



## Feeding Minnesota Task Force Report and Recommendations



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# Table of Contents

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Executive Summary .....	4
Introduction.....	5
Background .....	6
Our Task .....	10
Implementation of the Feeding Minnesota Task Force .....	11
Distribution Network .....	11
Analysis of Other States Programs .....	11
Who to Contact When There is Surplus .....	13
Access Points.....	13
Farmers Markets .....	13
Gleaning .....	14
Processing (Protein) Livestock.....	15
Contract Farms.....	16
Barriers .....	17
Recommendations and Action Items.....	19
Impact of Feeding Minnesota Task Force .....	24
Resources .....	25
Appendix .....	
A. Food Flow Chart.....	26
B. Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Survey and Results.....	27
C. Farmers' Market Surplus Collection and Examples .....	33
D. Venison Donation Program.....	36
E South East Minnesota Food Network.....	37
F. Protein Donation - Minnesota Farmers' Helping Families .....	40
G. Gleaning Background, Fact Sheets and Examples .....	41
H. Sample Recommendation Progress Form and Indicators.....	46

## Executive Summary

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Governor Pawlenty in the 2009-2010 legislative session reiterated his commitment to fighting hunger in Minnesota by signing legislation creating the Feeding Minnesota Task Force that was championed by Senator Vickerman and Representative Juhnke. The task force was to include appointees who would provide broad representation from the food bank industry, food producer, processor and grower organizations and academia along with various associations and statewide agricultural organizations. The purpose of the task force was to provide advice and possible recommendations to the Minnesota Legislature and its respective committees that might assist in utilizing our state's surplus food product to help Minnesotans who are hungry and in need of food. .

Pursuant to Minnesota Laws and Statutes 2008 Article 1 sec. 53.1., subdivision 1 and 2, the commissioner of agriculture convened the Feeding Minnesota Task Force to discuss issues concerning how to facilitate the donations of surplus food to charities that support hungry people. Pursuant to the statute, the task force came up with a definition for “hungry” and who qualifies as being a “hungry person” by its second meeting. The path the task force followed was to (a) define hungry and who qualifies as a hungry person; (b) review what other states have implemented for this type of program and review what research has been previously gathered; and (c) determine what strategies would work in Minnesota and provide possible recommendations.

**During the last year demand for emergency food has increased over 35% according to officials with Second Harvest Heartland.**

**Second Harvest Heartland is the Upper Midwest's largest hunger relief organization and their research finds that statewide about 12% of the population needing meals aren't getting them. In rural areas of the state, the statistic can be as high as 21%.**

Minnesota has long been a national leader in agriculture with ideal growing conditions for a variety of farm products. We have a strong position trading in global markets due in large part to quality products produced and access to modern modes of transportation. Although long winters can impact the length of the growing season, the majority of row crops, vegetables, fruits and animals can be raised economically and successfully in this climate.

It is widely recognized that we do not send to market all that is produced. With a focused effort to educate producers and processors, there is ample opportunity to harvest (in a variety of ways) additional or excess products with the intent to transport it to a charitable donation center and distribute the products to those in need. The questions that remain are how to locate, gather and transport this excess product in the most effective and efficient way. The Feeding Minnesota Task Force report and recommendations were based on findings from research and existing literature from currently funded surplus product donation programs around the country as well as interviews with those in the industry.

The Task Force has developed several recommendations for the legislature to consider, including, 1) developing a comprehensive surplus food networking website to connect producers, distributors, volunteers and those in need of food with local food banks and or food shelves, 2) establishing an advisory council on food insecurity and getting surplus food to this population, 3) considering an insurance waiver for farmers who allow workers to harvest surplus food from their land, and 4) strengthening education and communications outreach regarding surplus food to rural communities.

The Task Force also discussed future (3-5 years) action items to consider including a surplus product procurement system; tax credits, deductions or incentives for making donations; and, grants to organizations for the purpose of distributing surplus food.

## Introduction

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Minnesota is a long-time national leader in agriculture; we have ideal growing conditions for a variety of farm products. We have a strong position trading in global markets due in large part to quality products produced and access to modern modes of transportation. Minnesota is accomplished in our agricultural promotion and marketing strengths, but we also recognize that there are still citizens who are not able to get their basic nutritional needs met in our local communities and many of them do not know where their next meal will come from.

Each year, low-income Minnesotans miss a staggering 125 million meals, according to the research compiled by the USDA, the University of Minnesota, Second Harvest Heartland and other partners. That is ten (10) missed meals a month for every child, adult or senior that is dealing with food insecurity. This is approximately three (3) nights a week that they are going to bed hungry. It is important to determine how we will reach and meet the needs of these individuals. Not all parties in need will ask for help even when they desperately need it. Food production is one of Minnesota's great success stories, and it is time to bridge the gap from those that have surplus food to those that are hungry. The Feeding Minnesota Task Force took seriously the issue during review and discussion.

### Feeding Minnesota Task Force- Minn.Stat. § 53.1 sub. 1.

The commissioner of agriculture must establish the Feeding Minnesota Task Force to study the consumption of Minnesota grown produce and livestock by facilitating the donation of harvested products to charities that provide food for hungry people. "Hungry people" must be specifically defined by the task force by its second meeting.

The group's primary focus was to examine how and where surplus food is collected, used and distributed throughout the state. With this information, the task force determined ways in which surplus food could be logistically moved and given to charities with the purpose of distributing it to those in need.

The task force was compromised of nine (9) public members, including:

- **Paul Gifford**, Hope for the City.....Minnetonka MN
- **Marilyn Nysetvold Johnson**, Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers...Ham Lake MN
- **Pamela Benike**, Minnesota Producer and grower.....Elgin MN
- **Ronald Branch**, Minnesota Farmers' Market Association.....Alexandria MN
- **Elton Mykerezi**, University of Minnesota.....St. Paul MN
- **John Hausladen**, Minnesota Truckers Association.....Roseville MN
- **Chris Radatz**, Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation.....St. Paul MN
- **Thom Petersen**, Minnesota Farmers Union.....Pine City MN
- **Lexann Pryd-Kakuk**, Gold'n Plump.....St. Cloud MN

MDA Assistant Commissioner Robin Kinney facilitated the meetings and MDA Agricultural Marketing Specialist Amanda Baesler provided staff support.

## Background

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The factors that contribute to hunger and food insecurity are income or the economy (particularly during a recession), access and distribution. There is also a definite geography of poverty. The highest rates of poverty can be found in Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, along the U.S.-Mexico border and on Indian reservations. Also contributing to food insecurity is the number of working families teetering on the edge economically, where one emergency or unexpected life event can throw them off track and suddenly in need of food shelf services.<sup>1</sup>

Though Minnesota is not in the top 20 of states with the highest level of food insecurity, (those are largely located in the lower United States <sup>2</sup>) anytime someone is not having their basic nutritional needs met it impacts us. Even after what is distributed by food shelves and banks each year, it is estimated that more than 125 million additional meals are still needed each year in Minnesota and western Wisconsin to ensure that all low-income families and individuals have three nutritious meals daily. Understanding the issues that face those in need and how best to locate surplus or excess food was discussed at length by the members of the task force.

Many groups are committed to eliminating food insecurity in Minnesota. For example, Second Harvest Heartland distributes more than 51 million pounds of food and grocery products annually to nearly 1,000 food shelves, soup kitchens, shelters and programs in a 59 county area in southern Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

Nearly 1,000 local assistance programs, food shelves and shelters throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin, along with other non-profits and corporate entities join a national network of 200 food banks throughout the United States. This includes regional partners located in Rochester, Grand Rapids, Crookston, Duluth and Fargo, North Dakota. Working with Second Harvest Heartland alone, are more than 38,000 individual donors and more than 11,000 volunteers who make a difference in the daily fight to end hunger.

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<sup>1</sup> Valentine 2005

<sup>2</sup> Second Harvest Heartland website

Fresh produce is gratefully received and being donated directly from grocery stores, farmers' markets, individuals, community gardens and gleaning programs.

Tony Mans, director of Food Sourcing for Second Harvest Heartland was a frequent observer and resource to the Task Force meetings and process. He provided another example of some of the unique and innovative work that is being done, as he shared his organization's goal to bring together 30 companies each with a relatively small (1 pallet per month minimum) donation which would generate over 500,000 pounds—or 390,000 meals—to be distributed to those in need in the community. As of August 2010, Second Harvest Heartland has already received more than 41,000 pounds of product through this program.<sup>3</sup>

Hope for the City is another group making great strides to help eliminate hunger. Since 2000, they have given more than \$435 million in wholesale value of goods to organizations serving those in need. In 2008 alone, Hope for the City distributed enough food to their local partnering agencies to serve more than 15,000 people in Minnesota each month. This year, the group launched its “Lunch Box for Kids” program. The organization saw a need to combat summer hunger when they determined that two federal nutrition programs (NSLP & SFSP) that feed children during the summer months, were only reaching 13 of every 100 low income Minnesotan children. “Lunch Box for Kids” was designed to help meet the needs of Minnesota families who find their food supply stretched because of decreased food shelf donations and increased demands for meals at home when children are not receiving breakfast and lunch at school. Hope for the City and Channel 5 Eyewitness News worked together to deliver 5,000 Lunch Boxes and send 100,000 meals to local food shelves throughout the Twin Cities to help hungry children.<sup>4</sup>

These are just a few of the many examples in which groups are getting creative in their efforts to eliminate hunger. Minnesota can be proud of the success and innovation these groups, their leadership, dedicated volunteers and outreach staff have provided. It shows Minnesotans have made large strides in offering a helping hand and continue to work towards eliminating hunger.

#### Objectives:

- A. Define “hungry people”: The term hunger is broadly defined and, according to the USDA, it is —a potential consequence of food insecurity that, because of prolonged, involuntary lack of food, results in discomfort, illness, weakness, or pain that goes beyond the usual uneasy sensation.” The term “food security” means that all members of a household at all times have to enough food for an active, healthy life. As such, the term “food insecurity” means that there is limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food or that there is a limited or uncertain ability to acquire food.

