



Food Rescue in Morris County: Current Landscape and Opportunities for Growth

Prepared by the
Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority
May 2026

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
1. Introduction: Background and Approach.....	4
An Introduction to the Food Waste Problem.....	4
Food Waste Pathways.....	4
Food Waste in Morris County: Regional Initiatives and Regulatory Context.....	5
Project Focus: Food Rescue and Redistribution Through Donation.....	7
2. Overview of Food Rescue and Assistance in Morris County.....	9
Stakeholder Groups.....	9
Existing Food Rescue Systems and Food Assistance.....	10
Geographic and Demographic Context of Food Insecurity in Morris County.....	12
3. Operations and Logistics of Food Rescue and Redistribution: Stakeholder Discussions.....	13
Insights Into Food Assistance in Morris County.....	13
Insights Into Food Producers/Donors.....	20
4. Food Rescue and Redistribution in Morris County: Strengths and Weaknesses.....	24
Operational Strengths of Food Rescue in Morris County.....	24
Identified Gaps and Opportunities in Food Rescue in Morris County.....	26
5. Bridging the Gaps: Food Rescue Solutions for Morris County.....	29
Solutions to Expand the Volume of Food Being Rescued.....	29
Solutions to Expand the Rescue of High Demand Foods.....	31
Solutions that Minimize Food Waste Heading to Landfills Post-Rescue.....	32
Solutions that Support Food Rescue through Regulations and Policies.....	33
Solutions that Increase Communication, Awareness, and Community Involvement.....	33
Solutions that Improve How to Measure and Track Food Rescue.....	34
References.....	42
Appendix A: Questionnaires for Food Assistance and Rescue Organizations and Generators.....	38
Appendix B: Potential Grants and Funding Sources for Food Assistance.....	38
Appendix C: MCMUA Food Waste Labeling Education.....	38
Appendix D: Food Waste Flyer for Businesses.....	38

Executive Summary

Food waste is the most common material sent to landfills in the United States and a major contributor to climate change. Each year, billions of pounds of food are wasted, along with the water, energy, land, labor, and other resources required to produce it. Diverting surplus food from landfills to beneficial uses is essential for reducing its environmental impact. Food donation and redistribution allow excess edible food to serve its intended purpose, reduce waste, and generate a smaller environmental footprint than other end of the line solutions. Government initiatives have acknowledged the problem of food waste and established various goals, strategies, and legislation to address it.

The Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority (MCMUA) oversees recycling, solid waste, and hazardous waste management programs and is responsible for implementing the County's Solid Waste Management Plan. As part of these responsibilities, the MCMUA supports regional and state efforts to reduce food waste and increase food recovery. The MCMUA conducted this assessment between December 2024 and April 2026 to better understand the availability of surplus edible food and opportunities to expand its redistribution. During this period, the MCMUA interviewed key stakeholders involved in Morris County's food donation and recovery network to gain insight on food rescue and redistribution in the County. The MCMUA had conversations with thirteen Morris County food assistance organizations (food pantries, community kitchens, and other organizations providing nutrition services), the Community Food Bank of New Jersey (CFBNJ), two food rescue organizations, and five Morris County food waste generators (two supermarkets, one food producer, and two farms). Data from the meetings were evaluated for similarities and differences in challenges, needs, resources, services provided, messaging, operations, etc. Consideration was given to what was needed to resolve challenges and to what the MCMUA could do to provide support and help recover more excess food. In addition to the interviews, discussions, and site visits, the MCMUA conducted additional research to support the goals of this assessment.

In Morris County alone, there are over 50 pantries and community kitchens, as well as several food assistance organizations, demonstrating a clear existing foundation for food rescue and assistance. Conversations with these organizations revealed a variety of service models, with each organization's capacity to provide assistance largely dependent on the availability of resources.

The MCMUA identified strengths and weaknesses in the food rescue and redistribution landscape in Morris County. Strengths included having protections and incentives for food donations, food assistance service coverage throughout the County, food rescue already being an important part of food assistance, the existence of apps to facilitate donation, informal networks between agencies, a focus on nutrition and overall well-being, the additional services offered by food assistance organizations, corporate support for food donation, and the financial resources available in Morris County. The gaps and opportunities included a need for more donors, availability of specific food through rescue, cold storage and space needs, staffing and transportation needs, the lack of a formal food assistance agency network or coalition, logistical and operational hurdles, misunderstanding about acceptable donations, and the food waste created at food assistance agencies.

The MCMUA proposed solutions that directly address the gaps identified during stakeholder interviews and build upon the food rescue and assistance framework that is already in place. The solutions seek to expand the volume of food being rescued, expand the rescue of high demand food, minimize the amount of food heading to landfills after rescue, support food rescue through regulations and policies, and increase communication, awareness, and community involvement. The specific recommendations are detailed in Chapter 5 of this assessment.

1. Introduction: Background and Approach

An Introduction to the Food Waste Problem

Food waste is the most prevalent material discarded in landfills and incinerated in the United States, making up 24% of landfilled and 22% of combusted municipal solid waste (Jaglo, Kenny, & Stephenson, 2021). The environmental impact of food extends beyond its production and distribution, continuing to affect the planet even after it reaches the landfill. Approximately 58% of the methane emissions released into the atmosphere from municipal solid waste landfills come from this abundance of wasted food (Krause, Kenny, Stephenson, & Singleton, 2023). Methane, a potent greenhouse gas, influences the Earth's climate system, meaning that our food waste plays a significant role in driving climate change. Every year, billions of pounds of food go to waste in the United States, squandering not only the food itself but also the water, energy, land, and time invested in its production.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) defines food waste as food that is produced for human consumption but not ultimately consumed by humans (Kenny, 2025). It is comprised of uneaten food and inedible parts going to the following waste destinations: composting, anaerobic digestion, landfill, sewer, dumping, spread onto land, or not harvested (ReFED, 2025). Food waste occurs at all levels of food production, sale, and consumption, from being left in fields to being prepared or purchased in excess quantities to being discarded in homes and restaurants. Surplus food is a category of food waste referring to food that goes unsold or unused by a business or goes uneaten at home, i.e., food that is produced or purchased in excess. In the United States, up to 40% of the food supply is generated in excess and never makes it to people's plates (USEPA, 2025; ReFED, 2025).

Food Waste Pathways

Most food waste in the United States is landfilled or incinerated without any beneficial resource recovery, but alternative pathways exist to divert it from this fate. The Wasted Food Scale (Figure 1) ranks the methods of reuse and disposal from most preferred to least preferred based on their benefits to the environment and the circular economy (Wasted Food Scale, 2026). The options that pose the greatest risk to the environment are not ranked but encouraged to be avoided. By following this waste hierarchy, businesses and individuals can make more sustainable choices that reduce environmental harm and promote a circular food system.

After prevention, **donation**, and **upcycling**, food waste pathways are preferred. These pathways are ranked highly because they enable food to be used for its intended purpose and minimize waste. They also have lower



Figure 1 United States Environmental Protection Wasted Food Scale (Wasted Food Scale, 2026)

used for its intended purpose and minimize waste. They also have lower

energy, water, and land-use demands and environmental impacts than other food-waste pathways. Large-scale food upcycling usually occurs during the manufacturing phase of the food supply chain, where unused food and scraps can be incorporated into different products. Manufacturers can use leftover food parts that are typically discarded, such as fruit peels, stems, or seeds, and turn them into new products. For example, fruit pulp from juicing can be recycled into energy bars, jams, or smoothies. Maximizing use of the entire product can also be applied at home, helping stretch a household's budget and the nutrition obtained from regular grocery shopping. Alternatively, food that goes unsold in stores or uneaten in kitchens can be donated to feed people. Donation is typically free for the donor and can be used throughout the food supply chain, from farms to production and retail sales to end users and consumers. For a business, donations also help strengthen its corporate social responsibility efforts and reduce its waste disposal costs.

Food Waste in Morris County: Regional Initiatives and Regulatory Context

National Food Waste Reduction Guidance and Initiatives

The U.S. federal government's first domestic effort to reduce food waste was the National Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal established in 2015 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the USEPA. It aims to cut national food waste by 50% by 2030 (USEPA, 2025). To mobilize actions that support the Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal, the Federal Interagency Collaboration to Reduce Food Loss and Waste (FIFLAW) was established in 2018. This initiative is a federal-level collaborative effort to align federal programs in their mission to reduce food waste by educating consumers and stakeholders across the food supply chain. In May 2024, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the USEPA renewed their agreement and reaffirmed their shared commitment to reducing food loss and waste (U.S. FDA, 2024). The *National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste and Recycling Organics* was published later in 2024, with the main goals of preventing food loss and waste, increasing the recycling rate for all organic waste, and supporting policies that incentivize and encourage food loss and waste prevention and organics recycling (USEPA; USDA; FDA, 2024). Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 of the United Nations aligns with the USEPA target, calling to halve per capita global food waste at both the retail and consumer levels by 2030 (United Nations, 2026).

State Food Waste Guidance and Initiatives

The State of New Jersey has also recognized the need to address food waste. In 2017, the Food Waste Reduction Act (N.J.S.A. 13:1E-226 et seq.) established a state goal of reducing the amount of food waste generated in the state by 50% by 2030, based on the amount generated in 2017. It also commissioned the NJDEP to develop the Food Waste Reduction Plan, which was published in October 2023. This plan recommends specific administrative and legislative actions that support the 50% reduction goal. Key aspects of this plan include fostering partnerships with organizations already engaged in food waste reduction, creating educational materials, coordinating outreach, implementing statewide waste audits, and creating more metrics and reporting tools for food waste quantification. The plan also calls for the reinstatement of the Advisory Council on Solid Waste Management, along with the establishment of a food waste sub-committee (NJDEP, 2023). The Food Waste Reduction Act and Plan provide the core framework for reducing food waste and rescuing food in New Jersey.

