

# Beyond Bread:

## Healthy Food Sourcing in Emergency Food Programs



WhyHunger

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with Suzanne Babb

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## › WhyHunger and the National Hunger Clearinghouse

WhyHunger brings its unique assets and history to building a broad-based **social movement** to end hunger.

Our set of core values rests on the understanding that solutions and innovation are often found in the grassroots. WhyHunger's programs work to support these community-based organizations as they grow and develop, and bring new ideas and practices to creating a just food system that provides universal access to nutritious and affordable food.

As a grassroots support organization, WhyHunger provides capacity building services, technical support, access to information, and financial resources to community organizations implementing new ideas and developing groundbreaking projects to transform their communities. We build networks of grassroots organizations that share a vision of healthy, sustainable, and self-reliant communities leading to greater mobilization, robust social movements, and stronger advocacy to end poverty and hunger.

Since 1975, WhyHunger has been concerned with addressing the root causes of hunger and poverty, not merely charitable distribution. Twenty years ago, we advocated for [emergency food providers \(EFPs\)](#) to incorporate registering guests for government nutrition programs as a longer-term solution, and in 2005 and 2006, we produced two guides linking food banking and community food security: [Building the Bridge: Linking Food Banking and Community Food Security](#), co-written with the Community Food Security Coalition, and [Serving Up Justice: How to Design an Emergency Feeding Program and Build Community Food Security](#). In the spirit of that tradition, we have recently produced two new guides— one called [Cooking Up Community: Nutrition Education in Emergency Food Programs](#) and this guide on food sourcing— that share models of current innovative programming by emergency food providers. It is our hope that these guides will be sources of inspiration and ideas to strengthen the programs of emergency food providers, particularly in improving the nutritional health of those they serve and fostering their participation in the broader social movement to end hunger.

The **National Hunger Clearinghouse (NHC)** includes the **National Hunger Hotline (1-866-3-HUNGRY)** and [database](#), which refers people across the country to food and government nutrition programs in their area. NHC also works with emergency food providers ([food banks](#), [food pantries](#), soup kitchens, and food access sites) to improve their service delivery through sharing ideas, technical guidance, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Our monthly e-newsletter, the [Clearinghouse Connection](#), facilitates the exchange of information, resources, and ideas among emergency food providers working to create community food security. To subscribe, email us at [nhc@whyhunger.org](mailto:nhc@whyhunger.org).

This guide is part of an ongoing effort to aggregate and make available critical resources for emergency food providers. Please let us know how we can continue to improve this resource. We also encourage you to send us ideas for future resource guides you'd like to see developed. You can email us at [nhc@whyhunger.org](mailto:nhc@whyhunger.org).

—**Jessica Powers** (WhyHunger) and **Theresa Snow** (Salvation Farms) with **Suzanne Babb** (WhyHunger)

“ Taking action to improve nutrition and quality of food is also a good entry point to a deeper analysis of poverty and the structural conditions that produce inequity and a distorted food system. ”

## ➤ Introduction

Food banks and food pantries are often perceived as repositories for corporate castoffs, foods with high sodium and sugar content, and dreary, shelf-stable canned goods.

Yet the industry is changing rapidly, with the average food bank distributing roughly one-quarter to one-half perishable food. Interest from the public health sector, funders, and community food security advocates promotes increasing efforts to source nutrient dense foods, host nutrition education programs, and engage in the food system in new ways. At WhyHunger, we have advocated for emergency food providers to work towards community food security for many years, and we see this recent groundswell of interest as an opportunity to engage food banks further. In order to build and grow this momentum, we seek to leverage our role as a [grassroots support organization](#) by nourishing connections that will share resources, best practices, and ideas leading to greater unity between food banking and community food security. In this way, we hope to expand interest at both the agency and community level.

### Historical Perspective

There are two creation stories about the beginnings of food banking in the late 1960s. In the first story, John van Hengel gathered donations for a soup kitchen in Arizona, where he volunteered and was also a sometime guest. He was so adept at acquiring donations that he eventually needed to create warehousing and began distributing food to other locations. He called the enterprise [St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance](#), and it is still in existence more than four decades later. His was a model of efficiency and logistics rooted in genuine concern for low-income people. The second story hails from California, and has its roots in the Black Panther Breakfast for Kids Program. The Black Panther Party community service or “Survival Programs” created positive models within the community to help individuals meet their needs. Seeing that basic needs weren’t being met, they organized people in the neighborhood to feed breakfast to kids as they walked to school. This model was based in the community and rooted in the values of social justice and self-determination. It was an organizing strategy and satisfied a nutritional need, eventually inspiring the creation of the [National School Breakfast Program](#) and the [Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County](#). The dynamic tension between these two approaches—a logistical approach resulting in food access on the one hand, and a community-based approach with an emphasis on the right to food on the other—arguably exists to the present day.

The decades since have seen rising fuel prices, the erosion of the social safety net, stagnant wages relative to inflation, increasing economic disparity, rising medical costs, corporate tax breaks for donations, and subsequently, a dramatic increase in the number of emergency food providers. What started as an emergency response became institutionalized. While \$1 billion were added to federal food programs, \$5 billion in housing subsidies vanished. After spending money on rent, utilities, and medicine, the food budget is the most elastic for most households. In one of the most affluent countries in the world, some parents skip meals so their kids can eat and some seniors don’t know where their next meal is coming from. The nonprofit industry has stepped in to try to fill this gap in the form of many more soup kitchens, food pantries, and food banks, which are largely dependent on volunteer labor and private donations. As Jan Poppendieck so eloquently explains in her seminal book [Sweet Charity?: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement](#), these efforts, while well-intentioned, also function as a distraction from the broader social problems and policies perpetuating hunger and poverty in the first place.

What we see today is not a true emergency. Hunger and food insecurity in the United States is a chronic, systemic problem. We have a broken system that can do little more than attempt to plug the holes in our frayed social safety net. Chronic hunger and food insecurity cannot be solved solely by meal distribution or by admonishments to “pull yourself up by the bootstraps.” We need a social movement for food justice; we need a grassroots-led movement to end hunger. A first step is helping grassroots organizations share their innovations as they move beyond bread.



For a more detailed summary of the intersecting issues that impact hunger and poverty, please see this timeline, [A History of Emergency Food in the US](#).

Over time, food banks developed infrastructure to support more donations from corporations and commodities from the government, mastering supply chain logistics and creating efficiencies to get food to those in need— measured by significant increases in pounds of food distributed and numbers of people enrolled in programs. Capturing food waste and redistributing food surplus has not resulted in an end to hunger and poverty as anticipated. The effectiveness of a focus on distribution gradually grew to be seen by some with concern, as much of this food is highly processed, and quantity does not indicate quality or nutritional value. There are also hidden costs associated with highly processed foods, such as negative health outcomes and environmental degradation. And further corporate consolidation of the food system actually leaves consumers with fewer choices and greater risks.

Low-income people are also more likely to suffer from diet-related disease, both because of a lack of access to nutritious food (living in “food deserts”) and— as the [hunger-obesity paradox](#) describes— eating inexpensive, calorie-dense food. Interventions to combat hunger and obesity have been highly individualized: “work hard” or “eat less and exercise more.” These approaches omit the community and structural issues behind the injustice in the food system. Community food security is, as [Hamm and Bellows defined](#) it over a decade ago, “a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.” This approach attempts to address food insecurity and improve the food system for all at the community level. More and more food banks want nutritious food, fresh produce, and higher quality food. They see their role as [preventative healthcare intervention sites](#) or food hubs expanding in their communities. And they see an opportunity to become a source of healthy food and nutrition education.

»»» **But what are some of the challenges that food providers face in procuring healthy and fresh food?**

Food banks, despite their desire to help those who are food insecure, face logistical, institutional, and funding barriers to sourcing nutritious food. These challenges are addressed briefly below.

### Logistical Challenges

There are a host of distribution challenges to handling perishable inventory. The product needs to be acquired, handled, and stored properly, rotated, sorted, [re-packed](#), and distributed rapidly. Many partner agencies do not have adequate storage capacity, including refrigeration, or vehicles to distribute the food quickly. Or sometimes too much storage space is occupied by unhealthy food options. Some pantries have access to donated coolers, but lack funds for the labor to disassemble, move, and reassemble equipment. Some staff lack knowledge regarding fresh food handling, storage, and movement: one food bank reported disposing of 800 pounds of fresh cucumbers because the staff didn’t rotate the perishable stock, resulting in spoilage.

## Institutional Challenges

Food banks face internal barriers to modifying a model of food provision that has become institutionalized and is, arguably, efficient. Building new partnerships that lead to greater community food security takes time and commitment, and because some agencies see acquiring and delivering food as the primary goal, other activities are not prioritized. Operating from a mindset of continual emergency often leads to a climate in the EFP industry in which addressing root causes of poverty and hunger are mentioned, but not prioritized. Funding and donor relationships are so critical that a culture of lively debate and honest dialogue is sometimes discouraged.

Additionally, some [procurement](#) specialists maintain typical or familiar food donor relationships and are hesitant to build new, possibly challenging ones or to ask current donors to make changes or raise standards. Breads, pastries, and sodas are considered a gateway to other donations, so resources are spent handling that inventory, even when it may exceed the need, in order to maintain donor relationships. Some food banks accept and dump large quantities of highly processed foods, rather than educating or risking alienating donors. Donors, in turn, benefit from a tax deduction, social capital, and free waste disposal, and are not discouraged from producing unhealthy food. Some anti-hunger organizations (often bankrolled by the food companies themselves), debate the merits of choice, consuming treats in moderation, and health promotion in a highly charged, imbalanced playing field in which the producers of processed food spend billions of dollars on advertising and unhealthy choices are the default.

Creating political will to change the system within an organization may require education of staff, board members, executives, and guests who are comfortable with a donor-driven, charity model and may not see the value of a community-based approach or might need to learn about healthy foods. Some food banks report that years ago they “couldn’t give a carrot away,” but today, customer knowledge and demand is also changing.

## Funding and Evaluation Challenges

Reporting requirements and evaluation measures established by funders may limit the ability of food providers to procure healthy food. Restricted funds and grants with specific targets often result in duplication of efforts, necessitate that projects be tailored to meet the grant requirements rather than the actual program needs, and may restrict certain purchases or ignore vital operating costs. The intention of requirements to measure food in pounds is to eliminate fraud and quantify progress, but makes it challenging to promote and quantify healthy food distribution. After all, a liter of soda or a pallet of canned food is significantly heavier than the same quantity of fresh produce. Food sourcing and distribution territories created by county or region may not make sense for particular areas, and may discourage or impact the ability to build regional networks. Funding requirements that require measurable impact in a few years don’t allow for the long-term investment and the scalable, social change needed to end hunger and poverty.

## Solutions

Emergency food providers used to speak about the noble goal of “putting themselves out of business.” Today, they can’t keep up with demand. We need to prioritize addressing the systemic problems leading to hunger and poverty by advocating for policies that will change this downward spiral. As Joel Berg says in [All You Can Eat: How Hungry is America?](#): “By implementing a bold new political and policy agenda to empower low-income Americans and achieve fundamental change based upon mainstream values, America can end hunger quickly and cost-effectively.”

At the same time, there are innovative emergency food projects at the grassroots level that are successfully and creatively finding ways to source healthy fresh foods, and these models should be shared widely so they can be replicated and adapted and lead to new ideas. Emergency food is part of the larger food system, and it can be leveraged to strengthen local and regional food systems— contributing to local economies while putting healthy food on the table in ways that strengthen bodies, minds, and communities. Soup kitchens and food pantries can become community centers that are at the intersection of health, food access, and community development. Through advocacy, education, funding, and research, the public health sector is an important ally at the intersection of emergency food and community food security. All food is not created equal and by transforming the emergency food system into one where fresh, healthy foods are available to all, we can start to nourish America.

# » Rationale, Methodology & Limitations in Research

After conversations with dozens of leading emergency food providers over the course of a year, the need for capacity building guidance in food sourcing and nutrition education was continually identified.

WhyHunger learned that organizations were tailoring programming to meet funding requirements, and often re-inventing the wheel by creating new programming from scratch. Lacking a resource that aggregated and assessed existing models that EFPs could realistically replicate or adapt, organizations could not easily tailor their programs or learn about innovative models. WhyHunger defines EFPs broadly: food banks, soup kitchens, food pantries or shelves, of course, but we also include schools, since school lunch and breakfast are significant sources of calories during the day for many kids, as well as other food access sites, such as senior centers.

Organizations showcased within this guide were selected after numerous conversations, field visits, and observations, and collected from the time period of August 2011–August 2013. In speaking with representatives from each organization, it was apparent that each had different missions, goals, objectives, and programmatic activities. The organizations profiled in this guide are not meant to be comparable, but to demonstrate the variety of programming that exists among organizations of different sizes and capacities. The models presented in this guide only portray a portion of organizations' activities and programming, particularly emphasizing innovations in nutritious food sourcing.

The formation of this guide is a result of site visits, phone, and e-mail conversations with innovators throughout the country. Article reviews were also undertaken in order to produce this manuscript. Throughout this process, the deep-felt passion and commitment by those EFPs who contributed was palpable and infectious. Their dedication to improve the health of their communities and their genuine respect for and loyalty to their guests proved to be inspiring. WhyHunger looks forward to sharing these findings and receiving feedback to continually improve the guide and expand the available information. This resource is just the beginning of a project that will become more dynamic as additional innovators continue to contribute in the coming years.

## Acknowledgements

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## › Best Practices

The charitable/emergency food system throughout America is very dependent on shelf-stable product— primarily palletized cases of boxes and cans of familiar brand name items.

It's easy to conclude that food in boxes and cans makes good, efficient sense for this sector of the nation's food system, as these items are often produced in excess and available for donation; they are easy to inventory, handle, and store, even if packaging is damaged. Yet many emergency food providers are seeking additional options despite the challenges of handling new, fresh, time-sensitive, perishable, and unfamiliar products.

The number of programs and organizations that are increasing the inventory of perishable foods at sites serving the nation's food insecure is inspiring. The integration of such programs and products has been no easy feat for any of them. Some programs are 40 years old and many are still in their fledgling years. Each program and organization is creating greater health and nutrition awareness among Americans who are dealing with "[resource-constrained hunger](#)." Clients who have had long-term struggles with hunger as well as those who find themselves in temporary need are happy to see food options outside of high-sodium canned foods and highly processed carbohydrate-based products.

Fresh food sourcing programs have overcome many obstacles to reach current levels of success. Many food procurement directors and individuals who work directly on food sourcing have shared the challenges and tips outlined below for increasing fresh food programs and inventory. As you will see, location or scale of operation does not determine an organization's likelihood of success with fresh foods. Instead, the following best practices do make a difference in whether a fresh food sourcing program has success or limps along and ultimately fizzles out.

*“ Living and working in an agricultural community and working with hungry families, it'd be hard for us to justify not making the most of the resources our community has to offer. Gleaning and having relationships with local farms in many ways just connects the dots. All parties feel good and accomplish their goals of feeding people. From the food bank's perspective, gaining access to fresh and nutritious food is a major tenet of our mission, and so we justify the work it involves as we justify everything else that we do. It is at the core of our mission. ”*

— **Max Morange**, Agricultural Programs Coordinator, [Bellingham Food Bank](#)

### Strategic Vision and Leadership

Organizational “buy-in” at all levels is fundamental in order to achieve success when incorporating fresh foods into inventory and initiating fresh food sourcing and access programs. Boards and top executives must have an active interest in integrating agricultural relationships into operations. This needs to be firmly based in the strategic vision. Funding for staff positions that coordinate volunteers, engage in advocacy and policy, and support community food security efforts need to be maintained, even under challenging circumstances. Institutional knowledge, procedures, and infrastructure must be established and integrated throughout the charitable food network from the top down. All staff must be informed and educated, being provided formal procedures and clear expectations that are supported by proper infrastructure and the necessary supplies to maintain quality and morale in all aspects and at all levels of fresh food incorporation.

“ From my experience, conversations around envisioning the ideal southern Arizona community have expanded our board’s understanding of food security issues. This newly expanded vision not only includes emergency service provision, but also the promotion of programming that supports long-term nutrition, sustainability, resilience, and self-sufficiency. ”

— Robert Ojeda, VP Community Food Resource Center, [Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona](#)

## Incorporating Community-Based Health and Nutrition Programming

Integrating a culture of health promotion and nutrition education is critical for success amongst staff and guests. Whether an urban farm attached to the food bank, classes on cooking with whole foods, or a train the trainer approach for community-based nutrition educators, these efforts expand the priority of community health. See also [Cooking Up Community: Nutrition Education in Emergency Food Programs](#).

## Navigating Food Systems Relationships

When pursuing a working partnership with a grower or packer of fresh foods, strong relationships are paramount to realization. Organizations must have individuals on staff who have significant knowledge of the agricultural sector. These representatives need to communicate in such a way with growers and packers that reflect their knowledge of the fresh foods industry. Simultaneously, these representatives must clearly articulate the needs of the emergency food system while defining how the grower/packer fits into that system with little or no added expense of time, money, or effort. These representatives are charged with a tall order of changing mindsets and building relationships that create new modes of operations for both the organization and the grower/packer. Farmers/growers are proud individuals and like seeing an increase of their bounty enter the food stream, but if they are not presented with an easy working relationship and professional arrangement, they may be discouraged from ever trying to work with the emergency food system again. Impressions last a long time.

## Incentives to Growers

One argument often given for not sourcing fresh food directly from farmers is the assumption that the farmer can’t afford to donate and/or that the EFP can’t afford to pay for the produce. Some food banks have demonstrated that it’s cheaper to buy the same product locally than one that has been donated but for which they pay shipping costs. Sometimes it is more cost-effective to buy locally and/or directly from farmers. Incentives are often essential when working with growers, especially most large-scale producers. Growers want to see the food they produce feed people, but are more apt to donate if they have help in eliminating the barriers. Efficiency is of the utmost importance to most growers/packers. Many growers, unlike corporate donors, are [unable to access state and federal tax incentives](#). By increasing the ease of donating and lessening their out-of-pocket expense by providing containers for donated food, for example, growers may be more inclined to participate in a program that captures their surplus. If state-appropriated, grant-sourced, or general operating funds are made available for the sole purpose of incentivizing, the grower may commit to harvesting and putting product into supplied containers. This type of incentive often instigates grower foresight as it pertains to donating. Growers will donate what they would not sell and adapt harvest or packing system protocol if they are able to recoup much of the associated costs (labor, packing, etc.).



## Building Strategic Partnerships

Organizations and food sourcing representatives can make progress towards their goal of sourcing fresh food by understanding the basics of leveraging political power. This pertains to building a dialogue with the state legislature, associated agriculture, social service and public health departments, and industry lobbyists. Developing clear communication with agricultural trade associations and grower members and clearly presenting how a working relationship would benefit each party is another successful strategy. Building partnerships can lead to tremendous networks of resources. When thinking about who your potential partners are, consider the institutions, agencies, and associations that are already invested in the agricultural sector and who are concerned about the health of and available nutrition for your region's citizens. The following are just a few potential partners to explore and establish collaborative conversations with in your state: Department of Agriculture and Markets, Department of Children and Families, Department of Education, Department of Health, [Community Action Program \(CAP\) Agencies](#), the United Way, the Council on Aging, Waste Management, Farmers Market Associations, Food Policy Councils, Farm Bureaus, and State Extension Agencies. These departments can broadly influence policy at the state level, shifting the way agencies do business. The emergency food system can make a priority of increasing nutrition for the vulnerable populations it serves and it can build economic viability in the agricultural sector. Another possible partner often overlooked is local, regional, and national transportation/trucking companies or packers. Companies will often subsidize the cost of transport for perishable products from grower/packer to emergency food distribution locations. Some food banks have explored partnerships with some of these actors, but not others. Often, identifying a person with vision and creativity at a particular agency can lead to new opportunities.

## Appropriate Infrastructure

Appropriate infrastructure is necessary to achieve the timely execution of capturing, sorting, storing, and distributing fresh foods. The need for walk-ins, refrigerated trucks, and different kinds of “holding” devices other than pallets are necessary when increasing the capacity to handle greater volumes of fresh food. Organizations procuring perishable product must also make a good impression on the fresh food donor. This impression can be initiated positively by housing the right infrastructure within the organization to facilitate speedy and successful management of product, thereby maintaining its top quality. Growers want their product handled with an appreciation for its quality and an understanding of the care involved with its distribution. In addition to large regional and state food banks, smaller agencies or pantries that serve individuals also need the appropriate infrastructure. Providing food of optimal quality, rather than bins of rotting, fly infested produce, maintains a level of dignity and respect for the recipient of charitable/emergency food system services.

