

Questions on managing food wastes to Prof. Themelis by a New York journalist (Nov.13, 2015)

- 1) How big of a problem is food waste in landfills?
- 2) New York City recently instituted a plan to divert 90% of its organic waste from landfills by 2030. How effective are programs like this?

Response of Prof. Themelis:

Please read the recent paper by me and Ljupka Arsova (BioCycle February 2015) as to what is happening to food waste across the whole U.S. In contrast to yard wastes where there is over 50% composting, less than 5% of food wastes are composted for reasons explained in paper. There are two problems: Difficulty of collecting (smelly, can;t be stored in apts/homes for long, etc.): and capital investment in AD facilities to compost (at least \$500/annual ton of plant capacity). The NYC plan of 2015 is similar to that of 2001. See "Life After Fresh Kills" report of Columbia on Google. The only difference is now the city is sending 1.3 million tons to waste to energy plants, vs 0.5 million in 2001.