The other New Jersey legislation that directly addresses food waste is the 2020 Food Waste Recycling and Food Waste-to-Energy Production Law (N.J.S.A. 13:1E-99.122). The law requires large food waste generators that produce a minimum projected annual food waste mass of 52 tons and are within 25 miles of an authorized food waste recycling facility to separate and recycle their food waste. Currently, there are two approved waste facilities in New Jersey and one scheduled to come online in 2026, which means there is limited applicability of this law throughout the State (Figure 2). Despite this, the law represents an important step in New Jersey's efforts and aims to encourage the establishment of additional food waste recycling facilities.

In January 2026, two food waste bills were signed into law at the state level. The first (P.L.2025, c.228) requires that within two years each Solid Waste Management District, i.e., all 21 counties and the

Hackensack Meadowlands Region, develop and implement strategies to reduce their food waste by 50% by 2035 using 2022 as the baseline year. It requires Districts to amend their solid waste management plans with their adopted strategies. The law also requires the NJDEP to develop and publish an online list of measures solid waste management districts can take to achieve the food waste reduction requirement. These measures would include actions to prevent food waste, increase the donation of surplus edible food, and promote source separation, recycling, composting, and anaerobic digestion of food waste; other food waste diversion methods that also reduce methane emissions; and public awareness campaigns. Furthermore, the legislation requires the NJDEP to create a tiered regulatory structure for composting facilities that exempts small-scale composting facilities like those at community gardens from solid waste permitting, streamlines compost facilities planning requirements, and authorizes the use of registrations, general permits, and permits-by-rule where appropriate (State of New Jersey 221st Legislature, 2026). This law aims to promote, streamline, and increase access to food-waste reduction strategies. The second food waste law from 2026 (P.L. 2025, c. 309) requires higher-education institutions to implement food-waste reduction programs and submit annual reports detailing surplus food donations and composting efforts.

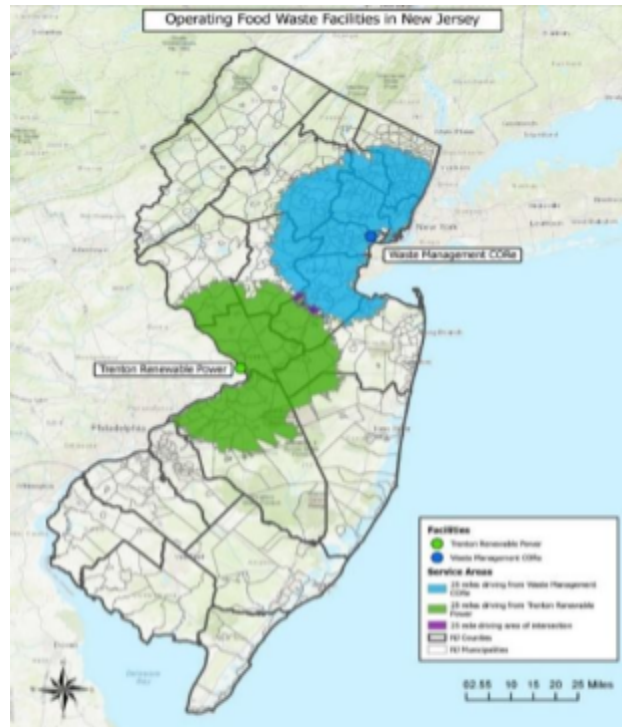


Figure 2 Areas where food waste recycling is mandatory for large food waste generators in New Jersey as of December 2025 (NJDEP, 2020)

County Food Waste Guidance and Initiatives

The Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority (MCMUA) is Morris County's solid waste management authority. It is responsible for executing the district's solid waste management plan. The MCMUA's priorities are established in accordance with the state's guidance and goals. When Senate Bill 2426 was first introduced in 2022, the MCMUA began evaluating strategies to achieve the 50% reduction in food waste goal. It began developing educational materials for the public on food waste and launched a food waste page on its website. It also proposed food waste reduction initiatives as part of its 2022 Recycling Enhancement Grant Application. Phase I commissioned a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of food waste solutions for the County, conducted by the Center for Ecotechnology (Center for Ecotechnology, 2024). It highlighted the need for enhanced education on food donation and waste reduction within the county, as well as a stronger effort to connect and promote the local food donation network. These findings provided the justification for MCMUA to progress to Phase II, a Morris County food rescue assessment, which aimed to learn more about food rescue and assistance in Morris County and to evaluate issues and challenges in directing surplus food to donation. This report summarizes the assessment results.

The MCMUA will revise its Solid Waste Management Plan to comply with the requirements of the new state legislation passed in January 2026. According to the New Jersey Food Waste Reduction Act 50x30 Report, food waste makes up approximately 19% of New Jersey's municipal solid waste (MSW) (NJDEP, 2026). Applying this percentage to the Morris County MSW amount listed in the 2022 New Jersey Generation, Disposal, and Recycling Rates Table (303,456.52 tons), the latest rate table available on the NJDEP website (NJDEP, 2025), yields an estimate of 57,657 tons of food waste annually. To reach a 50% reduction, the County would need to cut food waste by approximately 28,828 tons per year. Morris County will develop strategies to meet this goal, informed by the information gathered for this report.

Project Focus: Food Rescue and Redistribution Through Donation

Purpose and Scope of this Report

The MCMUA has focused this assessment on understanding the availability of edible surplus food and the opportunities to redistribute it among Morris County's residents, primarily those who are food insecure. Concentrating on food waste reduction through the donation pathway not only aligns with the MCMUA's waste management and recycling goals but also addresses the need to feed those without adequate access to food. As a county organization serving the public, these efforts will strengthen local food systems and the community by supporting the most vulnerable. National data suggests that only 2% of surplus food currently ends up being donated, and 85% of it is discarded (ReFED, 2025). Encouraging and facilitating donation is an environmentally low-impact strategy to redirect edible food that would otherwise go to waste.

The need for food donations is clear. Food insecurity, defined as people not having enough food to eat and not knowing where their next meal will come from, affects one in every seven Americans (Feeding America, 2026; Rabbitt, Reed-Jones, Hales, & Burke, 2024). While up to 40% of food is currently destined for disposal (USEPA, 2025), around 18 million families, equating to about 47.4 million people, continue to face difficulty accessing sufficient food (Rabbitt, Reed-Jones, Hales, & Burke, 2024). Many more millions of people, who may not meet the definition of food insecure, turn to the charitable food sector for assistance (Feeding America, 2026). Food insecurity is not simply an issue of hunger alone; it comes with a plethora of physical and mental health consequences for those experiencing it. Individuals' levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors can all be increased by experiencing food insecurity (Royer, 2024). The issue is also interwoven with other limitations, including inadequate wages, food deserts, residential segregation, lack of affordable housing, and a myriad of other socioeconomic conditions (Drewnowski, 2022). People who are food insecure can turn to food assistance organizations, who also often provide other resources for challenges faced by their clientele. Throughout the United States and the world, there are people struggling to afford the type of food that could end up in a dumpster if it's not redirected to these types of organizations.

Methodology Overview

From December 2024 to April 2026, the MCMUA conducted interviews and conversations with key stakeholders in the local food donation landscape to gain insights into the rescue and redistribution of food in Morris County. The MCMUA also wanted to understand how it could better support and encourage food rescue and donation in the county. The qualitative data collected were reviewed to compare the needs of food assistance agencies, identify strengths and weaknesses in food rescue, and propose potential solutions to address various gaps. Feedback from a range of stakeholders was analyzed to provide recommendations to strengthen food recovery efforts at the county level.

Prior to reaching out to entities active in food rescue or food assistance, questionnaires were developed as the basis for conversations and to ensure that specific information was captured. The questionnaires are available in Appendix A: Questionnaires for Food Assistance and Rescue Organizations and Generators. Key topics explored during the discussions included:

- The organization's role in the food rescue and its specific needs
- Logistics of food collection/donation, storage, and distribution
- Barriers and limitations to food donation and recovery
- Primary sources of funding
- Disposal of food waste
- Donation partners and serviced clientele
- Collaboration with similar organizations
- Opportunities for improving food recovery efforts

The MCMUA aimed to speak with organizations playing different roles in food rescue in Morris County to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the system from multiple perspectives. The list of Food Pantries and Meal Services on the Morris County Office of Aging, Disabilities, and Community Program webpage (Morris County Aging, Disabilities, and Community Programming, 2026) and the USEPA Excess Food

Opportunities Map (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2026) were consulted to identify the organizations operating in Morris County.

The MCMUA had conversations with the following entities:

- *Thirteen Morris County food assistance organizations: food pantries, community kitchens, and other organizations providing nutrition services.* These were selected to capture a range of services, capabilities, and locations. Some organizations were already known to the MCMUA through prior contact or word of mouth, which facilitated the introductions. When possible or practical, the MCMUA requested site visits. The purpose of the site visits was two-fold. First, the MCMUA wanted to experience the operations, facilities, and challenges the organizations may face. Additionally, the MCMUA wanted to have in-person discussions with members of the organizations. Eight of the thirteen organizations were visited for this project. Phone or off-site in-person conversations were conducted with the remaining.
- *Community Food Bank of NJ (CFBNJ).* The role of food banks is to supply food assistance organizations. The Community Food Bank of NJ serves several counties in NJ and is the only Food Bank serving Morris County. The MCMUA visited its headquarters, which houses a large food warehouse and other facilities.
- *Two food rescue organizations operating in Morris County.* These were familiar to the MCMUA through symposia, meetings, and other educational venues on recycling and waste management. Multiple in-person and virtual meetings were held with these groups, but neither has a physical location to operate out of. Rather, they facilitate the rescue of excess food and the delivery to organizations that can distribute it to people experiencing food insecurity.
- *Five Morris County food waste generators: two supermarkets, one food producer, and two farms.* These represented the donor side of the food assistance equation. The MCMUA partnered with the County Division of Public Health to visit supermarkets and ask questions about their food waste management and existing food donation involvement. The Division of Public Health is charged by the NJDEP to conduct food waste audits/surveys to better understand and reduce food waste, as well as to evaluate the applicability of the 2020 Food Waste Recycling and Food Waste-to-Energy Production Law. The MCMUA conducted a general recycling tour of the food producer's main research facility, during which they shared details about their donation and food-waste practices. Farms also provided insight into their waste reduction practices and donation.