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<sup>3</sup> Second Harvest Heartland website

<sup>4</sup> Hope for the City website

Very low food security is defined as a time during the fiscal year that the eating pattern of one or more household members was disrupted and their food intake was reduced because the household lacked money and other resources for food.<sup>5</sup>

The working definition that the Feeding Minnesota Task Force agreed upon is:

***“A hungry or food insecure person is an individual that is compelled to seek assistance to meet their basic nutritional needs for themselves or their household in the past twelve months.”***

B. Determine how to measure hunger/hungry people:

According to the “Missing Meals” report conducted by Second Harvest Heartland, in 2007 there were more than 1.8 million visits to Minnesota food shelves; up from 1.7 million in 2005. In 2009 nearly one in four households suffered from food hardship, and 125 million meals were missed.

- Minnesota:
  - 13.8% are food insecure
  - 3.7% report very low food security
  - Minnesota is currently below the national average, ranking 48<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states in terms of least food hardship in 2009.
- United States:
  - 17.9% are food insecure (December 2009),
  - 4% report very low food security

Single parent households with children are the hardest hit demographic. Nationally, households with children reported a food hardship rate that is 1.62 times higher than that of other households.<sup>6</sup> This figure is more pronounced in minority families or families with single mothers.

The U.S. Household Food Security Scale created by the USDA was designed to register even occasional or sporadic occurrences of food insecurity. To get a more complete picture of the length of the problem, households were asked whether or not they had food insecure conditions occur during the previous 30 days.

On average, the report showed that households that were food insecure at some time during the year were food insecure 7 months of the year. Households with very low food security at some time during the year experienced it 7 or 8 months and 1 to 7 days in each of those months. This report did not include the homeless or those in shelters.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Coleman-Jensen, A. & Nord, M., 2009 <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/labels.htm>

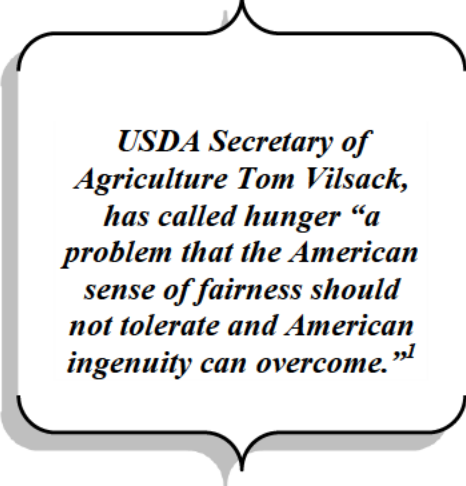
<sup>6</sup> Food Research and Action Center website



C. Formulate a set of recommendations to present to the Minnesota Legislature.

#### How to combat hunger

Currently there are over 350 food shelves in the State of Minnesota. They are each independently owned and operated, and serve an average of 50 to 500 people per month.<sup>7</sup> In 2008 there were 2 million visits to and 47 million pounds of food distributed from these food shelves. This reflects an 89% increase in food shelf visits since 2000, with 328,000 unique visitors to food shelves in the first six months of the year.<sup>8</sup>



*USDA Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, has called hunger “a problem that the American sense of fairness should not tolerate and American ingenuity can overcome.”<sup>1</sup>*

Currently more than 165 million additional meals are needed in Minnesota and western Wisconsin each year to ensure that all low-income families and individuals have three (3) nutritious meals a day. Although Minnesota is not in the top 20 states with the highest levels of food insecurity, there is still a need anytime someone is not having their basic nutritional needs met.<sup>9</sup>

#### Strategies:

To help meet its objectives, the task force adopted the following strategies:

Step 1 - determine how significant the issue of food insecurity is in Minnesota.

Step 2 - determine how to locate surplus or excess food in the state

Step 3 - determine how to facilitate donations of surplus or harvested produce and livestock to charitable centers that serve those in need.

#### *Contributing Factors*

The main factors that contribute to hunger and food insecurity are income, access and distribution. Good, healthy, fresh food is expensive, especially when one works for minimum wage.

Reports indicate that Minnesota has large quantities of a variety of crops that are not harvested or sold at the end of each season.<sup>10</sup> An estimated 224 million pounds of unused food goes to waste every year in Minnesota, much of it from unharvested food.<sup>11</sup> This surplus could be a viable source of nutritious food for families and individuals in need of food assistance. There is little data regarding the total amount of surplus crops (fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy, etc), or the type, quality, and reasons for it going unsold or not harvested.

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<sup>7</sup> Second Harvest Heartland website

<sup>8</sup> Minnesota Farmers Helping Families website

<sup>9</sup> Second Harvest Heartland website

<sup>10</sup> USDA website

<sup>11</sup> Second Harvest Heartland website

There are food losses that occur throughout the food system:

#### Farm and post-harvest

- Pre-harvest losses due to severe weather, disease and predation.
- Harvest losses attributed to mechanization, production practices and decisions.
- Storage losses due to insects, mold, deterioration, shrinkage, spoilage and general lack of refrigeration space.

#### Processing and wholesaling

- Removal of inedible portions bones, blood, peels, pits etc.
- Discard of substandard products (i.e. bruised fruit etc).
- Shrinkage in storage
- Poor handling or package failure
- Transportation losses

Fresh fruits and vegetables account for nearly 20 percent of consumer and foodservice losses. It should be noted that not all wasted food is suitable for consumption.<sup>12</sup>

For the purpose of gathering more of this data a survey was sent out to farmers to more clearly identify how much surplus there is in the state, what types of crops have surpluses, where they are located, etc. The survey was recommended by the Feeding Minnesota Task Force, utilizing the assistance and expertise of two task force members, Elton Mykerezi, Assistant Professor of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota and Marilyn Nysetvold Johnson, Executive Coordinator of the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (MFVGA) (see attached survey in appendix). Targeted lists from the MFVGA, and Minnesota Grown were used to determine the farmers to be surveyed.

## Our Task

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The focus of this task force is to determine if there is surplus produce and livestock product in the State of Minnesota, and if there is how much, where is it located and lastly, how can it be moved to charitable donation centers or networks or distribution to those in need?

#### *Program Development*

In order to effectively distribute surplus food to charity centers to those who need it, the location of these populations as well as the crops, producers and food banks need to be determined by regions of the state. Each region is unique and will have specific barriers and needs, therefore, any programs being developed must address these issues.

A large part of coordinating the distribution will be developing a website model that can serve as an educational, communication and networking tool so that individual producers

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/FoodReview/Jan1997/Jan97a.pdf>

or groups know how and where they can donate surplus product and why it would be beneficial for them to do this.

Resource tools such as charts and graphs can be designed for each of the surplus access point to help locate specific groups of producers (farmers' markets, gleaning, livestock producers and contract farmers).

Ultimately, the state legislature could consider how to help defray the harvesting, processing, or transportation costs incurred by the individuals making donations. Tax credit incentives or grants could be possible options in the future.

## Implementation of Feeding Minnesota's Task Force Requirements

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### *Distribution Network:*

Transportation and distribution is one of the more challenging pieces to the surplus food dilemma. Most surplus food is coming from outside the metro area and it is often not feasible or convenient for producers to transport the food to the charity center, creating a significant barrier.

Time and refrigeration are also factors in transporting the surplus, a significant portion of the surplus product is perishable in nature and has a short shelf life. The less time it takes in transit to the food bank, and the faster it can be distributed, allows for less spoilage and a more successful effort. Some of the charity food networks already have partnerships within the transportation industry and they work with these companies when product needs transportation. Some use onsite trucks and others require that people drop off their surplus food directly at their site. Many producers however, do not have access or the time to transport their surplus product to the various charity centers.

Volunteers are another method used by food banks to help cut costs and get perishable food to their locations sooner. Each charity food network has their own method in place, should a producer have excess food, it would be best to contact the center directly to arrange for drop-off or see if they can pick up the surplus product.

### *Analysis of Other States Programs:*

There are a few states that have established programs to obtain surplus agricultural product for food banks. For the purpose of this report the task force contacted three states with successful distribution networks already in place; Texas, Michigan and Ohio. The task force took away from this discussion how these systems are structured, the barriers, and challenges they overcame in order to be successful.

**Texas:** The Texas Food Bank Network provides a unified voice among food banks with the mission to end hunger in the state. The program provides a direct link between Texas based commodity producers, processors, food banks, emergency food providers, and food insecure families. The goal of the program is to help offset a donor's cost of harvesting and packaging surplus product.

Some of the barriers Texas encountered:

- Texas uses a reimbursement program and they have trouble making sure there is enough money in the reserves to pay their vendors.
- Getting product that has a good shelf life.
- Getting donors to realize that they are donating the product and they are helping offset the cost of their harvesting and packaging cost.

Successes:

- Distributed over 231 million pounds of food in 2008.
- Funded through a grant program, Feeding America, and some of their partnering food banks also get grants to help acquire more product.
- Have a transportation bid portal that helps obtain bids and arrange for transportation of product.
- Partners include the Texas Department of Agriculture and Department of Criminal Justice, farmers, growers and transportation providers.

**Michigan:** There is a partnership between Michigan food banks, Michigan Department of Agriculture, the agricultural community and commodity councils. Currently they supply 6 million + pounds of food for over one million people each year.

Some of the barriers Michigan encountered:

- Most funding comes from the state, the state has a significant budget deficit.
- Producers deliver more food than was listed on their purchase order and request to be reimbursed for it.
- Most significant challenge has been to retain state funding.

Successes:

- Farmers donate the product but are reimbursed through the program for processing and distribution.
- Transportation, the program has a line item appropriation for money to contract with a transportation company to facilitate food transportation.

