the mid-1990s CET helped Big Y start diverting food waste from disposal at a few locations in western Massachusetts. Over the next 15 years, CET and Big Y worked together to expand composting to nearly all Massachusetts stores. In 2007, CET helped Big Y establish a film plastics recycling program chain-wide. Shrink wrap from palletized shipments, case plastics and consumer bags are all collected and back hauled to a warehouse where they are baled and sold to Trex Inc, a composite lumber manufacturer.

**Implementation:** Big Y relies on a combination of proper signage, employee training and communication to implement their composting and recycling programs.

**Signage:** Big Y provides laminated signs near the compost compactor/dumpsters that allow employees to easily and visually identify recyclable and compostable materials.



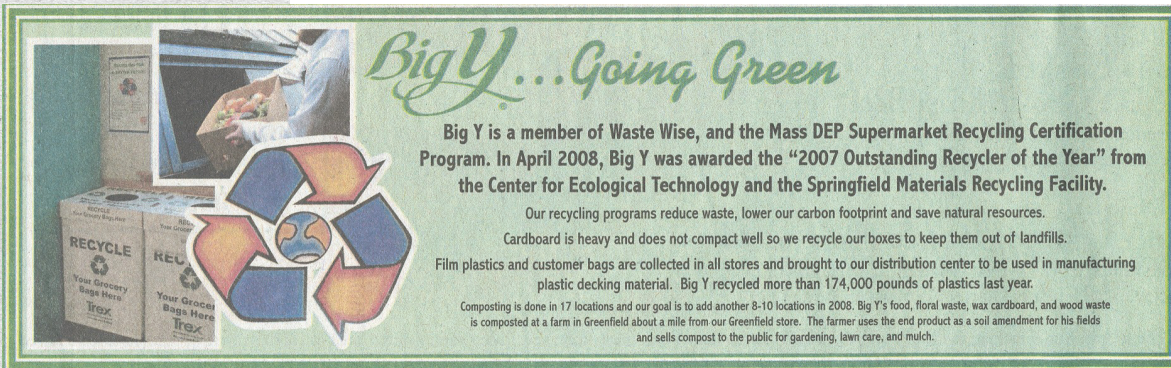
**At a Glance:**  
**Business:** Big Y Supermarket with 61 store locations.

**Recycling Increase:**  
Composting and recycling programs implement in many locations

**Savings:** \$2.9 million in 2011

*RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts is funded by MassDEP and delivered under contract by the Center for EcoTechnology*





*Big Y... Going Green*

Big Y is a member of Waste Wise, and the Mass DEP Supermarket Recycling Certification Program. In April 2008, Big Y was awarded the "2007 Outstanding Recycler of the Year" from the Center for Ecological Technology and the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility.

Our recycling programs reduce waste, lower our carbon footprint and save natural resources.

Cardboard is heavy and does not compact well so we recycle our boxes to keep them out of landfills.

Film plastics and customer bags are collected in all stores and brought to our distribution center to be used in manufacturing plastic decking material. Big Y recycled more than 174,000 pounds of plastics last year.

Composting is done in 17 locations and our goal is to add another 8-10 locations in 2008. Big Y's food, floral waste, wax cardboard, and wood waste is composted at a farm in Greenfield about a mile from our Greenfield store. The farmer uses the end product as a soil amendment for his fields and sells compost to the public for gardening, lawn care, and mulch.

*Communication between your business and the community is important. This ad, that ran in the Big Y circular, reinforces a positive green message to the supporters of the store.*

**Employee Training:** Big Y uses a computer based training program to educate employees about composting and recycling. Trainings are available in multiple languages and required for all new and current employees. This training helps minimize contamination of recyclables and compostables. The local farmers who receive the food waste note that Big Y delivers above average quality material.

**Communication:** The hauler, compost facility and store must work together to ensure smooth operation. The hauler and facility provides necessary feedback on contamination and any potential scheduling issues, this communication helps the store maintain a quality program.



*Employee training is vital to the success of a program*

### Tips for Replication

1. Top management support and commitment is vital to assure success and achieve goals. At Big Y the Produce Managers work with employees to minimize compost contamination.
2. It is important to remember that there is NO one "Turn Key Solution". Each store works with the local farmers, haulers, and food banks to develop a comprehensive program. For example in the Ludlow and Palmer Big Y stores, some of the food is donated to the local zoo to feed the animals.
3. The Supermarket Certification Program has been a major motivator for Big Y and helps gain upper level management support for composting and recycling programs.

**Evaluation:** When measuring financial incentives two statistics are important to keep in mind: Avoided Cost through reduced trash and Revenue received from some recycled materials. In 2010 Big Y diverted over 15,500 tons of materials and avoided \$1,135,000 in hauling and waste disposal costs. They generated \$1,300,000 in revenue from cardboard and film plastics for a combined approximate \$2,400,000 improvement to the bottom line. In 2011, they added four composting locations and improved recycling, resulting in over 16,000 tons of materials diverted. The 2011 net impact was savings of over \$2,900,000.

Big Y won the 2008 Business Recycler of the Year from the Springfield MRF Advisory Board and the 2010 MassRecycle Food Establishment of the Year award for their exemplary recycling and composting success. Information on their diversion efforts, energy efficiency, and other environmental performance efforts are included in their circulars and other customer communications.

MassDEP and the MA Food Association have a Supermarket Certification Program through which supermarkets that implement certain recycling, food donation and organics diversion programs receive regulatory relief from the MassDEP Waste Ban enforcement. In 2011, Big Y Foods passed the 80% Certification rate statewide, extending the benefit of regulatory relief to all BigY stores.