In addition to the interviews, discussions, and site visits, the MCMUA conducted other research to support the goals of this assessment. To obtain more information about the scope of services provided throughout the county, the MCMUA conducted brief phone surveys with all the identified Morris County food assistance organizations. These included the organizations listed by Morris County's Office of Aging, Disabilities, and Community Programs. The goals of these surveys were to: characterize the temporal and spatial coverage of food assistance in Morris County and identify limits in this respect; communicate with the Office of Aging, Disabilities, and Community Programming about discrepancies between the information provided on their page and the information collected by the MCMUA to ensure correct information is being shared; and develop profiles for each organization that would communicate to both donors and recipients what they need to know to donate or receive food. The phone script is provided in Appendix B: Phone Script for Morris County Food Assistance Organizations. Furthermore, the MCMUA investigated the availability of apps that can be used in Morris County to rescue food, either by the public or by food assistance organizations, and other strategies that food waste generators could employ to encourage the rescue of otherwise surplus, otherwise unsellable but still edible food. Finally, the MCMUA evaluated both existing and proposed policies that would reduce food waste by encouraging donation.

2. Overview of Food Rescue and Assistance in Morris County

Stakeholder Groups

Food assistance occurs through many participants and stakeholders who produce, sell, donate, procure, distribute, and receive food. It is necessary to understand the flow of food, the stakeholders involved, and their interactions to identify where opportunities to rescue food exist. The main entities involved in food rescue and redistribution in Morris County are represented in Figure 3.

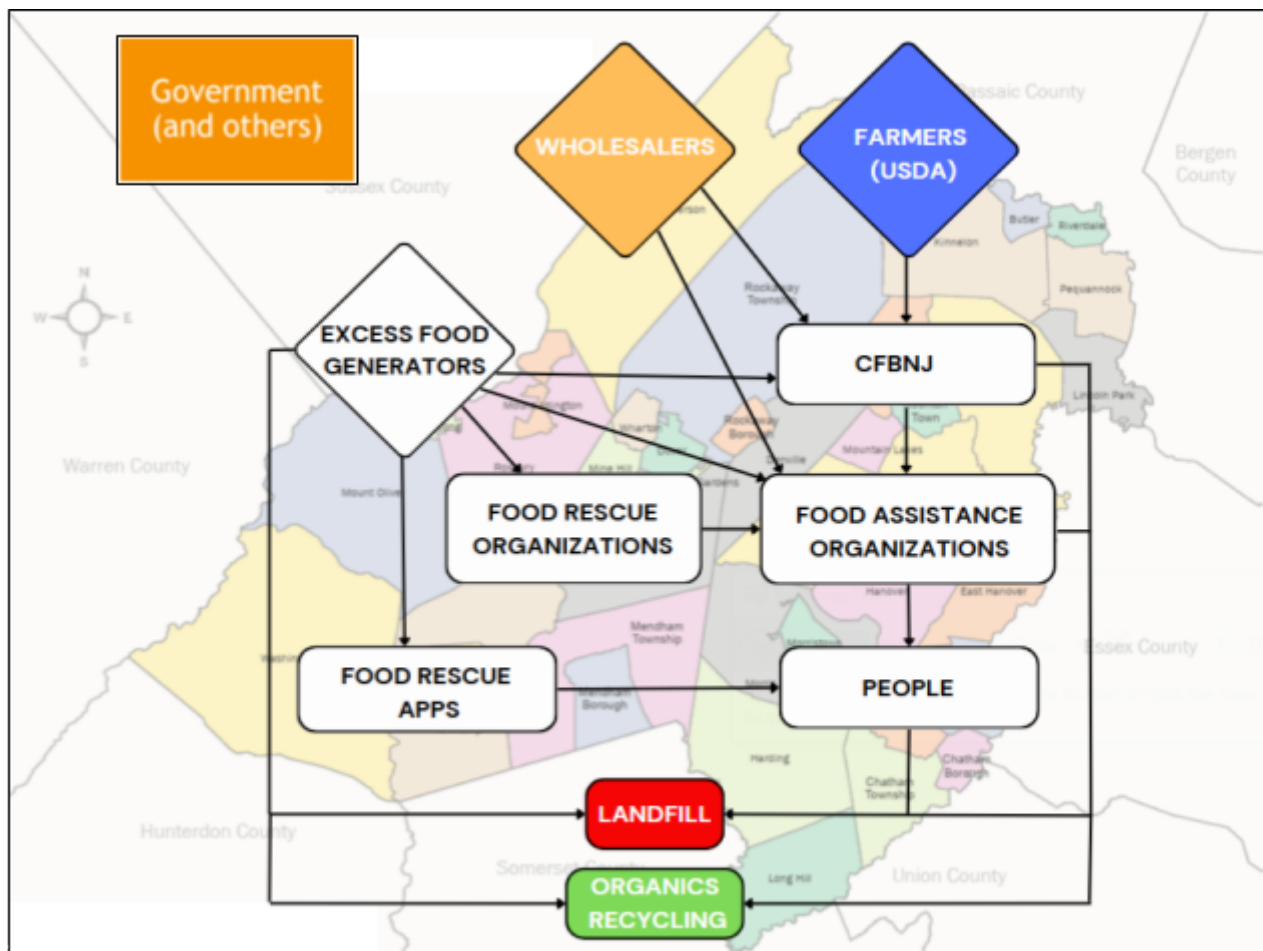


Figure 3 Rescued Food Pathways and Stakeholders in Morris County

Existing Food Rescue Systems and Food Assistance

Organizations that Provide Food Assistance

Pantries are organizations that provide groceries for clients to take home. Organizations that provide meals for those in need are traditionally called soup kitchens, but as some organizations prefer the term community kitchen, this term was used for these organizations in this report. Meal service organizations include those that provide meal delivery or takeout meals.

The Office of Aging, Disability, and Community Planning website identified 54 pantries and meal service organizations in Morris County (Morris County Aging, Disabilities, and Community Programming, 2026). One was located on the border of Morris County, so while technically not in Morris County, it also served Morris County. Of the organizations identified, 11 were listed on the EPA Excess Food Opportunities Map as of January 2026 (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2026), but some had slightly different names than the list maintained by the County. Two organizations were listed on the EPA Opportunities Map but not on the County list. Five additional food assistance organizations were identified through online searches or other means.

Municipality	Demographic Data			Food Assistance Agencies & Services		
	Population	Median Income	SNAP Households (%)	Total	Pantry	Meal
Boonton Town	8,815	\$100,417.00	unknown	3	3	0
Boonton Township	4,380	\$186,964.00	6.1	0	0	0
Butler Borough	8,047	\$110,375.00	7.1	2	2	0
Chatham Borough	9,121	\$250,000+	1.6	0	0	0
Chatham Township	10,983	\$223,360.00	1.9	2	2	0
Chester Borough	1,681	\$152,578.00	unknown	0	0	0
Chester Township	7,713	\$250,000+	1.4	1	1	0
Denville Township	17,107	\$163,276.00	1.4	2	1	1
Dover Town	18,460	\$70,519.00	11.9	10	9	1
East Hanover Township	11,105	\$144,792.00	1.8	1	0	0
Florham Park Borough	12,585	\$147,714.00	3.2	1	1	0
Hanover Township	14,677	\$159,681.00	1.8	1	0	0
Harding Township	3,871	\$178,810.00	0	0	0	0
Jefferson Township	20,538	\$115,094.00	4.2	3	2	0
Kinnelon Borough	9,966	\$178,102.00	1.4	1	1	0
Lincoln Park Borough	10,915	\$119,000.00	3.1	1	1	0
Long Hill Township	8,629	\$165,112.00	unknown	2	2	0
Madison Borough	16,937	\$168,469.00	2	1	1	0
Mendham Borough	4,981	\$223,750.00	0.9	0	0	0
Mendham Township	6,016	250,000+	0	0	0	0
Mine Hill Township	4048	\$113,861.00	0.4	1	1	0
Montville Township	22,450	\$170,472.00	1.5	1	1	0
Morris Township	22,974	\$194,142.00	0.7	0	0	0
Morris Plains Borough	6,153	\$149,623.00	2.2	1	1	0
Morristown Town	20,180	\$115,409.00	7.5	8	7	1
Mountain Lakes Borough	4,472	\$250,000+	0.9	0	0	0
Mount Arlington Borough	5,909	\$99,511.00	5.3	0	0	0
Mount Olive Township	28,886	\$119,931.00	0	1	1	0
Nelbong Borough	3,375	\$92,596.00	5.5	3	2	0
Parsippany-Troy Hills	56,397	\$112,923.00	4.9	3	1	0
Pequannock Township	15,571	\$117,206.00	2.2	1	0	0
Randolph Township	26,504	\$176,471.00	3.8	1	0	0
Riverdale Borough	4,107	\$96,667.00	0.7	1	1	0
Rockaway Borough	6,598	\$100,028.00	12.8	1	1	0
Rockaway Township	25,341	\$139,383.00	2.3	1	1	0
Roxbury Township	22,950	\$130,236.00	3.5	2	1	0
Victory Gardens	1,582	\$52,235.00	16.4	1	0	1
Washington Township	18,265	\$164,639.00	0.7	1	1	0
Wharton Borough	7,241	\$92,548.00	6.5	2	2	0

Morris County food assistance organizations are located throughout the county (Figure 4). A few townships have none, and some have several. There are 39 municipalities in Morris County, and 26 of them have at least one food pantry or meal organization (Table 1). Food assistance organizations are concentrated in Dover, with 10 groups identified, followed by Morristown with 8. Both municipalities are urban centers with train stations and other public transportation options. Morristown is a relatively affluent community compared to Dover, which is considered Morris County's only food desert. According to the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), a food desert is a community with limited access to affordable, nutritious food, and it incorporates factors like poverty rates, vehicle access, grocery store availability, public transport, and health data to pinpoint areas with high food insecurity (NJEDA, 2026).