**Ohio:** The Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program in alliance with the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Food Banks has set up this program to combat hunger. The program leverages public private partnerships to work together to provide food to those in need. Program staff approaches producers to solicit donations or request their surplus food, and uses trade shows and word of mouth to get donations.

Some of the barriers Ohio encountered:

- Confirming that they are receiving good quality product added contract language.
- Having enough cash on hand to pay the vendors when needed.
- Lack of refrigeration at facilities to house the perishable products.

- Dealing with economic downturn - cutting back hours at the local food banks makes it harder to get surplus food to locations in need.
- Transportation.

Successes:

- Modeled their program after Michigan and modified it to fit their state.
- Found federal funding through TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) dollars and the Ohio Department of Agriculture.
- Vendors provide the trucking and transportation of the product and packaging, helps save of costs.

The Ohio approach seems to be the model that would work well in Minnesota, it would take what Minnesota organizations and groups are already doing and broaden and expand it by adding the state piece. There are many aspects of the model that can be adopted and molded into a system that Minnesota could implement.

*Who to Contact when there is Surplus:*

In order to best utilize surplus in the state, producers need to have an easily accessible database with procedures and contacts of who they can contact in order to donate their product(s) or find assistance to help harvest their unused product.

## Access Points

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To be effective Minnesota could develop tools for each of the access points listed below: The four key categories that will provide tangible results and information for this task force are as follows: Farmers' markets and gleaning, livestock producers, and contract/direct donation farming.

### *1. Farmers' Market & Gleaning*

**Definition:** Collection and gleaning of surplus fruits and vegetables from farmers for direct distribution through the existing hunger relief network (food banks and food shelves)

**Target Market:** All growers listed in Minnesota Grown Directory, those involved with the Minnesota Apple Growers Association, Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, Minnesota Farmers Market Association, and individual producers.

**Barriers:** Highly perishable product which necessitates quick action on the part of volunteers, transportation, and distribution to maintain quality and freshness.

### Farmers' Markets:

Farmers' markets provide an excellent venue from which to gather surplus food, as there currently are over 100 farmers markets in Minnesota.<sup>13</sup> This is an underutilized source of fresh produce that could be donated to the food shelves after each market day or week. Many farmers and/or vendors do not know what to do with remaining produce and

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<sup>13</sup> Minnesota Grown website

product or do not have the time to call around to see will accept it, and then do not have time to transport it to those locations.

A highly effective way to target this surplus food is to have the local food shelves partner with the farmers market individually and set up an agreement and schedule. By doing this market vendors would not need to organize transportation of the produce or other details, making it much easier to donate. By working out such agreements, the vendors would be able to assist by providing a receipt or voucher to document the donation and assist in future tracking for possible reimbursement on their taxes. *See Appendix C*

#### Gleaning:

Gleaning is a highly cost effective way of harvesting surplus agricultural products. It provides a way for farmers who have crops that are edible, but not marketable, to link up with organizations that will harvest the unused produce, and distribute it to those in need.

The high cost for the labor needed to harvest the surplus crops is a significant factor when farmers are looking at donating, and this is where gleaning organizations can come in. Gleaning relies on volunteers to harvest crops from the farms that the producers and/or owners have decided is not economically profitable to harvest or from farms with surplus following the commercial harvesting season. Independent nonprofits and food banks organize these gleaning programs, which greatly reduces the burden on local farmers.<sup>14</sup>

**An estimated 224 million pounds of unused food goes to waste every year in Minnesota much of this is from non-harvested food, gleaning is one avenue to help eliminate this waste.<sup>1</sup>**

According to the survey the task force initiated, the cost of harvesting, processing, and transporting surplus agricultural products were identified as one of the most significant challenges in regards to donating surplus as farmers are not willing to incur those costs. Unfortunately for Minnesota there is not a strong gleaning network in place. There are a few visible volunteer programs but they appear to be loosely based. There are serious concerns by producers and/or owners regarding liability risks and the lack of supervision with the gleaning process, that make many hesitant to pursue this option.<sup>15</sup>

Another missed opportunity with donating food is that many farmers do not take advantage of the tax deductions for their donations. Many were not aware that these deductions existed and they were not considered a factor in their donation process.

When there is excess produce, one of the most pressing challenges is the products perishable nature and potentially short shelf life. There are many ways in which individuals can prolong the life of perishable products some of which include; canning, further processing (i.e. turning apples in to apple sauce, or tomatoes into tomato sauce) or

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<sup>14</sup> Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network website

<sup>15</sup> Second Harvest website

freezing. The University of Minnesota Extension offers a variety of resources on canning and freezing techniques. In areas where interest was high, the task force learned of community education classes being offered.

One of the barriers that often hindered farmers from donating their non-harvested goods was the fear of liability issues. However, Congress passed the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act and it became law in 1996. The act encourages the donation of food and grocery products to nonprofit organizations such as homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and churches. It promotes food donation by limiting the liability of donors to instances of gross negligence or intentional misconduct. The act further states that, absent gross negligence or intentional misconduct, persons, gleaners, and nonprofit organizations shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or apparently fit grocery products received as donations.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. *Processing (Protein) Livestock:*

**Definition:** Harvesting any surplus livestock that is still safe for human consumption and having it processed into a format that can be distributed through the hunger relief system.

**Target Market:** Any livestock producer in the state.

**Barriers:** Logistics of transporting livestock, establishing a network of qualified processors, costs involved with processing.

To look more closely at this potential for surplus product, the task force convened a group of eight individuals from the livestock industry. This group met once and discussed if there is a surplus of livestock in the state, and if so, how the product could be distributed to charity centers.

The group noted that during the past few years the consumption of protein has decreased in the United States and people are consuming less meat than they did in 2008. This trend has meat processors looking for business so that when the market does turn around they have the capacity to grow. Contracting changes in the livestock industry has enabled producers to manage their production inventory more carefully and avoid unplanned surplus.

The conclusion reached by the group was there is very little surplus in livestock production and with today's standards and processing virtually every part of the animal is used and nothing from the animal goes to waste. Currently most grocery stores and warehouses are connected to a charity network so that meat surplus becomes available it is being donated.

Another barrier to donating animals comes directly from the law passed in 1978 that eliminated the processing of non-ambulatory animals for human consumption. While there was good reason for the law, it has led to the inability of producers to process any animal with any small defect, no matter how trivial or superficial. This eliminates the

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<sup>16</sup> USDA website

possibility of donating animals that have small imperfections or that did not meet weight requirements but are otherwise viable for consumption.

This change has effectively altered the way farmers were able to process their livestock, and these still viable animals are not able to be used, causing increased hardship on the farmer and potential beneficiaries, including the food insecure.<sup>17</sup> If Congress would address the concerns and work with the livestock industry to meet the initial intent of the law, the industry would have the opportunity to utilize some of the animals that fall through the cracks and get them back into the processing chain.

An area of opportunity might be with farmers without contracts with processors and those that have a few animals at the end of the season that are not viable or do not meet the specifications of a contract. Often they do not see the value of donating a few or even one animal, as there can be logistical barriers in getting the animals to a USDA approved plant and then getting the processed meat to a food bank. Time is a luxury for independent farmers, so taking the time to locate a processing facility and getting it there takes valuable time and money.

The group came to a consensus that education is the key to reaching these farmers so that if they wish to donate they know where and how to get animals into the processing plants and to the charity networks. Providing to farmers a fact sheet and diagram outlining all of the contacts, steps and information for what to do if they wanted to donate their animal would be helpful and might make donating a little easier.

If farmers were provided with a stipend to help defray the costs of processing a donated animal, it would be more economically feasible for them to pursue this route. A program or template to consider could be similar to the provisions of the Minnesota Hunter Harvested Venison Donation Program. *See Appendix D*

3. *Contract Farmers with Surplus:*

**Definition:** Farmers that grow crops under contract with processors that have surplus.

**Target Market:** Farmers that contract with companies like Seneca, Birds Eye, and Lakeside Foods.

**Barriers:** Large scale, processing capacity during peak season, costs involved with processing.

Independent farmers are more likely to have surplus crops at the end of the season than contract farmers, as they are not operating on an expectation that a given amount of product will be delivered. Numbers are much easier to control in livestock than in produce, and when it comes to livestock, there is tight control of numbers in order avoid surplus, as it impacts their bottom line.

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<sup>17</sup> USDA website



A direct donation program relies on the goodwill of producers and processors to donate surplus food to local food shelves. Direct donations programs could facilitate new charitable relationships between producers and local food shelves.

For example, a local group called “Minnesota Farmers Helping Families”, a coalition of state agriculture commodity groups including the Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council, Minnesota Pork Board and Minnesota Milk Producers Association, came together with the purpose of donating pork and dairy products to local food shelves. However the group ran into several roadblocks when looking at locating a USDA certified processing facility and locating enough products. In the end they ended up purchasing pork and cheese, as they were not able to locate surplus and obtain sufficient donations, due to so many barriers. The group will continue its mission to challenge Minnesota producers to help those in need by donating more pork and dairy products in the future. *See Appendix F*

## Barriers

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There are many barriers when looking at accessing surplus food and successfully getting it to those in need. For many that were surveyed or those producers or industry professionals we spoke to advised the problem largely stems from a lack on education on what to do with surplus. Many people do not know where they can take their surplus, or have those relationships in place.

Challenges to donating surplus product identified by the Feeding Minnesota Task Force:

- ✓ **Cost of harvesting.** There is a lack of time and cost to harvesting surplus product, it takes time and money to harvest the excess product and time to transport it to the charity networks.
- ✓ **Missed opportunity to utilize tax deductions for donations.** Many producers do not take advantage of the tax deductions that are available when they donate product, more education and outreach is essential in this area.
- ✓ **High cost of labor to harvest surplus food.** The cost of harvesting unused product is a hardship to producers. A lack of volunteers to help glean the excess product out of the fields along with the concern for possible liability issues is also a barrier for many. For those producers that do not already have a relationship with their local charity groups, they do not have the time to research and create a model from which to utilize their surplus.
- ✓ **Time.** Time is money for producers, according to our survey and conversations with people in the industry, time and labor is more important than the cost it takes to transport the surplus product. Additionally, it was reported that the food banks were not open at a convenient time for them, which results in a lost donation.

