

## Converting food waste to energy

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Minister for the Environment, David Parker

The waste produced from your dinner could be used to cook meals in the future.

Biogas is a renewable fuel produced by the breakdown of organic matter such as food scraps and animal waste in absence of oxygen, a process called anaerobic digestion. It can be used for a number of purposes such as a vehicle fuel, heating and electricity generation.

“Soft landfill wastes, such as food scraps, are an ideal feedstock for producing biogas in New Zealand,” Gas NZ chief executive Janet Carson said.

The proposal in the Government's Transforming Recycling Consultation to separate food waste before it enters the rubbish tip would see less waste in landfills and more biogas in New Zealand homes and businesses.

By 2030, the Government wants all businesses and households to separate food scraps from their rubbish.

The proposal, announced by Minister for the Environment, David Parker, highlights biogas production as a potential use for the organic waste.

“This not only supports a circular economy but also devolved energy supply, including bringing energy decisions closer to communities,” he said.

Mr Parker said every year the country generates more than 17 million tonnes of waste and sends almost 13 million tonnes of that to landfill.

## Bioenergy in the news

“We currently have inadequate rubbish collection and recycling systems. As a result, our recycling rates are low compared to other countries with better systems and we have too much litter in our environment,” he said.

Food scraps make up more than a third of a typical household's rubbish each week and create greenhouse gas emissions when sent to landfill.

Mr Parker said the proposal would help to reduce litter, emissions and pressure on the environment.

Along with Gas NZ, Bioenergy Associations lauded the Government's role in bringing the transformation approach.

Bioenergy Association is a non-profit organisation and provides assistance and information to support businesses and promote their expertise and capabilities for undertaking activities in New Zealand, Australia and the South Pacific with regards to bioenergy (renewable energy) and biofuel-related solutions.

Association chief executive Brian Cox said while people may prefer to practise composting or even worm farming to best use their domestic waste, bio plants that make use of the anaerobic digestion process to create biomass were more suited towards “wet wastes” like food scraps.

“Composting is usually better suited for dry wastes such as woody materials. For example, Christchurch authorities had tried to use composting as a way to handle wet material.

“That's probably one of the reasons they experienced odours because they were putting in things that should not go in it,” Mr Cox said.

Based on the public's feedback, the organisation would be open to helping members like Gas NZ and others make decisions on having new bio plants across the country, he said.

It is estimated that only 28 percent of materials are recycled nationally and the rest goes to landfill.

“We are taking action that will make a real difference,” Mr Parker said.

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