



# Hunger Matters

A Newsletter from the Casa Hunger Action Ministry

An Outreach Ministry of the Franciscan Renewal Center

Bread of life, bread of Heaven, give us this day, our daily bread, feed those, who are hungry. Amen. *Bread for the World*

We hope this newsletter informs and inspires you to become more involved with hunger issues in Arizona, our country, and the world. In each newsletter we'll provide you with current information, as well as activities, at the Casa and in our community, where individuals or groups can participate to help reduce hunger.

The **Vision** of the **Hunger Action Ministry (HAM)** is to be a change agent in our community. **Our Mission** is to promote and support local organizations that strive to eliminate and reduce hunger. Our Vision and Mission are made achievable through our **Subcommittees: Awareness, Advocacy and Action**. To learn more about our Ministry see page 4.

**Do you feel a calling from God to become more involved in social issues?**

**Want to work with a dedicated team and help guide HAM's future?**

Please consider exploring and possibly joining the Hunger Action Ministry Core Team. As the leadership team, we determine the focus and activities of the ministry for the year and then give our time, our energy and talent to help those activities happen. Email us at [hungeraction@thecasa.org](mailto:hungeraction@thecasa.org) if you'd like to know more.

## Celebrate the Casa's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Tuesday, October 11th, 2022  
4:00 - 8:00 pm at the Casa

**Please note: prior RSVP is required to participate.**

To sign the virtual anniversary card and RSVP, visit <https://www.thecasa.org/celebration>

God,

You are our shepherd.  
We walk closely with you.  
Open our ears to hear Jesus' words,  
"You give them something to eat."

Open our eyes to see  
what actions we can take  
to blaze the path to an end to  
hunger in our world.  
In Jesus' name we pray,  
Amen

*Bread for the World.*

## FOOD WASTE & WHY WE SHOULD CARE ABOUT IT

### Consumer, Farm, and Grocery Store Waste

It is estimated that the average U.S. household tosses more than \$1,866 worth of food into the trash each year<sup>1</sup>. In spite of this, consumer food waste is only a small portion of the estimated 30-40% of the food supply and billions of dollars of food wasted yearly in the United States.

For many of us, food waste means throwing away those leftovers, maybe some fruit or vegetables past their prime, or food that the "best if used by" date is near or has

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey (FoodAPS)

passed. Consumers' food waste increases household food cost and can reduce the affordability of nutritious diets. Sometimes, rather than donating "imperfect" fruit and vegetables and other foods nearing their "use by" or "sell by" date to a food bank, grocery stores throw them away and they're taken to a landfill. This video is a must watch and shows the shocking state of food waste in our country:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8TDfjbpSBE>

### Environmental Considerations of Food Waste<sup>2</sup>

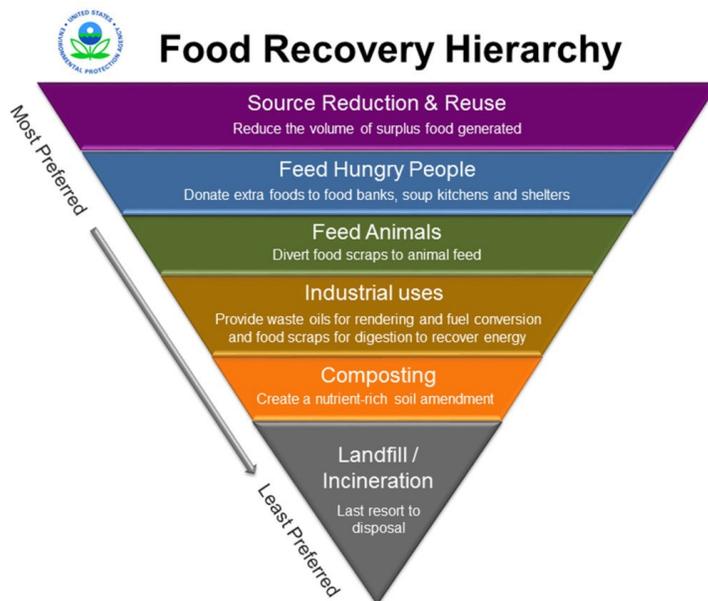
Resources could be conserved for more productive uses. When food is wasted, so too is the land, water, labor, energy, etc., used in producing, processing, transporting, preparing, storing, and disposing of the discarded food. For example, throwing away a couple of pounds of beef is comparable to wasting more than the 13,000 gallons of water required to produce that meat.

