



# Food Recovery:

## Benefiting People in Need, the Environment and the Economy

**An enormous amount of food is wasted in the United States each year. Information from ReFED—a collaboration of business, nonprofit, foundation and government leaders committed to reducing United States ag surplus—indicates that 72 billion pounds of safe and wholesome food does not make it to the kitchen table every year in the U.S.**

Food loss occurs at every stage of the food production and distribution system. Excluding consumer waste at home, 52 billion pounds of food from manufacturers, grocery stores and restaurants end up in landfills. An additional 20 billion pounds of fruits and vegetables are not harvested on farms or left in fields to be plowed under.<sup>1</sup>

All this loss takes place in a country in which 42 million people are food insecure. We have an opportunity to strengthen our partnerships with growers, producers, food manufacturers, retailers, and restaurants to improve food donation programs and address hunger. How can we allow billions of pounds of good food to not make it to people's plates when our neighbors need that nutrition to lead strong, healthy lives? We cannot. What's more, all of the resources, energy, and money that went into producing the food is lost when it does not make it to our plates.

### FEEDING AMERICA IS LEADING THE WAY IN FOOD RECOVERY

Feeding America is leveraging our position as the largest food-recovery and domestic hunger-relief

organization to bring together public, private and nonprofit organizations to rescue more food, drive awareness and mobilize the larger community to take action for food recovery. Because of our unparalleled national and local partnerships with retailers, manufacturers, foodservice operators, farmers and others across the food supply chain, we have unique access to food that might otherwise go to waste. Additionally, our nationwide food bank network can quickly distribute food to communities across the country. Feeding America is the leading food-recovery partner across the food industry, currently diverting 2.8 billion pounds of wholesome food from going to waste and providing it to families in need.

Feeding America currently rescues 2.8 billion pounds of safe and wholesome food and provides it to families in need.

<sup>1</sup> ReFED (Rethink Food Waste through Economics and Data), "A Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste by 20 Percent," (2016). All stats in paragraph are from ReFED. Note: ReFED numbers are in tons, this is converted to pounds.



## THE COST OF FOOD LOSS

Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap shows a meal gap of 8.6 billion meals a year, measured against our current distribution of almost 4 billion meals a year. We must create sustainable solutions to connect excess wholesome food with food banks so it can instead fill a family's pantry.

72 billion pounds of food is lost each year, not including waste at home



\$218 billion worth of food is thrown away each year



21% of landfill volume is ag surplus



21% of fresh water is used to produce food that is then discarded.



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## Feeding America's Food-Recovery Priorities

**Divert more excess food to people in need:** One of the largest opportunities to rescue more food is by expanding pilot programs with the ag industry to harvest excess crops and address the harvest, packing and processing costs to do so. Another is through consumer-facing businesses like grocery stores and restaurants. Feeding America is expanding our ability to capture food from foodservice locations while continuing to invest in longstanding programs like our retail store donation program. Additionally, we work with farmers and manufacturers to capture product that would otherwise go to waste. A key enabler of this is the expanded federal food donation tax deduction Congress passed in December 2015.

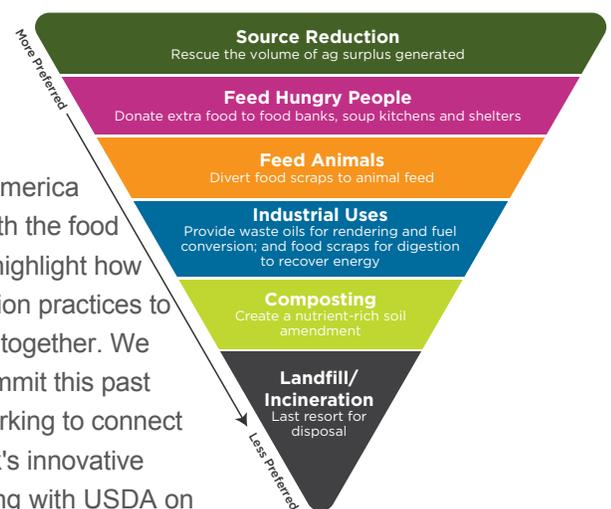
**Rescue healthy, nutritious foods:** Helping people we serve access healthy foods is critical to the Feeding America network. Meanwhile, billions of pounds of produce and other nutritious food does not make it to families plates every year. Feeding America works to capture significant amounts of nutritious food for people in need and with your help we can do more.

### Advocate for food-recovery legislation and policy changes:

Feeding America educates Congress and the administration about ag surplus. Recently, we advocated for Congress to pass legislation expanding tax deductions for small businesses, farmers and ranchers, which will make it easier to donate excess food to food banks.

**Build awareness:** Feeding America is focused on collaborating with the food industry and policymakers to highlight how we can strengthen food donation practices to tackle food waste and hunger together. We convened a Food Rescue Summit this past year, and are continuously working to connect policymakers with our network's innovative programs, as well as partnering with USDA on the US Food Waste Challenge and with the food industry on the Food Waste Reduction Alliance.

### EPA FOOD RECOVERY HIERARCHY



### The Time is Now

There are numerous reasons that food does not make it to a plate, and the farm bill gives Congress an opportunity to make sure donation is a choice food growers and producers can easily make. Congress should help provide support for growers/producers to connect excess food with food banks/communities in need, reduce regulatory barriers to food donation, and strengthen rural development resources for communities in need.