CFIL

Circular Food Innovation Lab


CABBAGE
CABBAGE + VINEGAR
RED BEET
ONION SKIN

Glossary

The terms in this deck represent vocabulary shared with us during CFIL site visits and codesign sessions. The glossary was compiled and designed by Yuki Xiang with contributions from Morgan Martino, Haein Kim, Lily Raphael and Laura Kozak.

Images were produced using inks made from wasted food including beet peels, cabbage leaves, coffee, baking soda and onion skin. Thank you to Cecile Novel Tovar, Malika Chopra, Kinasih Utoro, Amanda White and the CFIL Design Team.

Circular Economy

A circular economy is based on three principles: eliminate waste and pollution, circulate products and materials (at their highest value) and regenerate nature. A circular economy for food mimics natural systems of regeneration so that waste does not exist, but instead serves as feedstock for another cycle.

‘Food and the Circular Economy’. 16 September 2019, Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

SYSTEM CONDITIONS

Food Policy

Food policy informs the decision-making process for public, private and non-profit sectors as they relate to food and guide food-related decisions and actions.

'Food Policy.' Food Policy Canada.

SYSTEM CONDITIONS

Foodshed

The geographical area delimiting local and/or regional production, transport, marketing, delivery and supply of food to a population, analogous to a watershed in its description of a geographical food system.

'Foodshed'. National Agricultural Library Thesaurus and Glossary, USDA.

SYSTEM CONDITIONS

Food Systems

Food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded.

Nguyen, Hanh. 'Sustainable Food Systems Concept and Framework'. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018.

SYSTEM CONDITIONS

Greenhouse Gases

The natural and human-caused release of gases into the atmosphere that absorb and re-emit infrared radiation. The primary GHGs are water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and ozone.

‘Greenhouse Gas Emissions.’ Canadian Centre for Energy Information. 18 January 2024.

SYSTEM CONDITIONS

Linear System

A "take-make-use-waste" system where we take materials from the Earth, make products from them and discard them as waste.

'What is the meaning of a circular economy and what are the main principles?'
Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

SYSTEM CONDITIONS

Waste Recovery

Any operation the principal result of which is waste serving a useful purpose by replacing other materials which would otherwise have been used to fulfil a particular function, or waste being prepared to fulfil that function, in the plant or in the wider economy.

'Recovery of Waste'. Eurostat.



Composting

Composting is the controlled decomposition of organic materials. In optimal conditions, organic materials break down completely into non-toxic components that support plant growth.

'Sustainability Simplified – Our Glossary of Terms'. SGSCorp.

Best Before Date

Describes how long a properly stored unopened food product will keep its: freshness, taste, nutritional value, any other qualities claimed by the manufacturer. A best before date is not the same as an expiration date, and passing a best before date does not mean food is unsafe to consume.

‘Understanding the Date Labels on Your Food’. 28 January 2026, Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

FOOD (DE)VALUING TERMS

Food Rescue

The practice of diverting edible food at risk of being wasted from businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, and produce markets to organizations that can use it (also called food recovery).