Greenhouse gases generated from food rotting in landfills must be reduced to help mitigate climate change. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), food is the largest category of material placed in municipal landfills. Methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, is emitted from these landfills. In 2017 it was estimated that solid waste landfills were the third-largest source of human-related methane emissions in the U.S. contributing to climate change.

### The USDA and EPA Tackle Food Waste<sup>2</sup>

In 2015, the USDA and EPA announced the first-ever national food waste reduction goal. This calls for a 50-percent reduction in food waste by 2030. Prevention and donation are the first steps in meeting this goal. Management of food and scraps to achieve the highest beneficial use is the next step.

The following graphic shows the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy, with the most preferred solution to avoiding food waste at the top and the least preferred solution at the bottom. There are some additional destinations for uneaten food that are not included in this graphic, but they are also considered a better alternative than landfill or incineration.



The bottom line shows that reducing food waste is an opportunity to improve the social, economic, and environmental conditions of current and future generations.

### How Food Labeling Contributes to Food Waste<sup>3</sup>

Learn about food waste and how it affects food insecurity and our environment. Approximately forty percent of food produced in the U.S. is wasted - food that could help reduce hunger in our country. Food waste is bad for our environment, too, since 25% percent of our fresh water is used to produce food that is wasted and 21% of items sent to landfills is food. When all that food in our landfills decomposes, it produces greenhouse gases.

One contributing factor to food waste is food labeling: use by dates, best buy dates, expiration dates, sell by dates, etc. What do they really mean? If you're like most people, you see that the date on the package has passed and into the trash it goes. Much, if not most, of the food taken to landfills was OK to eat!

As consumers, we look at these labels and equate the date with food spoilage, and we assume that this information is important to our health. The problem is that the Federal government doesn't determine the rules for labeling. It is left to the states; but, since there is no standardization, one state's rules may be very different from another state, causing general confusion.

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<sup>2</sup>Sources for these sections: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Further with Food, Arizona Food Bank Network, Borderlands Produce Rescue, and Imperfect Foods

The truth is that food labels generally are not related to food safety. The date is meant to indicate when the food item is at its peak of freshness and flavor. After that date, some foods may lose some flavor, or the texture can change over time; however, most packaged foods are OK for weeks or months after their best buy date and canned items can be safe to eat for years. Just be sure to check that the packaging doesn't have holes, dents, or bulges.

The best by, expiration, best if used by, and use-by dates don't mean the food is bad after that date. There are some items, however, that should not be used after their expiration date, like vitamins, medications (both prescribed and over the counter), cake mix, and baking powder because they may not function properly.

Remember, though, it's OK to eat food after its sell by date. Sell by and pack dates are used by manufacturers and retailers to rotate their inventory and as a guide to removing items from shelves. These food labeling dates may lead grocery stores to throw away the removed items.

Unfortunately, some states bar stores from donating "expired" food to food banks and some foodbanks don't want those food items either.

The solution to waste caused by food labeling is the following:

- Pass Federal legislation to standardize food date labels.
- End the ban on donation of food past its quality-related date labels to food banks and pantries.
- Education of consumers on what the date labels mean.

<sup>3</sup>Information for this section was taken from the following sources:

- "Food Expiration Dates: What to Know," by Katy Hebbian for Nourish by WebMD, Undated
- <https://www.webmd.com/diet/features/do-food-expiration-dates-matter#1>
- "The lie of expired food and the disastrous truth of America's food waste problem," by Alissa Wilkinson for Vox, July 8, 2021,
- <https://www.vox.com/22559293/food-waste-expiration-label-best-before>
- National Resource Defense Council. <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/nina-sevilla/best-use-new-bill-helps-clarify-date-label-confusion>

**Good News!** A bi-partisan group of Federal legislators has reintroduced the Food Date Labeling Act in both the House and Senate. The purpose of the bill is to end confusion about food labeling and expand consumption and donation of good, safe food. To clear up confusion, the bill proposes only "best by" or "best if used by" (a date after which the food may be less flavorful) or "use by" (a date after which the food is not safe to eat) labeling. These new Federal labeling requirements will help consumers decide whether food is safe to eat or should be discarded.

If this bill becomes law, it will allow food to be donated after its "best by date." Additionally, the USDA and FDA will be tasked with educating consumers about the new labeling system.

### Strategies for Fighting Food Waste at Home<sup>4</sup>

The following strategies do require a willingness on your part to use food that you might not feel like eating, rather than ordering pizza for delivery! Only basic cooking skills are required to cut down on food waste.

