



Realizing the Promise of Fresh Produce

Currently, 1 in 8 people are food insecure in America. Even as the Feeding America network distributes more meals each year, our *Map the Meal Gap* study estimates that 8.7 billion more meals would be needed in a given year to feed every person facing hunger in America. What's more, people struggling with hunger are often at higher risk for nutrition-related illnesses. According to *Hunger in America 2014*, 58 percent of the households we serve have at least one member with high blood pressure and 33 percent have at least one member with diabetes. Our task is not only to provide meals for people in need, but also to provide nutritious meals that can help improve health and well-being.

Fresh produce provides a tremendous opportunity to both feed people facing hunger and also offer nutrient-rich foods that can improve health outcomes. We know that an enormous amount of produce is wasted in the United States each year. In fact, 20 billion pounds of fruits and vegetables are discarded on farms or left in fields to be ploughed under,¹ and that does not include produce lost at manufacturing and retail locations. Produce alone could close the meal gap.

The Feeding America network has significantly grown its capacity to source produce in the last few years, securing a total of 723 million meals of fruits and vegetables in 2017. However, we must do more to capitalize on this unparalleled opportunity.



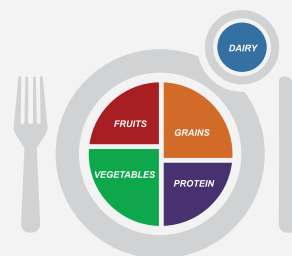
Seizing An Opportunity

- Feeding America secured a total of **1.47 billion pounds** of fruits and vegetables in fiscal year 2017.
- **868 million pounds** of fresh produce entered the Feeding America network through the Produce Program.
- Last year, Regional Fresh Produce Sourcers generated the equivalent of **195 million meals of produce**—much of this from new partners.

We Provide Healthy Food to the 46 Million Americans We Serve

We know the people we serve are making difficult tradeoffs to survive, including buying unhealthy foods as a coping strategy. Many are at risk for diet-related illnesses such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Meals provided by Feeding America come from a variety of food sources.



71% of the food we distribute closely aligns with the USDA's Dietary Guidelines for America.



¹ ReFED, "A Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste by 20 Percent," (2016). All statistics in paragraph are from ReFED. Note: ReFED numbers are in tons, this is converted to pounds.

Securing More Fresh Produce

Feeding America's efforts to source more produce have been tremendously effective. Now, we are building on our successes by helping establish a coordinated model that optimizes the fresh produce opportunity for all network food banks, regardless of location or capacity.

Creating Member-Led Regional Cooperatives

Over the next two years, Feeding America is planning to establish approximately eight member-led regional cooperatives strategically located throughout the country. By working together through the cooperatives, food banks in distinct geographic regions will be able to negotiate lower produce acquisition and transportation costs, and improve produce variety. Each cooperative will operate one central processing facility that can receive, store, mix and distribute large amounts of produce. Furthermore, the cooperatives will enable the network to accept more produce donations, thereby ensuring we can capitalize on donation offers and help eliminate food waste.

Taking Advantage of Every Donation Opportunity

To ensure we can accept all produce available to the Feeding America network, we are evolving our current sourcing model to support the member-led regional cooperatives. We are stewarding strategic partnerships nationally and regionally to ensure that donors think of Feeding America first when they have excess produce to donate. Feeding America will commit to accept significant amounts of produce from these donors. Once it has been donated, member-led regional cooperatives can then accept the quantity of produce they need. By leveraging the cooperatives along with the donation model, Feeding America will be able to say "yes" to more produce donations and exponentially grow our capacity to provide produce to people in need. With this new approach we will meet our goal to provide 1.7 billion produce meals by 2025.

Generating Support and Raising Our Profile

Feeding America is deepening our relationships within the agricultural sector. We are regularly engaging national agricultural associations and produce industry groups to educate them about domestic hunger, how produce can affect public health and the well-being of our nation, and how donating to the Feeding America network can be a cost-saving and environmentally sustainable alternative to food waste.

Feeding America has found that a combination of expertise in the produce industry and a "boots-in-the-field" local presence is critical to securing and distributing more produce. Therefore, we support teams of produce facilitators.

Regional Fresh Produce Sourcers are veterans of the produce industry, with targeted expertise in a specific commodity. These individuals develop long-lasting relationships with regional growers, packers and other distributors to source and increase the amount of produce available to the network.

Produce Program Representatives ensure the abundance of produce we are sourcing can be moved effectively through the supply chain by working directly with food banks to understand and address local barriers to sourcing and distributing more produce.



How You Can Help

Your support of Feeding America's produce initiatives helps us provide a steady stream of healthy, fresh fruits and vegetables to people struggling with hunger. When you make a gift today, you are not only helping to give families and individuals the nutritious food they need, you are helping us transform the hunger relief landscape. For information on how you can support Feeding America's produce initiatives, please contact 800.671.0088.