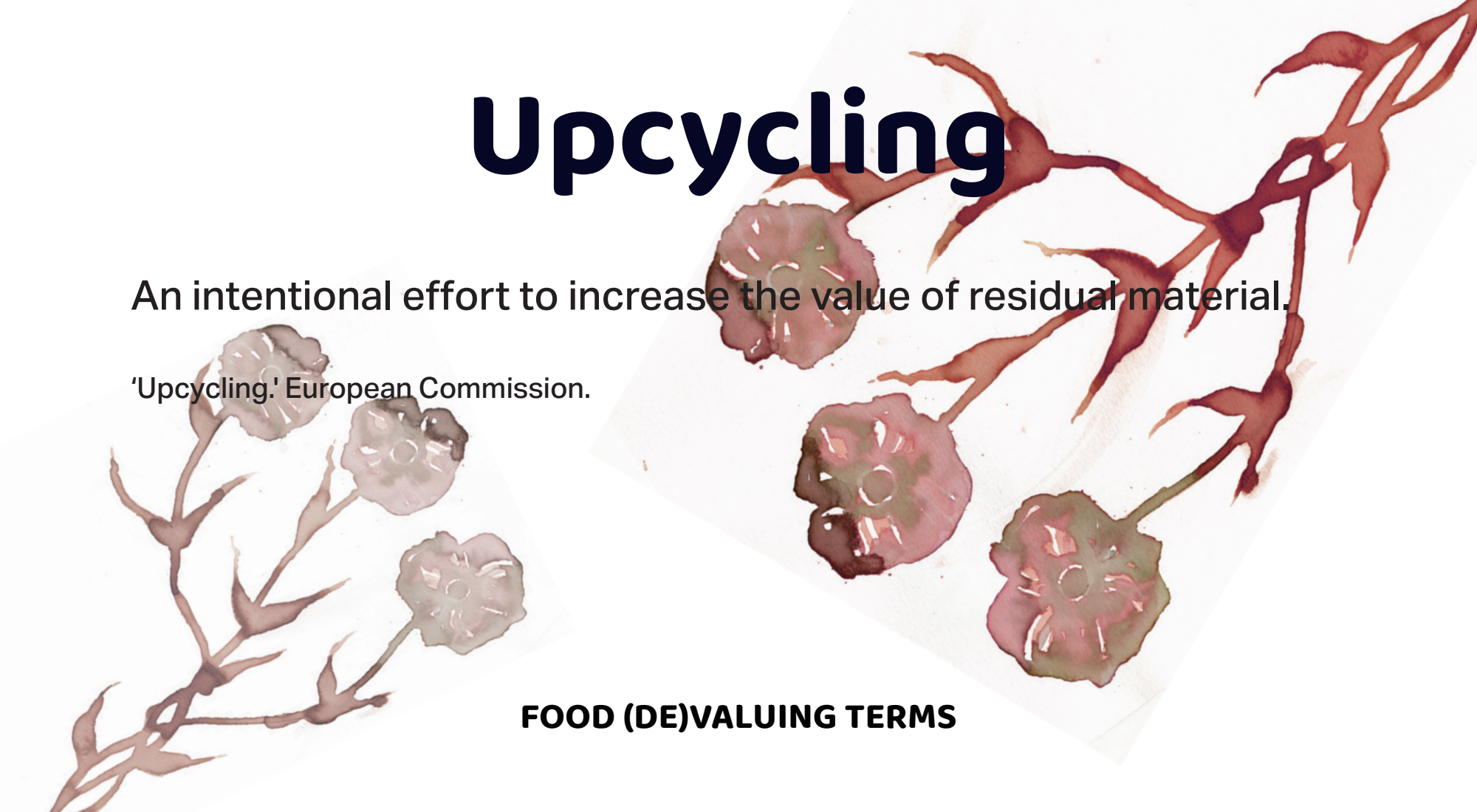
'Food rescue and redistribution.' City of Vancouver.

FOOD (DE)VALUING TERMS

Upcycling

An intentional effort to increase the value of residual material.

'Upcycling.' European Commission.



FOOD (DE)VALUING TERMS

Food Loss

The decrease in the quantity or quality of food resulting from decisions and actions by food suppliers in the chain, excluding retailers, food service providers and consumers.

'Technical Platform on the Measurement and Reduction of Food Loss and Waste.' Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Wasted Food

'Wasted food' describes food not used for its intended purpose. Can refer to both excess food and food waste.

‘Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction’. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015.

FOOD (DE)VALUING TERMS

Expiration Date

A date added to food products to advise consumers when a product should not be sold or consumed for safety reasons. In Canada, only baby formula and medications should be labeled with an expiration date.

'Understanding the Date Labels on Your Food.' Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

FOOD (DE)VALUING TERMS

Shrink

The loss of inventory due to spoilage, misshapen products, and overstocking. Shink often refers to an anticipated percentage of a product that will not be sold.

Buzby, Jean C., and Jeanine Bentley. 'Shrink.' USDA Economic Research Service.

Supply Chain

The system of people and things that are involved in getting a product from the place where it is made to the person who buys it.

‘Supply Chain’. Cambridge Dictionary.

FOOD SYSTEM ACTORS

Vendor

An individual or business entity that sells goods or services to customers, often on a smaller scale and directly to individual consumers.

Davito, Steve. ‘Vendor vs Supplier: What’s the Difference?’ Enable, 17 June 2020.

