

LA PLATA COUNTY FOOD PLAN

GLEANNING & FOOD DONATION

Food recovery is the collection of wholesome food for distribution to those who need additional food access. It includes gleaning from fields and collecting perishable, non-perishable, and prepared foods from various stages in the supply chain. Food donations can provide food to food banks and pantries with more variety and nutrients. Donating food creates opportunities for volunteers to fight against poverty, food insecurity, and environmental contamination through gleaning and food rescue/recovery. Donating wholesome food for human consumption diverts food waste from landfills and allows food to be used to its highest potential – consumption.



BENEFITS

- Rescue perishable, non-perishable, and prepared foods to individuals, ensuring they reach individuals in need and do not go to waste
- Divert food waste from landfills by channeling excess food to hunger relief organizations
- Reduce environmental burden of food waste disposal
- Promote community engagement by involving individuals, businesses, and organizations in effort to fight hunger and reduce waste
- Create employment and volunteer opportunities
- Increase accessibility to food for all populations
- Improve nutritional quality of food available

CHALLENGES

- Ensuring food safety through good handling and storage practices
- Overcoming logistic issues (transportation, storage, and distribution)
- Managing a short shelf life of perishable items
- Maintaining adequate supply of products
- Addressing dietary preferences, and providing diverse range of foods that meet the cultural and nutritional needs
- Securing sufficient funding, volunteers, equipment, and infrastructure needs and costs

In the United States, food waste is the primary contributor to landfilled waste (24%) and combusted municipal solid waste (22%) (US EPA & Eastern Research Group, Inc., 2023) Unspoiled food can be redirected to individuals through donations to food banks, food pantries, and food rescue programs across the country. Food donations provide an alternative to discarding surplus wholesome food by linking food service donors with hunger relief agencies.

All organizations that serve food have a role in reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste, and educating about recovering excess food for donation. For example, in 2018, East Aurora, Illinois, School District 131 became a Food Recovery Verified school district, and integrates food recovery and food waste reduction in all 19 schools (Sisneros-Lobato, 2018).

Food donations can provide food banks with the ability to offer clients more variety and nutrients in their diets by adding fresh, fiber-rich fruits, vegetables, and grain products. Through these mechanism, organizations are able to connect and build relationships – like the housing authority and nonprofit organization, 412 Food Rescue, that delivers rescued food to an estimated 2,000 senior citizens and families experiencing low-income, resulting in reduced referrals for families needing food assistance (Hardy, et al., 2018).



Gleaning, reliable collection, transportation, and distribution infrastructure helps prevent secondary food waste, which the EPA reports occurs at estimated rates of 4-40% (US EPA & Eastern Research Group, Inc., 2023).

Donating wholesome food for human consumption diverts food waste from landfills and puts food on the table for families. In a baseline estimate from 2010, USDA estimates retail and consumer food loss and waste to be 31% of the food supply, equating to 133 billion pounds valued at \$162 billion (USDA, n.d.).

Similarly, policy can impact the ability to recover and donate food. The Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act encourages donation of food and grocery products to nonprofit organizations or distribution to individuals. The Act provides protection for food and grocery products that meet all quality and labeling standards.



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