Food Rescue Organizations

In addition to food assistance organizations, food rescue organizations that recover surplus food and redirect it to food assistance groups are already operating in Morris County. Rescue organizations focus on the logistical barriers that keep good food from reaching people. According to MCMUA research, the following groups conduct food rescue in Morris County:



Figure 4 Active pantries and soup kitchens serving Morris County, NJ, as verified by the MCMUA

Share My Meals recovers meals and delivers them to nonprofit organizations in most New Jersey counties. They also operate a meal-delivery program in the Princeton and Trenton areas. Share My Meals partners with corporate cafeterias, schools, universities, hospitals, and other organizations to recover surplus meals. They use a technology platform to track meals in real time from donor to recipient. Share My Meals also utilizes paid staff and drivers as well as volunteers to help them accomplish their mission.

Table to Table is a food recovery program that rescues surplus perishable food that would otherwise be wasted and delivers it for free to organizations that serve the hungry in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, and Passaic Counties. They rescue food from a variety of food vendors and kitchens and use their own refrigerated trucks or volunteers to deliver food to hundreds of community partners in their service areas. They use their own app to allow volunteers to claim food pickups and deliveries, and community partners to claim donations.

Sharing Excess provides solutions for food businesses of any size to help capture surplus and redirect it to community hunger-relief organizations. This organization rescues retail and wholesale food, as well as high-volume surplus from farms, manufacturers, and distribution centers.

LocalShare is a program of The Foodshed Alliance that aims to reduce food waste on farms, increase food security for vulnerable residents, and engage the community in strengthening the local food system. This organization helps provide local natural foods from farms to food-insecure populations. Volunteers glean (harvest) and transport food for food pantries and free produce pop-up markets. Its parent organization, the Foodshed Alliance, works to strengthen the northern New Jersey "foodshed," working particularly in Sussex, Warren, Morris, Passaic, Bergen, Essex, and Hudson counties, with programs focused on healthy land, healthy food, healthy communities, and rebuilding the local food economy.

Food Recovery.org is a food rescue organization that connects food donors with nonprofits to fight hunger and reduce food waste. They facilitate the recovery of food from small donors such as restaurants, schools, caterers, and grocers, and from large donors such as manufacturers, warehouses, and truck drivers. They also assist both small recipients, such as pantries, shelters, churches, and mutual

aid groups, and large recipients, such as nonprofits and mutual aid groups, with warehouse space. They utilize an online platform where donors can post their donations and organizations can claim them.

Corporate Donation Policies

Several supermarket chains operating in Morris County have structured policies to donate unsold edible food. Based on MCMUA research, they usually partner with Feeding America or local food banks. Trader Joe's, Aldi, ShopRite, BJ's, Target, and Walmart all have policies that divert unsold food from the landfill by donating it to people in need if it is edible and/or sending it for animal feed or composting. These policies are available and described to different degrees on their company websites. Some of these chains allow organizations to submit donation requests or requests for specific needs. These policies result in millions of pounds of food being donated to food banks and partner agencies, which benefits many food-insecure Americans. However, it's unclear how many of these donations come from surplus that would have gone to landfill, or if forecasting for these needs and requests plays a role in creating the surplus. It's also unknown what percentage of the total food waste generated by these organizations is captured by their food waste diversion practices.

Geographic and Demographic Context of Food Insecurity in Morris County

Morris County covers 482 square miles and is located about 30 miles west of New York City. The county's population is just over half a million, making it the ninth most populous county in the state. It is New Jersey's third-wealthiest county, with a median household income of \$137,623 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026). Despite the affluence that exists in Morris County, tens of thousands of residents still face food insecurity and poverty. The county is home to 43,620 food-insecure people, a rate of 8.5% (Feeding America, 2026). Slightly over 4% of the county's population is estimated to live below the federal poverty line, but that jumps to 7.6% for those 65 years and older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026). The U.S. Census Bureau also provides data for "unrelated individuals for whom poverty status is determined," meaning people who are not related to anyone else in their household and whose income can be evaluated on its own to see if they fall below the federal poverty threshold. With that parameter in place, the percentage of people living below the poverty line is as high as 22% for seniors over 75 and people between 18 and 24 years of age in Morris County.

Map the Meal Gap is a study published by Feeding America for the last 15 years that provides local-level estimates of food insecurity and food costs for every county and congressional district. Map the Meal Gap shows that food insecurity exists in every county and congressional district in the U.S., though its prevalence varies significantly across populations and places. The most recent data collected in 2023 show that most food-insecure individuals (63%) earn too much to qualify for SNAP, above the national average of 44%. The Map the Meal Gap study also provides food budget shortfall estimates, which reflect the additional dollar amounts that food-insecure individuals report needing, on average, to purchase just enough food to meet their needs. An approximately \$35 million food budget shortfall was calculated for Morris County. Other expenses contribute to an overall high cost of living in Morris County (Best Places, 2026; Rotuno-Johnson, 2026) which diverts household funding away from purchasing food. Often, after covering other necessary expenses, people who are struggling financially, even if they are employed, have little to no funds left for food. This is why food insecurity affects many different people and why the work of food assistance organizations is so crucial. As of December 2025, the unemployment rate in Morris County was 4.0%, lower than the state rate of 5.4% and slightly below the national rate of 4.4% (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2026; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2026).

The CFBNJ estimates that Black and Latino residents in New Jersey are five and a half times more likely to suffer from food insecurity than their Caucasian counterparts (Community Food Bank of New Jersey, 2022). In the latest census, the most prevalent race in Morris County was white, with 69.7% identifying as such. The next most common race was Asian with 11.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026). The remaining 18.9% identified as other races or multiple races. The county scores 1.0 on the racial diversity index, where a score of 1.95 would indicate equal representation of all major racial and ethnic groups. In comparison, the racial indices of the United States and New Jersey are 1.22 and 1.28, respectively, so Morris County is less diverse than state and national averages (National Equity Atlas, 2026).

3. Operations and Logistics of Food Rescue and Redistribution: Stakeholder Discussions

Insights Into Food Assistance in Morris County

This chapter presents first-hand insights gained by the MCMUA through conversations with 13 food assistance agencies, two food rescue organizations, the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, and three food businesses. The organizations reflected a diversity of service models, needs, and challenges.

Table 2 provides an overview of the 13 agencies' operations and some of their services. Subsequent sections summarize details learned about the organizations' operations, as well as anecdotes and observations made by the MCMUA.

Table 2 A snapshot of food assistance provided by nonprofit agencies interviewed by the MCMUA.

Food Assistance Agencies	Principal Location	Primary Service Formats	Additional Distribution Location(s)	Perishable Groceries Distributed	Number of People Served	Times & Days of Operation	Utilizes Rescue Food	Sources of Food	Food Rescue Partners	Free Farmers Market	Pet Food Offered
A	Boonton	Client Choice Market		✓		Wed 4-6 pm, Sat 9-11 am	✓	Gleaning (Shoprite, Acme, Chick Fil-A, BJ's, produce from Trader Joe's, meat from Kings, bread from Shoprite), CFBNJ, donation bin, food drives	Food Connection, Table to Table		✓
B	Dover	Prepacked Groceries			5-15 people	Wed 10-12		Donation (mainly from donation box in the church), occasional school food drives, occasional supermarket purchases to supplement donations	NA		
C	Dover	Community Kitchen (Lunch)		NA	*80-100 guests/da	6 days/week 11:30-12:30		Donated, prepared, and delivered by external volunteers	NA		
D	Dover	Meals for Takeout, Meal Delivery	✓	NA	500-600 meals/wk		✓	Gleaning (Whole Foods, Trader Joes, Weiss, others - biggest source of donation), CFBNJ, some donations from individuals and drives, purchasing (for daily meals)	Share My Meals	✓	
E	Lincoln Park	Client Chosen Prepacked Groceries		✓		1 day/month, daytime		CFBNJ, purchasing from local supermarkets, donation (bin at City Hall, through Amazon wish list)	NA		
F	Netcong	Prepacked Groceries		✓	*120/week	Tues and Thurs, daytime	✓	Mainly food/cash donation (bins at City Hall), purchasing, some gleaning from supermarkets and other agencies	NA		
G	Madison	Meal Delivery (Lunch)		NA		midday, 5 days/week		Purchased by Morris County	NA		
H	Morris Plains	Client Choice Market (delivery for seniors/homebound)	✓	✓	5,000 households	multiple, evening hrs on T/ Wed	✓	Food/cash donations (40%), gleaning (25% - from 12 stores including farmers markets, Ramee Orchard, Alstede Farms, Grow A Row, supermarkets), government/CFBNJ (25%), purchasing (10% - includes all regular produce offerings)	Table to Table	✓	✓
I	Morristown	Community Kitchen (Breakfast & Dinner), Prepacked Groceries			*60 for meals, 7-10 families for pantry		✓	CFBNJ, purchasing (Cisco), small portion of food donations from local restaurants who drop off directly	Share My Meals		
J	Morristown	Community Kitchen (Dinner), Prepacked Groceries	✓	✓	*700 pantry families, *2500 meals/month	pantry 11am-1-2pm, meal 5:30-7pm	✓✓	Gleaning (*15 stores, pickups occur 5 days/week, supports pantry distribution and supplements meals), CFBNJ (for pantry distribution and meals)	Table to Table		
K	Morristown	Homeless Shelter/ Communal Dining Room (3 meals)		NA	20-30 breakfast, 15-25 lunch, *80 dinner		✓	CFBNJ, purchasing (supermarkets including Shoprite, Costco, and Walmart, disposable supplies are purchased from Ellen Paper Products)	Share My Meals, Food Connection		
L	Rockaway	Client Choice Market, Prepacked Groceries	✓	✓	up to 500 families		✓	Purchasing (Shoprite, Sodexo, etc), food donations (collection boxes in church), financial support (grants), gleaning (BJ's, Wawa, Blessings of Hope)	Food Connection, Table to Table		
M	Varies	Pop-up Farmers Markets		✓				Donations	NA	✓	

Availability of Services

Recipient Access

Agencies reported that clients have varied cultural backgrounds. Some have higher fractions of specific immigrant groups depending on their location, and most report that some or most of their clients' native language is Spanish, a common second language in New Jersey. Overall, the population of people seeking food assistance is diverse.

