

Veolia and Starbucks using worms to recycle coffee

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Veolia, working in partnership with Starbucks, has launched a new trial using worms to recycle coffee grounds and turn them into fertiliser, returning valuable resources back to the food chain.

Veolia, the UK's leading resource management company, has developed a trial to divert spent coffee grounds from landfill. Working with Wormganix, a producer of worm castings, Veolia has recycled three tonnes of spent coffee grounds, the equivalent of 420,000 single shot coffees. The Wormganix unique method feeds worms a mixture of paper pulp and spent coffee grounds that they digest to produce a nutrient rich fertiliser such as humus or vermicompost, that contains beneficial microbes, fungi and bacteria that improves soil health.

The UK enjoys nearly 98 million cups of coffee per day* generating over 250,000 tonnes of spent coffee ground waste annually in the process. If treated properly, spent coffee grounds have the potential to improve soil health, due to being naturally rich in nutrients such as nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus. This trial aims to assess the viability of a new low carbon natural solution for disposing of spent coffee grounds, which could also aid in reducing reliance on artificial fertilisers that are high in chemicals.

The Veolia Wormganix trial is currently taking place with a Starbucks store in Bradford, West Yorkshire, where Veolia facilitates the collection of the spent coffee grounds to be mixed with paper pulp and fed to the worms to digest. The Wormganix facility is based just outside Bradford in Cleckheaton, only six miles away from the participating store.

The trial sits alongside Starbucks' other food waste initiatives to tackle coffee ground waste. The business has already been taking advantage of the natural fertilisation properties of coffee grounds via their Grounds For Your Garden scheme, where stores across the UK donate bags of used coffee grounds to customers to use in their gardens. Starbucks also supports businesses with

innovative food waste ideas via The Eat It Up Fund, a partnership between Starbucks and environmental charity, Hubbub.

Commenting on the Wormganix and Starbucks partnership, Veolia's Managing Director for Commercial, Adam Wylie said: "We are always looking for innovative solutions to help our customers with their sustainability goals and this project utilises new methods to tackle a challenging waste stream. We are looking forward to seeing the results of the trial and the positive impact that it can have on the coffee industry."

Kevin Payne, Regional Operations Manager in the North at Soul Coffee House Limited - the Starbucks licensee for the Bradford store said: "We're thrilled to see the positive impact this will have in Bradford, supporting local business and the community."

"The new pilot with Wormganix is still in an early stage, but we are excited and proud that the Centenary Square, Market St, Bradford store represents another important step for Starbucks UK in our work to tackle food waste."

Veolia has focused on the production and sale of high quality and sustainable fertiliser into the horticultural industry supporting clients with their environmental goals. With opportunities from farming earthworms on organic wastes, the results from this project have the potential to kick start a new industry that recycles nutrients back into the food chain from previous waste streams.

*<https://britishcoffeeassociation.org/coffee-consumption/>