“ Our mission is two-fold; to capture wholesome surplus foods not favored by the for-profit food supply chain, and to wisely maneuver the wholesale purchase model. Food banks must be food rescuers and providers of otherwise wasted rescued foods in order to be the best stewards of donated dollars. Wholesome food headed for the waste stream should be captured and connected with folks who need it. This reduces contributor dollars spent on wholesale food and maximizes the pennies per pound spent on creative food rescue models. It may not be easy or pretty, but I believe it is our job. It is sad to experience a philosophical breakdown in who gets to eat what, when, and how. ”

—Peter Ricardo, Food Donations & Supply Chain Specialist, [Food Bank of Central New York](#)

## Supply Chain Management

Sourcing and distributing fresh foods can be logistically challenging but very rewarding. Depending on quantities received, product diversity, quality, and familiarity of products, the level of logistical arrangements can often be daunting if proper procedures and protocol are not in place. With sufficient administrative support, transportation, receiving, and distribution procedures, and clear communication with food producers, organizations can eliminate many stressful donation situations. Simply put, growers/packers and emergency food organizations will be prepared in advance to handle the logistics of product movement with confidence and competence. Engaging in dialogue with growers, and understanding their production cycles, will increase the predictability of incoming product as well as increase an organization's preparedness to execute a speedy distribution. Pre-established arrangements with regional [food shelves](#) that are willing and able to act as distribution hubs for large volumes of perishables will help facilitate

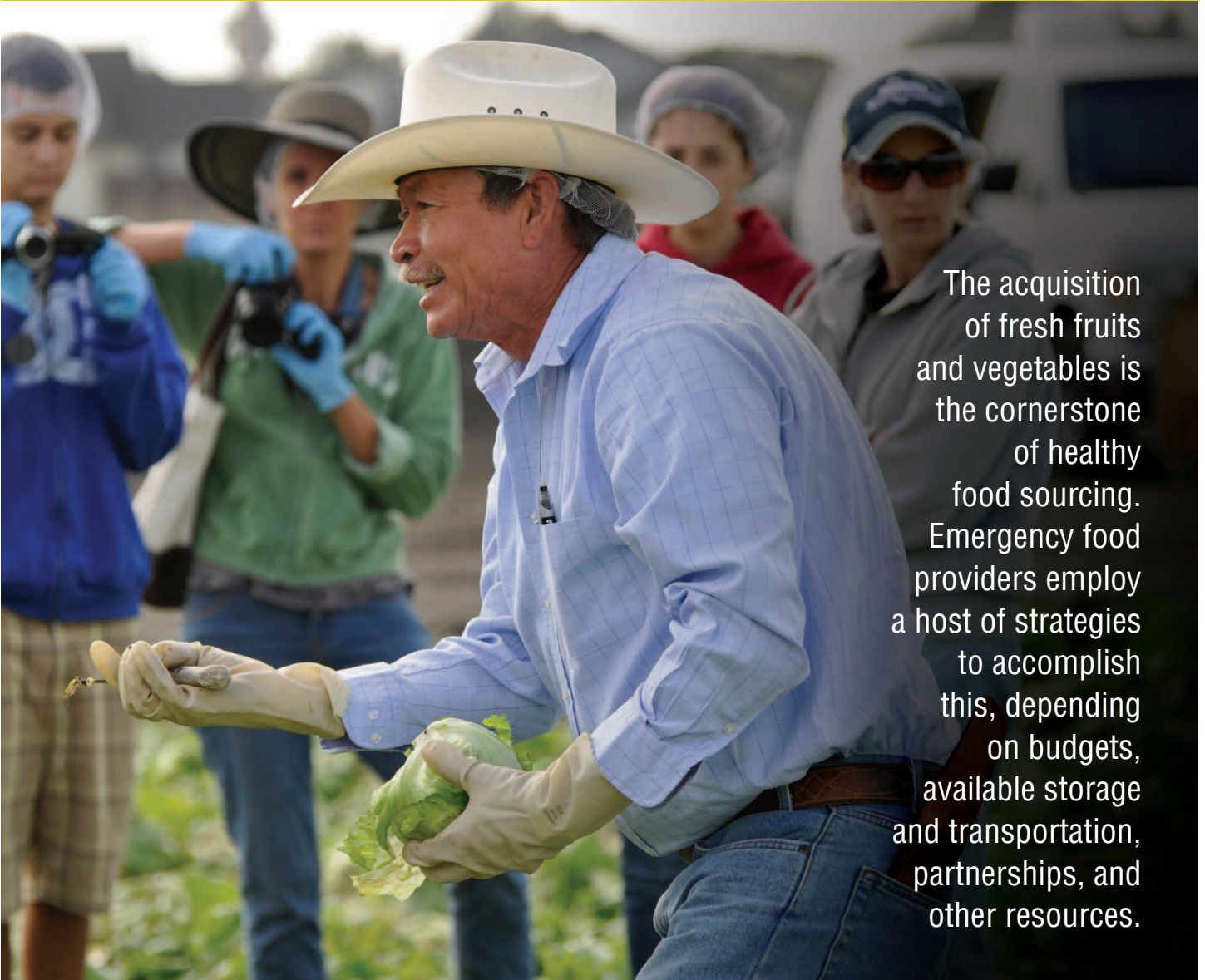
immediate distribution. This creates an opportunity to avoid the processes of receiving product into a food bank's facility, thus reducing handling. Smart set-up is important to the efficient movement of large volumes of fresh food just as is communication internally and with external partners. Intake quality control systems are important as is volunteer coordination. A permanent and prepared work space as well as clearly defined directions for volunteer sorting and packing of product will help speedy turnaround. Logistical decisions should be determined based on the need to keep handling of fresh foods to a minimum and costs to the organization low.

## **Consistency is Key**

When requested, the organization must show up at the proper time and location with the ability to handle the task at hand, whether it is loading palletized product, gleaning a 10-acre field with volunteers, or overseeing the aggregation of purchased product for immediate distribution to recipient agencies or clients. It is very important to hire a courteous, efficient, and effective driver as they may be the external face of the receiving organization. Creating good systems and clear direction will reduce stress and ensure consistency across varying circumstances.



# ➤ Produce Acquisition Programs



The acquisition of fresh fruits and vegetables is the cornerstone of healthy food sourcing. Emergency food providers employ a host of strategies to accomplish this, depending on budgets, available storage and transportation, partnerships, and other resources.

## ➤ CHAPTER 1

There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach, but most food sourcing fits into one of the categories described below. Adapt what works best for your community or organization.

## › I. Produce Purchase Programs

Direct purchase of produce enables an organization to control what they acquire, contribute to a local or regional food economy, and work directly with producers and distributors. Funding, distribution, and storage may be obstacles for organizations seeking to purchase produce, but the organizations profiled below employ some creative ideas to overcome these challenges.

### New York Common Pantry

#### New York

- › **CHALLENGES:** budget for purchasing fresh food, knowledge and experience of clients
- › **SOLUTIONS:** purchase locally, state funding support, client-choice, budget plan
- › **STRENGTHS:** board buy-in, plan for success, site visits for learning, online ordering system

New York Common Pantry, the city's largest community-based food pantry, was able to transition from purchasing canned fruits and vegetables to only purchasing fresh produce. It still welcomes donations of canned vegetables, which are often more familiar to some of their clientele and allow for increased [client choice](#). In the first year and a half, 80% of purchased fresh foods came from a regional producer. An impressive 50% of their total distribution is fresh food: fruits and vegetables from in-state producers and sources beyond. Since the Common Pantry distributes a large volume of food— serving groceries to almost 8,000 families and 84,868 hot meals annually— an innovative online ordering system facilitates the distribution directly to clients.

It is important to the Common Pantry that they are truly providing for the needs of those they serve, so annually they survey their clients. They found out that clients desired choice but did not want this to increase the amount of time they had to dedicate to accessing the resources of the pantry. The Common Pantry attempts to increase the volume of food available to individuals during each visit so that they need to visit less frequently. The increase of available fresh food has been a transition for many folks. Some of the produce is unfamiliar and cooking skills are limited for some individuals. The client choice option allows individuals and families to take only the food items they want and are willing to utilize. The Common Pantry provides nutrition and cooking education sessions; in 2010, 186 sessions were held.

The Common Pantry finds it cost effective to purchase product because of the volume they are investing in. The pantry works with two farms in upstate New York who have ample storage capacity. This allows for an extension in product availability well after the harvest season is over. One of these producers also partners with a farm in Florida, which helps supply product unavailable in the northeast in the winter months. One of the farms often includes additional product in the order as a donation. The Common Pantry also conducts food rescue missions at wholesale farmers markets.

NY Common Pantry faced some challenges to introducing fresh foods, specifically produce, and acknowledges these as significant, but they do not make the initiative impossible. Seeking partners that donate food helps to mitigate costs. The organization knew they would need a cash budget for food, which required a plan with some lead time built in, a fundraising arm, initiatives that raise funds specifically to purchase food, and constant monitoring of food costs after implementation.

The organization's board was supportive of the vision to convert to the purchase of fresh food, since this was a direction that most members shared. Many of the board members volunteer at the Common Pantry, so they have seen the immediate impact. Since they are aware of the product types in the pantry's inventory, they also understand the need for the fresh fruits and vegetable initiative, which has helped expedite innovation and change. Representatives of the Common Pantry visited approximately ten other emergency food providers before implementing the fresh fruits and vegetables initiative to see how they distributed food, what items they gave, and the model they used to do it. This information was reported back to the board regularly. Not only did the board learn alongside the staff, but they understood the time, effort, and process that went into making the decision to undertake this initiative. As a result, there was a vision with a well thought-out, researched, and highly viable plan.

For others interested in making the switch from purchasing canned to buying fresh, the NY Common Pantry suggests seeking new relationships outside of usual social service and emergency food organizations. Tap into farm collectives, online and storefront grocers, wholesale markets, farmers markets, and umbrella groups that represent any or all of them. If staffing is not available, use interns to make contacts with farmers directly. Make visits to farms when possible to cement relationships and understand their capacity, operational needs, and limitations. NY Common Pantry has found that this provides an increased understanding of what obstacles are in place and how to focus the partnership on working around them.

## Bellingham Food Bank

### Washington

- › **CHALLENGES:** limited budget
- › **SOLUTIONS:** contract purchasing
- › **STRENGTHS:** builds relationships with local growers, invests in local economy, purchase at lower cost

Although non-perishables are easier to solicit from food drives and can be collected in large quantities at certain times of the year, the Food Bank prioritizes purchasing perishable and nutrient-rich products despite a limited budget. The Bellingham Food Bank's Farm to Food Bank program invests in direct relationships with farms to help stretch those limited funds. Made possible by grant support, the Farm to Food Bank program purchases fresh produce on contract from local farms. The program works with seven regional farms: five diversified vegetable farms, a dairy, and an egg distributor.

The Food Bank establishes its annual budget for the program, evenly dividing it among the farms, asking each to predict what products and volumes will be available early and late season. By focusing on purchasing food in the shoulder seasons, that is, in between the high and low season, this program compliments the fresh food from their farm operation and their gleaning program, both of which are at their peak in mid-season. Farmers are paid pre-season, in advance of their production schedule, and deliveries occur on a weekly basis. This is a great arrangement for the farms, so much so that they make product available to the Food Bank at about five percent below wholesale for top quality product. Max Morange, the Agricultural Programs Coordinator at the Bellingham Food Bank, explains that "contract purchasing with local farms benefits all parties involved. By purchasing in advance, the Bellingham Food Bank gets a great price on terrifically fresh produce when it is needed most and farmers get cash at a time when they need it most to ensure a successful season."

In addition to the Farm to Food Bank program, the organization is sometimes presented with the opportunity to purchase surplus crops, like berries, from one of their major agricultural donors. In this instance, even with such a perishable and delicate crop as strawberries, the food bank will make the investment, as it is not just an investment in food but an investment in a relationship that has tremendous benefits well beyond the purchase.

## Good Shepherd Food Bank

### Maine

- › **CHALLENGES:** limited storage capacity, misconceptions about client food preferences, misconceptions about food pantries
- › **SOLUTIONS:** contract purchasing including fish and dairy, delivery same day as distribution, meeting with farmers, Memorandum of Understanding, recipe booklets
- › **STRENGTHS:** provides some stability for farmers, builds relationships with local growers, engaging good food movement

In 2010, the Good Shepherd Food Bank made the decision to provide more nutritious food to their 600 partner agencies. In order to do this, they approached local farmers to purchase their crops, and the Mainers Feeding Mainers Program was born.

Presently, Mainers Feeding Mainers has purchasing contracts with 21 farmers. Ten farmers deliver to the Food Bank's warehouses in Portland, Auburn, and Brewer, where it is then distributed to member agencies. Eleven other farmers deliver produce directly to member agencies or have the agencies pick up the produce from the farm. The benefit to agencies dealing directly with farmers—which is called the Farm to Pantry program—is that agencies can have access to the produce on the same day it will be distributed to clients, which eliminates the need for storage space. Additionally, in many cases, the Farm to Pantry agencies are usually closer to the farm than the Food Bank, which cuts down on transportation costs and emissions. The Farm to Pantry agencies send the Food Bank the amount of produce distributed and the Food Bank keeps track of the overall poundage received from all 21 farmers. Mainers Feeding Mainers is now working with fisheries and dairy farmers to be able to offer fish and cheese to agencies that come to the Food Bank to pick up produce. Fish and cheese are not currently available through their Farm to Pantry program, but they are working to establish it there.

To start Mainers Feeding Mainers, the Food Bank staff built on existing partnerships with Maine farmers and reached out to new farmers. They held a meeting with farmers who were interested in partnering with the Food Bank and identified a core set of crops they wanted to grow for the Food Bank's clients. Initially, Mainers Feeding Mainers started with nine farmers and quickly grew to 21. When initially approached, some farmers wondered if the Food Bank was simply looking for a handout, but Good Shepherd assured them that they would pay for the crops. One of the ways in which they did that was by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which states that the farmers will commit to growing certain products and Good Shepherd will pay them a certain amount for these products. The MOU agreement proved very appealing to farmers because they could depend on this income. This differs from a farmer's working relationship with retailers who can and sometimes do alter the price they will pay for products or alter how much of a farmer's product they are going to buy. With Good Shepherd, farmers have a signed commitment. If something happens with the crop—which can often occur in farming—the farmer is under no obligation to sell it and the Food Bank is not obligated to buy it.

The misconceptions agency directors have about their clients' food preferences has been a challenge. They often believe that their clients will not want produce. Providing agencies with recipe booklets is useful for clients and food pantry directors. The agency directors have more confidence that their clients will take the produce and know what to do with it. The clients receive fresh produce and tasty, healthy recipes on how to prepare it. Agencies have reported that clients are impressed with the produce they have received. Mainers Feeding Mainers is always looking for ways to stretch the



life of their produce, particularly trying to make crops stretch throughout the winter months. Most of the pantries do not have storage space. Good Shepherd has reached out to farmers to store some root vegetables for them so they will last during the winter months. Another challenge is finding an organization that could cut, blanch, and flash freeze vegetables for them. They are also trying to research grants for their agencies to apply for refrigeration units.

The Mainers Feeding Mainers program has been an asset to both the Food Bank and the farmers. The relationship is mutually beneficial in that the farmers are providing produce to people who really need it and the Food Bank is helping farmers out by creating an additional and somewhat stable market for their products. One farmer said if it wasn't for the Food Bank they wouldn't have been able to make it during this most recent economic recession.

The local food movement has helped in garnering support for Mainers Feeding Mainers. There is a genuine interest from the public in purchasing and eating locally which makes the program an easy sell when the Food Bank promotes the program. It connects the local food movement, community economic development, and nutritious food, all issues that touch the lives of many Mainers.

## ➤ II. Farmer Picking Arrangements & Cooperatives — Aggregation & Marketing

**By paying farmers a nominal fee for product and working collaboratively to have a broader impact, organizations invest in their local and regional food and farm economies. Costs to growers are minimized, waste is diverted, emergency food providers and clients acquire healthy food, and inroads are made to building community food security.**

Unfortunately, for-profit competitive bidders without a social mission— such as WalMart— are trying to get in on the deal too: purchasing crops that were once seen as unmarketable, driving down prices for farmers on commercial products, and raising prices for charitable partners on previously unmarketable crops.



# Food Bank of Central New York

## New York

- › **CHALLENGES:** unmarketable crops, labor costs, few food processors and manufacturers in area
- › **SOLUTIONS:** value-added processing (VAP)
- › **STRENGTHS:** low cost, invests in local producers, conserves food bank resources

Food Bank of Central New York has created a low-cost in-state [VAP \(value-added processing\)](#) program designed to increase procurement of regionally produced fresh foods. The food bank will pay a nominal fee of five to ten cents per pound for product not aesthetically suitable for market (i.e., corn that is less than six inches in length) but of good quality. Desired crops include items such as onions, potatoes, cabbage, and apples. The Food Bank feels that the agricultural sector is a growth area for obtaining increased food donations. In a “food poor” region, with few processors and manufacturers to obtain food from, there is also an opportunity to create VAPs from unmarketable crops. The VAP program covers the producer’s costs associated with packaging materials and often labor associated with picking unmarketable crops when they would have been left in the field or on the tree.

“ We have found the use of budget via VAP programs very viable and efficient. True costs must be considered (Food Bank staff time, trucks, drivers, and time taken away from day to day operations) when valuing the VAP strategy. The value becomes clear by using the example of 2000 pounds of produce and comparing the inputs of the “gleaning” model (see above “true costs”) to a VAP fee of \$100 to \$200 for using the system in place on the farm. ”

—Peter Ricardo, Food Donations & Supply Chain Specialist, [Food Bank of Central New York](#)

# Florida Association of Food Banks

## Florida

- › **CHALLENGES:** unmarketable crops, labor costs
- › **SOLUTIONS:** provide incentives and packing materials to growers
- › **STRENGTHS:** low cost, state funding support

The Florida Association of Food Banks recently began building relationships with local producers and packers to create viable systems and supports for the efficient capture of Florida’s surplus crops. This effort has received financial support from the state legislature and is showing success. It is a great benefit to the state’s growers and the Association that Florida’s Secretary of Agriculture sits in the cabinet of the governor. Agriculture is a vital part of the state’s economy and making a state appropriation that benefits growers while also benefiting the state’s hungry is a smart investment to include in the state budget.

The Association has been able to pilot its food rescue program with growers and packers by leveraging financial support, providing financial incentives for the grower/packer as well as providing the necessary packing materials to create efficiency and lessen the financial burden on the producer. An example of their success has been working with tomato growers. Many tomatoes are too small to send to market. Some of these are sold to food service companies and roughly 200 million pounds make their way to feed cattle. By providing flats for workers to put under-sized tomatoes into as they harvest, the Association was able to pay the producer less than two cents per pound, capture a half million pounds, and move the product in less than ten days.

# California Association of Food Banks

## California

- › **CHALLENGES:** unmarketable crops
- › **SOLUTIONS:** coordinated logistics network
- › **STRENGTHS:** prioritizes local needs first, minimizes loss

Farm to Family is a program designed to connect growers and packers with California’s food bank network. Farm to Family, administered by the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB), is modeled after a successful two-year pilot program in which members of California’s stone fruit industry joined with the Coalition of Northern California Second Harvest Food Banks to establish the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Initiative. Today, Farm to Family partners with dozens of food banks statewide, reaching both urban and rural communities in need.

California produces more than half of the nation’s total fruits, nuts, and vegetables. For some commodities, and at certain times of the year, there is a deluge of excess product. Growers and packers are forced to dispose of surplus, as well as cosmetically blemished produce, which can be costly and time consuming.

Farm to Family offers a solution by working with growers and packers throughout California to minimize the loss of surplus and unsellable produce. It has established a logistics network that captures surplus produce from one growing region, first distributing within that region, and then to other regions that can use the donations. When multiple food banks around the state are aggregated, the entire surplus is put to good use. Local needs are given priority to benefit surrounding low-income communities and reduce unnecessary transportation costs and pollution.

The California Association of Food Banks solicits donations, works with food banks to project their annual needs, and coordinates delivery of produce. They only coordinate shipments of truckload quantities: pallets are directed to the local food bank, one time unscheduled donations are accepted, and they secure transportation and arrange routes for 80 trucks per week in the summer time. They use a “hub and spoke” system, whereby larger food banks accept truckload quantities and break those up and provide produce to the smaller food banks or agencies that cannot accommodate a truckload all at once. Receiving food banks pay a few cents per pound to the grower to cover the costs of harvesting and packaging (a PPO or picking and pack-out fee). CAFB expects to coordinate delivery of an impressive 140 million pounds of specialty crops this year.

# Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks

## Ohio

- › **CHALLENGES:** funding, weather
- › **SOLUTIONS:** market-clearing initiative, public-private partnership
- › **STRENGTHS:** fair prices for farmers, collaboration, volume, rapid distribution of product to end users

The Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program (OACP) is a collective effort of the Ohio General Assembly, the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks, member food banks and agencies, the agricultural community, and local food processors. The program builds relationships between Ohio’s farm commodity producers, processors, food banks, and emergency food providers. The collaborative effort has a primary goal of providing fresh produce and processed food products to clients while improving the capacity of member agencies to feed hungry individuals. As a market-clearing initiative— an agreed upon price for an exchange— it does not impact the

profits of the farm community, but helps both farmers and food banks to make use of surplus commodities. Benefits of the program include preventing waste, providing nutritious commodities for food banks, and reducing losses for farmers and growers.

This program was developed through the hard work of the OACP Advisory Committee, including representatives from The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks, the farm community, commodity groups, hunger relief organizations, governmental programs, and Ohio State University. Initial legislative efforts netted \$1 million to develop this hunger-fighting effort over a two-year period. OACP officially began in October of 1999 and, despite drought conditions, distributed apples, potatoes, tomatoes, and other fresh produce to food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens across the state. Its funding currently exceeds \$6 million. The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services serves as grant manager for the program.

In state fiscal year 2012, over 42.7 million pounds of fresh produce and agricultural commodities were distributed to hungry Ohioans through this program. The real success of OACP can be seen in the excitement of food bankers when they receive great produce and the satisfaction of clients who receive quality, nutritious products.

Logistically, almost all of the partner farmers the OACP works with supply their own trucking. The cost associated with this service is included in the price of securing the surplus product. One food bank does provide some trucking for the program. The OACP has a tremendous and impressive turnover rate of fresh product through this program; movement from field to food bank to agency and then on to end users can occur in as little as two days. Challenges that face this program are not unfamiliar to those working with farmers and fresh food: weather and continued funding of the program through the State of Ohio biennial budget cycle.

## Just Food New York

- › **CHALLENGES:** agency capacity
- › **SOLUTIONS:** connect farms and agencies, Community Support Agriculture (CSAs)
- › **STRENGTHS:** field trips for pantry guests, Department of Health funding, fair price to farmers, product diversity

Just Food, an organization established in 1995 and based in New York City, has worked to connect local and regional farms with communities and neighborhoods throughout the city. The organization builds these connections for all demographics, striving to establish a just food system that allows access to wholesome and sustainably raised foods for everyone.

The Local Produce Link program is a successful model of aggregation and distribution. Since 1995, Just Food has facilitated a CSA (community supported agriculture) program that matches regional growers with neighborhood-based groups. In 2001, the United Way of NYC approached Just Food to see if they could develop a program that would function in very much the same manner but serve food pantries with shares of regionally produced vegetables.

Just Food and the United Way of NYC have been operating this “food equality and accessibility program” for 12 years now with tremendous success. The program began with a few growers and has expanded to a total of eight participating farms. The program is very successful; upwards of a quarter million pounds of regionally produced vegetables are making it to more than 40 emergency food programs. A unique component of this program is the opportunity it provides to the staff, volunteers, and clientele of the emergency food sites to meet the farmers who grow their food; not only do people get to attend a meet and greet event in the city, they are also invited to attend field trips to the participating farms.