- ✓ **Transportation and refrigerator space is a significant barrier to the donation of surplus food.** Produce and livestock products are perishable and in the case of produce have a short shelf life, facilitating effective and efficient transportation from the field to the donation center is an on-going issue, particularly with the increase in energy costs. Many food banks have purchased trucks that pick up product, others require that the producer drop off the product at their location, this varies from location to location. It will be essential to establish good lines of communication so producers are better able to effectively and economically transport product. There are many organizations that handle issues pertaining to transportation that may be willing to work with local groups or charitable donation centers to provide guidance on how to navigate their logistical problems. The Minnesota Trucking Association would be a valuable resource to utilize.

For example if a producer is transporting product to one town, after they have unloaded their product, if they could connect with a local producer and transport a load of product from that area to a location along the way or at their end location, (backhaul) this would be the best use of time, resources and equipment. A system would need to be put into place that would help compensate for the drivers labor and gas. In order to create a larger and more effective donation process, transportation will need to be addressed, and possibly, funding set aside to aid the food banks in their ability to reach more areas and utilize more surplus food.

- ✓ **USDA inspected plants.** Minnesota State is one of 28 states that has an “Equal to” E2 inspection program. State inspected products can only be sold in Minnesota while federally inspected products may be sold across state lines. The State Inspection Program is considered to be “Equal to” that of Federal Inspection and is routinely reviewed to ensure the state is meeting the Federal meat inspection requirements. These plants operate under the requirement as set by the Federal Meat Inspection Act or the Poultry Products Inspection Act.

### Meat Processing Inspection:

What type of inspection will I need?	
	Type of Inspection Needed
Processing meat and poultry products to return to the owner of the animal	Custom Exempt
Processing meat and poultry to be sold to other businesses (convenience stores, groceries, bars, etc) <i>in Minnesota</i>	State
Processing meat and poultry to be sold to other businesses (convenience stores, groceries, bars, etc) <i>across State lines</i>	USDA
Processing meat and poultry from inspected products and selling them out of the retail store only	Retail Exempt

## Recommendations and Action Items

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It is the Feeding Minnesota Task Force recommendation that the State of Minnesota could best facilitate the distribution of finding surplus Minnesota produced food and livestock by first and foremost;

- Build upon or expand models currently in place that advocate direct donations at the producers discretion using creative methods; and
- Build relationships in communities between producers, charity networks, retailers, businesses, and faith based groups.

### **Recommendation #1:**

To accomplish these primary goals *the task force recommends developing a compressive website and web based network where producers/distributors/volunteers/those in need, could connect with local food banks and or food shelves.* It would host a list of groups that the producers could partner with. The site would be monitored and continuously updated by a group to be determined to serve as the website administrator (i.e. the MDA/nonprofit organization/previously established group).

A website would be an ongoing project so it will require both development and maintenance funding. The website would need to be closely managed as information would be time sensitive. It is estimated that the website and ongoing development could cost upwards of \$50,000. After development a minimum of a .5 FTE would need to be budgeted for. It is also recommended that the website include the following components:

- Provide information on surplus food what it is and where in the state it is located.
- Provide models that are currently in action that can be modified to fit other community's and their specific needs.
- It will house testimonials on how other groups facilitate the donation and distribution of surplus food.
- List maps and contact information for all for food shelves and banks the state, list when they accept donations or when they are in need of product ( what products are needed) and when they need volunteers. The food shelves and food banks can list useful educational and information materials regarding product donation.
- Educational material will be downloadable and will allow for groups to customize them to their own groups.

- Utilize media, provide news release templates for producers or organizations to get out information, relate a need, request volunteers for gleaning, get the word out.
- Link to other groups that are currently donating or utilizing surplus food, i.e. MN Grown.
- Have a comprehensive search system that will allow producers, consumers, and the public to search what they are looking for. i.e. how to donate, pitfalls, where to donate, where I can volunteer, how can I distribute my surplus (logistics).
- How an organization or non-profit can donate products, money etc. Also how they can gift money to the group that runs the website.
- Gleaning: provide info/education, what it is, how to utilize it, guidelines, request volunteers, liability issues.
- Testimonials of groups that utilize gleaning.
- Provide info on community gardens should people like to get involved and show how people can donate food from their gardens.
- Give examples of programs that gather funds to purchase product, process it into a widely usable products and donate it to charity networks. i.e. Farmers Helping Families.

The Department of Agriculture could host the website on their server or another organization could host the site. There are limitations for housing the website at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, these items include:

- The layout and capabilities of the website will be limited as the department has strict guidelines and procedures that it must follow in regards to communication and website capabilities.
- Funding will need to be provided to support this website, and staff time will need to be dedicated.
- The MDA would not be able to have a GPS or logistics piece on the site as those capabilities are not compatible with MDA's current process. This is a vital piece of the surplus food process.
- This website can be housed and maintained by a non-profit group, as many have similar sites, this would allow for more design flexibility.

### **Recommendation #2:**

We further recommend that an advisory council be convened, and that the Feeding Minnesota Task Force members be encouraged to service as advisory members to continue to utilize their knowledge, resources and passion to lend direction to furthering the development of the website.

### **Recommendation #3:**

It is recommended that farmers have a waiver for those that will be working on their land. The state cannot provide a boiler plate waiver, but advises each party to consult with an attorney to draft one that is applicable to their needs and situation. It is advisable to have proper insurance to also help mitigate damages. The state does not have any acts that are

similar to the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, even if Minnesota did the federal rules would supersede those of the state. Minnesota could propose to have supplemental legislation put place but it has to stay within the bounds of the federal law. This information should be distributed statewide and should be also available on the website.

#### **Recommendation #4:**

It will be essential to reach out to the rural communities, work with them directly to strengthen communication and relationships so that producers that have surplus will know who to call, quickly and easily. Additionally it will be important for food shelves and food banks in the area to reach out to local producers and farmers markets so that that relationship is already in place when the times comes for surplus food to be donated. It is vital to bring all groups to the table and have them design a system that will work for them.

#### **Future Action Items to Consider (3-5 years):**

##### **1. Surplus agriculture product purchase program:**

Develop a program that could help reimburse producers and/or processors for the procurement of surplus products. These funds could help to reimburse for the costs of picking, packing and processing. Develop the Minnesota model on the expertise of other states we have reviewed and further tap into existing groups and assist in expanding their reach and abilities.

##### **2. Tax credits or incentives:**

Transportation incentives: should producers agree to transport product during their back hauling portion of their trip, time, labor, and gas should be reimbursed. A system should be constructed to help assist producers with this and also serve as a liaison to connect producers together to consolidate truck loads.

Tax credits could be used as an incentive for producers and processors to donate their unharvested or unsold products. This type of program relies on the goodwill of producers to donate product to charity networks. By strengthening the channels we can assist in making donation easier. Producers might be more willing to consider donation as an alternative to plowing surplus produce back into the land. The information below was developed by Feeding America to explain the tax donation system as it is related to food. This Act has since expired but it is expected that Congress will re-instate it in a similar format, the below information will gives an idea of what the Act consisted of.

#### **Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008**

An enhanced tax deduction for all business taxpayers was included in the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 passed by Congress and signed into law by the President. Included in the law were new tax incentives to foster increased donations of food and grocery products to food banks nationwide, including Second Harvest Heartland. This law extends an enhanced tax deduction for food and grocery product

donations to all business taxpayers from Jan. 1, 2008 to Dec. 31, 2009 . The enhanced tax deduction could generate up to 78 million additional meals for hungry Americans over two years.

The law enables all business taxpayers, including farmers, franchisees, ranchers and other small business owners, to take an enhanced tax deduction that is the sum of one-half of the unrealized appreciation (fair market value minus cost equals appreciation) plus the taxpayer's cost, but the deduction cannot exceed two times the cost of the contributed property as described in IRC Section 170(e)(3). Farmers and ranchers who use the cash method of accounting do not qualify for the deduction.

Here is an example of how this works:

Selling Price:	\$4.00
Cost:	\$1.00
Gross Profit:	\$3.00

So  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the gross profit is \$1.50 meaning that enhanced tax deduction could be \$2.50 (Cost plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the gross profit. **However:** the tax code says that the deduction cannot exceed 2 times the cost, meaning that the amount of the actual deduction that can be taken would be \$2.00 (2 x the cost of \$1.00)

In addition, the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act does allow qualified ranchers and farmers to deduct more than 10 percent of their income for the 2008 calendar year if they donate food that is worth more than that amount. Traditionally, business taxpayers have only been allowed to donate up to 10 percent of their income.

Local livestock growers associations might also consider a regular, rotating donation of their specific commodity to help support the food bank networks in their local community (Feeding America Website).

### 3. Grants:

Offer grants to organizations or groups that are already structured and have developed a way to distribute local surplus foods into the food network, provide them with funds so they can expand their program or operations and become self-sustaining and efficient. There are also foundations and federal grant funds that should be considered when looking for further funding opportunities. There are many federal grants that are issued from the USDA that could potentially be utilized by nonprofits or other groups to further the task force work. The website that is developed can list potential grant opportunities that charity groups could apply for.

Grant projects could include assisting in certifying community kitchens or help purchase commercial sized refrigeration to store perishable products, helping food banks purchase energy saving equipment or trucks. These grants can help organizations that just need a bit of help so they can continue to focus on serving their communities, or assisting new groups get off the ground.