FOOD SYSTEM ACTORS

Food Services

The practice or business of making, transporting, and serving or dispensing prepared foods.

'Food Service.' National Agricultural Library Thesaurus and Glossary, USDA.

FOOD SYSTEM ACTORS

Service Haulers

The transportation of waste to disposal, recycling, or transfer facilities. Service haulers ensure waste is removed promptly, legally, and in accordance with local disposal standards.

‘Hauling Service, Dumpster Rental Glossary’. Space Coast Dumpster Rental.



FOOD SYSTEM ACTORS

Distributor

Purchases and distributes products to retailers or service operators.

‘What is a Distributor?’ BC Ministry of Agriculture.



FOOD SYSTEM ACTORS

Food Producer

The manufacturer of a food product.

‘Food Producers Declaration’. UN Food Systems.



FOOD SYSTEM ACTORS

Retailer

A business that sells products directly to consumers as its primary function.

'Retailer.' Code of Federal Regulations.

FOOD SYSTEM ACTORS

Food Preservation

A variety of methods used to maintain foods in an edible state.

'Food Preservation'. National Agricultural Library Thesaurus, USDA.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TERMS

Community Kitchen

A gathering for a group of people to cook and eat a meal together. Community kitchens are used to promote food skills, provide meals, support food rescue and for community celebrations and gatherings.

'Community Kitchens'. City of Vancouver.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TERMS

Food Dignity

Having the ability to choose what ingredients to cook with, to pass down family stories and history through traditional recipes, and to foster new relationships through shared foodways.

'Mental Health & Dignified Food Access.' Food Stash Foundation.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TERMS

Food Sovereignty

The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.

'Food Sovereignty'. Nyéléni Declaration of 2007.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TERMS

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.

'Household Food Insecurity in Canada'. PROOF, University of Toronto.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TERMS

Food Security

Population level food access.

‘Sustainable Food Systems: Dietitians' Roles’. Dietitians of Canada. 2020.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TERMS

Edible Portion Cost

The amount of usable food/ingredients that can be used in food preparation after removing trimmings or waste from the original as-purchased form of a food.

‘Edible Portion.’ Food Costing Calculation: Know the Most Important Terms. Unilever Food Solutions.

BUSINESS TERMS

Inventory

Inventory is the raw materials and finished goods a company holds for production and sale.

Kenton, Will. ‘What Is Inventory? Definition, Types, and Examples.’ Investopedia, October 11, 2025.

BUSINESS TERMS

Yield

The percentage of a raw product that can be translated into a useable or saleable product.

‘Controlling Food Costs.’ The BC Cook Articulation Committee.

BUSINESS TERMS

Value Pricing

Value-based pricing sets product prices based on perceived value that customers have for that product. The price is based on what they are willing to pay rather than the actual cost.

Bloomenthal, Andrew. 'Understanding Value-Based Pricing: Key Strategies and Benefits'. Investopedia. August 8, 2025.

BUSINESS TERMS

Purchasing

Sourcing and buying food or other products for use by an individual or organization as part of their business operations. It considers the amount and quality needed in a given time window at a given price point.

'Purchasing'. The BC Cook Articulation Committee.

BUSINESS TERMS

Surplus

A surplus is the amount of an asset or resource that exceeds what is needed or used. It can refer to income, profits, capital, and goods, and it's often the result of a disconnect between supply and demand.

‘What Is Surplus Edible Food (and Why Should You Care)?’ Second Harvest.

BUSINESS TERMS

Portion Cost

The total cost of ingredients used to prepare a single portion or dish.

'Controlling Food Costs.' The BC Cook Articulation Committee.

BUSINESS TERMS

Holding Cost

Holding cost refers to the expenses a business incurs for storing unsold goods in inventory, including warehousing fees, insurance, taxes, and depreciation.

'Holding Cost Definition & Meaning'. Buske Logistics.

BUSINESS TERMS

Traceability

The process of monitoring the movement of food or products from origin or initial production to consumption (or waste) and vice versa.

‘Traceability’. National Agricultural Library Thesaurus, USDA.

BUSINESS TERMS

Margin

The percentage by which a company's revenue exceeds its costs of operation.

Segal, Troy. 'Profit Margin: Definition, Types, Uses in Business and Investing'. Investopedia, 19 June 2025.

BUSINESS TERMS