The Local Produce Link program utilizes partnerships wisely. The United Way of NYC is able to access financial support from the state Department of Health which it invests in the purchase of produce from the eight New York farms in the program. Just Food has been able to fund community chef cooking demos, farm trips for food pantry staff and clients, and farmer outreach/selection and technical support with grant funds secured from the Department of Health. Just Food and United Way of NYC have seen these state grants extended until 2015. The additional time and money will enable the program to continue, possibly expanding the program a small amount over the next five years. In addition to funds from the State Department of Health, parts of the program are supported by grants from private, family foundations.

Farmers are being paid a fair market price for their products, creating a great economic impact in the agricultural economy while building a base of eaters who are educated about the types of vegetables that can be produced in the greater metropolitan region of New York City. The program is proud of the product diversity it is able to offer, as much of the fresh produce that food pantries receive through other sources often consists of the same five or seven crops. This program provides fresh leafy greens, tomatoes, and melons, which are particularly treasured by pantry guests.

“It means a lot to our local farmers to be able to serve this community, and the food pantry staff love this program because it gives them the rare opportunity to give out freshly-picked, really high quality produce,” said Just Food’s former Fresh Food for All Coordinator Abby Youngblood. “The program has helped provide a stable market for participating farmers by paying farmers a fair price for the produce upfront before the season begins. One farm has been able to shift away from wholesale markets that are no longer profitable and believes Local Produce Link is the reason their farm has been able to remain viable as their wholesale markets have declined. For other farms, Local Produce Link has allowed them to purchase necessary seeds, equipment, and supplies pre-season rather than taking out loans in the early spring to start off the season.”

A toolkit for replication of the Local Produce Link program is available for purchase on the Just Food website. The toolkit includes information about recruiting and selecting farmers, farmer-agency matching, food and farm education (including cooking demonstrations and farm trips for food pantry staff and clients), record keeping, and program evaluation.

## Island Harvest

### New York

- › **CHALLENGES:** healthy food access, increased poverty in suburban communities, lack of social services support network to address need, cost of fruit
- › **SOLUTIONS:** purchase at discounted rate, build agency capacity
- › **STRENGTHS:** no cost to agencies, invest in local farm economy, serves highest need areas

Island Harvest is Long Island’s largest hunger relief organization, distributing to a network of 570 suburban food pantries. Working with the local Farm Bureau, the Agency Farmers Market program focuses resources on specific low-income communities to create sustainable improvements to the agencies that serve those communities. They also seek to increase healthy food choices and accessibility to nutritious foods. An additional goal is to support local Long Island farmers by procuring produce that is grown on Long Island. And since locally grown produce travels less than other produce to get to their agencies, the program also promotes environmental and resource use awareness by saving fossil fuels in transport of food products.

The Agency Farmers Market provides fresh produce in targeted areas of Long Island where poverty is high and healthy, low cost produce is not readily available. Specific program goals are to: 1) identify the disparity in the local availability of healthy food and nutrition choices by conducting monthly surveys, 2) increase awareness of diet-related diseases and healthy dietary behaviors by offering nutrition education and healthy eating tips through the “News You Can Use”

program, 3) strengthen the ability of Island Harvest member agencies to provide supplemental nutritious food and, 4) support local farmers by purchasing local produce.

How the Agency Farmers Market works is simple. Produce is purchased from local farmers at a discounted rate. The produce is then distributed to member agencies— emergency food providers— within their network. Participating agencies are selected based on the greatest need and receive the produce at no cost. Island Harvest volunteers are utilized to organize, separate, load, and distribute the produce to each of the participating agencies.

The results from the 2011 pilot summer demonstrate success. Island Harvest held 30 Agency Farmers Markets throughout Nassau and Suffolk counties in June, July, and August; all sites were pre-selected based on need. In total, 62,185 pounds of produce were purchased and distributed to ten agencies— five in Nassau and five in Suffolk— which served 3,215 families throughout the summer. The program exceeded the pre-season goal to purchase and distribute 50,000 pounds of locally raised produce, and they trumped their goal of sourcing and purchasing produce from five local farmers by sourcing from nine, all of whom provided produce at a discounted rate.

Participating agencies have all provided positive feedback and are interested in signing up for the coming season. The program's pilot year was such a success that it has been approved for another summer. Of all the potential obstacles this type of new program could face, purchasing fruit proved to be the most difficult challenge due to cost and harvest schedule.

## New North Florida Cooperative Florida

- › **CHALLENGES:** cost to individual growers, budgets
- › **SOLUTIONS:** farmer cooperative, processing, aggregation
- › **STRENGTHS:** influencing production, high volume, low cost, reduced labor cost

Since schools provide a significant source of calories to low-income kids and are institutional purchasers, they can provide ideas and inspiration for food banks and vice versa. The New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC) serves high need schools and retail outlets, and like many farmers cooperatives, provides the aggregation necessary for institutional procurement and purchasing.

NNFC is meeting the needs of both the farmer and the food service provider. They are a farmer cooperative as well as a wholesale produce purchaser. The cooperative has a facility where they bring in sourced product that their members have grown or that has been purchased from non-member growers. This facility provides the necessary space and infrastructure to allow for both washing and packing of product. This type of infrastructure is a big investment for individual growers, so the facility is providing necessary operational support to its members in addition to overseeing product aggregation, sales, and distribution.

Schools are comfortable with purchasing from the cooperative. The product available through NNFC is often more affordable and product is provided in a condition that demands less prep time on behalf of the food service staff. In addition, working with the cooperative is more time and cost-effective because it minimizes the number of fresh food providers the school food service company must work with. The cooperative provides consistency and a one-stop shop for schools. And because the schools purchase large volumes of food, prices can remain relatively low.

A unique component of the relationship between NNFC and the schools is the conversation that is occurring to educate the growers about desired crops and projected volumes requested by school food service. This is a great help to the farmers and the cooperative and creates an important level of commitment to the program from both the producer and the purchaser.

# Grow NYC: Greenmarket Co.

## New York

- › **CHALLENGES:** structural barriers to healthy food access, low margin
- › **SOLUTIONS:** wholesale distribution, provide infrastructure
- › **STRENGTHS:** uses existing community assets— including businesses and food access sites

Greenmarket Co. is a wholesale distribution service offered by GrowNYC, a non-profit that improves New York City's quality of life through environmental programs that transform communities and empower New Yorkers to secure a clean and healthy environment. Greenmarket Co. is designed to bring fresh, high quality farm products to New York City's wholesale buyers and make locally or regionally produced foods more available by delivering them to grocery stores, bodegas (corner stores), restaurants, emergency food providers, and other food outlets.

Distribution of locally grown farm products via wholesale channels such as grocery stores and institutional kitchens greatly increases New Yorkers' food access and helps keep regional farm businesses viable. GrowNYC is reducing barriers for buyers and farmers alike by providing the infrastructure that brings local food to wholesale channels throughout the city. Although they have numerous relationships with farmers who sell at the Greenmarket Farmers Markets, most of those farmers do not sell their produce wholesale. However, the Greenmarket farmer retail network, as well as their relationships with other organizations such as [Foodlink](#), a rural food bank serving Central and Western New York State, has helped foster these new wholesale farmer relationships. Greenmarket Co. has spent the last three years advocating and building the wholesale aspect of Grow NYC.

Greenmarket Co. has many connections to the emergency food world. Greenmarket Co.'s biggest customer is City Meals on Wheels. City Harvest, New York City's largest food rescue organization, is providing Greenmarket Co. with temporary shipping and receiving space in its food rescue facility, to temporarily store produce prior to delivery.

Funding for Greenmarket Co. comes from a combination of grant money, a small interest loan, and produce sales. Their goal is to break even and be self-sustaining in year five, which is dependent on sales growth. In years one and two, Greenmarket Co. is focusing on growing in efficiency while years three to five will focus on making a profit. "You are talking about very small profit margins," says Greenmarket Co. director Michael Hurwitz. "If we sold to high-end retail markets we'd be making more, but we are leveraging small client markets to ensure we have access to low-income neighborhoods. We also have to deal with issues of seasonality. It's a tough business, but we are confident we can do it."

Most challenges for Greenmarket Co. are logistical in nature. They have to balance City Harvest's warehouse operating hours with the hours farmers are available to deliver produce. Other issues range from not having office space at the warehouse to trucks breaking down. Also, Greenmarket Co. does not have the capacity to handle and ensure quality control. When working with retailers they have to be creative and flexible with their prices. "Retailers are not going to pay more for produce than they are already paying," Hurwitz states.

What makes Greenmarket's model great is that they are working with existing neighborhood retailers to expand what is possible in local distribution. They are also proving that you can create a profitable business servicing all neighborhoods in New York City. Having the retailers already in place allows for more time to make sure that they have the infrastructure they need to store and display the produce, that they have the marketing materials to promote the produce, and to build relationships with distributors.

Hurwitz continues: "We are working in a field of commodities and we are trying to put a humanistic and 'non-commodifying' aspect to this field. Farmers should get paid properly, and low-income neighborhoods should have access to fresh, nutritious food. We are competing against major players that have been subsidized by state and city governments. Fresh Direct [a local grocery delivery service] is subsidized. They don't go to where we go, yet we don't get subsidized. They get disproportionately more money, yet they are not contributing to local economies, they are not helping farmers, and they are not helping to improve access."

## › III. Voucher Programs

Voucher Programs give clients vouchers that can be used at local supermarkets or farmers markets to acquire fresh food items. They are an excellent solution for food pantries with limited storage and transportation, and they reinvest money in the local food and farm economy.

Demand for produce can be assessed by checking redemption rates, and clients are able to choose the food items that they need, including a variety of high quality animal proteins, which are often a challenge to reliably source. Incentivizing healthy food choices can have a positive impact on improving healthy behavior choices.

### Lamoille Community Food Share

#### Vermont

- › **CHALLENGES:** labor and storage capacity
- › **SOLUTIONS:** coupon program, foundation support
- › **STRENGTHS:** invest in local business, client choice and dignity, healthy food including animal protein

In 2010, the Lamoille Community Food Share (LCFS) served just over 1,000 families, totaling 3,135 individuals. Two-fifths of their clients were children. That was 13% more families than served in 2009 and 66% more than in 2007. By late 2011, the number of clients visiting this small, rural pantry had close to doubled. Now LCFS is averaging nearly 400 visits per month and wants to do more to increase healthy food access for their clients.

Increasing the internal handling of fresh food for such large numbers of clients was a daunting task for a small pantry. In 2009, they teamed up with their local supermarket to address their desire to do more for their clients. LCFS and the store created a program that would provide \$2 coupons to individuals who access the food pantry that could be used to purchase fresh produce. The program is called the FRESH (Food Resources Everyone Should Have) Coupon Program and it guides clients towards healthy choices when they shop. In 2010, the program was expanded to include coupons for fresh meat as well. LCFS distributed coupons to more than 900 families in 2011 and their investment in this program exceeded \$12,000.

The FRESH Coupon Program was made possible as a result of generous core support from one foundation that enabled the initiation of this program. This ensures that the partner supermarket is reimbursed for all coupons redeemed by shoppers. Clients of the LCFS tell them that the coupons represent a healthy meal and allow them to access food products with dignity.

The Lamoille Community Food Share's Manager, Deb Krempecke, tells WhyHunger that "initially, we got a grant for fresh produce because we knew that the canned variety has added sugar. It was popular but we realized there were problems with storage of such perishable items. Also, one woman declined to take the oranges we were offering, saying her son would not eat them, but 'he loves apples!' What if we could let people choose what they wanted when shopping at our local store? We also decided to stop purchasing certain high sodium canned products such as corn beef hash. The short answer to how this program works is simply shifting money used to purchase high sodium/sugar items into the coupon program. Our clients ask for these coupons when they come to shop. One woman with a family of five held her coupons up and said, 'See this? This represents a meal!' Overall, the comment we hear most is: 'These coupons really help.'"



# Farm to Family, Swain County

## North Carolina

- › **CHALLENGES:** storage capacity
- › **SOLUTIONS:** voucher program, collaboration
- › **STRENGTHS:** bridge socioeconomic divide, support local economies, healthy food including animal protein

In 2010, the Swain County Farmers Market partnered with the Bryson City Food Pantry and Swain County Cooperative Extension to initiate the Farm to Family Program, which provides vouchers for pantry clients to use at the Farmers Market. Each family member receives a \$5 voucher that is redeemable for fruits, vegetables, eggs, fish, and meat. The goals of the program are to increase fruit, vegetable, and protein consumption among pantry clients, to support local farmers, and to utilize the Market as a site to bridge the divide between communities of different socioeconomic status.

There is no limit to the number of coupons a family can receive in a season. When an individual comes to the Pantry, a volunteer provides them with dry goods based on family size and a Farm to Family voucher for each family member. The Pantry is supposed to be used only in emergencies, but with one of the highest unemployment rates in North Carolina—19%— many Swain County residents are chronically in need of food.

In 2010, a total of 592 vouchers were distributed at the Food Pantry and 430 vouchers were collected at the Farmers Market, providing the program with a redemption rate of 72.6%. The program brought a total of \$2,150 into the Farmers Market. Each week, the Food Pantry writes a check to the farmers for the face value of the vouchers they redeem. The organizers, farmers, and food pantry volunteers witnessed enthusiasm from food pantry clientele about the program and the opportunity to access fresh foods at the local farmers market. The Food Pantry continues to fund the program and included it in their budget in 2012. The Pantry is applying for federal non-profit status so that they can write grants and do more strategic fundraising to support all of their operational expenses.

Several factors made this program convenient for clients: the Food Pantry was open during the same hours as the Farmers Market, and food pantry clients were already using vouchers to purchase bread and milk at a local grocery store, which was located in the shopping center next to the Farmers Market. “A woman came to the table and was so happy that there was fruit. She asked me if I take the vouchers and I said ‘yes’. She was really glad because she said that she didn’t get paid until next Wednesday. She purchased grapes and a few other items and I gave her twice as many grapes as she could afford. It made me happy to see her granddaughter eating grapes and smiling,” said Kelley Penn of Balltown Bee Farm.



# Wholesome Wave

## Connecticut

- › **CHALLENGES:** assumptions about dietary preferences, diet-related disease
- › **SOLUTIONS:** double value coupons, fruit and vegetable prescription program
- › **STRENGTHS:** partnerships with healthcare providers, invest in local economies, acquiring funding support

The mission of Wholesome Wave is to empower historically underserved urban and rural communities to make better food choices by increasing access to and affordability of fresh, locally grown food. Doing so creates economic viability through local food commerce, rebuilding our nation's food system. Wholesome Wave partners with over 60 community-based organizations across 24 states and the District of Columbia to implement the Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) and the Fruit and Vegetable Prescription (FVRx) program.

DVCP was launched in 2008 at farmers markets in Connecticut, California, and Massachusetts, and expanded to over 300 markets in 2012. DVCP represents a new way of conceptualizing solutions to the related problems of food insecurity, the prevalence of dietary disease, including obesity, and the economic viability of small and midsize farms. Wholesome Wave supplies the network of farmers markets implementing DVCP with technical assistance, data collection tools and analysis, and facilitates a national learning community.

Results from a 2010 nationwide survey of participants taking part in nutritional incentives administered by Wholesome Wave showed that 87% of DVCP consumers increased or greatly increased their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables as a result of shopping at the farmers markets. Also, over 90% of DVCP consumers agreed or strongly agreed that the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables they bought at the market made a big difference in their or their family's diet.

FVRx fosters partnerships between health care providers and organizations working with farmers markets to measure the health effects of increased consumption of fresh produce. Fruit and vegetable prescriptions are distributed by community healthcare providers and redeemed at participating farmers markets for fresh fruits and vegetables.

The goal is to improve health outcomes by providing community members at-risk for diet-related diseases such as diabetes and obesity with the resources to increase consumption of fresh, locally grown produce. Health care providers and farmers market partners work together to identify and enroll program participants, disburse and redeem prescriptions, collect data on consumer participation and health, and add a wealth of knowledge to the FVRx learning community through active engagement. In 2012, FVRx was implemented in 12 locations across 7 states.

Wholesome Wave works closely with a range of innovative, community-based organizations across the country, such as community health centers, individual farm stands, small businesses, and non-profit organizations operating a network of farmers markets, providing them with technical assistance and micro-grants to support the implementation of the above mentioned programs in their communities. These programs are designed to foster an active learning community in which partners can share their experiences and knowledge.

Wholesome Wave also works closely with community partners in their hometown of Bridgeport, Connecticut to implement DVCP at a number of locations across the city. Doing so helps the organization to remain grounded in the activities and challenges their national program partners face during DVCP administration.

Wholesome Wave programs are funded through grants and donations from foundations, corporations, individual donors, and government agencies. Over the past five years, the organization has worked to solidify relationships with their existing donors while striving to diversify funding sources, such as individual donations and corporate cause-marketing campaigns. They further support their partners by providing funds leveraging assistance and making direct connections between partner organizations and potential funders when appropriate.

A major challenge overcome by Wholesome Wave were common misconceptions that consumers relying on federal food assistance would not consider the quality of food being purchased, that underserved communities represent economic dead ends, and that shopping at farmers markets and other farm-to-retail venues is the domain of the affluent. However, over the past few years, there has been a proliferation of farmers markets across the country, with a growing number serving lower-income areas and populations and accepting SNAP or other forms of federal food assistance benefits.

Data collected by Wholesome Wave from 2010 show that incentive programs such as the DVCP are playing a huge part in the growing success of farm-to-retail venues serving historically underserved communities. Markets generally see SNAP redemption rates double (and, in some cases, even quadruple) following DVCP implementation. Moreover, the program has also had a considerable impact on consumers as well. DVCP encourages many patrons to spend their federal benefits at farmers markets (73% reported that they would not have gone otherwise) and it also enabled them to make better food choices: 87% of DVCP customers reported that the program helped to increase or greatly increase their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

“*Forging progressive, forward thinking partnerships can be helpful to both long-term program success and leveraging funding. Building relationships with key stakeholders in communities is essential. For example, local community-based organizations, places of faith, and city and state agencies can strengthen program outreach and increase the dissemination of messaging. Furthermore, connecting with implementers of similar programs within communities or regions can result in loosely structured alliances with a broad, diverse base of knowledge and experience. This collective voice can be especially helpful when seeking funding. In Maine, we were able to connect our network of program partners with funders enthusiastic to learn about their successes, as well as their needs for bolstering their programs statewide. This resulted in leveraging over \$200,000 for our support of six partners in Maine, as well as forming direct funder/implementer connections.*

*In Massachusetts, we participated in forging an innovative partnership involving the Department of Transitional Assistance, the Department of Agricultural Resources, and a local foundation which subsidized purchasing of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) terminals for farmers markets, coupled with support for incentive programming, greatly increased the opportunities for federal benefit redemption at farmers markets. In this case, collaboratively identifying areas where efficient resource use could be maximized resulted in successful programming and strengthened existing relationships.*

*In general, program collaborations that are inclusive of but not limited to entities with similar missions can be a catalyst to breaking down pre-existing silos locally and statewide. The resulting innovative partnerships can help to fortify the efficacy and sustainability of programs.”*

—**Cristina Sandolo**, Director of Programs/Community Integration, Wholesome Wave



## ➤ IV. Fresh Food/Retail Food Market Rescue

**Fresh food rescue diverts food waste from markets, wholesalers, and other sites for use by food providers. Also known as grocery rescue or supermarket gleaning, some food banks report that this is the only type of food donation that has experienced growth during the recession.**

Through building relationships with grocery stores and big box stores, emergency food providers are able to acquire additional fresh and frozen foods. Both the [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996](#)— which encourages donation by minimizing liability to donors— and adherence to food safety and HAACP standards have helped to ease the concerns of grocers, who in turn benefit from community goodwill, tax deductions, and reduced waste removal costs. Some programs scale up food rescue to the municipal level.

### Foodshare

#### Connecticut

- **CHALLENGES:** outgrew space
- **SOLUTIONS:** reduced rent at market
- **STRENGTHS:** access to wholesale, reduced associated costs for fresh food rescue

About 10 years ago, Foodshare (FS), a Connecticut-based food bank, was looking for a new home. They had outgrown their distribution facility and found themselves on occasion using their parking lot to re-pack donated product. As they searched for an alternative, an irresistible opportunity came their way. Through conversations with the Connecticut Marketing Authority—a group of ten individuals responsible for the operation of the market, whose chair is appointed by the Governor, and other members representing market tenants and the farm community— Foodshare was offered office space and room to install a cooler. It was a natural fit. FS was able to rent the space at half the cost as the market authority took into consideration the organization's charitable mission. FS went right to work cleaning up their new rental space and secured a grant to place a 20' x 34' cooler on-site which can hold a maximum of 50 pallets of food.

In this location, FS is able to access the wholesalers market where domestic and international product is bought and sold year round, six days a week. Up to eight different wholesalers from this market donate surplus to FS. Every day during the growing season a farmers market occurs, mostly retail and a little wholesale, from which FS also receives donations. This set-up is ideal for keeping associated costs with fresh food rescue low. On occasion, FS is conveniently able to capture a truckload of produce coming in to the wholesale market that is rejected by wholesale purchasers. FS is proud of the fact that five million pounds of its total twelve million pound annual distribution is produce.

Distribution of produce rescued from the market location is done in a few different ways. The organization has been running mobile pantry trucks to increase access to fresh produce for six to seven years. Volunteers are organized to repack product into 150 bags for each of the mobile pantry trucks. Volunteers from all walks of life, organized by Foodshare's volunteer coordinator, repack donated produce six days a week in two shifts of 12 to 15 volunteers. Other product that may need to be assessed for quality will make its way to the primary facility. Agencies are able to access produce by adding it to an order that is delivered or when they pick-up.

# City Harvest

## New York

- › **CHALLENGES:** improving community food security in underserved neighborhoods
- › **SOLUTIONS:** food rescue, increasing community access through distribution and improving capacity of local vendors
- › **STRENGTHS:** targeted distribution, healthy food including animal protein, community engagement

City Harvest serves the food insecure in New York City by capturing food resources that would otherwise go to waste. Of the 1.5 million food insecure in NYC, City Harvest helps to feed more than 300,000 individuals per week with the estimated half a million pounds that they rescue each week. When first established over 25 years ago, City Harvest served 55 community food access programs. Today, the number has increased tenfold.