Grants can be distributed by the ongoing advisory group or the entity that takes on the task forces projects to help offset costs to producers. Cost was noted in the survey as being the main barrier for producers not donating their surplus product. Providing funds to help offset the cost of transportation, time lost while harvesting, transporting surplus product, and labor costs, would make a significant measurable difference to the amount of surplus product donated.

#### **4. Other:**

Currently the group Homegrown Minneapolis is working on a project that will list of all community kitchens in the state of Minnesota. There are approximately 30 kitchens in Minneapolis that are available for food-related activities (some are commercially licensed, most are just kitchens that could be used for individual use). They will then work to develop strategies for connecting people around the state to this resource. This would be an excellent avenue for people with surplus food to process the products further to that it can have a longer shelf life. Once this group has completed this resource they will be posting it online at [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us.dhfs/homegrown-home.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us.dhfs/homegrown-home.asp).

The Boston Consulting Group developed a survey with the help of Second Harvest Heartland to look at how agriculture surplus is being utilized in the state as part of a statewide campaign to end hunger by providing access to food for low-income Minnesotans. This survey will be available to the public in early January 2011. This independent assessment of U.S. and Minnesota data closely corresponds with the findings of the Task Force along with the dimensions of agricultural surplus and how that impacts those in need. This data will be helpful for future work conducted by the task force advisory group.

## **Impact of Feeding Minnesota Task Force Recommendations**

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Success will be measured by the ability to serve others in need through the programs and services offered, such as, the Feeding Minnesota website, collaborating with other charitable networks to promote access to surplus food, ability to quickly and efficiently move surplus food from producers to those in need. On a national level success would be to improve programs and services already being offered to those in need.

Tracking the pounds of food distributed through the food banks statewide by both type and location, and monitoring the tracking before and after launching the website will provide a good measurement tool to monitor the number of people served by obtaining surplus food. The effort will need to be coordinated with that of the food bank networks that are already in place.

Another survey should be conducted on the same group of people that were surveyed for this report, tracking to see if there is an increase in donation of surplus product, and see if barriers have been removed and monitor for progress in the barriers that were identified.

Analyze how many pounds of food were donated to the food bank pre and post implementation of the website. This can be accomplished by tracking the type and quantity of the product, where it was sent from within the state, where it was distributed, the time tables for transportation of the product and how many people were served.

An additional measure of success is counting the the number of new donors to the food banks each year, surveying donors to see why they donate, barriers they face in donating and how the process can be made easier along with why they were now able to donate.

Additionally, track the number of organizations like Minnesota Farmers Helping Families, and how many new or continuing organizations are donating food through agreements with individual producers. For the organizations already in place, measure how much donated and surplus product they are able to process and donate.

The Feeding Minnesota Task Force while conducting their research found several areas in which further and continued work could be done. The impact of the task force's recommendations would be long range and substantial in nature, with the end result being a reduction in the amount of unused surplus food in the state and a decrease in people that are considered food insecure.

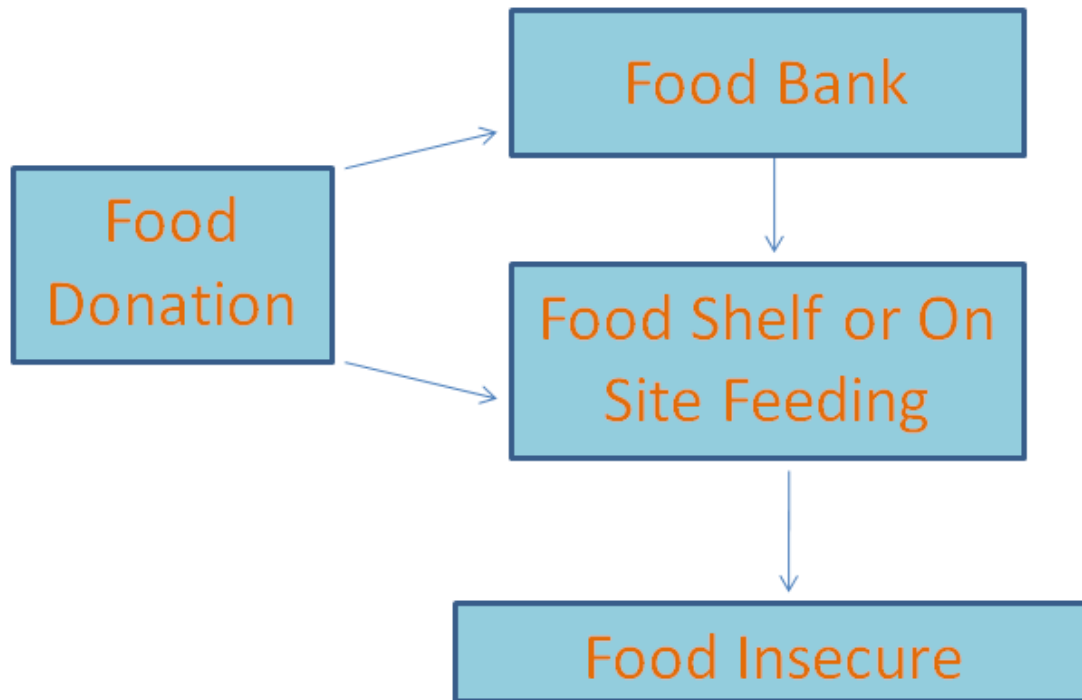


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Appendix A:

## Flow of food to those in need



## Appendix B:

### **Survey of Minnesota's Fruit & Vegetable Producers - Overview and Documentation**

#### **Purpose and Contents:**

The Feeding Minnesota Task Force conducted a survey of local farmers that was targeted to elicit information on local agricultural surplus, its current uses and potential barriers to donations of surplus products to non-profits. The survey was administered to growers of fruits and vegetables. Specifically, the survey elicited information on the following areas.

1. Overall size of the operation and acres devoted to fruit and vegetable production
2. An inventory of the types of fruits and vegetables grown and approximate quantities of each product.
3. A summary of marketing methods, including information on direct marketing and use of farmers markets.
4. Amount of excess for each type of product, the times during which excess is available and uses for excess/unsold produce.
5. Interactions with food banks, including whether or not they donate, whether food banks pick up from the farmers markets where they sell, barriers to donating and willingness to donate in the future.

#### **Sample & Descriptive Statistics:**

We received 201 responses through the mail and 22 were filled out electronically. We mostly received responses from small and medium farmers. (Table 1) presents the size distribution in terms of total acres of production. One third of the respondents operate farms that are smaller than 5 acres while nearly half (46%) operate farms that are smaller than 10 acres. Only 4 percent of the respondents operated farms that were 500 acres or larger. The respondents were also mostly older farmers. One fourth were older than 65 years of age, while 85 percent were over the age of 45 (see Table 2 for age distribution). Seniority in farming was evenly distributed, with nearly half the respondents having farmed for over 20 years (Table 3).

A very large share of the respondents are involved in direct marketing, and most use more than one marketing method. For instance 62% use farmers markets, 57% sell on farm and 29% market via "pick your own" farms. Overall only 162 producers gave a valid response regarding marketing methods.

#### **Production and Excess:**

Most producers are involved in multiple products. Some of the most popular products include apples (37%), berries (39%), Pumpkins (50%) Winter Squash (53%), Bell Peppers (45%), Sweet Corn (38%) Tomatoes (53%), Cucumbers (50%) and Potatoes (40%). (Table 5) describes the number of producers that are involved in different fruits and vegetables. Almost all producers have some excess (94% of them). The excess mostly occurs at the end of the season (37%) or occasionally (30%). Only 9% of producers report that they have excess regularly, while another 9% said they have excess weekly (Table 6).

### **Donations and Barriers**

A high share of the respondents donate the produce. Specifically, 65 percent of the respondents state they donate excess produce while 15 percent state they would consider it. Overall 81 percent of the people know where their nearest food bank is located. In terms of contact with the food bank, 10 percent are contacted each week or occasionally by the food banks, 45 percent state they contact the food bank when they have excess, while 35 percent are not in contact with the food banks. Many of those who donate do so through farmers markets. 29 percent of those who sell at farmers markets stated that food banks pick up excess produce. Of course, 71 percent of the respondents haven't noticed pick-ups of excess at farmers markets (Table 9).

Among those who don't donate the most important barriers are cost related. The three most popular answers were harvest labor costs, lack of time to harvest and transportation costs (Table 10). Among those who have tried to donate, the most important barriers have been lack of refrigeration space and instances when the food bank was closed. Additionally, only 17 percent of respondents said they were willing to have volunteers pick the produce.

### **Drawbacks**

We tried to assess produce costs but only 13 respondents (7%) provided an answer, while only 3 respondents stated they know their harvest costs. So the survey was unable to elicit harvest costs. Also the sample is rather non-representative of the Minnesota farm population. For instance, more than half the farmers sell at farmers markets and nearly 70 percent already donate excess.

### **Concluding remarks and future uses.**

Despite the non-random sample the survey can be of great use for estimating program costs and volumes, should a program that subsidizes donations be proposed. Feeding Minnesota Task Force member Elton Mykerezi has designed a procedure for enhancing the representativeness of the sample via re-weighting. A re-weighting scheme could be used to make the median survey respondent overlap with the median respondent to the most recent Census of Agriculture. Additionally better estimates of surplus statewide could be produced.

The survey can also serve as a baseline for program evaluation. For instance, should a step be taken to improve the coordination and information flow between farmers and non-profits, a second survey of this nature after the changes can be conducted. This survey can serve as a baseline, so that progress can be measured.

The data is property of the Department of Agriculture. For information and access please contact the MDA.