1. **Make Stock or Broth.** Stock and broth can be made from either raw or cooked bones or meat, as well as any kind of vegetable, herb, or spice. Bones are not necessary to making a good stock. Any washed vegetable can go in the pot: celery leaves, carrot tops, mushroom stems, limp parsley or cilantro, zucchini ends, broccoli stems, onion scraps, and anything else you have in the refrigerator. Instructions: take a large pot and fill it with cold water, add your choice of bones/meat, vegetables, herbs, and spices. Boil for 2-3 hours on the stove. Allow to cool, strain, and then pour liquid into jars or containers and store in the refrigerator for now and later in the freezer. Stock and broth can be used in soups, stews, and sauces. Strained vegetables can be added to compost.
2. **Use Your Freezer.** If you think you might not eat something in time, then freeze it. Produce bought on sale can be chopped and frozen for future use, stale bread can be tossed in a blender and the breadcrumbs can then be frozen. Hint: you can freeze eggs, rice, milk, and butter.
3. **Learn Recipes That Will Use Up Excess Food.** We're talking about recipes that use up near-to-expiring foods that will make a delicious meal. Suggested recipes include minestrone and other soups, vegetable chili and  
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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.treehugger.com/strategies-fighting-food-waste-home-4847423>

possibly vegetable and noodle stir fry. Be sure to have staples on hand such as canned tomatoes, pasta, stir-fry sauce, chili powder, canned beans and more. Be creative! Stale tortillas can be fried for tostadas and stale bread can be used for garlic bread.

4. **Change How You Store Food.** Try using glass jars and containers when storing leftovers in the refrigerator ...remember, out of sight, out of mind! Maybe get really organized and store oldest food in front so it can be used first. Rather than thinking about best by dates use your senses to decide whether a certain food can be eaten. Look at it, smell it, and taste a tiny bit.
5. **Commit to Eating Leftovers.** Many of us aren't fond of eating leftovers, but to be serious about reducing food waste, we must. You could decide that one or two days a week are leftover nights. These are opportunities to clean out your refrigerator...maybe everyone eats something different...kind of a buffet!! Or, for the creative, leftover night can be a great meal: possibly a salad, a rice dish or stir fry.
6. **When You Must Dispose of Food.** Rather than tossing food in the trash that will go to a landfill and add to climate change, backyard composting is an option. Of course, not everyone, especially those residing in an apartment, can do backyard composting. An option would be to store compostable items in a freezer until they can be delivered to a municipal composting site.
7. **Plan Your Meals.** One of the best ways to cut down on food waste is to make a weekly meal plan based on foods you already have in the refrigerator; new purchases would build upon those foods. Having a meal plan and purchase list cuts down on impulse buying (and allows you to save money!).

8. **Recipes are Just a Guideline and Substitution is OK.** You can "substitute zucchini for peppers, kale for spinach, green onions for yellow onions, cilantro for parsley, canned tomatoes for tomato paste, and yogurt for milk or sour cream." Be brave!

**Let's start doing our part to reduce food waste:  
Look, Smell, Taste, Don't Waste!**

## MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR MINISTRY

Each of our subcommittees has specific areas of responsibility. Those responsibilities are outlined below.

### Awareness

September Hunger Action Month Events  
Educational Movies and Events

### Advocacy

We promote advocacy on significant issues related to local and national hunger through these organizations:

- Bread for the World
- Feeding America
- St. Mary's Foodbank
- Arizona Food Bank Network
- St. Vincent de Paul

Legislative interaction: letters, emails, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings with State and/or Federal lawmakers.

### Action

Scheduled service activities with local agencies focused on alleviating hunger

- Casa food drives benefiting St. Vincent de Paul.
- Food donations in the Casa food and clothing bins benefiting Vista del Camino and Andre House
- Group volunteering at local food banks
- Preparation of food kindness bags for the hungry in our community

### To contact us:

Hunger Action Ministry (HAM)  
The Casa/Franciscan Renewal Center  
Faith in Action Ministry  
5802 East Lincoln Drive  
Scottsdale, Arizona. 85253-4124  
web: <https://www.thecasa.org/faith-in-action/> (scroll down to find Hunger Action)  
Email: [hungeraction@thecasa.org](mailto:hungeraction@thecasa.org)

## SAVE THE DATE!

**MARCH 24, 2023**

**The Hunger Action Ministry is planning a fun and educational /advocacy event in March of next year. We'll have knowledgeable speakers, and we'll learn even more about food waste in our country and how we can advocate for changes to Federal laws designed to tackle this problem.**

### REMEMBER

**If we Waste Not,  
our hungry neighbors will Want Not**