City Harvest operations are rooted in the sole belief that excess food should feed someone who is hungry rather than go to waste. Food is captured from all segments of the food industry in the city including restaurants, hotels, wholesalers, grocers, corporate cafeterias, manufacturers, and farms. This model is addressing multiple needs by keeping valuable food products out of the landfill and providing fresh food to New York City's food insecure.

City Harvest is proud that nutrient-rich food comprises 75% of deliveries, including meat and protein items like chicken, canned tuna and salmon, and beans; dairy such as yogurt, cheese, fresh and shelf-stable milk; 100% juice; and fresh produce like apples, green peppers, squash, and lettuce greens. This also includes an increased emphasis on excess fresh, local food from farm sources.

In harmony with their goals of reducing the impact of our consumption-based culture through responsible resource management, distribution takes place throughout the five boroughs of New York City using not just a fleet of trucks, but bikes and volunteers on foot, too.

City Harvest also understands that the same neighborhoods dealing with hunger and food insecurity are also suffering from high incidences of diet-related chronic disease, and that access to healthy food can help to alleviate some of these issues. They've decided to strategically focus their programs and resources in five low-income communities throughout New York City. Started in the South Bronx, City Harvest's other "Healthy Neighborhoods" include the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, Washington Heights and Inwood in Manhattan, the North Shore of Staten Island, and Northwest Queens. City Harvest staff (called neighborhood experts) are community liaisons who build partnerships with community organizations in each Healthy Neighborhood and connect them to City Harvest programs and resources.

Healthy Neighborhoods runs bimonthly Mobile Markets, a farmers market style, free produce distribution program held in partnership with New York City Housing Authority. The Mobile Markets are volunteer run by residents for residents. They are often an opportunity for community partner organizations to offer residents other services like health and food stamp screenings or nutrition education programs.

The Healthy Retailers program is City Harvest's newest program. This program, modeled after [The Food Trust](#) and NYC Department of Health programs, partners with supermarkets that are interested in revamping their produce aisles to make it easier for customers to shop for fruits and vegetables. Healthy Retailers will broaden their program to include bodegas and neighborhood corner stores. By channeling additional deliveries of free fresh food and other resources to their Healthy Neighborhoods and by working closely with local residents, organizations, and community leaders to improve access to and demand for nutritious food, City Harvest is hoping to create models of healthy, food-secure neighborhoods.

# Metro's Fork it Over Program

## Oregon

- › **CHALLENGES:** food waste, volunteer labor, donors, reliable collection, storage
- › **SOLUTIONS:** diverting waste from the landfill, public-private partnership, community needs assessment
- › **STRENGTHS:** environmental impact, cost-effective, scaled to three county area, community buy-in

In 1996, Metro, the regional government serving the three-county area including the city of Portland, entered into a partnership with the Oregon Food Bank to directly address the needs of the food insecure by developing a program to rescue fresh produce destined for the waste stream. By 2004, Fork it Over was created through the engagement of multiple partnerships and public leverages in an increased effort to reduce both hunger and waste by capturing all manner of prepared and perishable fresh food items. These partners strengthen the program in their ability to see the big picture solution, sharing resources and contacts with each other to meet program aims.

There are several facets to the program but the essence of it is quite simple: to develop long-term relationships between food donors and agencies serving the food insecure with a second initiative to compost what cannot be donated for human or animal consumption. “Donation is best, compost the rest” is a phrase used to guide the management of available food resources as food first, and organic, biodegradable matter second.

The goals of the program are to: 1) decrease the amount of food disposed of in the Metro region; 2) maximize the amount of nutritious, edible, perishable foods diverted to food banks and ultimately the hungry; 3) increase awareness of both hunger and waste; and 4) provide the tools necessary for businesses to make positive change.

In the years before launching Fork it Over, Metro conducted a large community assessment of the gaps in the local emergency food system. As a result, Metro provided grants to support the purchase of refrigerators, freezers, and a few collection vehicles to assist food rescue agencies to safely collect, transport, and store perishable foods. In launching the program, both public visibility and education on how to participate were vital.

Complementing the Fork it Over food rescue initiative is a commercial compost program. These paired programs aid businesses and basic needs providers with easy and effective means to practice social responsibility in their community. Keeping food waste out of the landfills— both for food consumption and compost— helps increase the availability of fresh food for food bank clients and provides soil for future healthy food production.

“ I think that the Fork it Over tagline says it all: donation is safe, simple, and the right thing to do. I remember standing at our waste transfer station as a load from a grocery store was dumped on the floor and destined for the landfill. I was stunned to see how much beautiful, wholesome food came out of that truck. To top it off, that container of ‘waste’ had been sitting behind the grocery store for an entire week in the middle of August— and the food still looked good! Imagine the potential if it had been stored properly and donated instead of tossed in the dumpster. Beautiful food gets disposed while at the same time so many go hungry. It also amazes me that a business will pay to bring food in and then pay again to throw it away instead of donating it. At a minimum, it doesn’t seem to make good financial sense, does it? ”

—Jennifer Erikson, Senior Solid Waste Planner, Metro

There are many challenges to reaching and maintaining the success seen in the Fork it Over program. Food rescue agencies report struggling to find consistent and reliable volunteer labor as well as securing and maintaining a strong donor base. Businesses say that a reliable collection schedule, after-hour pickups, and available storage space are challenges for them. The biggest challenge for Fork it Over was not developing the concept, but retaining the energy and attention. How do you keep a program fresh and engaging for participants over time? Effective publicizing year to year and providing the right information to the right people to build awareness and participation has also proved challenging to the program organizers.

Metro provides annual funding for the program. In 2011, the budget was small; \$5,000 was earmarked for outreach and advertising and a very small percentage to personnel. Metro has one staff person designated to oversee this program. The budget is expected to increase next fiscal year as decisions are made regarding the future of Fork it Over. The funds that support Metro’s waste reduction and recycling programs, including Fork it Over, are derived from fees assessed on every ton of waste landfilled in the region.

For organizations interested in replicating this type of program, Metro suggests the following: (1) know the specific needs and resources in your local community, (2) build and implement your program in collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders to build a sense of ownership among program partners, and (3) have the information and data to back up your assumptions to make marketing and implementation that much easier. Metro’s final suggestion is to make sure that your local health department is a partner as food businesses want to be assured that donations won’t get them in trouble with health inspectors.

*“ Focus on the local benefits and especially the positive community-building aspects— make it personal, local, and real. ”*

—Jennifer Erikson, Senior Solid Waste Planner, Metro



### Reducing Waste through Food Recovery

See also [Waste Not, Want Not: Feeding the Hungry and Reducing Solid Waste Through Food Recovery](#), a publication from the USDA and Environmental Protection Agency that needs updating, but includes case studies of comprehensive food recovery efforts and ideas for interesting partnership opportunities. Learn more about community food assessments (CFA), an approach that engages the entire community in discovering who has access to what kind of food and through what means, resulting in an action plan to develop a local, healthy, community-based food system, [here](#).



## Northwest Harvest

### Washington

- › **CHALLENGES:** large state, rural areas
- › **SOLUTIONS:** no fees, large distribution network
- › **STRENGTHS:** independent, sourcing nutritious food, gleaning, processing, board buy-in, direct relationships with farmers, adaptable, decline offers that don’t make sense for them

Northwest Harvest is a hunger response network that offers food to 350 food banks, meal programs, and at-risk elementary schools around the state of Washington. (Note that in Washington State, large distribution hubs service smaller food banks— referred to as food pantries or shelves in other parts of the country.) All inventory is made available to emergency food access sites for free with no hidden fees like handling, storage, or transportation. Northwest Harvest is an independent organization that does not accept money from the government and is not a member of Feeding America.

In 2011, the organization distributed 26 million pounds of food, an amazing two-thirds of which was fruits and vegetables. Of that 26 million, about 70% is donated. The remaining 30% is purchased on a monthly basis. The organization makes a concerted effort when purchasing food to lean toward nutritious foods, aiming to always have a steady supply of basics like rice, beans, pasta, canned tomatoes, rolled oats, canned fruit, and a protein item that is added to the donation stream.

Operating in the “richest agricultural region in the world,” Northwest Harvest sought to grow their efforts to source nutritious food. Their gleaning project bloomed from between 30,000 and 50,000 pounds of produce annually to 200,000. They credit their board of directors for providing strategic direction and support. Northwest Harvest conducts direct outreach to farms, makes sure that someone answers the phone when producers call, and ensures that staff can do tasks like drive tractors when needed. They have an email list of volunteers who can conduct home harvesting of fruit on short notice and they do not accept offers that don’t make sense for them (such as pasture land with no structure or water on-site). These guidelines have enabled the program to grow smartly, and they have the ability to tailor them as needed. They found that they could control and maintain the quality of produce if they process it (clean, bag, etc.), so they started doing that as well.

## Willing Hands Vermont and New Hampshire

- › **CHALLENGES:** food waste, rural area
- › **SOLUTIONS:** rescue organization
- › **STRENGTHS:** works regionally/interstate, healthy food including animal protein, effective storytelling to funders

Willing Hands picks up donated food, primarily fruit and vegetables which might otherwise go to waste, and delivers it to local organizations serving those in need. In 2010, Willing Hands captured and distributed approximately 208 tons, averaging four tons per week. Food donors include local grocers, farmers, bakers, and chefs. Food recipients include people of all ages throughout the rural Upper Valley region of Vermont and New Hampshire receiving assistance from shelters, food shelves, soup kitchens, low-income family and senior housing, rehab programs, and programs serving at-risk children, teens, and families.

In support of their primary program of food rescue and delivery, Willing Hands also runs a program of cooking workshops and taste-tests, operates an acre-size organic farm garden, and gleans surplus crops from the fields and orchards of local growers; the approximate quantity of produce gleaned in 2010 was 22,000 pounds. With a budget of \$110,000 and with the help of over 150 volunteers, Willing Hands operates 360 days per year. They pick up from 24 food donors, deliver to 55 organizations at least once each week, and offer all of their services free of charge.

Willing Hands was founded in 2005 by an employee of the [Co-op Food Stores of New Hampshire and Vermont](#), who was dismayed by the amount of nutritious produce that was being thrown in the dumpster every day. He left his job and, in collaboration with the Co-op, began to recover this food and give it away to folks who otherwise could not afford it. The Co-op Food Stores are Willing Hands’ primary food donor. Willing Hands makes 41 pick-ups every week, year round. Their cost per pound of food delivered in 2010 was 26 cents per pound. The organization has one delivery vehicle and a part-time staff; four delivery drivers, and an executive director. Volunteers assist as members of the board of directors; they also drive the delivery van on Sundays, run the farm garden and nutrition education programs, and are critical to the success of the gleaning program.

Willing Hands acknowledges how important each food donor is to their success but admits in particular how critical their collaboration with the Co-op Food Stores is and how it enables them to operate at nearly full capacity on a year-round basis. The Co-op is dedicated to their [triple bottom line](#) theory of business operation (social and environmental concerns in addition to profit) and is therefore committed to sustaining their relationship with Willing Hands. Multiple



pick-ups are made each day at their four stores. These frequent pick-ups serve the dual purpose of helping to move accumulated culled product out of the cramped and very busy back rooms of the produce departments and refreshing the organization's supply throughout their day of deliveries.

Willing Hands employees are trained to foster good relations with Co-op produce employees— cheerful working partnerships are essential to success. Donated, fresh goods are also received twice a week from a local bakery; milk is received intermittently throughout the year from a local dairy; eggs from a local feed store; and frozen meat from the Co-op Food Stores.

The organization understands how important it is that effective food access measures include the food shelves that are ultimately being affected by operations. They have had individuals from recipient organizations fill vacancies on their board of directors and are aiming to recruit another to join the board in the upcoming year. The board currently has one of their farmer/food donors as well as the former head of one of the largest food shelves/shelters in their service area. These folks bring a very important perspective to board level discussions.

Heather Bagley, Willing Hands' Executive Director, tells WhyHunger that “we would be happy to help others create Willing Hands type organizations in their region. After six years, we're still a young enough organization to remember the challenges of our early days! The main keys to our success have been to keep our overhead low, our operations simple, to respect our volunteers, to build strong partnerships with our food donors and recipient organizations, and to learn to tell our story effectively to perspective cash donors.”

*“ We have established a Veterans Free Farmers Market at the VA Medical Center each Wednesday through collaboration with Willing Hands. We started this Market to encourage our diabetic patients to eat healthier... We are proud to say, there have been over 11,000 veteran visits to the Market. ”*

—[VA Medical Center](#), Voluntary Services, White River Junction, Vermont



## › V. Food Bank Farms

Growing food at your food bank is another way to increase distribution of healthy, fresh food. A farm also provides a great learning environment and organizing tool for staff, volunteers, and clients to understand more about where good food comes from and to connect with local food.

### Bellingham Food Bank

Washington

- › **CHALLENGES:** cost of produce
- › **SOLUTIONS:** volunteer labor, inexpensive lease and infrastructure, avoid fees for organic certification
- › **STRENGTHS:** cheaper to produce than purchase, season extension, learning environment

The Food Bank Farm of the Bellingham Food Bank has operated since 2006. It is a three-acre farm utilizing two acres for crop production. In addition, two large greenhouses offer space for season extension and heat-loving crops like tomatoes. The yield from the farm— 15,000 to 20,000 pounds of non-certified organic produce— goes to the Bellingham Food Bank for direct distribution to clients. The farmland, its infrastructure, and equipment became available to the food bank at a very low lease rate right at the time when the organization was making a strategic effort to integrate agriculture into its operations. It was an opportunity that they couldn't refuse as it was offered as an ideal "turn-key" arrangement: it was ready to be farmed immediately.

The farm is maintained through a cooperative partnership with a non-profit farming organization based in Whatcom County. The farming organization covers the costs associated with paying a farm manager while the Food Bank is responsible for the lease agreement and any needed inputs, including the cost of water. Aside from a manager and a seasonal intern, labor at the farm is entirely provided by volunteers. The cost per pound of food grown at the farm is below that of food that could be purchased.

Food bank farms are a great way to procure high-quality fresh produce for food bank clients. It is a terrific way to engage and educate the public about food production and the problem of hunger. And the farm is a great place for large volunteer groups to learn about the food bank's mission, have fun, and build relationships that make communities better places.

### The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts: Food Bank Farm

Massachusetts

- › **CHALLENGES:** need to procure more fresh food
- › **SOLUTIONS:** capital campaign, purchased land, lease farm
- › **STRENGTHS:** CSA supports enterprise, receive share of harvest, environmentally sustainable

The Food Bank Farm is a 60-acre parcel of land on the Connecticut River Valley soils. Since 1992, the land has been farmed without chemicals, pesticides, or herbicides, with the primary purpose of providing fresh, healthy produce to households in Western Massachusetts that face hunger or food insecurity. In addition, the farm's 60 acres are protected from any development, preserving an important riverside ecosystem. This purchase was driven by the Food Bank's Board of Directors who voted to launch what became a successful capital campaign to purchase the property in 1992.

The Food Bank Farm operates as a production farm in partnership with Mountain View Farm. Mountain View Farm leases the land from the Food Bank, and in exchange, provides 100,000 pounds of fresh, local, chemical-free produce to the Food Bank. Mountain View Farm operates a for-profit community-supported agriculture (CSA) program available to community members, the revenue from which supports their farming enterprise.

The Farm is financially viable because of its partnership with an independent CSA farm. The Food Bank owns the land and receives payment for its use in the form of a share of the harvest. The CSA farm operators till the land for their CSA shareholders who provide the income stream to cover their operating costs. It's a simple arrangement that works for both partners.

## ➤ VI. Food Processing

**Processing fresh foods can extend their shelf-life and ease of use. Because the process can be complicated in high volumes, partnerships with appropriate organizations are critical to success.**

### The Center for Innovative Food Technology

#### Ohio

- **CHALLENGES:** extending shelf-life of perishable foods, encouraging adoption of healthy foods
- **SOLUTIONS:** light processing, innovative partnerships
- **STRENGTHS:** sensible growth, professional recipe development

Based in northern Ohio, the Center for Innovative Food Technology (CIFT) is taking agricultural surplus innovation to a new level. In partnership with the [Seagate Food Bank](#) and the [Society of St. Andrew \(SoSA\)](#), gleaned produce is making its way into the [Agricultural Incubator Foundation's](#) Northeast Ohio Cooperative Kitchen. Rescued surplus crops are lightly processed and flash frozen there for incorporation into the Food Bank's inventory, made available for distribution to emergency food providers and for final use by folks seeking food assistance.

The initiative began with the Seagate Food Bank independently working with farmers and food producers in the surrounding 18 counties to capture fresh foods, making them available to their network agencies at no charge. This initiative evolved into a grow-a-row program where the Food Bank began contracting with farmers to grow specifically for their inventory needs. The initiative's evolution continued as they decided to incorporate a gleaning effort that engages volunteers in the capture of farm fresh foods. The Society of Saint Andrew is a vital partner in this initiative as they have the expertise to assist with and facilitate large scale gleaning.

The participation of the Center for Innovative Food Technology and the Agricultural Incubator Foundation was made possible by a USDA Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development ([HUFED](#)) grant that made the Cooperative Kitchen

blanching and freezing operations a reality. The grant specified that the proposed project include components to aid efforts to reduce food insecurity. The partnership has resulted in the processing of several different crops, including bell peppers, string beans, apples, cabbage, and different varieties of winter squash. The Center has also generated a guide for gleaning in Northern Ohio that is available by contacting them directly.

Another key partner in the success of the processing operation is [Bon Appétit Management Company](#), an on-site restaurant company committed to socially responsible practices. They purchase and process local food and have helped the Center for Innovative Food Technologies develop its recipes, packaging, and processes. Products include a freezer slaw made with cabbage and peeled, steamed, and cubed pumpkin or winter squash. Both of these products are packaged in two pound deli containers that are just the right size for distribution to food insecure individuals.

In addition to the frozen, shelf stable products, the Center has compiled a cookbook for using local foods, filled with recipes to accompany the lightly processed products. This type of educational document is designed to help food recipients more easily incorporate the new food items into a meal.

## Salvation Farms

### Vermont

- › **CHALLENGES:** unused surplus, developing partnerships takes time
- › **SOLUTIONS:** processing, partnership with Department of Corrections
- › **STRENGTHS:** opportunities for growth, fresh food benefits institutional providers, contributing to state food sovereignty

Salvation Farms' mission is to increase resilience in Vermont's food system through agricultural surplus management. Their mission is achieved by fostering collaborative, cross-sector partnerships that engage and utilize available resources, skills, and knowledge to create efficient practices for managing Vermont's farm surplus. To achieve this end, they are developing the Vermont Gleaning Collective: a network of programs that actively engage community members in the responsible management of available farm fresh food resources. This statewide collective will consist of food-focused organizations, like the [Rutland Area Farm & Food Link](#) and the [Intervale Center](#), which are committed to increasing the states' food independence.

It is estimated that more than 85% of available surplus crops in Vermont— close to 2 million pounds— go unused annually. Meanwhile, Vermont has a food insecurity rate of 14%, and 54,000 meals are served in public schools daily (and 600,000 in hospitals annually). By tapping into creative partnerships with non-traditional institutions, Salvation Farms is working to increase the consumption of healthy, regionally produced foods by vulnerable populations.

Salvation Farms' director identified and approached the Vermont Department of Corrections as a potential partner four years before the Vermont Commodity Program found a foothold within the confines of the Southeast State Correctional Facility, a minimum security work camp. The organization has been adamant that the inmate work crews and the availability of a building within the facility are essential resources for erecting a cost effective and efficient aggregation and processing site for Vermont's farm surplus foods. After a half year of conversations regarding the integration of this vision into the work opportunities at this correctional facility, the theory was tested in late 2012 with an acre's worth of potatoes. The program anticipates a full winter of packing potatoes and the addition of piloting two new crops— winter squash and apples.

Over the course of 20 work days between November 2012 and June 2013, 22 inmates rotated through the "potato crew" to clean, grade, and pack just under 70,000 pounds of donated Vermont potatoes. On average, a crew of seven inmates contributed five hours per day resulting in more than 32.5 tons of grade potatoes (more than 200,000 servings), packed

into ten pound bags for distribution throughout Vermont to food shelves, meal sites, and institutional kitchens. More than 2,000 pounds of potatoes culled from the pack line were donated to Department of Corrections' meal programs.

Salvation Farms is currently contracted by the Vermont Department of Corrections to provide inmate work crew oversight and to develop a vocational work program to complement the Vermont Commodity Program work. Salvation Farms is raising funds to renovate a building within the facility to accommodate greater crop volumes and diversity. The organization is responsible for creating standard operating procedures, providing inmate training, and all food sourcing and distribution.

Salvation Farms is much more than a gleaning organization, building an agricultural clearinghouse without walls through multi-layer mechanisms for managing farm surplus foods by engaging cross-sector partners to fill essential rolls within the clearinghouse.

The programs are systems-based in design, social change-focused, and resource management-driven. Their approach as envisioned is a proactive, responsive system for managing food and building resilience. Their vision is based in collaborative partnerships to create relationship-based systems that are stable, nimble, and integrated into the culture of the state, therefore making them less vulnerable to the volatilities of the national and global food system.

## ➤ VII. Citizen Engagement Programs

**Encouraging people who are concerned about hunger in their communities to think beyond the typical canned food drive. Targeted food drives can build awareness about nutritious food needs, reduce the need to sort undesirable donations, help providers obtain needed proteins, and challenge assumptions about food preferences.**

Healthy, fresh food purchasing helps the local economy and ensures that purchases go towards fresh foods. Some programs move beyond food distribution to engaging the community to create solutions for their local food system more broadly.

### Houston Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association

Texas

- **CHALLENGES:** funding for healthy food access
- **SOLUTIONS:** consumer program, contributions from members
- **STRENGTHS:** providers can purchase what is needed, low barrier for engagement

The Houston Food Bank has been the recipient of generous donations from the Houston Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association's Gift of Produce program for the past 24 years. In 2010, the Food Bank received 1.25 million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables during the holiday season from the association. Produce donations came from produce distributors, grower-shippers, retailers, and members of the Association.