**Table 1. Farm Size**

	Respondents	Percent
Less than 5 acres	59	29.35
Between 5-10 acres	31	15.42
Between 10 – 25 acres	24	11.94
Between 25 – 50 acres	27	13.43
Between 50 – 100 acres	21	10.45
Between 100 – 500 acres	32	15.92
Between 500 – 1,000	2	1
Over 500 acres	5	2.49

**Table 2. Age Distribution**

Age	Frequency	Percent
No response	5	2.46
Less than 25	1	0.49
25-35	9	4.43
35-45	12	5.91
45-55	52	25.62
55-65	70	34.48
<u>Older than 65</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>26.6</u>
Total	203	100

**Table 3. Years Farming**

	Frequency	Percent
No answer	6	2.96
less than 5 years	19	9.36
5 – 10 years	22	10.84
10 – 15 years	24	11.82
15 – 20 years	25	12.32
20 – 30 years	53	26.11
30 – 40 years	36	17.73
more than 40 years	18	8.87

**Table 4. Marketing Methods**

	Producers	Percent
Farmers Markets	127	0.62
On Farm	116	0.57
Pick your own	59	0.29
Wholesale Local	61	0.30
Wholesale Broker	12	0.06
CSA Shares	20	0.10
Combination	31	0.15

**Table 5. What is produced:**

	Producers	Percent
Apples	76	0.372549
Other Tree Fruits	21	0.102941
Berries	79	0.387255
Pumpkins	101	0.495098
Winter_Squash	108	0.529412
Leafy_Green	65	0.318627
Potatoes	80	0.392157
Carrots	70	0.343137
Other_Root_crops	50	0.245098
Sweet_Corn	78	0.382353
Peppers_Bell	92	0.45098
Peppers_other	72	0.352941
Tomatoes	109	0.534314
Green_Beans	88	0.431373
Cucumbers	100	0.490196
Melons	61	0.29902
Onions	90	0.441176
Other	60	0.294118

**Table 6. When does the excess occur?**

	Producers	Percent
<b>End of season</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>0.372549</b>
<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>0.294118</b>
Regularly	19	0.093137
Monthly	0	0
Weekly	19	0.093137
A little through the season	10	0.04902
Never	19	0.093137

**Table 7. Donations**

	Producers	Percent
<b>Yes</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>0.645503</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>0.201058</b>
<b>No, but I'd consider it in the future</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0.142857</b>
I have, but I don't plan to anymore	<u>2</u>	<u>0.010582</u>
Total	189	1

**Table 8. Contact with the Food Bank**

No Answer to the question	18	0.089109
<b>They call to see if I'll have anything to donate each week.</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0.044554</b>
<b>They call occasionally.</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0.044554</b>
<b>I contact them when I have extra produce.</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>0.465347</b>
They bug me.	1	0.00495
No contact.	<u>71</u>	<u>0.351485</u>
	202	1

**Table 9. Picking up from Farmers Markets**

Yes – every week	23	0.17037
Yes – Sometimes	13	0.096296
<b>No</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>0.718519</b>
Sell at multiple markets, excess picked up at (?)	<u>2</u>	<u>0.014815</u>
	135	1

*So 135 sell at farmers markets and gave a response to this question.*

**Table 10. Barriers to Donating:**

	Producers
<i>I don't know where to take the produce.</i>	11
<i>I didn't know the food bank/shelf accepted donations of fresh produce.</i>	22
<b>I don't have excess produce.</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Food bank/shelf doesn't accept donations when it's convenient to drop it off.</i>	25
<b>Labor costs to harvest.</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Lack of transportation to the food bank/shelf.</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>I don't have the extra time to harvest and transport.</b>	<b>51</b>
Previous pressure from a food bank/shelf to make donations.	2
I think it's better to dump the extra and maintain the price so I'll still be in business	5
Other	26

**Table 11. Problems Donating**

The food bank/shelf didn't have adequate refrigerated storage space	30
The food bank/shelf didn't distribute the produce timely	7
The food bank/shelf wasn't open	25
The food bank/shelf was open, but couldn't accept donations	11
The food bank/shelf refused the donation based on quality or product	4
Other – please specify	10

## Appendix C:

# Farmers' Market Surplus Fact Sheet:



### **What is a farmers' market?**

A farmers market is a producer operated facility where fresh fruits and vegetables and other food items are offered for sale.



Note\*\* Not all markets are producer run, some are organized by the community, city or other local groups.

### **Is there surplus produce at the end of the market day?**

There currently are over 100 farmers markets in Minnesota. This is often an underutilized source of fresh produce that could be donated to the food shelves after each market day, many farmers do not know what to do with or have the time to determine what to do with the surplus.

### **What is the donation process?**

A highly effective way to target this surplus food is to have the local food shelves partner with the farmers market individually or through their association, the Minnesota Farmers Market Association, to set up an agreement and schedule. By doing this, market vendors would not need to organize transportation of the produce or other details, making it much easier to donate. Also, by working out such agreements, the vendors would be able to more easily track how much is donated for reimbursement on their taxes.

### **Liability Concerns:**

In 1996 the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act was passed to promote food recovery by limiting the liability of donors to instances of gross negligence or intentional misconduct. The Act states that, absent gross negligence or intentional misconduct, persons, gleaners, and nonprofit organizations shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or apparently fit grocery products received as donations. For more information visit:

<http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/seven.htm>.



## **How to Develop a Farmers' Market Produce Pick-up Program:**

### **Goal:**

To collect produce from the Farmer's Market for distribution to a local food shelf. Produce collected is generally any left at the end of the day from growers that have surplus but it could also include produce purchased by patrons of the market to donation to those in need.

### **Pre-work:**

- Meet with the manager and/or board of the local farmer's market to get permission to pick up surplus produce on a weekly basis.
- Plan a space at the market to be used as a collection point that is near a spot that you could park the vehicle that will be used to transport the produce collected.
- You could also consider soliciting patrons of the market to purchase produce to donate to your organization. If you do, you will need to develop appropriate signs, banners, and/or flyers to communicate that program. These donations can be dropped off at a booth/table at the same collection point as the rest of the produce.
- Send a letter to all growers that participate at the market to introduce yourself and let them all know that you will be there.
- Develop a flyer to use to hand out to all growers that sell at the market.
- Identify local food shelves or other hunger relief organization that will accept and distribute fresh produce.

### **Equipment Needed:**

- Food safe cardboard boxes to put produce into when collecting. Produce boxes (banana, apples, etc) from a local grocery store work well. An alternate might be a food-safety plastic bin that can be re-used each week.
- A 2 wheel dolly or cart to maneuver full boxes through the crowds at the market.
- A truck (refrigerated is ideal) to transport the produce to the local food shelf
- A table and canopy if setting up a booth at the market.

### **Day of the Event:**

- Arrive before market opens and set up a booth to be used as a collection point.
- Promote your organization to patrons of the farmer's market and encourage them to purchase produce for donation to the food shelf by dropping it off at the booth (optional).
- Introduce yourself to all of the growers that participate in the market and explain your mission.
- Distribute flyers to patrons promoting the idea of purchasing produce to donate (if applicable.)
- Towards the end of the selling period, drop off empty boxes so growers can begin boxing as the crowds dwindle.
- As boxes become full, transport to your vehicle.
- When all produce boxes are picked up, check the area and remove any empty boxes that may remain. Clean up any signs, banners, etc that you may have brought.
- IMMEDIATELY transport the fresh produce to the food shelf to maintain quality and freshness.
- Provide receipts to all vendors who donate so they can potentially use the donation as a tax benefit.

### **Post Event**

- Send thank you notes and acknowledgement of the donation to each grower.
- Sit back and relax because YOU HAVE DONE A GREAT THING!



*Don't let surplus fresh produce be thrown away when you can partner with **Second Harvest Heartland** to make it available to people at risk for hunger in the community. Last Sunday 13,000 pounds (equaling 8600 meals) of fresh nutritious melons, squash, corn, tomatoes, peppers, beans, were saved from the dumpster and delivered to soup kitchens and food shelves across the metro area.*

**HOW:** Collect surplus produce from grower/vendors at Minneapolis Farmers Market and load onto Second Harvest Heartland truck. Pass out flyers to shoppers inviting them to donate purchased items.

**WHERE:** Minneapolis Farmers Market, Lyndale near Hennepin, west side of the Basilica of St. Mary

**WHEN:** Any Sunday now until Nov. 1:

- 8 - 11:30, pass out flyers and/or be at booth to receive donations
- 11:30 - 3, distribute boxes to grower/vendors and collect full boxes with 2-wheel dollies

**WHO:** Anyone 18 or older - ability to lift required in afternoon shift. 8-10 volunteers per shift

**CONTACT:** Tim Wareham, Volunteer Coordinator, [twareham@2harvest.org](mailto:twareham@2harvest.org), 651.209.7917





## Help Your Hungry Neighbors Donate Excess Produce at the Farmer's Market

Minneapolis Farmers Market and  
Second Harvest Heartland (the Upper Midwest's  
largest hunger-relief organization) are teaming up to  
bring fresh produce to those in need through  
a new program, *Giving Green*



Photo credit to Shocai on Flickr

### *How it Works*

Beginning Sunday,  
July 19th, and  
every Sunday  
throughout the  
growing season,  
Second Harvest  
Heartland staff



and volunteers will collect your excess produce at  
the close of the market.

### *Donating is Safe and Easy*

SHH volunteers will load a refrigerated truck  
with produce and will answer questions from  
shoppers. The SHH driver (trained in food safety  
practices) will deliver the produce to the SHH  
Maplewood Distribution Center for distribution  
the next day. You and your donation are protected  
from liability.

Shoppers will also be encouraged to donate.

### *How Your Donation Helps*

Donations from Giving Green will feed hungry  
children, families, and senior citizens—our  
neighbors here in the heartland—through our  
community partnerships.

Nutritious food can often be cost prohibitive for  
many families. Fresh, local produce is especially  
appreciated by food shelves so they can offer  
more options to their  
clients. Healthful eating  
helps maintain or  
improve health.

Your participation is  
voluntary and you may  
end it at any time.



