

Date of Hearing: January 12, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

AB 643 (Wilson) – As Amended January 5, 2025

SUBJECT: Climate change: short-lived climate pollutants: organic waste reduction

SUMMARY: Allows local jurisdictions to count organic material used as a beneficial agricultural amendment toward its recovered organic waste procurement target if the material meets specified conditions.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the Air Resources Board (ARB) to develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce the emissions of short-lived climate pollutants (SLCP) to achieve a 40% reduction in methane emissions, 40% reduction in hydrofluorocarbon gases, and 50% reduction in anthropogenic black carbon below 2013 levels by 2030. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 39730-39730.5)
- 2) Requires the state to reduce the disposal of organic waste by 40% from the 2014 level by 2020 and 75% by 2025 to help achieve the state's methane reduction goal. (HSC 39730.6)
- 3) Requires the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), in consultation with ARB, to adopt regulations to achieve the state's organic waste reduction requirements. Specifies that the regulations, in part:
 - a) May require jurisdictions to impose requirements on generators or other relevant entities within their jurisdiction and may authorize local jurisdictions to impose penalties on generators for noncompliance.
 - b) Include requirements intended to meet the goal that not less than 20% of edible food is recovered for human consumption by 2025.
- 4) Establishes criteria for processes used to determine if a process or technology constitutes a reduction in landfill disposal of organic waste. (California Code of Regulations (CCR) 18983.2)
- 5) Requires local jurisdictions to annually procure a specified quantity of recovered organic waste products (e.g., products made from organic waste). This organic waste product procurement target (procurement target) is calculated by CalRecycle based on population. (CCR 18993.1)
- 6) Exempts specified rural jurisdictions from the procurement targets until January 1, 2037. (Public Resources Code 42652.5)
- 7) Requires every person who manufactures or distributes fertilizing materials to obtain a license from the Secretary of Food and Agriculture for each plant and business location. (Food and Agriculture Code 14591)

THIS BILL authorizes local jurisdictions to count organic material used as a beneficial agricultural amendment toward its recovered organic waste procurement target if the following conditions are met:

- 1) The material is processed at a facility authorized by CalRecycle using technologies approved pursuant to Chapter 12 (commencing with Section 18981.1) of Division 7 of Title 14 the California Code of Regulations that meet the criteria of PRC 42652.5; and,
- 2) The material is licensed for end use as an agricultural fertilizer by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Organic waste recycling.** An estimated 35 million tons of waste are disposed of in California's landfills annually. More than half of the materials landfilled are organics. CalRecycle's 2021 waste characterization study, found that 34% of disposed waste is organic waste. According to University of California Los Angeles Center for Health Policy Research, more than a third of Californians (39%) can't afford enough food. In spite of widespread food insecurity, 11.2 billion pounds of food is disposed of annually in the state.

SB 1383 (Lara), Chapter 395, Statutes of 2016, requires ARB to approve and implement a comprehensive SLCP strategy to achieve, from 2013 levels, a 40% reduction in methane, a 40% reduction in hydrofluorocarbon gases, and a 50% reduction in anthropogenic black carbon, by 2030. In order to accomplish these goals, the law specifies that the methane emission reduction goals include targets to reduce the landfill disposal of organic waste, including food, 50% by 2020 and 75% by 2025 from the 2014 level. SB 1383 also requires that by 2025, 20% of edible food that would otherwise be sent to landfills is redirected to feed people. Specifically, the law requires: jurisdictions to establish food recovery programs and strengthen existing food recovery networks; food donors to arrange to recover the maximum amount of edible food; and, food recovery organizations and services that participate in SB 1383 to maintain specified records.

To achieve this, California's waste management infrastructure is going to have to process and recycle much higher quantities of organic materials, involving significant investments in additional processing infrastructure. Organic waste is primarily recycled by composting the material, which generates compost that can be used in gardening and agriculture as a soil amendment and engineering purposes for things like slope stabilization. Anaerobic digestion is also widely used to recycle organic wastes. This technology uses bacteria to break down the material in the absence of oxygen and produces biogas, which can be used as fuel, and digestate, which can also be used as a soil amendment. Tree trimmings and prunings can also be mulched.

In order to ensure that there are adequate markets for the state's increasing quantities of products made from organic waste, like mulch, compost, and digestate, CalRecycle established procurement requirements for local jurisdictions. The procurement targets are based on the average amount of organic waste generated by Californians annually multiplied by the population of a jurisdiction. Jurisdictions can meet the target by procuring, giving

away, or arranging for the use of the material through contracts with direct service providers. Eligible materials include compost, mulch, biomass electricity, or renewable gas, as specified.

Compliance with SB 1383 requirements is particularly challenging for less-populous areas of the state. Implementing the kinds of collection and recycling systems that work well in urban areas is infeasible in more rural areas. Altogether, the 19 counties that are currently eligible for the rural exemption have fewer than 600,000 residents; in some areas the population density drops below 10 per square mile. In higher elevations, roads can become impassable for collection trucks due to snow. These challenges make compliance disproportionately high for these communities.

2) **This bill.** This bill broadens the types of materials that local jurisdictions can use to meet the state's ambitious procurement targets to include "beneficial agricultural amendments."

3) **Author's statement:**

The Legislature has heard from many communities across the state that they are concerned they will struggle to meet their procurement targets under SB 1383. Increasing the eligibility of procurement products made from diverted organics will assist in jurisdictions in meeting their goals, provide positive impacts to the State's climate change objectives, and provides the agricultural community another tool to continue growing crops in our state.

4) **Suggested amendments:**

- In order to ensure that the amount of material credited to a local jurisdiction for procurement accurately reflects the amount of recovered organic waste, *the committee may wish to amend the bill* to specify that the calculation is based on dry weight.
- *The committee may wish to amend the bill* to specify the CDFA fertilizer licensing statute.
- In order to ensure that the material credited to a local jurisdiction pursuant to this bill is recycled materials, *the committee may wish to amend the bill* to clarify that the material must be processed by a facility that does not qualify as disposal.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Association of Sanitation Agencies
Fairfield-Suisun Sewer District
Goleta Sanitary District
Solano County Farm Bureau

Opposition

Active San Gabriel Valley
California Climate & Agriculture Network

California Nurses for Environmental Health & Justice
Californians Against Waste
Carbon Cycle Institute
Clean Water Action
Climate Action California
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Natural Resources Defense Council
Placer Earth Care Action
Plastic Pollution Coalition
The Climate Center
The Last Plastic Straw
Zero Waste San Diego
1 Individual

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