Agencies also reported that their clientele is not all local. People come from various municipalities and distances from the agency's location. None of the interviewed agencies require clientele to live in a specific area or radius. One pantry stated that they serve anyone from Morris County, but they do not necessarily reject those from outside; they simply ask for justification for their traveling from far away. An example could be that they work in Morris County and cannot make it to the distributions closer to where they live.

When asked who could utilize food assistance services, most agencies responded with a version of "anyone can come, no questions asked." By that statement, they meant that no questions were asked about their income, demonstrated need, or legal status. However, most pantries ask some questions, mainly about names and family size so they can track repeat customers and determine how much food to distribute. Most pantries require clients to register. CFBNJ requires that their partner agencies do not provide food based on a specific income level or demonstrated need.

Agencies that, on the other hand, do not have a "no questions asked" policy are those whose clients must qualify for services or are residential institutions. For example, a homeless shelter that provides three meals per day for their residents conducts background checks. Furthermore, senior meal services throughout Morris County have an age requirement.

Locations and Hours of Operation

Pantries conducted their distributions in singular or multiple locations, on one, several, or most days of the week. Three of the pantries the MCMUA spoke with conduct their food distributions in more than one location. One client choice pantry had a second physical location with another client choice pantry. Two have mobile pantries (vans or other vehicles) that they use to bring the prepacked distributions to other locations.

Hours varied significantly at the agencies. Some pantry distributions and meals are provided in the middle of the day, which therefore are not accessible to those who work regular work shifts. It is common for clients to have jobs but still experience food insecurity and even housing insecurity. Of the six organizations visited that provide meals, three provide dinner service. While some of the pantries hold distributions only during daytime hours, others have schedules that are more accommodating to people who work during the day. The hours of service could partially explain why many people travel to receive food assistance.

Clients travel on foot and by car. Some likely take public transportation, but Morris County is vast and not particularly well connected by public transportation. For some agencies, there appears to be an assumption that clients will have a car. For example, one agency in Rockaway is in a less densely populated part of the County near the northern border and is not near bus or train lines. The agency is located on a large campus with ample parking and was establishing an extensive client choice pantry. Clients would likely not arrive at that location by public transportation or on foot. While approximately 90% of households in New Jersey as well as the U.S. own at least one car, it may be more likely that families struggling to afford nutritious food may also not have cars available to them.

Sources of Food and Funding

Community Food Bank of New Jersey

The Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ) serves as a central food hub, supplying highly discounted food to food pantries, soup kitchens, and other meal programs across northern New Jersey. While food is not provided free of charge, CFBNJ is a dependable source of inventory for partner agencies. The MCMUA met with CFBNJ staff and toured its Hillside warehouse, a facility roughly the size of three football fields that stores and distributes large quantities of food. CFBNJ obtains food from multiple sources, including USDA programs, local and state agricultural initiatives, purchased goods from wholesalers, and donated surplus from food retailers and other businesses. Although much of its inventory is purchased, the organization actively pursues food rescue and gleaning opportunities to recover edible food that would otherwise be wasted. Its food sourcing team also secures donations of equipment and supplies, such as shelving and kitchen appliances, to support partner agencies.

Not all food assistance organizations are eligible to partner with CFBNJ. Partnership status depends on factors such as community need and existing service coverage. "Enabled" agencies can collect donations directly from retailers, while others receive food only after it is processed and redistributed through CFBNJ. Organizations partnered with CFBNJ generally have greater access to food and other resources. CFBNJ is a member of the Feeding America network, which provides access to national food donations, corporate partnerships, logistics, and advocacy. However, some agencies reported losing access to certain local supermarket donations after those retailers began donating exclusively through Feeding America.

CFBNJ uses advanced inventory management systems, including barcode tracking and an online ordering platform, to efficiently manage and distribute food, particularly perishable items. During the warehouse visit, MCMUA observed highly coordinated operations with minimal food waste. Any small amount of food scraps generated, primarily from the facility's kitchen, is processed using an onsite food digester.

Food Rescue Organizations

The MCMUA spoke with two food rescue organizations that operate in Morris County. They are nonprofit organizations with the explicit and primary objective of rescuing food for consumption by people in need. They facilitate and coordinate food rescue at no cost to the donor or recipient organizations. Food rescue organizations figure out the donation logistics and delivery so the donor company or institution can simply prep the food for the donation without needing to coordinate any of the downstream steps. It is an asset to the food rescue landscape in Morris County that such organizations are already working to facilitate food rescue from all types of food producers and vendors. They operate in other counties as well and entered Morris County more recently.

The two organizations the MCMUA spoke with for this project differ in their operations and pursuing different rescue opportunities. Share My Meals primarily focuses on rescuing prepared foods loaded into organization-specific reusable trays, which are then tracked during transport to ensure food safety. Some of their clients include cafeterias and corporate kitchens. They utilize their own vehicles, employee drivers, and volunteers to complete their rescues. While prepared food is their primary target, they also rescue other items they encounter incidentally if they can match them with a recipient.

Table to Table pursues rescued food opportunities of any kind, including prepared foods and groceries. They have vehicles they use to transport rescued food to other counties where they are active, but in Morris County, they currently rely on volunteers to claim food donations and pick them up with their own vehicles, bringing them to a recipient organization. Volunteers and recipients use the rescue organization's app to claim donations for transport or receipt. Their literature lists over 100 grocery stores, food distributors, corporate chains, cafeterias, and farmers' markets that they rescue food from throughout NJ.

The two food rescue organizations emphasized that they were actively seeking more corporate or institutional donors because demand from pantries and community kitchens was consistent and pressing. Food rescue organizations source their donations from a wide range of food waste generators. They include institutions such as elementary schools, universities, and hospitals, corporate cafeterias, restaurant chains, convenience stores, grocery stores, prep kitchens in supermarkets, etc. Some of these locations are also gleaned by individual agencies and CFBNJ. Any commercial kitchen or food vendor that produces excess edible food is potentially eligible to donate this excess by way of food rescue organizations. The most common donors the MCMUA observed are supermarkets among food assistance agencies. However, food rescue groups have a wider network of donors.

Discussions with both these organizations revealed that they are actively seeking additional donors as well as recipients that can use the various types of food they source. Several of the agencies the MCMUA spoke with already partner with these organizations. Matching donations with appropriate recipient organizations is important. The format, type, and schedule of the available food are some factors affecting how it should be matched with an organization. While most pantries and kitchens would take groceries or ingredients, finding recipients that can take prepared meals is more

challenging. While many agencies in Morris County provide meals, they do not necessarily want the rescued meals because there may not be enough to serve their entire clientele. They also may need to plan for their meals ahead of time and so they opt to purchase ingredients or utilize rescued raw materials instead. The agencies redistributing rescued meals used them for a smaller portion of their overall clientele.

Financial Assistance and Purchasing

Donations to the CFBNJ, food rescue organizations, and food assistance agencies can be made in the form of food or funds. Monetary donations are always in high demand. Not all food assistance agencies can utilize or redistribute all types of food donations, but monetary donations are appreciated by all, since they provide the flexibility to obtain what is needed most. Some agencies have large corporate or individual donors, while others rely on the church congregations they are affiliated with for food and monetary donations. Two of the organizations the MCMUA spoke with had some affiliation with their municipalities and, therefore, received financial support from them.

In addition to the size and composition of the donor base, the period of existence was also a factor affecting the financial resources available to agencies. Older organizations had more time to establish their donor base, grow their facilities, form partnerships, and iron out logistics. The pantries the MCMUA spoke with ranged from as far back as over 30 years ago to as recently as March 2020, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic itself was a factor affecting the growth of some agencies. They responded to an observed spike in demand during the pandemic, leading to their growth and expansion. They were generally able to do this due to an increase in donations and government funding. During the pandemic, the federal government provided financial support to several agencies to improve access to food assistance. The positive impacts of these dollars are continuing because they helped grow the organizations, improve their operations, and attract more donors.

Agencies have accounts with supermarkets and food distributors to purchase food. At some agencies, purchased food is the main source of food, and at others, it supplements what they can obtain through donation. Donations are typically unpredictable and nonspecific. Waiting to see what comes in as a donation does not always work for planning or the recipient organization's service model. Agencies will sometimes opt to purchase food rather than seek it out as a donation because they are looking for specific food items.

Direct Food Donations

Food donations are also in high demand. Each agency has its own food donation guidelines and most of their websites include basic information about what items are most in demand, places and time for drop off. They may also include requests for supplies and whether the organization accepts food past the date labels. Among all the organizations reviewed, only the two food rescue organizations and one large food pantry provide specific, detailed donation guidelines directly on their websites. These organizations offer instructions on the types of food they accept and the handling requirements. In contrast, most food pantries' websites include only general information, and potential donors may be encouraged to contact the organization directly with donation-related questions. Pantries base their requested selections on the needs of their clientele as well as overall nutritional needs.

Pantries receive donations from the public, from members of the religious institutions they are affiliated with, from food drives, from food retailers and other establishments, and from the CFBNJ. Agencies can request specific items, but they can also receive additional items based on what the food bank has available or can source. Meal service agencies receive the food for meals from outside volunteer organizations when those organizations are responsible for preparing the meals. When meals are prepared in-house, some organizations use rescued food, but many do not. Meal service requires planning and certain quantities of food. Some organizations prefer or need to have a more predictable inventory of food, from CFBNJ or purchased from other sources. If organizations receive donations, they can spend less of their overall funds on food. In some cases, due to limited finances, food donations directly impact how many families the organizations could serve.

A subset of donated food is gleaned from supermarkets. As previously indicated, the CFBNJ and food rescue organizations glean from supermarkets, farmers' markets, and other food businesses. Individual agencies also glean from these types of establishments, sometimes in addition to the food they receive from CFBNJ and food rescue groups. At many agencies, volunteers drive their own vehicles, pick up food, and make it possible for organizations to glean and help more people. Many rescued food opportunities could not be realized without the willingness and availability of pantry personnel to pick up donations. Often, these types of donations are only available during brief windows, become available suddenly, or would not be offered if not for the persistence of pantry personnel.