*Thanks for Supporting Your  
Hungry Neighbors!*

*We'll see you at the Market!*

## Appendix D:

### **Venison Donation:**

The Minnesota Hunter Harvested Venison Donation Program allows Minnesota deer hunters to donate deer carcasses to food banks, food shelves and feeding programs.

This program, which is a cooperative effort between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), provides an excellent source of protein to people in need while helping reduce local deer populations, as well as, provides a great outlet for individuals or producers to donate product.

Food charities in Minnesota are able to receive venison for distribution through this program. Charities must register with the program and report to MDA the number of donations they receive and distribute on a regular basis.

Hunters interested in donating can go to the DNR's website for more information on the requirements of the program.

Meat processors are eligible to receive \$70 reimbursement per deer processed for donation if they meet the following requirements:

- Are a licensed food handler
- Are registered with the venison donation program prior to accepting donations
- Deliver or arrange delivery of donated products to registered food charities
- Complete and submit the required documentation to MDA for each deer they accept for donation

## Appendix E:

### **South East Minnesota Food Network:**

**An example of how one group utilizes surplus food and contracts with farmers to bring fresh food to the market.**

The South East Minnesota Food Network is a limited liability company in which all of the producers are also members of the network. Generally you need to be a member to sell through them. Each category of projects is handled differently:

**Protein:** generally when contracting with protein producers they schedule a year out, the producer will let the network know how many animals, and when they will be ready so they can plan accordingly.

**Produce:** over the past few years the group has gotten to where the network is able to schedule planting in advance of the season with the growers, they look at what time product is needed most and schedule with the grower to have product available at that time. Generally the growers call one to two weeks ahead of time to let the network know when items will be ready, then the network is able to let their customers know via email what products will be available so they can place their orders.

The network has three lists that they contact to let know of the products that are available. 1. They have their general customer list, from which emails are sent on Monday's with a list of all products that will be available so they can place their order.

2. The network also has a preferred customer list, which is a group that is sent information regarding product that is available but in smaller quantities that is offered on a first come first serve basis.

3. Lastly, is the institutional list. The products that are available for this group come with institutional pricing, and come in bulk. This list is used in the fall for schools and other large institutions.

**Timeline for delivery:** customers place their orders Monday or Tuesday. Wednesday the network starts to assemble the product boxes. Thursday the truck arrives, picks up and then distributes the boxes to the customers. From June- November the delivery truck runs a few times a week, but from December – May it only runs once a week.

Customers get one invoice regardless of how many producers contributed to their order, this helps keep things convenient for the customer instead of receiving several invoices. Once the payment is received by South East Minnesota Food Network, it is logged and then payment is made to the producers.

The Network holds 25% of the revenue so it can cover distribution costs, marketing, employee time and overhead.

**Producers:**

In the beginning the Network actively recruited producers and members, now they are at the stage when people are calling them to sell their products. Often times depending on the goods they are put onto a waiting list. Beef is an example of a product that is continually on the waiting list.

**Financial Structure:**

All members by a share what is considered a “by in” in order for them to get started, that is what helps fund the beginning of the overall venture.

Due to the complicated accounting documentation that was needed, the Network utilized the help of University of Minnesota graduate students to create accounting and record keeping software. This way they are able to predict how much product is needed to fill the orders, keep track of all the orders, and how much they need to compensate these producers. Each producer and customer has a bar code this allows for careful tracking of products and to ensure that invoices are correct and that producers are getting paid accordingly.

Because of the complicated customer structure the Network worked with their bank to have a revolving fund structure, this allows for producers to get paid on a consistent schedule rather than sporadically depending on the purchasing agent. For example if a college or school is purchasing product it could take 90-120 days for payment to be received. With this option the producer has more control over their income and can decide what works best for them. Should they choose to use the revolving door payment method the Network does add a 1% fee, this helps cover the cost of interest. For example, a producer that only sells strawberries during one point in the summer may want to be compensated right away so they can pay their seasonal workers.

**Barriers:**

There were several barriers to overcome in order for the Network to get off the ground. First is the perception that local foods are inconvenient or hard to get reliably in the quantity that is needed. There is the notion that quality may not be consistent, and that distribution can be a challenge. Often restaurants and schools have a set menu and are not able to be flexible depending on what is available. To help counteract this the Network first worked with small restaurants that were able to be flexible on their menu items often changing it several times a week, from this they were able to perfect their distribution and other systems in order to get a program that would work on a larger scale for those that are not as flexible.

Until the Network was able to schedule what was grown with the producers there was a great deal of inconsistency and inability to determine what was available and when. Being able to plan ahead with producers on what they are going to grow,

when they will grow it and how much, eliminates these inconsistencies. Planning with producers is routine for the group.

Developing the needed software tools and spreadsheets have also taken years to perfect.

Another significant barrier is the cost it takes to start up this type of program as well as maintaining it at an efficient level.

Grant money would be helpful but not at the beginning of the process, rather when grant funds are truly needed is at the 3-5 year mark. This way the grant funds would benefit those that are currently making it work but need help expanding so they can become more self-sustaining and efficient. 90% of start up's fail, many focus all their time and energy reinventing the wheel, when they could be learning from others before them who paved the way.

**Services:**

The Network now offers training for a fee in which they will work with prospective groups looking to set up a similar structure in their area. One item that the Network is finding is that not everyone can market to the Twin Cities metro area, depending on their location and what products they are growing. However, they can help them find a niche market for their products such as marketing to schools, colleges, nursing homes and so on. What the Network is also finding is that there is a large market for processed foods. In this case the producers would take their tomatoes and turn them in to tomato sauce or catsup, making products with longer shelf life, this extended shelf life will also help in the ability to transport it to further locations.

There is no one way to approach food distribution, there is no one size fits all approach but it would be financially beneficial for new start-ups to utilize the good examples in place already, and learn from them.

## Appendix F:



### **Protein Donation: Taking a page from Minnesota Farmers' Helping Families.**

The Minnesota Farmers Helping Families project is an example and can be used as a blue print of how to maximize protein donation and get it to those in need.

This program was a collaborative effort and partnership between the Minnesota Pork, dairy and soybean producers associations. They took a portion of their check-off money, which funds research and marketing efforts at home and around the globe and purchased protein as well as received donations from Minnesota farmers to donate to Hunger Solutions Minnesota.

The groups donated approximately 85,000 pounds of pork and more than 36,000 pounds of cheese to Hunger Solution Minnesota a hunger relief organization.

Originally they were looking to receive donated livestock but that proved too cumbersome and there were too many holes with the logistics, instead the group raised the funds and purchased the product. They then had it processed in a plant in Wisconsin and then distributed throughout the state using the Hunger Solutions network. By providing a uniform frozen product the food banks are able to more effectively utilize it and the customers able to get the most use out of the product.

The group was able to purchase the product just slightly above cost from Stoneridge. It was tough to locate product on such short notice as most had already been spoken for.

Logistics proved to be a problem for the group, along with locating the amount of product they were looking for, as well as, finding a plant that was USDA approved to process the product. Another issue was that after the press release there was not a lot of traffic to the website.

The program is going to continue, they are going to keep their current website [www.mnfarmershelpingfamilies.com/](http://www.mnfarmershelpingfamilies.com/) and look for more partners to grow their mission, the group does plan on making this an annual donation.

The end product was well received by the end users as well as the food shelves. It was very easy for the people to use.



## Appendix G:

### Gleaning

**Gleaning** is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or on fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest.



Gleaning is a highly cost effective way of harvesting surplus agricultural products. It provides a way for farmers who have crops that are edible, but not marketable, to link up with organizations that will harvest the unused produce, and distribute it to those in need. An estimated 224 million pounds of unused food goes to waste every year in Minnesota and gleaning is one avenue to help eliminate this waste. Gleaning relies on volunteers to harvest crops from the farms that the owners have decided is not economically profitable to harvest or from farms with surplus following the commercial harvesting season. Independent nonprofits and food banks organize these gleaning programs, which greatly reduces the burden on local farmers (Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network Website).

According to surveys, the cost of harvesting, processing, and transporting surplus agricultural products was identified as one of the most significant challenges in regards to donating surplus as farmers are not willing to incur those costs. The high cost for the labor needed to harvest the surplus crops is a significant factor when farmers are looking at donating, and this is where gleaning organizations can come in.

Unfortunately for Minnesota there is not a strong gleaning network and the programs in place now are few and very loosely based, with concerns regarding possible liability risks and lack of supervision this makes farmers hesitant to pursue this option (Second Harvest Heartland website). Another missed opportunity with donating food is that many farmers do not take advantage of the tax deductions for their donations. Many were not aware that these deductions existed and they were not considered a factor in their donation process.

### **Why Glean:**

- It brings together a variety of people
- The goal of recovering food to feed the hungry is appealing.
- It is hands on experience
- It is extremely low cost per pound of food.
- Has significant impact on the operating budgets of organizations that serve the hungry.

### **How Gleaning Works:**

- The farmer that is listed in the network call when they have available produce to glean.
- The staff contact one or more of their gleaning groups and they go out to the fields to harvest.
- All are welcome to volunteer or participate.
- Bags are filled and produce is transported to agencies or neighborhoods.

### **Why Gleaning Works:**

- It brings together a very wide range of people
- The goal of recovering food to feed the hungry has enormous appeal
- It is a hands-on experience
- It has an extremely low cost per pound of food
- It has a favorable impact on the operating budgets of a large number of organizations that feed the poor

### **Gleaning Programs do the following:**

- Find Farmers willing to give access to food
- Organize gleaning teams
- Recruit volunteers
- Train leaders
- Arrange gleaning events
- Transport poor people to the fields
- Supply produce containers
- Supervise gleaning events
- Transport gleaned produce
- Distribute food to poor people
- Host special events for hunger awareness

**\* Federal Public Law 104-210, The Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act.** Contact your local library for United States Code 42 USC Sec. 1791, or see <http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/appc.htm>

## **Food for Your Community: Gleaning and Sharing**

Food recovery is the collection of wholesome food for distribution to the poor and hungry. It follows a basic humanitarian ethic that has been part of societies for centuries. We know that

### **Points to Remember**

**Try to keep the activity to a manageable size.** If you have a large number of volunteers, divide them into two or three smaller groups. Set a block of time for each to glean the fields. Or glean on two different days.

