

## Department of Agriculture Highlights Pennsylvania Food Rescues, Outlines Steps to Reduce Food Waste, Feed Hungry during COVID-19

**Harrisburg, PA** – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding today highlighted the department’s efforts to reduce food waste and decrease stress on our food supply chain. He also outlined steps Pennsylvanians can take at home to reduce food waste, and connect with organizations across the commonwealth working to recover food and distribute to those in need.

“Many people don’t realize how much food they throw away every single day,” said Secretary Redding. “COVID-19 has increased our awareness of the availability of food and the complexity of its supply. We must work together to reduce our waste and only buy what our households will use in a week or two.

“By reducing food waste, we can save money, provide for those in our communities who are experiencing food shortages, and conserve resources for future generations.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that more than one-third of all food goes uneaten due to waste. COVID-19 has compounded the issue of food waste in the commonwealth, with ongoing pressure of the food supply chain to produce more consumer-sized goods and less commercial-sized goods as more people are eating in the home.

The department’s [Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System \(PASS\)](#) program helps to support Pennsylvania’s agriculture industry in all 67 counties and reduce waste of agricultural surplus by making connections between production agriculture and the non-profit sector.

PASS provides an efficient mechanism for producers to donate safe, wholesome food by reimbursing them for the costs of harvesting, processing, packaging and transporting donated food. Thirteen local, charitable food distributors procure foods from Pennsylvania agricultural producers, packers and processors, using state funding provided by PASS. Without PASS, these food products would otherwise be left to rot in fields, plowed under, dumped or landfilled.

The following Pennsylvania food rescues work to recover food before it goes to waste and distribute it to people and organizations in need:

- [412 Food Rescue](#) – serving the greater Pittsburgh area
- [Chester County Food Bank Food Rescue](#) – serving Chester County
- [Food Connect Group](#) – serving greater Philadelphia
- [Food Recovery Network Pennsylvania](#) – with chapters at Allegheny College, Cabrini University, Drexel University, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Lafayette College, Lehigh University, Lycoming College, Marywood University, Messiah College, Millersville University, Muhlenberg College, Saint Joseph’s University, Shippensburg University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh, University of the Sciences, Ursinus College and West Chester University
- [Fooding Forward](#) – serving greater Philadelphia
- [Philly Food Rescue](#) – serving greater Philadelphia
- [Rolling Harvest Food Rescue](#) – serving Bucks and Montgomery counties
- [Sharing Excess](#) – serving greater Philadelphia

[Operation BBQ Relief](#) (OBR) is an effort to reduce commercial sized food waste in restaurants, harnessing the power of shuttered restaurants, available restaurant workers and commercial food products to produce family-style meals to support those in need. The commonwealth has partnered with the Salvation Army and OBR to distribute 4 million meals. Those needing assistance should contact their local Salvation Army Corps Center or [Feeding Pennsylvania food bank](#) for distribution information.

“When food is tossed aside, so too are opportunities for improved food security, economic growth and environmental prosperity,” added Redding. “During these unusual times when we’ve all become hyper-focused on food and its availability, I encourage Pennsylvanians to consider how they can reduce food waste in their own homes. Save yourself some money, save producers some stress, and leave food available for those who are wondering where their next meal is coming from.”

Pennsylvanians are encouraged to practice sustainable food management by donating untouched food that would have otherwise gone to waste to those who might not have a steady food supply. Below are some tips to reduce waste in the home:

- Keep a running list of meals your family enjoys and their ingredients;
- Make your shopping list based on how many meals you need and their ingredients;
- Include quantities on your shopping list to avoid over-buying;
- Be sure to check your fridge and pantry before shopping to avoid buying what you already have;
- Buy only what you need, buying in bulk only saves money if you can use it before it spoils;
- Check out [these tips](#) for storing fruits and vegetables so that they stay fresh longer;
- Freeze, preserve, or can surplus fruits and vegetables;
- Freeze things like bread, sliced fruit, or meat you won’t be able to eat in time;
- Many fruits give off natural gases as they ripen, making nearby produce spoil faster – store bananas, apples, and tomatoes by themselves, store fruits and vegetables in different bins;
- Produce past its prime may still be good for cooking – consider making soups, casseroles, baked goods or smoothies;
- [Learn the difference](#) between the sell-by, use-by, best-by and expiration dates;
- Watch how-to videos by [PA Eats](#) to find recipes to use up all of your ingredients and minimize food waste while cooking.

In addition to the tips above, Pennsylvanians are encouraged to check out the [Healthy Pantry Toolkit](#) provided by [Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network](#) for individuals with limited resources. Used in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and many other programs, this toolkit provides health and nutrition education along with tips on being mindful of using pantry resources to their full potential to minimize food waste.

For more information on food security in Pennsylvania including information about resources and actions taken by the Wolf Administration, visit [agriculture.pa.gov/foodsecurity](http://agriculture.pa.gov/foodsecurity). For the most accurate and timely information related to Health in Pennsylvania, visit [on.pa.gov/coronavirus](http://on.pa.gov/coronavirus)