Getting the community involved in this effort has become an increasing priority for this program. As the Association is a volunteer organization, engaging citizens to get involved in the initiative is now seen as a vital component to increasing the success and growth of the program. In light of this community engagement desire, the Association had added the new Gift of Produce “consumer program.” Beginning in 2012, participating retail outlets will promote the new component and donate a percentage of sales from certain produce items; i.e., purchase carrots and five cents per pound will be donated to increase the distribution of fresh food through hunger relief efforts. The proceeds will be made available for fresh produce purchases by the Food Bank. This program shows great potential for replication, citizen engagement, and participation of retail partners in a new and innovative way that financially benefits the Food Bank, educates consumers, and makes fresh food access increasingly available to all.

## Pick For Your Neighbor Vermont

- › **CHALLENGES:** diversifying inventory of available foods
- › **SOLUTIONS:** citizen engagement, partner with growers
- › **STRENGTHS:** more local produce, positive for growers, connects different parts of the food system

Pick for Your Neighbor (PFYN) is a partnership program between the [Vermont Foodbank](#), the [Vermont Agency of Agriculture](#), and the [Vermont Tree Fruit Growers Association](#). During apple harvest season, citizens are encouraged to visit a participating orchard to pick and purchase extra apples for donation to the Foodbank. Donated apples are picked up and distributed to Foodbank network partners. Food shelves and meal sites around the state have raved about receiving fresh, local apples from Vermont producers.

The program began in 2009 and has seen a consistent growth, both in apple donations and participating orchards. “Along with staples and shelf-stable product, the Foodbank is diversifying its offerings by providing fresh, often local, fruits and vegetables to Vermonters in need,” says John Sayles, Vermont Foodbank CEO. “The Vermont Foodbank, with the help of a number of growers and food producers, is providing more than a million pounds of fresh food each year.”

“Pick for Your Neighbor has been a great program for Vermont apple growers. It’s a great public relations tool for them, but more importantly, it’s a way for them to stay involved with their local communities at a very busy time of the year. Apple growers are very proud of the healthful products they grow. They like to see the fruits of their labor going to families that appreciate and enjoy them.”

—Steve Justis, Executive Director, Vermont Tree Fruit Growers Association, Inc.

### Donations at Farmers Markets

In this engaging TEDxHonolulu [video](#), Vivian Chau describes the “Give It Fresh Today” (G.I.F.T.) program, which provides farmers market customers with an easy and convenient way to donate fresh, local foods by sharing part of their purchase.

# Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

## Oregon

- › **CHALLENGES:** community health
- › **SOLUTIONS:** farmer table, purchase match, healthy congregation initiatives
- › **STRENGTHS:** health is a shared community goal

The Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) works with more than 100 congregations in the state, a subset of which partake in their Interfaith Food and Farm Partnership, consisting of two major programs. The first, a produce buying club, is available for members to pre-order vegetables at wholesale prices through church staff. Once individual orders are collected, the church produces a combined order and places it with its partner farm. The farm delivers produce to the congregation, where staff and volunteers build individual pre-orders for members to pick-up. This occurs once a week and members who receive SNAP benefits or have WIC fresh food coupons are eligible to get a dollar for dollar match up to eight dollars. The second program is the farmer table. Each weekend, a table is set up for a pre-arranged farmer—typically an immigrant farmer—to table at the end of worship for members to purchase directly from the grower. Farmers rotate through a schedule so that an array of farmers can fill this market table throughout the season.

In addition to the Interfaith Food and Farm programs, EMO puts emphasis on the need to focus on communities that lack access to necessary resources for healthy, productive lives. They are developing guides to advise congregations on how to organize food drives that result in healthier food donations and are helping to establish policies that will set a standard for the types of food served at congregational gatherings, i.e., food purchasing policies. They have a mini-grants program that helps congregations create community gardens that reinforce healthy eating, healthy lifestyle choices, and increased physical activity within their membership. Wellness coalitions exist in collaboration between congregations. They measure through a “health index” the nutritional intake and activity level of members as well as help share what congregations are doing to increase healthy lifestyle choices through tracking progress, goal setting, and resources. EMO is also creating documentation regarding how congregations can become community kitchens and have this space be a resource available to the community as a revenue generator for congregations. A micro-enterprise guide for community kitchens is being created to support this effort. These community kitchen spaces have great potential to help farmers process and add value to their products in a certified kitchen.



### SuperFood Drive

SuperFood Drive holds a vision where hunger relief is synonymous with healthy food distribution. To simultaneously address hunger, malnutrition, obesity, and chronic disease, SuperFood Drive supports food banks and food pantries in transforming into healthy hunger relief organizations.

Visit [SuperFood Drive](#) to download free pdf toolkits, including:

- › Resources for food banks and food pantries,
- › Resources for hosting a healthy food drive,
- › Resources for organizations working with youth, and
- › Recipe cards for healthy meals that incorporate frequently-donated ingredients.



## ➤ VIII. Advocating for Change

Whether funding positions that work on policy or community food security initiatives, intentionally creating the space to advocate for long-term change can transform the ways larger food banks and governmental agencies do business. Healthy food sourcing is not only a procurement issue, it is a policy issue.

Implementing changes to nutrition policy or food sourcing at the agency level, such as declining food of little nutritional value, has a lasting impact. Advocating for change or applying pressure as a network of agencies, to local government, or to donors, or from the food bank or government level to the agency level can create food systems change.

### Westside Campaign Against Hunger

#### New York

- **CHALLENGES:** high sodium and sugar foods, quality of foods received through distribution networks
- **SOLUTIONS:** nutritional analysis, persistence, ongoing advocacy
- **STRENGTHS:** changed policies at city and state level

The Westside Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH, pronounced whis-ka) states that advocacy is integrated into everything they do and has a staff position —the Food Policy Strategist —responsible for overall supervision of the food pantry including food sourcing, food ordering, food distribution as well as advocacy for long-term systemic change in food policy in the Farm Bill and other legislation.

WSCAH has influenced the quality of food in emergency food programs by using a nutritional analysis of the food, maintained since 2000, to advocate for an upgrade in the quality of food coming from TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program— federal commodity allocations), Food Bank for NYC, and City Harvest. All programs now provide some fresh produce. Additionally, sodium and sugar levels in canned foods have decreased significantly in those food distribution venues. The Food Bank for NYC has committed to distributing food with sodium less than 140 mg per serving and sugar less than 6 mg per serving in canned goods.

The New York State Department of Health Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) now requires that all New York State Food Banks do a nutritional analysis of the food they distribute. They have called upon WSCAH to share the tools the organization has developed to gauge nutrition content of emergency food provider's inventory (see [Appendix](#)). This has also influenced wholesale food vendors, resulting in the Food Bank for NYC now being able to source low sodium items at the same price as the higher sodium items. HPNAP now encourages recipient agencies to move to a client choice model, which the spirited, now retired ED of WSCAH, Doreen Wohl, had advocated for for decades.

Since 1993, the West Side Campaign Against Hunger has partnered with Roxbury Organic Farm, a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm about an hour north of NYC. Weekly produce shares that are not picked up by CSA members are donated to the WSCAH's food pantry. Since this initiative's inception ten years ago, five CSA farms now donate their excess produce to the pantry. The annual value of these contributions, WSCAH estimates, is close to \$40,000. In addition to the CSA program, WSCAH initiated a pick-up from the Columbus Avenue Greenmarket in the late 1990s. When the rescued produce volume grew to more than two taxis could handle, City Harvest was contacted and asked if they'd be



interested in making this food rescue pick up. City Harvest now picks up from many greenmarkets and delivers produce directly to emergency food providers.

Growing out of the abundance of food donated by the Roxbury CSA and based on the simple fact that some of the West Side Campaign's pantry customers were unfamiliar with this bounty, the WSCAH secured one year of funding from HPNAP for food demonstrations in 2000. After that pilot year, they were able to expand this into a chef training program. The training program consists of four sessions of 12-week classes a year. Program participants learn basic cooking skills and healthy nutritious cooking.

The majority of the program graduates have gone on to take further culinary training, find employment, or develop home-based catering for special events, i.e. birthday cakes. WSCAH reports that, in addition to job skill development, a majority of these participants have changed their personal cooking and eating habits as a result of their enrollment in this program. Under the leadership of former ED Doreen Wohl, the impact that the WSCAH has had at the municipal and state level was achieved through prioritizing advocacy efforts, leading to change beyond the walls of their own food pantry.

## ➤ IX. Gleaning

**With a little bit of creativity and cooperation, we can reclaim our ability to provide healthy, nutritious food for all. Gleaning happens to be one of the solutions, effectively addressing problems of food waste, hunger, poverty, and carbon footprint through one simple act.**

Gleaning, the act of harvesting surplus produce from the field, has been a human tradition since biblical times. The Bible instructs farmers to leave the edges of their field unpicked so that people in need may reap the benefits of the harvest (Leviticus 19:9-10). Ruth, a figure from the Old Testament, survives and supports her family by gleaning crops. Over the past few decades, groups and individuals across the United States have begun to resurrect this ancient tradition to provide meals for those in need. One of the many beauties of gleaning lies in its simplicity—it acts as proof that not all problems need expensive technological fixes.

Gleaning benefits every person involved. Obviously, emergency food providers and their clients benefit from free, nutritious food, and the planet benefits from the elimination of hundreds of thousands of food miles of commodity goods transport. Volunteers have the opportunity to visit local farms and share in the bounty, and subsequently often leverage their purchasing power while buying food to support farms that they have visited through gleaning. Farmers get the advantage of publicity and the knowledge that the food they worked so hard to grow is addressing hunger in their community. Gleaning creates a thriving local foods economy that assures accessibility of food for everyone.

The mechanical harvesting techniques of many commercial growers nationwide and the cosmetic standards of our retail food industry combine to render a significant amount of any crop unusable for retail distribution. These factors produce a surplus often beyond the farmer's control as growers often produce in excess to make sure they can always meet the market's demand.

Gleaning extends the value that a farmer's crop has to nourish people without diminishing the farm's own profit. Properly organized, gleaning begins as close to the completion of a commercial harvest so that the food is as close to market quality as possible. Distribution is then immediate to ensure quality or properly stored for later use (if appropriate for the glean crop type).

Gleaning is a wonderful way to reconnect with our neighbors, the land, and the incredible ability we have to build a food system based on the needs and resources of local and regional communities.

When coordinating and directing a gleaning program, group, or event, there are a number of variables to consider, steps to follow, contacts to make, people to involve, and supplies to gather. Salvation Farms of Vermont offers the following guidance to act as stepping stones for organizations on their way to increasing food security in their communities through the practice of gleaning.

## Laying the Groundwork:

- › Find a farmer or multiple farmers who would welcome a well-managed volunteer crew onto their farms for the purpose of gleaning.
- › For each farm, determine a date or a sequence of dates, as well as crop type(s), rough amount(s), and area(s) of the farm to be gleaned.
- › Find a gleaning coordinator with vegetable farming experience or an association with the farm(s). This individual will help the farmer feel comfortable with the arrangement and demand little of their busy time.
- › Start collecting containers. Contact your local grocery stores. Ask them to save wax boxes and flats for the purpose of supporting regionally based gleaning. Be sure to pick them up as scheduled. Purchasing these containers can be costly. Depending on crop volumes, you may need to make this investment. You will also need field containers. These will likely consist of five gallon buckets and bushel size totes.
- › Establish your distribution site(s). Call the National Hunger Hotline 1 (866) 3-HUNGRY or go to [www.whyhunger.org/findfood](http://www.whyhunger.org/findfood) to find food pantries in your area. Investigate what connections can be made with your regional food bank. Where and when can produce be picked up by the food bank? Research potential local recipient sites. Where is your local food pantry, soup kitchen, senior care center, or early learning center? Make contacts, maybe volunteer at the site; find out if fresh food donations are welcome.
- › Be prepared to provide or have arranged transportation for donation deliveries or to cold storage for future pick-up. Do you know someone with a truck, wagon, or van? Does gleaning require you drive into the field? Can your vehicle do that? What are the conditions of the field, muddy or sandy?
- › Find potential storage options in case produce needs to be stored before distribution. Farms often have refrigeration units on-site; ask your farmer(s) for space or suggestions.
- › Make sure that you are educating your volunteers about the farm that they are gleaning from, about hunger, food loss, and local agriculture. Volunteers need to know what is expected of them. Make them aware of farm rules and task techniques. Please remind them that they are helping of their own free will, can leave whenever they would like, and can choose not to engage in any task they find uncomfortable.
- › Assist with necessary fundraising by soliciting your gleaning groups' friends and family. Ask local businesses for financial support or in-kind donations.
- › Keep good records. Track all produce amounts and crop types harvested from each farm and its destination. Keep track of time and money investments, as well as volunteer hours and mileage for personal vehicles used in the field or for produce deliveries.
- › Recruit volunteers. Run press releases in your area newspapers, hand out flyers, coordinate promotional events, and utilize social media outlets. All types of citizens make great volunteers; be creative about who you target as potential gleaners. Gleaning is a great way to engage groups that already participate in canned food drives to start thinking about broader food systems issues. It is also a good way to engage youth groups like Boys and Girls Clubs of America.



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## Resources for Volunteer Management

[www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com)

Susan Ellis, author of *From the Top Down*, is President of Energize, which assists organizations of all types with their volunteer efforts. The website is packed with resources and current topics in volunteer management.

[www.volgistics.com](http://www.volgistics.com)

Volgistics is an online tool for tracking, recruiting, and coordinating volunteers which requires a monthly subscription fee.

[www.nyava.org](http://www.nyava.org)

The New York Association for Volunteer Administration has an extensive list of helpful links.

[www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org) or [www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov)

Helpful websites to list volunteer opportunities.

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## In The Field:

- › You may need to arrange transportation or carpools to the farm. If providing their own transportation, volunteers should know where to park and meet. They should sign-in and out: name, time in and out, and contact information. First-timers should complete an agreement and a waiver of liability.
- › Prior to or upon entering the field, conduct a farm introduction. Educate volunteers about the farm, why the produce is available, establish rules, and the goals for the day. Introduce the farmer if he/she visits the gleaning group.
- › Be clear about where you are gleaning and what crops you are gleaning. Offer techniques for harvesting, handling, and boxing different types of produce.
- › Encourage conversation, water breaks, hard work, cooperation, and good morale. Always be ready and happy to answer questions.
- › At completion, tell the volunteers how much they've harvested and who will be receiving the produce. Make sure that the area is clean of any trash and that all supplies are cleared from the field.
- › All produce available should be collected, boxes weighed and labeled with at least its contents, source, and weight. Bring your field vehicle as close as you can to the gleaning area. It will offer some shade for full produce boxes and convenience. Field scales are often an important investment for tracking weights of product gleaned.
- › Have transportation arranged to take gleaned produce to your pre-arranged storage location or to emergency food provider sites as soon as possible to maintain the highest quality of product possible.

## Preparing Your Volunteers:

- › Provide directions and instructions for meeting at a participating farm.
- › Recommend appropriate clothing for season and harvest tasks.
- › Suggest water, snacks, and a watch if they need to leave at a particular time.
- › Advise using the restroom before coming to glean as these are often not available around most farm fields.

- › Encourage volunteers to give only what is most appropriate for their lives. Gleaning as a volunteer should always be fulfilling and never a burden.
- › Remind them to respect the farm, themselves, and each other.

To make your gleaning experience as smooth as possible, it is important to be fully prepared. Below is a check list of supplies you'll want to consider having on hand for any glean.

### Supply Checklist:

- |                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| › Boxes                          | › Scrap paper                         |
| › Bags                           | › Harvest totals tracking binder      |
| › Totes of varying volumes       | › Volunteer sign-in binder            |
| › Duct tape (best for wax boxes) | › Paperwork for first time volunteers |
| › Harvest tools; knives, shovels | › Calculator                          |
| › Work gloves                    | › First aid kit                       |
| › Field scale                    | › Rain gear; optional                 |
| › Pen, Sharpies                  | › Snacks & water; optional            |
| › Clipboard                      | › Sunscreen & bug repellent; optional |

### Gleaning Resources

These organizations are experienced at gleaning and can provide guidance and opportunities for newcomers.

## Society of Saint Andrew

### United States

- › **CHALLENGES:** food waste
- › **SOLUTIONS:** gleaning, deliver product to distribution site, minimal infrastructure, dedicated volunteers
- › **STRENGTHS:** years of experience, volume

Society of Saint Andrew (SoSA) Gleaning Network, started in 1988, is nationwide in scope and uses volunteers to glean fields and orchards after harvest to capture what would otherwise go to waste. In 2010, the SoSA set a gleaning record of 18 million pounds with more than 30,000 volunteers.

The Gleaning Network works in partnership with regional emergency food programs and food banks. SoSA fulfills the role of overseeing the gleaning process and the food programs/banks handle the movement of product from harvest to end user distribution. SoSA does not store any product: their regional offices are just that— offices— and do not include any storage infrastructure.

The Society staffs regional gleaning coordinators and trains field supervisors, who are typically volunteers. When field gleans arise, the coordinator will organize the necessary level of support from the partner food program/bank and determine if they will supervise the gleaning or if a trained volunteer field supervisor can take on the responsibility. The volunteer field supervisor can lead a glean without the gleaning coordinator, is fully trained, provided with supplies, and often has proven their ability through past commitment to the cause and experience in the field. Field supervisors maintain their role through a casual agreement; there is no official arrangement for these highly committed volunteers.

# Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

## Arkansas

- › **CHALLENGES:** food waste
- › **SOLUTIONS:** gleaning network, partnerships with trucking company and Department of Corrections
- › **STRENGTHS:** statewide network, high volume

The Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) and the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance have partnered to form the Arkansas Gleaning Project, a gleaning network within the state of Arkansas. SoSA and Alliance volunteers glean fields and orchards donated by growers. The produce is then given to local pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters that feed or distribute food to their neighbors in need. Alliance members serve over 900 hunger relief organizations in every county of Arkansas, making this a natural partnership. Wherever there is food to glean, there is a distribution outlet.

The Director of Food Sourcing and Logistics for the Alliance works directly with the Society of St. Andrew Gleaning Coordinator to help secure trucks, supplies, and labor for each gleaning. The regional food banks will supply trucks in their service areas when needed, but often a semi-truck is necessary. You will often see a Stallion Transportation Group (STG) truck in the field or along the highway delivering gleaned produce. STG is a valued partner of the Alliance, and joined the Arkansas Gleaning Project in response to the growing harvest amounts. The Arkansas Gleaning Project enjoyed rapid growth in 2010 when the Arkansas Department of Corrections committed inmate labor to the project. With the help of the Regional Maintenance Crews from the Department of Corrections, the amount of produce gleaned grew from 289,000 pounds in 2009 to over 800,000 pounds of produce in 2010.

These groups first met in May 2008. By October 2011, almost 2,000,000 pounds of fresh produce have been gathered. Arkansans in need have had healthy, nutritious items such as fresh cabbage, squash, sweet potatoes, watermelon, corn, cantaloupe, pears, apples, and tomatoes available to them.

# Ag Against Hunger

## California

- › **CHALLENGES:** capturing surplus produce
- › **SOLUTIONS:** work with growers and shippers, trade agreements, gleaning
- › **STRENGTHS:** cooperation, marketing volunteer opportunities, volunteers learn about the food system

Ag Against Hunger's mission is to alleviate hunger by creating a connection between the agricultural community and food assistance programs. Since 1990, the generous donations of surplus produce from local growers and shippers helped Ag Against Hunger bring 178 million pounds of produce to tens of millions of hungry children, adults, and seniors.

The organization has several means for obtaining fresh produce and their primary goal is to capture surplus fresh food from being lost and to deliver it to individuals who need access to nutritious foods. The Harvest Program operates from April through November collecting surplus produce from over 50 growers and distributors in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties. This program yields tremendous amounts of fresh food. During the winter months, there is no local produce grown in the valley where Ag Against Hunger is located, which has led the organization to pay trucks to travel to Yuma, Arizona once a week to collect surplus produce. The Sharing Program, rooted in the Salinas and Pajaro Valleys, grows lettuce, spinach, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, and strawberries for integration into the organization's inventory.

While this program yields some fresh produce, it does not provide the diversity that food banks served by Ag Against Hunger need. To help supplement, the organization has set up trade arrangements with the [Community Food Bank in Fresno](#), California and [St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance](#) in Phoenix, Arizona for their produce that is grown locally. In return, Ag Against Hunger sends a full truckload of produce and receives items like stone fruit, apples, and watermelons.

Ag Against Hunger's Volunteer Gleaning Program operates from April through November on a regular schedule that volunteers can find online. The program welcomes anyone over the age of four to glean. Volunteers commit just a few hours, meet at a designated area, and caravan to the designated gleaning location. Finding volunteers used to be a challenge until the organization hired a full-time marketing person. That staff person has been able to gather over 100 volunteers to assist with every glean.

While volunteers are a vital component to achieving successful gleans, Ag Against Hunger still needs to provide a coordinator, a truck driver, a truck, and all of the tools needed in the field. Funding will always be a challenge but grants and donations from the public are an incredible help. Without the involvement of the farmers, there would be no gleaning program. The program depends on them to hold a field (put off tilling surplus under), provide a foreman to supervise, and show participants how to properly cut the produce as well as provide portable bathrooms for their use. Gleaning can sometimes be challenging for farmers, so Ag Against Hunger knows how important it is to show how much they appreciate the effort of contributing farmers that are willing to work with the organization's needs.

“Gleaning is our way to reach out into the community and ask for help. Also, there is nothing more satisfying than actually picking the food that will be on someone's dinner table who is in need. We feel very strongly about preventing the waste of produce, and gleaning is just one more way that we accomplish that. And finally, gleaning is a wonderful teaching tool for our local volunteers. The largest industry on the Central Coast of California is farming. Gleaning is a way for our volunteers to step into the shoes of a field worker and to appreciate how food gets to their own table.”

—Lindsay Coate, Marketing Manager, Ag Against Hunger

## Rotary First Harvest

### Washington

- › **CHALLENGES:** sustainable produce recovery programs
- › **SOLUTIONS:** connecting people and resources, logistics support
- › **STRENGTHS:** use community resources, transportation partnerships

Rotary First Harvest (RFH) is both a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation and a program of [Rotary District 5030](#) that works with farmers, truckers, volunteers, and others to bring valuable skills and resources into hunger relief efforts in communities across Washington state. RFH considers itself a connecting point, an organization that can bring people and resources together through logistics coordination. They have been able to secure truckloads of produce, leverage the generosity of the trucking industry to offer free transport, and provide these truckloads to area food banks leaving further distribution up to them. This often results in 10 to 13 million pounds annually.