**Have refreshments.** The time of year will be a factor in what you serve volunteers at gleaning time.

**Consider providing tools.** If volunteers bring their own tools and water, you don't need to. However, the "bring your own" approach may decrease the number of volunteers that participate.

**Get help.** Appoint some people to help volunteers harvest produce correctly.

**Think ahead.** This year's gleaners may be next year's project organizers or leaders.

"gleaning," or gathering after the harvest, goes back at least as far as biblical days. The term "field gleaning" refers to the collection of crops either from farmers' fields that have already been mechanically harvested or from fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. This fact sheet describes how you can set up a field gleaning project to benefit your community.

### **Locating Farms for Donations**

State departments of agriculture can also be extremely valuable resources in helping to identify donors for gleaning projects. These agencies are not only closely tied to the individual growers, but are also usually the offices that approve and establish farmers' markets and organize the state and county fairs. Involving agencies can also help build a sense of community and cooperation at the local level.

### **Communicating with Potential Donors**

Before going out to ask a farmer to donate, anticipate questions that the farmer is likely to raise. Keep in mind that a farmer is going to have some unique concerns that will need to be addressed. It's important not to make promises you can't keep, such as guaranteeing that no one will sue if they are injured while on the farm. Be prepared to discuss the liability provisions in detail; have a copy of federal and state "Good Samaritan" laws, or well-written summaries of their provisions, to give the farmer.

Initiate a discussion of who will be responsible for providing the containers for the gleaned produce: Will they be provided by the farmer, or will they have to be brought in? What are the farmer's concerns about having all these unknown people on the farm? Does the farmer have ground rules that need to be identified up front (such as no use of the restroom facilities or the telephone in the house; don't drive vehicles in certain areas)?

It is important to remember that producers are professionals whose time and product are valuable. Neither should be wasted by

promising to glean and then not showing up, or showing up at the wrong time or place, or showing up with the wrong type of gleaners (e.g. your children or grandchildren, when the producer specifically said no children.)

# Gleaning Fact Sheet

## Setting Up A Gleaning Project - A step-by-step plan.

### What to Do- Advance Planning:

1. **Set up a committee to plan and coordinate the activity.** Assign a committee chair or coordinator.
2. **Develop a plan.** Determine the scope of the activity so that you can plan your recruitment and promotion efforts.
3. **Identify local farmers and gardeners whose farm products can be gleaned.** Make a list of these people, including their addresses and telephone numbers. Contact them and invite them to join you. Discuss the activity, describe the training volunteer gleaners will receive, and the benefits of participating. Get written permission to glean their fields, gardens, groves or orchards.
4. **Give out copies of a summary of state and federal “Good Samaritan Laws”** (see previous information or contact your county Extension office) to farmers and gardeners who will be participating.
5. **Make a list of the farmers and gardeners who will be a part of the project.**
6. **Recruit.** Contact local schools or the county Extension office to recruit school children or 4-Hers as gleaners, as well as assistants. Make a list of all the volunteers who will be helping collect produce.
7. **Set a date(s)** for the gleaning activity.
8. **Contact food banks, homeless shelters or other local facilities** to arrange for donations of fresh produce, and to schedule a delivery site and time.
9. **Contact local businesses and civic groups.** Ask them for help in transporting the produce to food banks, providing harvesting tools, portable toilets, refreshments, etc. Get written commitments.
10. **Begin advertising the gleaning activity.** Prepare and distribute fliers, radio announcements and press releases announcing and promoting the gleaning activity to the community. Include dates, times and locations as well as any dates and times for ~~training~~ sessions” with the farmers or volunteers. If necessary, translate the promotional materials into the languages of local ethnic groups to expand the outreach.
11. **Alert local civic groups, organizations representing local ethnic groups, and the religious community about the gleaning activity.**

### What to Do: One Week Before the Activity

1. **Prepare directions** to the farms, gardens, groves and orchards. Prepare tip sheets about what to wear (for comfort, safety and protection), safe hand-harvesting techniques, and the kind of harvesting tools needed.
2. **Distribute tip sheets on clothing, harvesting tools, and directions** to the gleaning site at your planning meeting. Discuss such issues as transportation (car pools or buses?) and contingency plans (what to do in case of bad weather or other unforeseen problems).
3. **Check with food banks** to make sure that they will still accept the food to be gleaned. Confirm delivery sites and times.

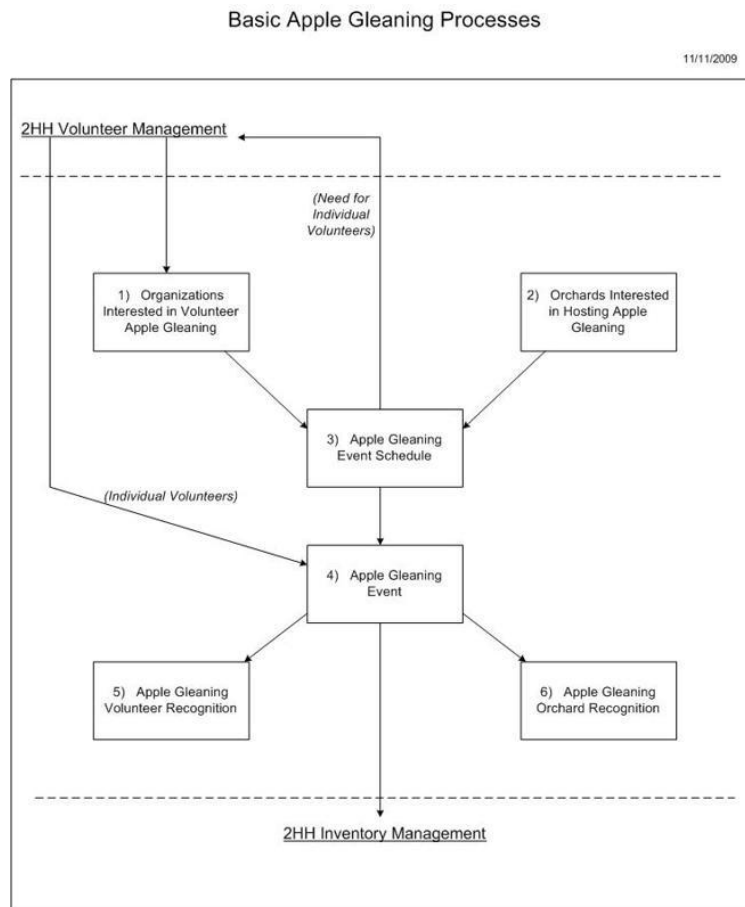


## What to Do: Day Before Activity

1. **Mark areas at the gleaning site where the volunteers may park.**
2. **Prepare and put up signs** showing the central meeting spot and directions to gleaning site.
3. **Have youth help set up collecting and rest areas:**
  - tables where volunteers get containers for collecting food;
  - main deposit area for gleaned food; and
  - tables/benches where volunteers can get water or beverages and take rest breaks.
4. **Notify media of the event if you want coverage.**

## What to Do: Day of the Activity

1. **Provide cold water and/or other hot or cold beverages and drinking cups.**
2. **Ask gleaners to assemble at a central place at the farm or garden.** Welcome the gleaners. (Involve the owner of the field and the activity coordinator.) Review safety, protection and comfort information. Have the farmer or owner lead a harvest training session. Distribute the containers and harvesting tools.
3. **Involve the media.** Conduct interviews with volunteer gleaners, farmers and children. Photograph the volunteers as they pick produce.
4. **Have youth prepare the gleaned produce for distribution to the receiving organizations.** Encourage volunteer gleaners to take some of the gleaned produce home for their own use.
5. **Load the produce** into vehicles for transporting to the food banks, etc.
6. **Ask volunteers to help with clean up.** Close the gleaning activity by thanking the volunteers and field owners.



## Appendix H: Sample Recommendation Progress Form and Indicators

Recommendation	Progress	Sample Indicators
Build upon or expand models currently in place that advocate direct donations at the producers discretion using creative methods		Develop a website and web based network. Partner with groups that already have sites or educational tools, track membership and visits to the site.
Build relationships in communities between producers and charity networks.		Have producers/distributors/volunteers/charity networks/local businesses meet and discuss issues. Measure amount of food being donated, measure number of groups starting projects, measure the project's impact.
Have a searchable system		Link producers, consumers and the public, link up to facilitate timely and efficient donating. Monitor traffic on the website, new users, is there an increase of donations to food shelves/banks.
Address Liability		Distribute information on the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, put on the website. Measure number of people and markets reached, number of distribution points.
Gleaning		Provide education/information. Education material and website information, measure traffic to website. Hold informational sessions, (number in attendance, number of groups utilizing gleaning). Measure amount of product donated.
Farmers Markets		Work with farmers markets vendors and managers, link them up with local charity donation groups. Education material and website information.
Protein/Surplus agriculture product purchase program.		Research and partner with other groups already donating surplus or purchased protein (i.e. Farmers Helping Families). Education material and website information.
Community Gardens		Education material and website information. Monitor traffic to web, how many people start new gardens. Contact groups involved measure impact on community through measuring number/lb of donations. Track at each garden or at charity site how much food is donated from the garden.
Tax credits or incentives		Would people use the program, track how many do, does the program increase peoples propensity to donate? What is the change in donation pre and post tax credit/incentives?
Grants		Track how grant funds are used, track how they impact a community, monitor how much surplus food is utilized and how donated, how many people did it

		serve?
Community Kitchens		How much perishable product was converted in to something that has a longer shelf life. How much was donated, how many people did it serve?