Overall, some of the food that comes in as donations is rescued, and some is not. The consensus among different types of organizations is that there is not a shortage of excess food but there are challenges in sometimes utilizing or redistributing the type of food that was excess. The specific needs of food assistance organizations precluded their ability to utilize everything that was available through rescue or to distribute exclusively rescued and donated items. Pantries want to supply certain types of nutritious food and ensure the availability of different food groups, but these are not always included in donations. To fill the gaps, food must be obtained in other ways, such as through the CFBNJ, or by purchasing.

Food assistance service models affect what kinds of food can be rescued and used by different organizations. For example, pantries typically do not distribute prepared food or ingredients, so they cannot utilize the abundance of prepared food that food rescue organizations can rescue. Soup kitchens do distribute complete meals but often need to plan their menus ahead of time and ensure they have enough and the correct ingredients. The MCMUA observed that prepared food donations usually supplement a soup kitchen's operations or enable it to reach more people. For example, one of the food assistance organizations referred to the prepared food donations they received through food rescue organizations as budget relief. They do not offer these meals at their main distribution locations; instead, they use them to feed auxiliary populations, such as food-insecure students at the local community college.

Another limitation regarding rescued food is it is not possible to request specific items or quantities in the donations from institutional or business donors. Food assistance organizations do not know what the donations will be or when they will receive them. This is the case if the food was obtained directly by the agency, through a food rescue organization, or even through the CFBNJ.

While the agencies are very grateful for any food donated because it enables them to help more people without having to purchase as much, sometimes the offerings pose challenges. Agencies do not want to refuse any donation to avoid jeopardizing the possibility of receiving future donations. This means they sometimes receive food they do not need or little to no food they want. Some agencies have very specific needs; for example, one organization that serves breakfast offers only apples and oranges in the morning because those were the items the residents wanted. They do not have the ability to use any other produce they might receive as donations and cannot request only apples and oranges in surplus donations from supermarkets. Thus, this agency purchases apples and oranges rather than accepting donations and disposing of food that could have gone to someone else.

Similarly, the types of food received do not always align with the agencies' goals or fill gaps in their inventories. For example, all pantries that received donations from supermarkets reported a surplus of processed bread, desserts, and other unhealthy bakery items, while protein, produce, and dairy are less likely to be received. This does not align with the objectives of the agencies to provide nutritious food and promote overall health and well-being. As a result, pantries that want certain nutritious items must purchase them or request them from CFBNJ. One meal service agency stopped accepting donations from one supermarket because they were receiving mostly unhealthy baked goods and desserts and they did not feel that giving items to their clientele would ultimately benefit them. Another issue with rescued produce is that its quality is sometimes poor, with several agencies reporting receiving spoiled or overripe produce. These agencies must invest a great deal of labor into sorting donated produce to retain only the acceptable fraction for distribution. Volunteers usually do the sorting. In most cases, when agencies are offered donations, they take what they can get and

either try to distribute it, pass whatever they cannot distribute to another organization, or dispose of it in other ways.

The MCMUA witnessed poignant examples when visiting an organization that had just received two boxes of rescued overripe bananas as well as 75 pounds of past best-by-date oatmeal with their regular rescued food delivery. It was unclear why these items were dropped off and whether the food rescue group misunderstood the need or there was some other breakdown in communication. While the shelter served fruit for breakfast (apples and oranges), the bananas were too ripe to eat raw. The director took the initiative to repurpose them into banana bread. She also had to purchase the additional ingredients necessary for the banana bread with the organization's budget. The next day, she informed the MCMUA that she had baked 80 muffins and six loaves of banana bread. The oatmeal was not an item that the organization could use or distribute. The director reached out to her contacts and found another food assistance organization that could accept and use the donation. Without that extra effort by an already very busy director, the entire donation likely would have gone to waste.

Another thing that could improve the quality of donations is attention to the community's cultural needs. Considerations for culturally appropriate foods is not always the focus of food assistance organizations, as they are more concerned with ensuring their clientele has enough nutritious food. The CFBNJ communicated that they try to source halal and kosher food when possible. The cultural needs are not always communicated to donors. Some organizations with many Hispanic clients intentionally try to source beans, but others shared that they have limited control over the types of donations they receive. They prefer not to decline any type of donation to ensure they can feed more people.

Other Food Assistance Organizations

In visits with food assistance organizations, the MCMUA learned that nearly all the agencies interviewed have relationships with other agencies. They shared their excess with other agencies and vice versa. Several organizations stated that they would call their friends in this field when they had excess food that they could not utilize or distribute. Likewise, several said they received donations from other organizations to supplement their own offerings.

A poignant example of both the mismatch of rescued food and the networking between agencies was observed when the MCMUA visited one agency. The agency had received 75 pounds of rescued uncooked oatmeal. This food could not be utilized by the agency, but the director contacted some of her friends in the food assistance and nonprofit areas. The oatmeal was picked up by another nonprofit organization.

Food Disposal

The MCMUA learned from conversations that many leaders of food assistance organizations are already aware of food waste issues and the massive scale of the problem. Although not explicitly part of their mission, they are interested in food rescue to keep food out of landfills and prevent environmental damage.

Of all the organizations the MCMUA spoke with, only two have any kind of program that diverts food waste from landfills. These two places still generate food waste, and one found that they generate particularly large quantities that require significant financial resources to dispose of. Other organizations expressed reasons that they did not manage their food waste differently are the cost to do so, and lack of time or knowledge. Landfilling is usually the cheapest way to dispose of food waste, and personnel are typically too busy to investigate alternative options.

Pantries explained that food waste occurred when they received a surplus of non-nutritional items, e.g., cakes and desserts, which they did not want to distribute to clients, and if they received expired food and spoiled donated perishables. Waste can also be attributable to receiving a surplus of items they didn't need or ask for. A garbage pail full of bread loaves, items that were frequently referred to as excess, even at food assistance agencies, was observed at one pantry. Another organization's only food waste is from items past any date label on the package.

Still another organization said their pantry did not generate any food waste because they distributed everything they received. This pantry does not use a client-choice model; it prepares several bags of various groceries, primarily supermarket-gleaned, for each recipient family before distribution. The offerings vary based on the items gleaned throughout the week, both perishable and non-perishable.

The MCMUA observed indications from some pantries that eliminating the client-choice aspects resulted in clients receiving food they did not want. This could lead to food waste at home if clients bring home items they do not like, need, or know how to use.

Staff and Personnel

Food assistance organizations rely heavily on volunteers for a wide range of tasks. They often operate with minimally paid staff and depend on volunteer support for daily operations. Volunteers conduct tasks including, but not limited to:

- stocking shelves and refrigerators
- sorting perishable and nonperishable donations
- purging expired items, checking produce donations for spoilage
- creating prepacked bags and boxes, helping clients “shop”
- delivering food to homebound clients
- assisting clients in understanding proper food choices for their health needs
- picking up food from supermarkets and other donors
- dropping off leftover food at local farms for animal feed
- growing food to supply the pantry

At several locations, the transportation of donations was only possible because of volunteers, who provided their own vehicles and were willing to pick them up whenever they were available. In multiple places, volunteers assisted the kitchen with prep and/or serving.

A representative from one pantry emphasized their ongoing need for dependable volunteers. Some organizations have implemented strategies to address these challenges. For example, Table to Table pairs each volunteer driver with a staff member, ensuring oversight during deliveries. Share My Meals also uses volunteer drivers, but has a structured onboarding process, which includes training and shadowing experienced drivers before new volunteers are sent out independently.

Apps and Websites to Facilitate Food Rescue and Donation

Platforms already exist that support food assistance, rescue, and donation efforts. These were identified during discussions with food assistance organizations:

- **Table to Table I-Rescue** is a mobile app developed by the food rescue organization, Table to Table, and is available to Table-to-Table volunteers and recipient organizations. It connects volunteers with local food donors to recover surplus food and deliver it. Available food donations are listed on the app along with a designated pickup time and destination. Volunteers can claim the rescue so that they can pick it up during the designated time window and deliver it to a nearby pantry, shelter, or group home in need. The volunteers then transport the food to a nearby group home, shelter, or food pantry in need. All organizations visited by the MCMUA that already partner with Table to Table are familiar with this app. Table to Table I-Rescue is available in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, and Passaic counties (<https://tabletotable.org/i-rescue/>).
- **Food Donation Connection** assists food service companies with the development and implementation of programs designed to provide an alternative to discarding surplus food. It coordinates the donation of prepared food from food service providers, including major chains like Pizza Hut, Whole Foods, Olive Garden, Red Lobster, and Wawa, to local food assistance organizations. Several of the organizations visited by the MCMUA utilized this site. Two organizations received Wawa breakfast sandwiches, which they would freeze and redistribute, and this was a popular offering for their clientele. Food Donation Connection has been in existence since 1992, and it is partnered with the National Restaurant Association. The organization provides assistance and education facilitating the donation of food, including

donation program implementation, handling of food, reporting, and problem solving (foodtodonate.com).

- **Agency Express** is an inventory management system used by CFBNJ that enables partner agencies to view available stock and place both pickup and delivery orders efficiently. The portal also acts as a site for agencies to accept and edit government allocations (<https://cfbnj.org/agency-express/>).

Other Services Provided in Conjunction with Food Assistance

Most organizations had a focus on nutrition and overall well-being. They make sure to provide a variety of foods from different food groups and fresh produce. They request these items as donations, try to rescue these types of food, and ensure that they do not provide an abundance of unhealthy or low-quality baked goods just because the excess supply of these items is plentiful and easy to obtain. Similarly, community kitchens strive to provide balanced meals that include healthy ingredients.