In 2009, Rotary First Harvest partnered with the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) to establish its Harvest Against Hunger program. Annually, 10 AmeriCorps VISTA have been placed with local food banks/pantries and central distribution program centers. Each VISTA has developed gleaning and recovery programs designed to serve the area in which they were placed, large and small farms, rural and urban areas, and worked to define scope, needs, and best practices. Rotary First Harvest has developed the [Produce Recovery Resource Guide](#) to assist organizations that would like to develop their own produce collection, gleaning, and volunteer outreach programs. David Bobanick, Rotary First Harvest's Executive Director, puts it quite simply: “Harvest Against Hunger helps organizations build sustainable gleaning and produce recovery programs that make effective use of the specific resources available in their communities.”

# Linn Benton Food Share

## Oregon

- › **CHALLENGES:** coordination of gleaning efforts
- › **SOLUTIONS:** support staff position, organizational support
- › **STRENGTHS:** gleans conducted by recipients, empowerment, partnership with processor

Linn Benton Food Share, a regional food bank serving Linn and Benton counties in Oregon, has successfully managed a gleaning program for 30 years and they attribute this success to the fact that they have staffed a coordinator position for program oversight. What makes the Linn Benton gleaning program unique is that the gleaning groups are all made up of low-income individuals who take home what they harvest. Each gleaning group is assisted by the Linn Benton Food Share Gleaning Programs Coordinator to help establish itself as a federally recognized non-profit, create a board of directors, and institute important operational systems.

In the Linn and Benton County region, there are 14 gleaning groups that consist of more than 5,000 members. These members capture surplus from stores and field gleans as well as work in the central Food Share warehouse to repack food for the region's groups and members. Linn Benton Food Share's gleaning groups are made up of 50% gleaning members and 50% "adoptees." Gleaning members often take care of obtaining food for "adoptees"—members who are physically unable to participate as active members.

*“ I don't know how I would survive without the gleaners. I can pay for my medication and eat and pay rent now; I don't have to choose. ”*

—Adoptee member of Mary's River Gleaners.

*“ Gleaning helps me keep my self-respect; I am not asking for a handout. ”*

—Gleaning member of Fair Share Gleaners.

An interesting component to the work of the Linn Benton Food Share is a partnership they have with a regional food processor. Local crops, such as string beans and corn, are donated frozen twice a month at a volume of 8,000 to 10,000 pounds and gleaners are charged with the task of packaging this locally produced and preserved product.



# Small Potatoes Gleaning Project of the Bellingham Food Bank

Washington

- › **CHALLENGES:** initially a volunteer-led effort
- › **SOLUTIONS:** provide administrative, infrastructure, and funding support
- › **STRENGTHS:** direct relationships with growers

In addition to its other fresh food programs, Bellingham Food Bank also runs a gleaning program. Initiated by a concerned citizen in the late 1990s, the program became a part of the Bellingham Food Bank's agricultural programs in 2009, when the founder realized that the larger organization could better support the effort with its infrastructure, administrative, and financial support. Incorporating the gleaning program into its suite of agricultural programs, the Food Bank was able to build on already established farm relationships and the credibility the project enjoyed among donors and volunteers who had been involved with it. The Food Bank immediately saw the importance of staffing a coordinator of this program to maintain the stability the farmers needed in order to guarantee a prompt and consistent response to offers of donated crops.

The gleaning program works with more than 35 farms and has created a guide to starting gleaning initiatives. This guide is available to others simply by contacting the Food Bank directly. Furthermore, the program has enabled deeper relationships with those farms, including the opportunity to harvest produce planted specifically for the Food Bank. These farms work directly with the Agricultural Programs Coordinator to determine which crops the Food Bank needs most. The program also gleans from farmers markets, delivering the fresh food directly to clients within walking distance of the market; this is a great way to stay connected to many producers and agricultural donors, as well as to food bank clients.





## › X. Grow Your Own

Engaging people in efforts to grow their own food has many benefits.  
People tend to eat more produce when they have access to  
and experience with growing food.

They feel empowered and are able to improve their household's food supply. Teaching people how to grow food can also be used as an organizing tool: to connect people to their local food system, to a healthy environment, and to their community. Some efforts blossom into community economic development projects as people are able to sell surplus products.

### Delta Fresh Foods Initiative

#### Mississippi

- › **CHALLENGES:** diet related disease, supply of fresh foods
- › **SOLUTIONS:** use existing community and church assets, grow food
- › **STRENGTHS:** intergenerational, culturally appropriate, leadership development, fellowship and community-building

As part of an effort to help prevent obesity, increase access to healthy, affordable foods, and encourage residents of the Mississippi Delta to become more engaged in healthy eating choices, the Delta Fresh Foods Initiative (DFFI) has supported the Growing Together project for the past three years. In collaboration with Delta communities, congregations, youth groups, students, educators, legislators, health clinics, senior centers, and grassroots organizations, over 50 gardens and hundreds of new gardeners have sprouted across the region as part of the project. With the goal of increasing the supply of fresh foods in the Delta by cultivating a supportive mentor network for new gardens and gardeners, participating growers attend regular information and skill-based workshops, travel around the Delta to visit other community gardens, and have the opportunity to enter into a yearly garden competition for cash prizes and public recognition at DFFI's annual Harvest Celebration.

And it's not only infrastructure that's being built— although land acquisition, soil cultivation, irrigation systems, tools, seeds, saplings, walking paths, and shade pavilions have all been realized— there is an equal value placed on the skills training, networking, idea-exchanges, fellowship, and empowerment that come from communally learning together, producing sustainable food, caring for the land, and providing nourishment for your neighbors. The gardens capitalize on the experience and knowledge of older gardeners and for young and inexperienced gardeners to learn new skills and to access, grow, and prepare food they enjoyed from their parents' and grandparents' gardens. "People are excited to grow the heritage crops they remember from decades ago— butter beans, squash, okra, field peas, greens," says Ryan Betz of the Delta Fresh Foods Initiative. "And distributing food to townspeople becomes yet another opportunity to knock on doors and spread the message of the church or catch up on neighborhood news while delivering healthy food."

The Growing Together network is part of DFFI's grand plan to build community-based collaborations that, in turn, build the health and wealth of the Delta. Across the nation, the healthy living wave has moved from the pulpit to the churchyard, the schoolyard, the backyard, and onto people's plates. It's powered by the notion that healthy food feeds the body just as faith nurtures the soul. Now, in many Delta towns, new and renewed farmers are teaching neighbors about the health and economic benefits of growing food for themselves. But while increasing the supply of fresh, healthy, affordable food is a critical piece of the strategy, there is something more at play in the development of community and congregational gardening. There is a profound sense of outreach and community-building inherent in the concept of community-

based agriculture. Many hands are needed to produce food from the earth— from the labor to the distribution, it's too much work to cultivate, plant, tend, harvest, and cook food alone. And just ask any grower who has had the awe-inspiring experience of harvesting mid-summer bushels of beans and multiple buckets of tomatoes— you can't possibly eat it all alone.

## Start a Church Garden

Congregational gardening can engender fellowship among church members while growing food for the community. And a shared garden plot can provide valuable fresh fruit and vegetables to underserved parishioners, retirement homes, or local food banks. Ryan Betz, coordinator of the Growing Together network for the Delta Fresh Foods Initiatives, shares five tips for getting started:

- 1) Get at least a quarter-acre of open space with full sun.** Some churches farm multiple acres at multiple sites. Talk to city officials in the planning or parks and recreation department for details about available lands and permits.
- 2) Educate the volunteers.** Provide gardening books, information from the local Extension service, or expertise from a church or community member. See [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org) for more information.
- 3) Fertilize to build the quality of the soil.** Find a local source for natural compost (such as gin trash) and fertilizer (such as horse, chicken, or cow manure). And don't forget the flowers. Not only are they pretty, but they also attract pollinators like bees and butterflies.
- 4) Plan church functions,** such as a dinner cooked with produce from the garden, to keep the garden relevant and demonstrate that the land and the food it produces have a real-life place in the congregation's shared fellowship.
- 5) Get the youth involved!** Have a parent-child day once a month so kids can work and learn alongside their parents. Connect the dots by harvesting and bringing the food directly to the kitchen for a cooking lesson and tasting session. (At other times, encourage adults to accompany children in the garden, lest you like trampled veggies.)



### Other Gardening Resources

#### [AmpleHarvest.Org](http://AmpleHarvest.Org)

AmpleHarvest.org is an online registry for food shelves/pantries to list their interest in receiving home gardener surplus. Currently the register exceeds 6,000 pantries nationwide. A visitor to Ampleharvest.org will discover an abundance of resources and information related to the issue of hunger and addressing hunger with whole fresh foods.

#### [Grow/Plant-a-Row](http://Grow/Plant-a-Row)

Many states promote the idea for home gardeners to grow an extra row for the hungry. Some initiatives are more formal than others. Some are promotional programs, instilling the idea of donating extra from home gardens to the hungry. Others are full-fledged organizations that grow on donated land, utilize volunteer labor to harvest, and donate the food to neighbors in need. Some initiatives are collection efforts to capture home gardener surplus and oversee a streamlined coordination of produce distribution. For more information, conduct an internet search for "grow a row" or check out these sites for more details: [www.growarow.org](http://www.growarow.org) and [www.americasgrowarow.org](http://www.americasgrowarow.org).





## Other Gardening Resources

### [Guerrilla Harvests and Urban Foragers](#)

In recent years, as times have become increasingly tight for many individuals, there has been a surge in the mindset of reducing our collective waste, increasing individual resourcefulness, and actively practicing frugality, freeganism (reclaiming and eating food that has been discarded), and the [sharing economy](#). Individuals are beginning to, independently or in collectives, take notice of the edibles going to waste in their communities. People are grazing from the lawns and trees of foreclosed homes and groups are mapping public fruit trees free for the picking. Two organizations that offer inspirations for this action are [www.fallenfruit.org](http://www.fallenfruit.org) and [www.concrete-jungle.org](http://www.concrete-jungle.org).

### [SNAP Gardens](#)

An amendment proposed by Senator James Allen of Alabama was added to the Farm Bill in 1973 allowing individuals who received food assistance benefits, now known as SNAP, to use these benefit dollars to purchase seeds and vegetable starts. Any retailer who currently accepts SNAP benefits can also sell seeds and plants. SNAP Gardens seeks to raise awareness about this option. For more information about SNAP Gardens visit [www.snapgardens.org](http://www.snapgardens.org).

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# Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona

## Arizona

- › **CHALLENGES:** long-term solutions, support for local foods
- › **SOLUTIONS:** teach gardening, mentorship
- › **STRENGTHS:** available land resources, self-determination, leadership development

The Home Gardening Program began as an initiative in Summerview, a neighborhood of Tucson, Arizona. The initial program started in a school and then garnered support from the Community Food Resource Center of the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona (CFB). The Food Bank applied for a grant from the Department of Economic Services and through this funding, the Home Gardening program was started with 20 families participating and its first garden installed in 2002. It became a permanent program of the Food Bank in 2004.

Joining the gardening program is free and open to any low-income person and membership includes free seeds and starter plants, free compost, access to tools to borrow, and printed material on various topics in gardening. There are also classes and demos on gardening, cooking, and preserving that give members skills to do it themselves. Workshops and trainings are given by certified master gardeners from cooperative extensions as well as by some of the graduates of the home gardening program who have become advanced gardeners. The program includes some general advocacy for families, such as navigating through the food stamp system. Gardeners are part of the program for a year.

When a family joins the Home Gardening program, the Food Bank assesses what is the best garden type for them. Once that has been determined, a group of volunteers from the Gardening Cooperative, which is composed of other home gardeners, volunteers, and CFB staff, go to the family's home to help install their garden, plant food, and add drip irrigation. The Gardening Cooperative volunteers will also help families with their first harvest and with planting for their second growing season. Some gardeners sell on consignment at the Food Bank's farmers market, but the produce grown is mostly for a family's personal consumption.

The success of the program can be attributed to the CFB's outreach and the satisfaction of the members. They started by doing demonstration gardening for clients and the interest grew from there. The Food Bank does cooking and gardening demonstrations at SNAP assistance offices while people pick up their good food boxes. However, much of the interest for the Home Gardening program is generated through word of mouth. The program has become so popular that there is a waiting list for it.

Working with a vulnerable population that is dealing with lots of issues outside of food security can be challenging. Dealing with other issues can take up a lot of their time. This just means CFB staff has to meet people where they are at. Gardening is hard but the beauty of having a group of people working towards the same thing is that there is a support system. It can also be hard to get funders to see the multiple measures that define the success of a home gardening program. How do you measure the success of the educational impact, the social impact, or the nutritional value that is being added to a family's diet?

The Home Gardening program achieves community food security at its most basic level. "Gardens grow food for families, of course. It provides families with the knowledge and skills to bring supplemental vegetables to their diets. There are the additional benefits of social engagement and physical activity. Trying to grow your own food gives you an appreciation for local farmers and brings more customers to local farmers markets. The potential that comes from this is creating a vital local food system. It challenges food banks to think about their practices and ask questions. Can we source more local food? What is the role of a food bank in sustaining local food systems?" asks Robert Ojeda, vice president of the Community Food Resource Center, which houses the program at CFB.



### Best Practices in Gardening and Mental Health

For more on the social and health impacts of gardening, see Community Food Centres Canada's toolkit. "If you look at the research in environmental psychology, it shows that gardening helps people recover from stress and it can help people focus less on their problems. Evidence has shown that gardening makes people feel more optimistic, gives them a regular routine, a sense of purpose and achievement." —Aimee Taylor, Vancouver-based horticulture therapist

Last year, Community Food Centres Canada filmed the Best Practices Session at the Gardening and Mental Health Knowledge Swap hosted by the Central Toronto Community Health Centre. The session consisted of five presenters from a variety of organizations offering different flavors of gardening and mental health programs. Each speaker gave an overview of their program and shared challenges they're facing and some lessons learned. The videos of the five speakers, along with other resources on mental health and gardening, are available on the [the Pod Knowledge Exchange](#) website. You will need to create a user profile to access the content, but it is entirely free.



## ➤ Animal Protein

Sourcing higher quality animal protein remains a challenge for many emergency food providers.

There has been some success including animal products as a purchasing option in [voucher programs](#).

Cooperative purchasing arrangements, where higher-income people supplement the cost of items for lower-income people, is another strategy.

Many supermarkets or food retailers will donate short-dated meat products.



## ➤ CHAPTER 2

And educating donors about the kinds of items that are needed during a canned food drive can result in more high quality protein options. But overwhelmingly, the complexities of food safety, processing, distribution, and cost make it difficult for emergency food providers to acquire lean meats and a variety of products for guests.

Many emergency food providers are resigned to the fact that quality meat sourcing is a problem without a solution because of the cost involved. There are a host of issues surrounding meat: food safety, transportation, perishability, few direct relationships, processing, packaging, buying power, and lack of expertise. Very few models for creative solutions exist. Most pantries resort to substitution strategies (yogurt, eggs, legumes) and distribute chubs of ground chicken and turkey when possible. The meat is of lower quality, high in fat, and in smaller quantities than they would like. For customers at increased risk of diet-related disease, the implications are higher.

Many pantries report the conventional thinking that if folks don't have meat, they have nothing to eat. Reduction strategies are an important facet of a host of nutrition education initiatives to encourage healthier eating. Physically demonstrating the serving size of a portion of meat with a deck of cards often resonates with people because it is easy to remember. Some pantries have a vegetarian pantry day, to encourage people to focus on a meal without meat. Such dietary changes take a long time, but by motivating, empowering, and respecting people, incremental changes do occur.

For inspiration and innovation, we can look to the efforts in the healthcare and school food industries that leverage purchasing power to change institutional food. [Health Care Without Harm](#) seeks to define and develop food purchasing practices that are consistent with principles of health and sustainability. By leveraging purchasing power, creating objectives, and sharing models, some hospitals are procuring antibiotic-free, sustainable meat. Similarly, [School Food FOCUS](#), a program of [Public Health Solutions](#), works to change food procurement practices and shares the results and lessons learned in different campaigns. Successful efforts include a reduction in the sugar content of flavored milks and the introduction of fresh chicken drums and leg quarters into Midwest public school districts, each documented in their online [Learning Lab](#).

Advocacy is another way to raise the standards of USDA commodity meat. Demand that the meat used in school food and other emergency food provision be subject to the same inspection standards as used in the fast food industry. Urge legislators to shift purchasing away from hormone-laden to antibiotic-free (ABF) poultry and meat, from chub packs of meat to leaner meats, and that more variety be made available. If institutional purchasers demanded higher quality product, we could move to healthier, more sustainable production.

### [Hunters for the Hungry](#)

Names vary, but Hunters for the Hungry is a cooperative effort among hunters, sportsmen's associations, meat processors, state meat inspectors, and hunger relief organizations to help feed those in need with wild game. During the 2009-2010 season, over 2.6 million pounds of deer, elk, antelope, moose, pheasant, and waterfowl were donated. Unfortunately, donations outpace the ability to cover the costs of processing, packaging, storing, and distributing the meat. All donated meat must be processed in a USDA inspected facility.

Since consumers might be unfamiliar with preparing game meat, the most successful efforts include cooking demonstrations, tastings, and recipe cards for items like venison stew.

### [Mennonite Central Committee Mobile Meat Canner](#)

For 65 years, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has operated a mobile meat canner from October through May. In the 2010-2011 season, over a million pounds of turkey, beef, and pork were canned and shipped to hungry people in the US and around the world. Local committees are responsible for raising the money to purchase and butcher animals, and teams of volunteers grind and can the final product. The success of the program is attributed to generating local support by engaging volunteers in the visited communities and by providing a unique, hands-on experience to thousands of people. Contact your [regional MCC](#) if donations are needed in your area.

## ► Transportation



With rising fuel costs, transportation is even more challenging on tight budgets. Large states have the additional challenge of hundreds of miles to cover. Leveraging transportation can be effective as a workaround for insufficient storage capacity.

## ► CHAPTER 3

# Food Bank for Westchester

## New York

- › **CHALLENGES:** variety of produce, limited cold storage capacity
- › **SOLUTIONS:** work with local farmers, rapid distribution
- › **STRENGTHS:** nutrition and meal preparation, invests in local economy, funding from Department of Health

The Food Bank for Westchester has two successful models for increasing access to fresh foods, the Green Thumb Program and their Rapid Distribution program. The Green Thumb Program is the result of the Food Bank's goal to identify a regional producer who could supply the desired diversity and volume of crops to create a weekly distribution program offering an interesting mix of products to end users. Each week, year-round, the Food Bank's Green Thumb Program's staff contacts one or more local farmers and places an order for a mix of four to five types of vegetables and two to three types of fruits. The local farmer produces much of the food to fill the weekly orders but will access his network of regional growers and wholesale providers, if needed, to meet the demand. The Food Bank will purchase all of the produce and on occasion may receive donated produce, too. For the success of the program, purchasing guarantees quality and volumes necessary to fulfill the parameters of the program.

Every Monday morning, when the produce is received at the Food Bank, volunteers are ready to pack it into bags—1,900 bags per week. These bags include a mix of crops that work well in meal preparation as defined by accompanying recipes. The recipes are provided in hard copy when the product is distributed, but it is a goal of the Food Bank to make these resources available online to its network. Set amounts are predetermined for the bags with a healthy and appropriate mix for a family to be able to consume over the course of a week. This program works because the clients love it and its impacts are multiple as it is focused on nutrition and meal preparation, not just calories. It also supports the local farm economy, serving as another market source for area farmers. The program has been made possible by grant funding through the state health department. There are no fees associated with the program to member agencies that receive and distribute these bags to their clientele. Recipients sign up to receive bags with member agencies; this information is relayed to the Food Bank and assists them with forecasting budget and ordering projections. A sample bag may include the following: one head of lettuce, a bunch of scallions, ten pounds of potatoes, one container of mushrooms, three pounds of carrots, one melon, and eight peaches. Some agencies chose to forego the pre-bagging in order to offer a more client choice-based set-up.

The Rapid Distribution Program utilizes the truck loads of produce available to Feeding America-affiliated food banks. Food Bank for Westchester obtains two truckloads per month, totaling 80,000 pounds, and distributes this product in three days. Over the course of three days, produce is transported to six separate sites (the same each month) and product is moved out of these locations within two hours. Logistically, this is relatively simple. The Food Bank truck delivers a pre-determined volume to the established distribution site, member agencies provide vouchers to clients, and clients redeem these at the site for the fresh food. Vouchers are collected, counted, and pounds per person calculated. Rapid distribution works around the challenging logistics that many food banks have with limited cold storage capacity and receiving truckloads of 40,000 pounds of produce at one time. There are no associated fees for agencies. In addition to the six regular sites, the Food Bank has nine additional alternative sites that consist of senior housing and [congregate meal sites](#) to assist with the speedy movement of this perishable product.





# Rotary First Harvest

## Washington

- › **CHALLENGES:** food waste, transportation costs
- › **SOLUTIONS:** address transportation and storage gaps, gleaning
- › **STRENGTHS:** collaboration, coordination, dialogue

Rotary First Harvest (RFH) works with farmers, truckers, volunteers, and others to bring skills and resources to hunger relief efforts in communities across Washington State. In their excellent 2009 report, [Hunger Relief Transportation and Storage Solutions](#), Rotary First Harvest sought to identify “transportation and storage capacity gaps that disrupt the distribution of food” in the state of Washington, although they can easily be applied elsewhere. They identified six gaps, namely the following needs:

- › to increase cooperative transportation
- › to continue to improve dialogue
- › for donated and reduced-rate trucking
- › for more community-based partnerships
- › to improve storage capacity
- › to expand clusters of partnership

In each section, they identify a few possible solutions, including transportation coalitions, a shared trucking communications platform, regional conference calls, cross docking (moving cargo directly from one transport vehicle to another with little or no warehousing), and obtaining donations of “deadhead” space (trucks coming back empty from a delivery). Rotary First Harvest seeks to coordinate and implement the lessons learned.

