On-farm Composting at an Organic Community Farm

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About Sweetwater Organic Community Farm

- Established in 1995
- Nonprofit, urban, certified-organic farm in Tampa
- 6-acre site
- Focuses on education and community development
- Produce is sold through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and Sunday Market
Composting at Sweetwater

- Sweetwater composts manure and bedding from Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa
- Has a small compost site adjacent to main farm and a larger facility at its satellite farm
In 2010, the Florida Organics Recycling Center for Excellence (FORCE) and KCI partnered with Sweetwater and Tampa General Hospital (TGH) for an on-farm food residuals composting demonstration project.
Food residuals compost project

TGH collected source-separated, pre-consumer vegetative food residuals over 4 weeks.
Food residuals compost project

TGH transported food residuals to Sweetwater, where they were inspected prior to composting.
Food residuals compost project

Sweetwater blended food residuals and animal bedding
Food residuals compost project

Small compost piles built each week
Food residuals compost project

Piles turned 5 times within 15 days for pathogen reduction
Food residuals compost project

Temperatures were monitored daily
Food residuals compost project

Example Temperature Chart

Temperature (ºF) vs Rainfall (in.)

- Day
- Date
- Temperature (ºF)
- Rain Fall
- Windrow Temperature
- Windrow Turning

Temperature: 131ºF

Rainfall:
07/09/10: 0 in.
07/19/10: 0 in.
07/29/10: 0 in.
08/08/10: 0 in.
08/18/10: 0 in.
08/28/10: 0 in.
09/07/10: 0 in.
Food residuals compost project

- Compost cured for 60-70 days then used on the farm
This project demonstrated that composting on small farms plays a critical role in closed-loop, local organic waste management.
RFT ELLS Event - October 8, 2015

• Toured Sweetwater’s compost site and farm.
• About 20 attendees from the public and private sectors.
Attendees learned about the critical role composting plays in organic agriculture.

Small scale composting keeps organic resources within the community.

Sweetwater is more than just a local farm. It is a community space that trains citizens in organic agriculture and sustainable practices.
Thank you!

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