At more than one location, pantry representatives affirmed versions of “it’s not just food.” They recognize that simply providing sustenance is not enough and the type of food matters, especially because low-income populations typically suffer from higher concentrations of chronic illnesses. They also recognize that populations experiencing food insecurity also experience financial insecurity and potentially a number of other challenges. When within their means, they try to address access to nutrition and provide additional services. A few organizations had established programs to do this, but the others operate on a more limited scope or budget.

Some organizations incorporate nutrition or cooking education into their services, empowering clients with knowledge to make informed dietary choices and prepare the foods they’ve been given. One pantry, in addition to providing substantial amounts of produce and other healthy items, employs a nutrition educator who collaborates with Atlantic Health to design and implement nutrition education programs. This approach reinforces the role of food assistance not just as a meal source but as a platform for long-term health and wellness. These nutrition programs help reduce food waste at the household level by equipping clients with the knowledge and skills to prepare meals using pantry items. By offering guidance on how to store and cook unfamiliar ingredients, these programs help individuals make the most of the food in their pantries.

In addition to providing nutrition assistance, many organizations offer a range of supportive services, including housing support, addiction recovery programs, job skills training, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. While these services may not be directly related to food rescue or redistribution, they play a crucial role in addressing the root causes of food insecurity. By providing individuals with essential life skills and resources, these programs help clients build stability and ultimately reduce their reliance on emergency food assistance. One agency that does not host programs itself is located within the same building as the resource center that provides services like ESL and job search preparedness classes. These types of programs can also serve as an initial point of contact, drawing individuals to the organization and acting as a gateway to additional support services, including food assistance. Some agencies also offer community spaces like a conference room or a community room with Wi-Fi. The observed community spaces were well utilized.

Insights Into Food Producers/Donors

The MCMUA also spoke with five food businesses in Morris County to further inform people about food-rescue opportunities. Two were supermarkets where the Morris County Division of Health performed NJDEP-mandated food waste audits, Supermarkets A and B. One was a large producer of various snacks and drinks that invited the MCMUA to conduct a general audit of recycling practices at one of its facilities. Two were Morris County Farms.

Donation and Waste Reduction Policies

All of the interviewed businesses participated in donation programs and other food-waste reduction efforts. Supermarket A's representatives expressed a goal of keeping perishable waste out of landfills by donating surplus food to at least two food assistance organizations and one food rescue organization. Their method is to have dedicated donation shelves in the back storage areas where different departments can drop off their excess. When there are sufficient materials, they contact their food assistance partners to pick up the items. In addition, the supermarket utilizes the Too Good To Go app to redistribute unsold bakery and prepared items at the end of each day. An additional policy is source separation of any food waste generated in the store for recycling. Food waste and scraps are collected in compostable garbage bags in the various departments. Food that was not sold was also depackaged and separated by employees. These various food waste streams are placed in a designated compactor in the refuse area. This is a great effort set forth by the organization, but as detailed in the next section, unbeknownst to employees, the food was probably not being recycled as intended.

Supermarket B donates food several times a week to at least two food assistance organizations. This supermarket recovers portions of their food waste for recycling, composting, and donation. The store manager reported that approximately six totes of food waste are generated each week, but he was unsure of the destination or processing method. A food waste collection company picks up food scraps for animal feed, compost, or energy. They have bins in the prep kitchens for collecting food scraps. These bins are typically removed by late morning when the bulk of the food preparation work is complete, after which any remaining food waste is discarded with regular trash.

The food producer also participated in food donation and food waste diversion. They also hosted a collection bin at locations in the facility so that employees could donate to the food pantry. Finally, they collected food scraps in the cafeteria. These scraps were collected for recycling by a food waste hauler/recycler for a cost. Furthermore, this facility works with a food rescue group to donate their excess prepared cafeteria food.

Both farms participated in food donation, but their approaches differed. Farm A was much smaller than Farm B with approximately three employees and 70 acres versus 30 employees and 600 acres, respectively. Farm A mainly grew apples and sold them using a "U-Pick" model where customers picked the produce themselves. It also produced other vegetables that it sold at their location or sold for food assistance using the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA). This program provides funding for state, tribal, and territorial governments to purchase local food, supporting hunger relief efforts as well as the farm economy. The Community Food Bank of New Jersey paid for produce from this farm which was then picked up by a food pantry. This farm would not grow vegetables if not for this program since they did not have the staff and resources to run farmers markets and would not make enough selling it wholesale. Farm A utilized volunteers for gleaning since it did not have a large labor pool. The volunteers came from various groups, including gleaning organizations. The farm has worked with Farmers Against Hunger and Local Share. Reasons they utilized gleaning included that it helps people, tax credits, and it makes orchards and fields cleaner. Another outlet for the farm's apples was selling it as feed. The amount that went to the compost pile was minimal.

Farm B grows approximately 250 different kinds of produce and does not utilize gleaners. They have the personnel to harvest everything, and they donated from their harvest. They regularly share their production with Morris County pantries and the CFBNJ. They did not typically partner with small pantries, particularly because they face various logistical issues. They instead ask them to go through one of the larger pantries Farm B partners with. Farm B stated that their reasons for donating were varied, and included wanting to help people, a strong faith base, not wanting food to go to waste, and tax incentives.

Farm B harvested everything from the fields themselves and then donated everything they could not sell or utilize. Feed and compost are not common destinations for its produce. This farm has multiple retail selling locations. They also have a food and beverage team that uses the produce for pre-made options and catering events..

Missed Opportunities for Donation

At Supermarket A, employees were diligent in depackaging and separating their food waste because they aimed to keep perishable waste out of the landfill. However, these efforts were likely in vain, as they were unaware that their hauler was not delivering the material to a designated recycling facility. They have a compactor dedicated to food waste but questioning from the MCMUA revealed that the compactor was being emptied at a transfer station, not a food waste recycling facility. This misunderstanding likely came from assumptions and unclear communication between the generator and the hauler.

Supermarket B does not focus on depackaging. Packaged food that is neither sold nor donated is disposed of as landfill waste, while other food waste is collected by a third-party vendor. During the site visit, whole loaves of bread and intact produce, items that may have been edible and suitable for donation at an earlier stage, were observed in the food waste containers outside. This raised questions about whether some of these items could have been recovered for donation before being placed in compactors, trash bins, or compost collection containers.

Similarly, at the food producer, it was evident that not all the food that could be recovered for donation was actually recovered or donated. This is because the food donation aspect of waste management was totally voluntary and run by one person. Managing donations did not fall within this employee's job responsibilities. She coordinated the pick-up of donations by a large food pantry. The amount of donations was limited by not having space to store donations for any significant period and the time constraints/availability of the donation coordinator.

Farm A utilized gleaners, specifically for the apple harvest. Although they could utilize gleaners approximately two times per week, they usually did not because of scheduling challenges. The farm's schedule is dictated by weather and the timing of produce ripening. It was difficult to utilize gleaners or even food rescue organizations due to the inconsistency in availability of food. The amount of excess changes annually as well and is generally consistent among farms, so if one farm has a great deal or extra, likely others do as well and vice versa.

Farm B said they found that people want some food items more than others, mainly based on cultural preferences. Some food grown in the Northeastern US may not be common in pantry clientele's home countries, so education about utilizing the ingredients may be helpful.

Other Opportunities for Food Waste Reduction

While both supermarkets demonstrated a commitment to donating surplus food and recycling food waste, each revealed gaps in understanding the food waste recycling process or how to maximize food waste diversion from landfills.

While Supermarket B separates some of its food waste, the site visit revealed that not all food scraps are diverted. The store representative acknowledged that minimal effort is made to salvage any edible parts of the food during the preparation, suggesting that speed and efficiency are prioritized over waste reduction.

The food producer invested in a food scrap collection and pick up program in their cafeteria, which was commendable, but they acknowledged that they could not commit to recycling all of their food waste due to the high cost. The majority and a potentially significant amount of food waste at a facility like that is generated from their processes rather than from employee meals.

Both farms identified labor shortage as a major challenge their business faces. Farm A provided insight into programs that would help its operation as well as food assistance. A liability bill for "U-Pick" programs and government buying programs for small farms would help. The County can assist by sharing the information that farms take Good Food Bucks, WIC, and SNAP. There is a voucher program for seniors to use at farms but there was little interest, likely because the farms are in remote areas. Getting people to the farms could help increase the use of these programs. Bringing school groups to the farms for climate resiliency programs and spring planting would also help educate the next generation about these concepts. The Rutgers Agricultural Extension may also be a resource to help share information. The Morris County Agriculture Board meets monthly and typically discusses services and information, but not issues associated with gleanings or waste management.

This board could be an opportunity for information sharing in the future. Farm B also felt legislation could establish better ways to feed people.

4. Food Rescue and Redistribution in Morris County: Strengths and Weaknesses

Operational Strengths of Food Rescue in Morris County

Protections and Incentives for Food Donation

The 1996 Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act is the most significant piece of federal legislation that promotes food donation by protecting donors. It encourages generators to donate surplus food without fear of legal repercussions, such as those related to foodborne illnesses or allergen exposure from the donated product. Under the Act, food donors are protected from civil or criminal liability if the food is donated in good faith and not considered grossly negligent (Food Law and Policy Clinic Harvard Law School, 2023). This act is critical for supporting food donation. It is frequently cited by food waste reduction organizations, recovery groups, and federal agencies to encourage food donation and help redirect edible food away from the waste stream. New Jersey has its own food donor protection laws in place, which predate federal protections. New Jersey's Food Bank Good Samaritan Act of 1982 (N.J.S.A. 24:4A-1 through N.J.S.A. 24:4A-5) protects donors, food banks, distributors, and gleaning activities from liability associated with the good faith collection or distribution of donated food. In 2017, liability protections were expanded and clarified and in 2019, N.J.S.A. 24:4A-4.1 required the state to maintain an online portal connecting food donors, nonprofits and gleaners to facilitate surplus food donations and reduce waste.

Charitable tax incentives also play a role in encouraging businesses to contribute their leftover food. There are two types of tax deductions which apply to food donations, general and enhanced (Food Law and Policy Clinic Harvard Law School, 2021). The general tax deduction refers to a standard deduction that businesses can take when they donate food to a charitable organization. It allows businesses to deduct the cost of the food donated from their taxable income. The enhanced deduction allows businesses twice the base value of the food or the base value of the food plus half of the expected profit margin.