Rotary First Harvest has a comprehensive [Gleaners Resource Guide](#) in the [research](#) portion of their website. RFH also collaborated with [Salem Harvest](#), [Portland Fruit Tree Project](#), and [Oregon Food Bank](#) to host the Pacific Northwest Gleaners Conference. And, in collaboration with the Washington State Department of Agriculture and the [Washington Food Coalition](#), they held a series of Grower Round Tables to better understand and support grower relationships with the community. A [facilitation guide](#) and a [community report](#) summarizing the findings are available online.

### Other Transportation Resources

#### [Aidmatrix](#)

Aidmatrix’s programs are a collection of technologies, consulting, training, and support designed to empower organizations to deliver humanitarian relief more efficiently, whether through disaster relief, hunger relief, transporting relief, or other programs. Transporting relief projects include the [Feeding America Transportation Project](#) and the Texas Transportation Network, which link food banks to offers of donated or discounted transportation providers through an online Transportation Donations Management module.

#### [Move for Hunger](#)

Move for Hunger works with transportation and relocation services to deliver leftover food— often from a home move— to a local food bank. Move for Hunger further engages people in the shipping business by working with them to host food drives and awareness events in their communities.

## ➤ **Organizational Culture**



When staff at an organization decide to improve nutrition through healthy food sourcing and other initiatives, engaging everyone who interacts with the organization in this commitment is a critical factor for success.

## ➤ **CHAPTER 4**

# MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

## California

- › **CHALLENGES:** nutrition not reflected in missions and policies of food banks
- › **SOLUTIONS:** participatory process
- › **STRENGTHS:** collaboration, long-term solution

Not all change begins with sourcing healthier food. At some food banks and agencies, board members, staff, and/or volunteers may understand their organizational mission to solely be providing food to those in need, and whether that food is nutritious is a secondary concern. But that mindset is no longer the rule within the emergency food network. MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger recently helped 12 food banks across the country formalize their goal of incorporating more nutritious food into their inventories through their Healthy Options, Healthy Meals™ program. Research indicates that implementing a formal written nutrition policy leads to greater success in turning policy into practice. By identifying nutrition as part of the mission of an organization, some of the barriers to change can be circumvented and the organization adopts a culture of nutrition.

Through a participatory process, MAZON provides training and technical assistance and peer support in order to continue their commitment to learn and share with these organizations. MAZON also shares resources such as [Stepping Up to the Plate: healthy food access and the anti-hunger community's response](#) and [Improving Buy-in and a Commitment to Advocacy From Your Board and Staff](#) on their website. This approach— of shared learning and openness, rather than prescriptiveness— is a model that food banks can replicate in their work with member agencies. Building consensus can take time, but leadership, education, and full participation are keys to success. Sourcing healthier food, then, becomes part of a larger mission to create a healthy community.

# Food Bank of Central New York

## New York

- › **CHALLENGES:** high fat and sodium foods
- › **SOLUTIONS:** aligned vision and practice, declining unhealthy food donations, gardening
- › **STRENGTHS:** evidence-based approach, staff support and wellness initiatives

In 2002, the Food Bank of Central of New York (FBCNY) conducted an evaluation of the types of food they were purchasing and the nutritional value of that food. They examined foods with high amounts of fat and sodium and foods that were in high demand by member agencies. The fact that this evaluation took place can be attributed to two major factors: the awareness of the staff about the role the Food Bank could be playing in the obesity epidemic, and the openness of the executive director to hear the concerns of their staff and act on it.

The Food Bank also conducted a food preference study among the clients. They found that most clients preferred to receive staple foods such as proteins, fruit, and vegetables over candy and snack foods, the least preferred. Staple foods are also preferred because they are more difficult for clients to access. As a result of this study and the evaluation, the position of food sourcing and nutrition was merged so that these two functions were aligned in vision and in application.

Based on this research, in early 2004, FBCNY adopted a “No Soda, No Candy” donation policy that prohibited the receipt of soda and candy donations. The Food Bank decided to focus their distribution on healthier foods that were more difficult for their clients to access. This shift in nutrition policy required a tremendous educational effort for everyone and took three years to be completely realized. Staff would attend meetings with agencies to discuss the policy changes

they were making. They provided general education about products and nutrition education to their agencies' staff and clients. Donor support of their nutrition policy has been well-received. The key has been educating donors on the positive benefits of their nutrition policies and expecting a positive response to the changes.

The critical aspect of implementing their nutrition policy was the education and support of Food Bank staff. Without their support this policy would never be able to get off the ground. Staff members who interact directly with agencies were particularly important to have on board because of their close relationship with the agencies and their pivotal role as gatekeepers. Their support of the nutrition policies made them powerful ambassadors.

Another essential motive for the switch in nutrition policy is the FBCNY's view of themselves as a public health organization. From a business perspective, it is in their best interest to play a key role in promoting health in their clients. Their role as a health promotion organization also extends to the health of their staff in the form of employee wellness programs. Employees are given an extra 30 minute break every day for physical activity. A donor supplied the Food Bank with fitness equipment and staff regularly organize and participate in fitness challenges. A budget has been created for wellness staff and the staff dieticians conduct nutrition education classes based on employee interest.

The "No Soda, No Candy" policy also ties into FBCNY's role as a supporter of building a strong local food system and building towards community food security. They do that through starting gardens at member agencies and teaching clients about gardening in their Garden Containers program. It's through supporting local farmers by purchasing their produce and their value added products. It's in partnerships with the Department of Health and farmers markets association to accept EBT and seniors farmers market vouchers. It's also encouraging clients to patronize the smaller farmers markets thereby supporting more farmers. No matter the activity, behind it all is their intention to build community food security through empowering people to grow their own food, support local farmers, and strengthen their local economy.



### Food Banks as Preventative Healthcare Sites

Erik Talkin, CEO of the [Foodbank of Santa Barbara County](#), is a leading voice on reimagining the role of food banks in communities. In his blog, [From Hunger to Health](#), he shares the "story of how one organization on the inside of the 'hunger business' is trying to redefine what a food bank can achieve in transforming the health of our communities through good nutrition." In a thoughtful, humorous, and friendly way, he advocates for food banks to move towards community food security by focusing on nutrition. He argues that "nutrition helps people take control of their own situation and health" and is a means to address the ill health of our current food system. Read it to get more ideas and examples from this inspirational organization.



Foodbank of Santa Barbara County

# ➤ **Emergency Food Providers Engaged in Community Food Security**

Community food security is a broad-based, systems approach that looks beyond food access and the charitable supply chain while addressing the needs of low-income communities, supporting local agriculture, acknowledging community assets, and building community resources.



## ➤ **CHAPTER 5**

Creative, community-based approaches that engage citizens and build local control over their means to address food needs can create socially just, sustainable changes that transform the root causes of hunger, poverty, and a distorted food system.

## Massachusetts Avenue Project

### New York

- › **CHALLENGES:** few economic opportunities, healthy food access
- › **SOLUTIONS:** mobile market, incubator kitchen, urban farm
- › **STRENGTHS:** youth leadership development, uses food production as an organizing strategy

The Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) mission is to nurture the growth of a diverse and equitable community food system to promote local economic opportunities, access to affordable, nutritious food, and social-change education. Started by neighborhood residents in 1992, MAP has evolved in response to the growing economic and food security needs of Buffalo's inner city neighborhoods and the lack of resources and employment opportunities for a growing youth population. They have developed fruitful partnerships with the State University of New York at Buffalo, local farmers, food processors, marketers, policy makers, and community members. In 2008, MAP began a Mobile Market that sells seasonal, local produce, June through October, at different community sites around the city that are considered "food deserts."

In addition to the Mobile Market, the organization has programs that are unique in design and address food system, food access, and employment issues in Buffalo. Growing Green is an urban agriculture program that works to train youth as community food system change agents on a half-acre urban farm. The youth component includes Growing Green Works, a youth-run food business which markets value-added products, a Community Outreach group that plans youth led conferences and community events, and a Peer Education Group, in which teen trainers teach younger youth about food and nutrition issues.

Food Ventures is a microenterprise development program that assists low-income people to start food-based businesses. The Food Ventures program creates opportunities for self-employment and business ownership through the use of a shared commercial kitchen, business training courses, one-on-one technical assistance, and access to markets. Food Ventures' fully-licensed kitchen is staffed by a culinary professional to provide specialized assistance.

## Food Bank of North Alabama

### Alabama

- › **CHALLENGES:** addressing root causes of hunger and poverty, funding, not yet fully realized
- › **SOLUTIONS:** microenterprise
- › **STRENGTHS:** collaboration, long-term solution

In 2007, during a strategic planning session, the Food Bank of North Alabama's (FBNA) Board of Directors realized they did not have programming that addressed the second part of their mission, which is to seek proactive solutions to poverty and hunger. So they decided to give themselves an ultimatum: either create programming that works to eliminate the root causes of poverty and hunger or remove this point from their mission statement. Deciding to keep their mission statement intact and find a proactive solution to mitigate poverty, their strategy was to create a plan for

a social enterprise that would achieve systemic change by creating new jobs for residents and alter the dynamic of the Terry Heights Hillandale community, an economically distressed neighborhood of Huntsville, Alabama. Through a steering committee composed of community organizations, faith-based organizations, staff from the City of Huntsville Community Development department, members of the local farming community, and board and staff from the Food Bank of North Alabama, they proposed the creation of a cooperative grocery store located within the Terry Heights Hillandale neighborhood. The Pulaski Pike Market (PPM) would create jobs and offer convenient food choices, including fresh produce grown by local farmers, to Terry Heights Hillandale residents, many of whom lack reliable transportation. The worker coop model would create jobs that address the underpinnings of poverty, where workers earn fair wages with benefits, own an equal share of the enterprise, and accumulate long-term savings through equity in a viable business.

*“There needs to be a paradigm shift in food banking,” says Kathryn Strickland, Executive Director at FBNA. “We want to have a robust local food system that everyone in our community can rely on. Our projection of the amount of people we feed each year is approximately 100,000; we are not sure we are procuring enough food to feed that gap. The way to deal with this gap is through working on poverty issues through projects that focus on job creation, wealth creation, and really, wealth retention.”*

The real strength of the Pulaski Pike Market development process was their due diligence. The steering committee had to determine if the Terry Heights Hillandale neighborhood, despite its concentration of poverty, could sustain an independent, cooperative grocery store that would benefit both low-income, urban residents and small, rural farmers. For over two years, the committee carried out extensive research on the grocery industry and cooperative management. Steering committee members attended national conferences on worker cooperatives, food cooperative management, and community food security. The committee conducted site visits to food coops and independent grocery stores. It was important to have real data because the steering committee didn't want to move forward unless their plan was viable. Another key aspect was building partnerships with various stakeholders. Their intentionality in research and relationship building allowed the committee to raise \$1 million in nine months for start-up costs.

Eighty percent of the food proposed for the Pulaski Pike Market would be conventional food options, which is what consumers wanted, with the idea that nutrition education, including seasonal food cook-offs, in-store sampling, and community food celebrations would help introduce fresh, sustainably grown fruits, vegetables, and other local foods to the grocery store. PPM planned to partner with the Clean Food Network (CFN), a network of local family farmers who pooled their resources in order to keep their farms in production. The PPM business model was designed to create an enterprise that mutually benefitted residents of a distressed urban center and farmers who were from rural areas, had limited resources, and/or were just starting out in their farming careers. “Fifty-four percent of farmers in Alabama are having net gains,” says Strickland. “Consumers are spending \$2.2 billion on food. We want to bring some of that consumer money to our local farmers. We are supporting a viable base of local farms for our future and supporting local farms is paramount to feeding clients and creating a vibrant local food system.” The Pulaski Pike Market would have met the infrastructure needs of CFN by housing its distribution center and address the Network's outreach needs because the grocery's marketing strategy would promote not only the store but also the farmers who supplied it. In exchange, CFN would augment the grocery's conventional merchandise plan by supplying it with fresh, sustainably grown fruits, vegetables, and other local foods.

Unfortunately, the Pulaski Pike Market was not implemented because the steering committee was unable to secure enough funding. However, this process also taught them valuable lessons and highlighted a lot of their strengths. The need for access to credit to build food systems was a major lesson. This led one of their partners, Neighborhood Concepts, to launch a loan fund that offers microcredit to farmers, with the hope that it will eventually become a Community Financial Development Institution, a financial institution that provides credit and financial services to underserved populations. The importance of building strong partnerships was another major lesson which PPM did quite well and allowed them to accomplish as much as they did, including having community buy-in, political will, and raising \$1 million.

The Food Bank of Alabama still continues to work on proactive solutions to ending hunger and poverty such as matching local farmers with local institutional buyers. They are also helping the Terry Heights Hillandale community launch a farmers market that will accept EBT and do general outreach to farmers markets in North Alabama to accept EBT. One of

their main principles is to continue to support local food distribution and to try to be a food hub. According to Strickland, these are the types of projects that food banks should undertake and the role that they should play in the food system.

*“ We resist doing direct service because we don’t want to compete with our agencies. We should maintain our relationship as a distributor within the food system. This gives us a more systemic view. We encourage other food banks to adopt a systems view. From this perspective we can identify and work with the key players in the local food system. When the food system is healthy, there is a crossing of sectors and there is a feedback loop. It’s about supporting those cooperative and viable relationships and keeping it vibrant and alive. We have the resources to start things like loans. We realize that it is not a quick fix but a long-term building towards systemic change. It takes persistence and time. There will be things that don’t work but there is an incredible depth of learning that comes out of that. ”*





## » Lessons Learned

### Interstate Regions and Collaboration

Many charitable/emergency food providers and food assistance programs work within certain political boundaries, often defined by zip code, town, county, or state lines. What happens when an organization creates programs to serve a region that crosses the boundary lines that distinguish one organization's jurisdiction from another's? Willing Hands in the Upper Valley region of Vermont and New Hampshire is a good example of this. They are small and grassroots and thus have the freedom to create boundaries of service as well as food sourcing that better reflect the needs and assets of their community. However, organizations certainly want to be cautious about how they are working when it comes to being neighborly with another organization. Collaboration is key when working on food access and justice issues and airing on the side of transparency helps build relationships. Often resources are scarce and action can be short-sighted when wanting to meet missions. Stepping back and getting the big picture view is very important when learning how to define the boundaries but respect bordering organization's needs and objectives.

When multiple food banks around a state or multi-state region are aggregated for the purposes of food sourcing, massive amounts of surplus product can be captured and put to good use. When managing surplus from a particular region, working in collaboration with other emergency food providers allows for an abundance of surplus to be captured due to the greater range of distribution locations. Such is the case with the California Association of Food Banks or Ag Against Hunger. These organizations are in a region that produces large volumes, has multiple outlets for surplus, and serves a great need. Surplus from a region that produces large volumes (food rich) can be absorbed by food access sites in that area and can also be made available to regions that lack the abundance of food resources (food poor). Interestingly, food rich and food poor regions can swap these characteristics depending on the season.

*“ Feeding America is the nation's food banking network. Feeding America members are bound by contract to honor service areas when soliciting donors, whether for product or funds. Service areas are set up by state when there is only one member food bank in a state or by counties when there are multiple member food banks within a state. Service areas define, for a member food bank, both the food donor resources and the population in need which the entity is responsible for developing, maintaining, and servicing all aspects of all relationships. For example, there are nine food banks in the six New England states. There have been times during the history of food banking when service areas have not been honored, causing confusion for the donor and mistrust for the food bank whose service area was not honored. At the end of the day, food banks have to honor a donor's wish as to which food bank will receive their product. However, consistent messaging to and education of the donor by the food banks can greatly enhance all relationships. Currently in New England, food banks “source to excess” and share surplus product in their service area with other food banks.”*

—Ann Cote, Product Management Director, Connecticut/Boston Partnership

It is thought-provoking to consider what possible limitations we have set upon our organizations by defining our service area or how we have excelled at our work based on maintaining our focus and commitment to a well-defined area. Either way, organizations must continue to look at fresh ways of operating in order to make sure they are best serving their constituents, contributors, and the organization itself. Sometimes this means changing patterns and areas to increase impact and efficiency. Working in collaboration, sharing resources, and being aware of each other's strengths and needs is a very smart approach to meeting the end objective of one's service mission.

### Building Lasting Relationships

When working in the non-profit sector and specifically in serving basic human needs, it is important to think about the relationships that you and your organization have. How are these established and maintained? What type of value do you place on your working relationships? Are your relationships transparent, focused on a common end goal, or are they one-sided and self-focused?

As we strive to build increased food security for our fellow citizens, we must see and meet everyone as equals. Working relationships must be seen as a way out of the situation we are all trying to eradicate. Whether you are approaching for the first time or have been working for years with a food manufacturer, farmer, soup kitchen manager, transportation worker, social services staff, or community-based food justice organization, you must portray a clear vision, persistence to meet the ultimate goal, optimism that envisioned achievements can be obtained, consistency in your message and service, efficiency in your communication and work, and sincerity in your words and actions. In essence, you must portray genuine conviction, knowing that the collaboration in which you are involved is the way to truly fulfill all needs unmet and that it is only through these relationships that that end will be met.

*“ If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together. ”*

—Lilla Watson, Indigenous Australian activist and artist

## Approaching and Working with Farmers

No matter the scale of his or her farm, a farmer is always busy. It is always best to call or email prior to just stopping by, as it is common courtesy. But often, the best way to actually speak to a farmer is to just stop by the farm. First, it is very important that you state the obvious fact that you are fully aware of how busy the farmer is and that your intention is not to take much of their time, but that you just wanted to meet them, introduce yourself, and tell them a little about the work that you do. At this point, let them provide the signals for how long the conversation should last— essentially, how long they are willing to stop work. Presenting a clear proposition for the relationship you desire to have with them is of utmost importance. Be sure to leave them with your contact information and if nothing else, make sure you make a good impression, one that shows them you know something about farming or at least that you are fully determined to do what you proposed to do with/for them. Winter or the off-season is often a good time to connect with a farmer. At this point, you can often find a farmer in the house (if their farm is located on their home property), in the office, or in the greenhouse if it is seed starting time.

Once you’ve made contact, be sure that you maintain the same level of appreciation for and attentiveness to their time as you did on your first visit. Farmers tend to be straight shooters— so start honing your skills. You’ll want to learn how to be direct in your needs and clearly provide the information they need in order to consider what you are proposing. Also, always follow through on your word, be sure to display your ethic for and dedication to hard work, and always be consistent and outwardly thankful. All of this will leave most farmers impressed and receptive. Other than that, there isn’t much else to meeting and working with farmers— unless you become friends. Then it’s a whole new ball game.

*“ Let us not forget that the cultivation of the earth is the most important labor of man. When tillage begins, other arts will follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of civilization. ”*

—Daniel Webster, 14th and 19th US Secretary of State

## Working with State Department of Corrections

The incarcerated of our country have the right to participate in opportunities that build character, skills, and self-worth through contributing in a positive way to our society. By engaging these individuals in working and learning opportunities that pertain to agriculture, food production, food processing, and culinary skills, they will leave our nation’s correctional facilities better poised to become active participants in society, with skills and experiences to contribute to a system so important to our communities— our food system. As explained by Barb Hagen, who directs the garden program at the Swanton, Vermont correctional facility, “when inmates are given the opportunity to produce something like a garden full of crops, they grow very proud, gain ownership, and display a dedicated responsibility to maintaining their portion of the garden.” She also explained that most of the inmates preferred to see the produce they grow be donated to the local

food pantries, and that this added to their pride, their sense of responsibility as a community member, and their ability to identify with the needs of others.

## Food Bank Farms

Do we need to produce more food to feed the nation's hungry? When it is believed that we throw away up to 40% of our food supply annually, should we be using donor dollars and volunteer labor to produce more food? Or do food bank farms serve a different purpose in addressing food access and food insecurity than just mere food production?

It is important to engage individuals in the physical act of food production, as many of us have grown distant from this very basic survival skill. It is also important to make sure that undernourished individuals have access to fresh, wholesome foods. Community gardens and farms, often non-profit-based, are wonderful places for learning and youth-based programs. Agricultural work is grounding, making engagement in farm-based activities, including those at food bank farms, an ideal way for families to work together while contributing to an important cause.

Is there a more creative and responsible way to provide the fresh and nutritious food that these farms and gardens produce? Or are we keeping farming alive in our culture by reintroducing farming through food banking? Are we aiding the retention of agricultural land by farming for charity? And is this the step where the charitable/emergency food industry openly acknowledges the importance of farms in our national food system? Is this us ultimately acknowledging that, first and foremost, farms are where food comes from?

Food bank farms are not necessarily the most efficient means of growing food at high volumes. But, as we have seen, farming and gardening projects serve many purposes in addition to production: awareness raising, educational (science, nutrition, etc.), skill and leadership development, reconnecting people to the land and whole foods, building community resilience, providing beautiful open outdoor space, and as an organizing strategy to engage folks in broader systems change and activism.

“*Eating is an Agricultural act.*”

—Wendell Berry, Academic, Author, and Farmer



## » Conclusion

In the preceding profiles, we shared stories and strategies from food banks and food pantries seeking to improve the nutritional quality of the food they distribute.

There are many more examples, and we hope to continue to hear from readers about additional ideas. We intend to update this guide periodically to keep us all learning.

We believe that we are in the midst of a considerable cultural shift within emergency food. Consumers are more educated, often battling diet-related disease, and seek better quality food. Funders are interested in scalable social change, and providers are evaluating their successes and challenges over the past three or four decades. Our response to chronic hunger in the US has not ended or resolved the problem. As a result, in some communities, food banks are expanding their role in direct service. Many food banks are moving away from seeing their role as solely managing supply chain logistics to including programming on nutrition education, sourcing healthier food, and experimenting with or expanding their public role.

Taking action to improve nutrition and quality of food is also a good entry point to a deeper analysis of poverty and the structural conditions that produce inequity and a distorted food system. The USDA defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.” This definition addresses health, nutrition, and access, but it falls short. When we focus our attention solely on access (through the acquisition and distribution of food), we don’t address why some people are low-income and why some people have difficulty accessing food in the first place. We don’t address the lack of living wage jobs, deepening inequality, lack of affordable housing and childcare, spiraling medical costs, concentration of wealth, lack of social support for our elderly or veterans, or racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression that lead to increased likelihood of food insecurity.

*Community food security*, on the other hand, is a condition in which “all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.” This definition prioritizes the entire food system and the environment, envisioning a future where we don’t have an ancillary distribution system for low-income people. It acknowledges self-determination—in communities and with food preferences—and the ability to realize one’s full potential. As a vital part of the food system, food banks can leverage their respected role in the community to tackle broader systems change. We can work to improve resiliency and justice in our communities.

But how do we improve resiliency and justice without addressing the consolidation of agriculture and resources in our food system? *Food sovereignty* asserts the rights of people to define their own food systems. We are all eaters, and we are all impacted by an unhealthy food system. When production is concentrated in the hands of a few corporations, we all have fewer options. This definition acknowledges the role of commodification and the inequities that arise in an economic system that exploits finite resources. To think of food as a right rather than a commodity is a helpful frame to acknowledge the role that each of us plays in this work: the health and justice of our communities has been impacted by consolidation of control. Coined by La Via Campesina, an international movement of peasant organizations, food sovereignty has been a helpful tool in the global South to hold governments accountable for ensuring access to food, eliminating obstacles and addressing the underlying reasons why people have difficulty accessing food in the first place. Many countries, such as Venezuela and Brazil, have seen significant reductions in extreme poverty by organizing with this framework. As we have seen in other historic rights-based movements throughout history, social change happens through a combination of legal protection and cultural shift. We can create a society in which it is unacceptable to have chronic hunger and an agricultural system that contributes to climate change, environmental degradation, injustice, and health disparities.

“ Food sovereignty is 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. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. ”

—**Declaration of Nyéléni**, the first global forum on food sovereignty, Mali, 2007

On a recent talk promoting his book [The Stop: How the Fight for Good Food Transformed a Community and Inspired a Movement](#), Nick Saul of Community Food Centers Canada asked the following questions about emergency food: “Does it reduce hunger? Does it increase health? Does it lead to a path out of poverty? Does it lead to stigma? Does it deepen divides between those who give charity and those who receive it? Is it a moral release valve, enabling us to feel good while absolving responsibility?” He went on to acknowledge that some agencies might need to close if they can’t make the necessary changes to promote health, dignity, and civic engagement. If we continue to reflect on these questions in our work, it will certainly shift some of the ways that we operate.

The movement to re-examine and change emergency food is building from the organizations themselves. In September 2013, the Community Food Bank of Arizona and allies hosted [Closing the Hunger Gap](#), a conference for progressive emergency food providers across the country who are interested in moving beyond charitable distribution. Providers attended workshops, networked, and identified seven areas of interest and exploration through a facilitated process: Food Banks as Public Health Institutions, Food Banks in Symbiotic Relationship with Local Food Producers, Capacity Building and Convening, Creating and Sustaining a Culture of Innovation and Learning, Becoming Community Economic Builders, Food Banks as Community Organizers and Social Justice Advocates, and Food Banks as Public Policy Leaders. The conference report is available on the website, and marks the start of a coordinated, transparent effort to share ideas and advance food banking into a more justice-oriented approach.

We look forward to learning more from emergency food providers and continuing to share innovative ideas so that we can all build a movement to end hunger and poverty and transform our broken food system.



## » Definitions

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**Client Choice** Food banks, shelves, and pantries that provide a shopping atmosphere, allowing the client to pick food items that they want to take home, are considered client choice. If an emergency food provider site does not offer client choice, the mode of operation is providing clientele pre-packaged bags or boxes with food products regardless of whether the client wants or will use the food products contained within.

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**Community Action Program (CAP) Agency** Community-based and found throughout all states in the nation, CAP agencies provide assistance to individuals in need in accessing programs that aid with most basic needs such as housing, food, and fuel.

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**Congregate Meal Site** Free community meals, soup kitchens, and sites providing hot meals to large groups of people are known as congregate meal sites. Some of the sites are supported by federal funding and others are grassroots community organized meals, many occurring at churches or senior centers.

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**Emergency Food Providers** Food banks, shelves, pantries, congregate meal sites; all nongovernmental organizations serving food insecure individuals with food products and meals are considered emergency food providers.

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**Food Banks** Food banks are non-profit hunger relief organizations that secure large volumes of food for distribution to agencies that serve food insecure individuals. Food banks typically do not serve individuals directly but this is not always the case with every food bank in America. Many food banks in America are part of the national [Feeding America](#) network.

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**Food Pantries / Food Shelves** Food shelves/pantries are community-based organizations that serve individuals who are food insecure. In some instances, food banks will also act as a food shelf/pantry serving individuals.

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**Procurement** In food banks nationwide, it is typical to have a staff person who is solely responsible for obtaining food products for distribution. Procurement is the sourcing of goods, in food banking these food items can be donated or purchased.

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**Re-pack** When fresh fruits and vegetables are donated, rescued, or gleaned, this time-sensitive perishable product often needs to be assessed for quality. Re-packing is the process that typically engages volunteers to look through this product and re-pack the items that have quality deemed worthy of distribution.

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**Value Added Processing (VAP)** Food banks may have associated costs with obtaining large volumes of produce direct from growers or distributors known as “value-added processing” (VAP) fee. This fee is typically several cents on the pound and often covers the grower’s/packer’s cost of packaging a product, i.e., potatoes in five pound bags.

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# Appendix

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Analysis of Nutrition Facts  
of 300+ foods purchased  
thru the Food Bank for  
New York City

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Developed by  
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Updated by  
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October 2011

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**WEST SIDE CAMPAIGN  
AGAINST HUNGER**  
263 West 86 Street  
New York, NY 10024

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## Heading Abbreviations:

Ca	Calcium
Cal	calorie
CHO	carbohydrate
Chol	cholesterol
Cp	cups
D	Donated
DV%	Percent Daily Value
E	EFAP
F	Food Bank
Fb	fiber
Fe	Iron
Gm	gram
K	potassium
Mg	milligram
Na	sodium
Oz	ounce
Pro	saturated
Srce	source
Sug	sugar
Sv	serving
Sv/ct	servings per container
T	TEFAP
W	Wholesale

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## Health Tips:

**Sodium:**  
content per serving:

140mg – low  
480mg – high

Recommended:  
180mg or less

**Sugar:**  
Recommended:  
10mg or less





**EFAP/City Council**

Item No.	Item	Brand	tot oz	tot gm	sv cp/oz	sv gm	sv/ct	cal	fat cal	tot fat gm	sat fat gm	trans fat gm	chol mg	Na mg	K mg	Carb gm	fb gm	sug gm	pro gm	Vitamin				Mineral					
																				A DV%	C DV%	Ca DV%	Fe DV%	Mg DV%	P DV%	Cu DV%	Zn DV%		
<b>Vegetables</b>																													
E27044	Corn, whole kernel golden	Hudson	15.25	432	.5 cup	123	3.5	70	0	0	0	0	0	180	0	13	2	2	2	4	0	0	0	0					
E27041	Green Beans, no salt added	Tendersweet	14.5	411	.5 cup	120	3.5	20	0	0	0	0	0	15	75	4	2	2	<1	4	6	2	0	0	0				
E26006	Spaghetti Sauce	Furman's	15	425	.5 cup	127	3.5	50	5	1	0	0	0	140	0	11	1	5	1	8	10	2	4	0	0	0			
E27013	Potato Flakes	Super Spud	26	737	1/3 cup	19	39	70	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	14	1	0	1.5	0	4	0	0	0	0				
<b>Fruits</b>																													
E26018	Applesauce, unsweetened	Applesnax	24	678	4	113	6	45	0	0	0	0	0	20	45	12	2	10	0	0	30	0	0	0	0				
E14023	Juice, Apple	SunPac	5.24	155mL	5.24	155mL	1	72	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	18	0	15	0	0	65	1	1	0	0	0			
E14003	Juice, Apple	SunPac	46	1.36L	8	240mL	6	112	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	27	0	23	0	0	100	2	2	0	0	0			
E14009	Juice, Cranberry Cocktail	SunPac	46	1.36L	8	240mL	6	120	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	31	0	31	0	0	100	0	3	0	0	0			
EK14002	Juice, Grape	Kedem	32	946mL	8	240mL	4	150	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	37	0	37	<1	0	20	0	0	0	0	0			
E14022	Juice, Pineapple	SunPac	5.24	155mL	5.24	155mL	1	85	0	0	0	0	0	<1	0	21	0	21	0	0	64	2	2	0	0	0			
E10016	Raisins	Boghosian	9	252	1 box	42	6	130	0	0	0	0	0	10	310	31	2	19	1	0	0	2	6	0	0	0			
<b>Grains</b>																													
Rice:																													
E24003	Brown Rice	Gulf Pacific	16	4545	.25 cup	42	10	150	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	32	1	0	3	0	0	0	4	0	0	0			
E24001	White Rice	Gulf Pacific	16	454	.25 cup	45	10	160	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	0	0	3	0	0	0	8	0	0	0			
Pasta:																													
E21016	Elbow Macaroni, Whole Wheat	Columbia	16	454	2	56	8	200	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	40	5	2	8	0	0	0	10	0	0	0			
E21003	Spaghetti	Columbia	16	454	2	56	8	200	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	42	2	2	7	0	0	0	10	0	0	0			
Cereal:																													
E05016	Crunchy Granola Raisin Bran cereal	Ralston Foods	18.2	516	1 cup	53	9	190	10	1	0	0	0	180	170	44	4	20	3	15	0	0	25	10	10	8	25		
E05017	Oatmeal, Instant	Ralston Foods	11.8	336	1 packet	28	12	100	20	2	0	0	0	80	0	19	3	0	4	20	0	4	20	0	10	45	0	10	0
E05013	Toasted Oats	Tasteeos	14	397	1 cup	28	14	100	15	1.5	0	0	0	190	170	21	3	1	3	10	10	10	50	10	15	6	25		
<b>Protein</b>																													
Beans:																													
E23018	Beans, Kidney, can	Sunwise	15.5	439	.5 cup	130	3.5	110	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	19	6	2	7	0	0	4	10	0	0	0			
Fish:																													
E15020	Chicken, canned, in broth	Butterfield Farms	29	822	2	56	15	80	30	3.5	1	0	35	250	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	2	0	0	0			
E15019	Chicken, canned, in water	Crider	5	142	2	56	2	60	15	2	0.5	0	45	280	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
E15012	Salmon	Ship Ahoy	14.75	418	2	56	7	80	30	3	0.5	0	45	220	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	15	2	0	0	0			
E15030	Sardines, in water	Omelia	4 3/8	102	1/2 can	51	2	90	40	8	2.5	0	37	80	0	0	0	0	12	2	0	8	10	0	0	0			
E15027	Tuna, solid white, in water	Shop Rite	5	142	2	56	2	60	10	1	0	0	25	180	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Poultry:																													
Meat:																													
<b>Dairy</b>																													
E07004	Milk, liquid shelf stable, 1%	Lil' Milk	8	236 mL	8	236 mL	1	100	20	2.5	1.5	0	10	130	0	12	0	12	8	10	2	30	0	0	0	0			
E07002	Milk, liquid shelf stable, 1%	Parmaalat	32	946mL	8	240mL	4	100	20	2.5	1.5	0	10	130	0	12	0	12	8	10	2	30	0	0	0	0			
E07003	Milk, soy, shelf stable	Pacific	32	946 mL	8	240mL	4	80	20	2.5	0	0	0	115	220	11	1	9	5	0	0	2	4	0	0	0			
<b>Others</b>																													
E21018	Macaroni and Cheese	Annie's	6	170	1 cup prepared	71	2.5	270	35	4	2	0	10	430	0	47	2	5	11	2	0	10	4	0	0	0			
E06017	Minestrone Soup	Venice Maid Foods	15	425	8	240	2	110	20	2.5	0	0	0	400	0	17	3	3	5	25	6	2	6	0	0	0			
E25006	Multi Grain Crackers	White Rose	16	454	5 crackers	15	30	60	15	1.5	0	0	0	160	20	11	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	0			
E25001	Nutri Grain cereal bars	Kellogg's	20.8	592	1 bar	37	16	130	30	3	0.5	0	0	120	0	24	2	12	2	15	0	20	10	0	0	10			

**TEFAP**

Item #	Item	Brand	tot oz	tot gm	sv cp/oz	sv gm	sv/ct	cal	fat cal	tot fat	sat fat	trans	chol mg	Na mg	K mg	carb mg	fb gm	sug gm	pro gm	Vitamin	Mineral			
																				A DV%	C DV%	Ca DV%	D	Fe DV%
<b>Vegetables</b>																								
TB27008	Corn, sweet, cream style	Hudson	14.5	411	0.5 cup	123	3.5	90	0	0	0	0	0	180	0	21	2	6	2	4	2	0	0	4
TB27009	Corn, sweet, whole kernel	Hudson	15.25	432	0.5 cup	123	3.5	70	0	0	0	0	0	180	0	13	2	2	2	2	4	0	0	4
TB23004	Green Beans, low sodium	Hart	14.5	411	0.5 cup	120	3.5	20	0	0	0	0	0	140	75	4	2	2	<1	4	6	2	0	4
T26004	Spaghetti Sauce, low sodium	Luigi Giovanni	15	425	0.5 cup	125	3	50	0	0	0	0	0	60	0	11	2	6	2	10	6	0	0	4
T27026	Spinach	Margaret Holmes	14	396	2/3 cup	128	3	20	0	0	0	0	0	240	0	3	2	1	2	130	15	10	0	15
T27019	Sweet Potatoes, packed in syrup	Dunbar's	15	425	2/3 cup	160	2.5	140	0	0	0	0	0	20	300	34	1	19	0	180	0	2	0	8
<b>Fruits</b>																								
TB26001	Applesauce, unsweetened	Royal Select	15	425	0.5 cup	122	3.5	50	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	15	2	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
T14015	Juice, Grape	Mother's Maid	64	1.89L	1 cup	240	8	160	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	40	0	39	0	0	120	0	0	0
TB14008	Juice, Grapefruit	Ocean Spray	64	1.89L	1 cup	240	8	90	0	0	0	0	0	35	340	21	0	17	2	0	80	2	0	0
T14013	Juice, Orange	Fruit Patch	64	1.89L	1 cup	240	8	110	0	0	0	0	0	20	450	27	0	24	2	0	130	2	0	0
T14016	Juice, Tomato, low sodium	Harvest Traditions	64	1.89L	1 cup	240	8	50	0	0	0	0	0	85	0	10	2	6	2	8	100	2	0	4
T10030	Mixed Fruit	Del Monte	14.5	411	0.5 cup	126	3	60	0	0	0	0	0	5	110	16	1	13	0	2	6	0	0	2
T10034	Peaches, in juice	Del Monte	15	425	0.5 cup	124	3.5	60	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	15	1	14	0	6	8	0	0	2
T10008	Pears, in extra light syrup	America's Finest	15	425	0.5 cup	130	3.5	70	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	3	14	0	0	6	0	0	0
<b>Grains</b>																								
	Cereal																							
T21006	Egg Noodles	Anthony's	16	454	1.25 cup	56	8	220	30	3	1	0	65	15	0	40	2	2	8	0	0	2	0	10
T21001	Spaghetti	Pasta Sanita	32	907	2 oz	56	16	201	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	42	2	3	7	0	0	0	0	10
	Rice																							
<b>Protein</b>																								
	Fish, canned																							
	Meats																							
	Frozen																							
	Canned																							
	Beans and Nuts																							
T23003	Peanut Butter	Hampton Farms	18	510	2 Tbsp	32	16	200	140	16	3	0	0	2	0	8	2	4	7	0	4	0	0	4
<b>Dairy</b>																								
TB07003	Milk, liquid shelf stable, 1%	Parmalat	32	946	1 cup	240	4	100	20	2.5	1.5	0	10	130	0	12	0	12	8	10	2	30	25	0
<b>Extra</b>																								



## By Crop: Produce Turn Over and Storage Guide

Vegetable or Fruit	Temp.	Moisture	Turnover	Note
Asparagus	Refrigerate	Stems in Water	5 days	
Apples	Refrigerate	Moist	2 weeks	
Beans	Refrigerate	Moist	3 days	
Beets	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	5 days if have greens attached
Berries (Strawberries, Raspberries, Blueberries)	Refrigerate	Moist	3 days	ASAP for quality
Broccoli	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Brussel Sprouts	Refrigerate	Moist	1 week	
Cabbage	Refrigerate	Moist	2 weeks	
Carrots	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	
Cauliflower	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Celeriac	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	
Celery	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Chinese Cabbage (Napa)	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Corn	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days	ASAP for quality
Cucumbers	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days	Watch for chill damage
Eggplant	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Fennel	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Garlic	Cool Room	Dry	2 weeks	
Greens (lettuce, spinach, kale, chard, beet greens, collards, arugula, mizuna, mustard greens, bok choy and more)	Refrigerate	Must be in plastic bags or covered with a tarp	3 days	Full size kale, chard and heads of lettuce can keep 5 days
Herbs (parsley, dill, cilantro, thyme, basil)	Refrigerate	Moist	3 days	
Kohlrabi	Refrigerate	Moist	2 weeks	
Leeks	Refrigerate	Moist	2 weeks	
Melons	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days	
Mushrooms	Refrigerate	Paper bag	3 days	
Onions	Cool Room	Dry/dark	3 weeks	
Parsnips	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	
Peas	Refrigerate	Moist	3 days	
Peppers	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Potatoes	cool room	Dry	3 weeks	
Radishes	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days spring	3 weeks storage varieties
Rutabaga	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	
Scallions	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Summer Sq./Zucchini	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days	
Sweet Potatoes	Room temp	Dry	1 week	Cold will turn them to mush!
Tomatillos	cool room	Moist	1 week	
Tomatoes	Room Temp	Dry	3 days	Refrigerate only if over ripe
Turnips	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days w/greens	3 weeks storage types
Winter Squash & Pumpkins	Room Temp	Dry	1 week	Keep evaluating for quality

## By Turnover: Produce Turn Over and Storage Guide

Vegetable or Fruit	Turnover	Temp.	Moisture	Note
Beans	3 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Berries (Strawberries, Raspberries, Blueberries)	3 days	Refrigerate	Moist	ASAP for quality
Greens (lettuce, spinach, kale, chard, beet greens, collards, arugula, mizuna, mustard greens, bok choy and more)	3 days	Refrigerate	Must be in plastic bags or covered with a tarp	Full size kale, chard and heads of lettuce can keep 5 days
Herbs (parsley, dill, cilantro, thyme, basil)	3 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Mushrooms	3 days	Refrigerate	Paper bag	
Peas	3 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Tomatoes	3 days	Room Temp	Dry	Refrigerate only if over ripe
Corn	3-5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	ASAP for quality
Cucumbers	3-5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	Watch for chill damage
Melons	3-5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Summer Sq./Zucchini	3-5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Radishes	3-5 days spring	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks storage varieties
Asparagus	5 days	Refrigerate	Stems in Water	
Broccoli	5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Cauliflower	5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Celery	5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Chinese Cabbage (Napa)	5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Eggplant	5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Fennel	5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Peppers	5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Scallions	5 days	Refrigerate	Moist	
Turnips	5 days w/greens	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks storage types
Brussel Sprouts	1 week	Refrigerate	Moist	
Sweet Potatoes	1 week	Room temp	Dry	Cold will turn them to mush!
Tomatillos	1 week	Cool Room	Moist	
Winter Squash & Pumpkins	1 week	Room Temp	Dry	Keep evaluating for quality
Apples	2 weeks	Refrigerate	Moist	
Cabbage	2 weeks	Refrigerate	Moist	
Garlic	2 weeks	cool room	Dry	
Kohlrabi	2 weeks	Refrigerate	Moist	
Leeks	2 weeks	Refrigerate	Moist	
Beets	3 weeks	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days if have greens attached
Carrots	3 weeks	Refrigerate	Moist	
Celeriac	3 weeks	Refrigerate	Moist	
Onions	3 weeks	cool room	Dry/dark	
Parsnips	3 weeks	Refrigerate	Moist	
Potatoes	3 weeks	cool room	Dry	
Rutabaga	3 weeks	Refrigerate	Moist	

## By Storage: Produce Turn Over and Storage Guide

Vegetable or Fruit	Temp.	Moisture	Turnover	Note
Garlic	Cool Room	Dry	2 weeks	
Onions	Cool Room	Dry/dark	3 weeks	
Potatoes	Cool Room	Dry	3 weeks	
Tomatillos	Cool Room	Moist	1 week	
Asparagus	Refrigerate	Stems in Water	5 days	
Apples	Refrigerate	Moist	2 weeks	
Beans	Refrigerate	Moist	3 days	
Beets	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	5 days if have greens attached
Berries (Strawberries, Raspberries, Blueberries)	Refrigerate	Moist	3 days	ASAP for quality
Broccoli	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Brussel Sprouts	Refrigerate	Moist	1 week	
Cabbage	Refrigerate	Moist	2 weeks	
Carrots	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	
Cauliflower	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Celeriac	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	
Celery	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Chinese Cabbage (Napa)	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Corn	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days	ASAP for quality
Cucumbers	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days	Watch for chill damage
Eggplant	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Fennel	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Greens (lettuce, spinach, kale, chard, beet greens, collards, arugula, mizuna, mustard greens, bok choy and more)	Refrigerate	Must be in plastic bags or covered with a tarp	3 days	Full size kale, chard and heads of lettuce can keep 5 days
Herbs (parsley, dill, cilantro, thyme, basil)	Refrigerate	Moist	3 days	
Kohlrabi	Refrigerate	Moist	2 weeks	
Leeks	Refrigerate	Moist	2 weeks	
Melons	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days	
Mushrooms	Refrigerate	Paper bag	3 days	
Parsnips	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	
Peas	Refrigerate	Moist	3 days	
Peppers	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Radishes	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days spring	3 weeks storage varieties
Rutabaga	Refrigerate	Moist	3 weeks	
Scallions	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days	
Summer Sq./Zucchini	Refrigerate	Moist	3-5 days	
Turnips	Refrigerate	Moist	5 days w/greens	3 weeks storage types
Sweet Potatoes	Room Temp	Dry	1 week	Cold will turn them to mush!
Tomatoes	Room Temp	Dry	3 days	Refrigerate only if over ripe
Winter Squash & Pumpkins	Room Temp	Dry	1 week	Keep evaluating for quality

“ We can create a society in which it is unacceptable to have chronic hunger and an agricultural system that contributes to climate change, environmental degradation, injustice, and health disparities. ”

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