Service Coverage Throughout Morris County

Morris County has over 50 organizations providing food assistance. They provide meals or groceries consisting of perishable and/or non-perishable items. They work out of churches, senior centers, or operate their own independent facilities. They operate on different schedules and follow various distribution guidelines, such as how often a pickup can occur, but they all provide food to anyone who needs it. Some operate free farmers markets or mobile markets that allow them to reach different locations and people. Therefore, the food assistance infrastructure that already exists in Morris County provides a solid foundation for helping people and expanding food rescue. Morris County is also covered by the CFBNJ, which was recognized as a key source of both food supply and support.

Food Rescue Already Important Part of Food Assistance

Many of the organizations providing food assistance, including the Community Food Bank of NJ, already participate in food rescue. In addition, there are many surplus food generators throughout Morris County, such as supermarkets, bakeries, convenience stores, and restaurants, among others, who are eligible to donate their excess to organizations that can redistribute it. Many of them already participate in donation in some way. Many leaders of food assistance organizations were already aware of the massive scale of the food waste problem and were aware of their contribution to keeping food out of landfills.

Furthermore, Morris County has at least two food rescue organizations operating throughout the county that connect donors with recipients and coordinate the transport of food between the parties. Many interviewed organizations had strong partnerships with food rescue groups, such as Share My Meals and Table to Table, organizations that play a critical role in redistributing surplus food.

Apps and Websites to Facilitate Donation

Platforms already exist that support food assistance, rescue, and donation efforts. The apps identified by the MCMUA were used by food assistance organizations to access available inventory and excess food from food rescue organizations, the Community Food Bank, or food service companies. Certain organizations with the initiative and resources are already leveraging technology to promote and facilitate food rescue.

Informal Networks and Inter-Agency Assistance

The MCMUA interviews revealed that despite the lack of an official pantry network, organizers and leaders in the different food assistance organizations did not operate in a vacuum. Many of them maintained contact with at least a few other food assistance organizers so that they could share excess and provide support for each other. The described sharing of food between agencies also acted as a method for food waste reduction, keeping food out of landfills and saving money on disposal.

Focus on Nutrition, Overall Well-Being, and Cultural Needs

Multiple food assistance organizations expressed the importance of offering their clients healthy, nutritious foods. They recognize that low-income families are at a disproportionately higher risk of developing chronic and acute health conditions related to diet. These populations often have limited access to nutritious options due to the cost of healthier fresher items or the unavailability of these items in the communities where they live. Existing health issues are often exacerbated by limited access to affordable, nutritious options. These populations may also lack knowledge of nutrition and how it can help manage various health conditions or may be disproportionately targeted by fast food and other processed food advertising.

Many clients receiving food assistance may rely heavily on food pantries to meet their nutritional needs, making the quality of food provided by these organizations critical to their health. Most organizations realize this and those possessing cold storage are especially well positioned to address this need. Access to freezers and refrigerator space not only allows for more varied and healthy options, but also enables partnerships with local farms, grocers, and food recovery programs that prioritize fresh food donations. This infrastructure helped ensure clients received not just enough food, but food that also supports long-term health.

Services Beyond Food and Nutrition Assistance

Morris County food assistance organizations recognize that their clients' needs were not limited to food. Food insecurity is usually indicative of other coexisting or resulting problems in the lives of those experiencing it. Several expressed the refrain "it's not just food." From health issues to housing issues to inability to afford other essential supplies like diapers, school supplies, and personal care items, people seeking food assistance often need other assistance as well. Several wonderful organizations in Morris County recognize this among their clientele and try to fill these needs while also feeding them.

Corporate Support for Food Donation

The corporate world generally embraces a certain level of donation. All interviewed generators participated in food donation and waste diversion and demonstrated some commitment to donating surplus food and recycling food waste.

Resources

The relative affluence of Morris County is an asset to organizations within the county. Several receive monetary and food donations from generous donors. One pantry visited by the MCMUA is affiliated with a megachurch, with a strong base of parishioners and support. At another pantry, a generous donor funded the creation of new office space. Some food assistance agencies are affiliated with a municipality rather than a church or other charitable nonprofit. The differences in resources contributed to the differences observed in service models and offerings. If not for donation, the organizations that exist to address food insecurity would have to invest more of their limited budget into purchasing food. Donation frees up money to serve more people or simply makes food available where it would otherwise not be.

Identified Gaps and Opportunities in Food Rescue in Morris County

Need For More Donors

The organizations the MCMUA interviewed all stated that there were more people they could be helping and they were always in need of more donations. Most organizations expanded to try to meet the need and are still trying to, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. The growing need for food assistance is largely due to the increasing number of individuals facing food insecurity as a result of rising living expenses, employment instability, addiction, and other socioeconomic challenges. As costs for groceries and other supplies continue to rise for many reasons, this also affects how much of these items food assistance organizations can purchase.

Fluctuations in public assistance programs can impact the need for food. Major changes to SNAP benefits that are set to take effect in 2026 include cuts to overall federal funding, expansion of work requirements that could limit eligibility, a shifting of some costs to states which may force them to tighten eligibility, and restrictions on future benefit increases (Legal Action Center, 2026; congress.gov, 2026). Furthermore, the Local Food Purchase Assistance program funded by the USDA and implemented in New Jersey as “Jersey Fresh for All” was discontinued in 2025 after it ran through its third year of funding. This was a program designed to strengthen local food systems by letting state governments purchase food from local and socially disadvantaged farmers and distribute it to people in need through food banks and other feeding programs (NJ Food Democracy Collaborative, 2026). CFBNJ attested to the success of this program and how it allowed them to obtain more fresh produce for its partners. One of the farms the MCMUA spoke with benefited from this program as well.

In addition to these challenges, food generators remain hesitant to donate their surplus due to lingering concerns about liability despite protections put in place by Good Samaritan laws. While the Good Samaritan Act is necessary, it is not helpful if donors are not aware of its protections. Food assistance organizations were not always prepared to discuss it and did not promote it as an incentive to donate when requesting food. Only some agencies directly communicate information about protections during outreach or donation coordination, and they rarely provide this information on their websites. The food rescue organizations interviewed, on the other hand, did provide clear explanations of specific liability protections online.

Availability of Specific Food Through Rescue

This project revealed that large quantities of food are being donated and rescued in Morris County, but obtaining certain high demand perishable items through rescue was not always possible, simple, or straightforward. Agencies attested that they would not meet their goals by only rescuing food. Current food assistance efforts focus on providing nutritious and fresh food, which is not always available as donations in the quantities needed. There is a quantity over quality issue when it comes to surplus food supply, which sometimes forces organizations to purchase food for distribution rather than rely on rescued items.

Fresh produce and meat were essential staples to the food assistance groups that were able to store these items. Sometimes rescued produce arrived in poor condition, resulting in food waste and strain on staff who must sort and dispose of unusable items. Ethnic and culturally relevant items (e.g., kosher, halal, common ingredients from home countries) are other categories of food that are difficult to obtain through rescue. Availability of culturally relevant foods creates an inclusive environment and reduces the likelihood of food waste.

Food rescue organizations provide their services free of cost to the donors and recipients. Even so, they need to ensure what they are rescuing can be used by the recipient organization. Pantries and some of the community kitchens interviewed by the MCMUA were not set up to redistribute prepared meals, a

significantly overproduced type of food. Different types of organizations could be investigated as recipients of this food. Certain foods are produced in excessive quantities and outlets for them are limited. Food service companies should focus on source reduction and should better understand downstream challenges to find synergy between the surplus and need.

Cold Storage and Space Needs

To consistently provide healthy food options, organizations must have sufficient access to cold storage. While most groups offering perishable items did have some form of refrigeration, there was significant variability in the adequacy of that storage. In several cases, limited capacity hindered their ability to reliably distribute fresh food. Not all pantries have refrigerators or freezers and those who do could use more.

Staffing and Transportation

Food rescue requires labor, manhours, expenses, and vehicles, which are not always available. Transportation is needed by agencies to pick up food as well as deliver it to recipients. Many food assistance agencies lack both drivers and vehicles. Some agencies have vehicles and paid drivers, but many lack both. Some rely on volunteers and their personal vehicles to rescue food. Other smaller pantries do not have any staff to do this work which prevents them from taking donations from retailers. Agencies were very grateful for their volunteers and relied heavily on them. However, the dependence on volunteers for transportation could lead to difficulty in reliable scheduling and delivery. Furthermore, volunteers may have high turnover rates and varying levels of commitment. Rescue organizations were able to overcome some of these challenges with structured onboarding and oversight for volunteers as well as dedicated vehicles.

Both farms expressed their challenges with labor shortage. The lack of people available to do these jobs reliably means farms are more concerned with survival than auxiliary concerns like supporting local communities and managing waste sustainably, although they still make a concerted effort despite these challenges.

Networking Between Agencies

The MCMUA was encouraged to see the collaboration between pantries and soup kitchens. The agencies also felt these contacts were critical, but that the collaboration and information sharing among food assistance organizations in the region is likely limited. Communication between groups occurred through personal contact and on an ad hoc basis, leaving room for better and more complete networking between organizations. In many cases, pantry/soup kitchen personnel interacted with a few other organizations, but not nearly all of those in Morris County. The exception was one pantry with approximately 28 partner agencies that included smaller food pantries, low-income senior housing sites, and food access sites operated by the County of Morris.

This lack of networking may inhibit opportunities for resource sharing and collective problem solving. Given the number of pantries across Morris County, it's likely that one organization's surplus could meet another's needs. In addition, the lack of an official or independently hosted pantry network means that the burden of securing recipients and transportation for excess inventory is on the organization trying to liberate themselves of the food. Their ability to do so might be compromised by other responsibilities and pressures at their own organization.

Food assistance agencies in the region are part of larger networks like CFBNJ or food rescue groups, but there remains a significant gap in peer-to-peer coordination. The lack of access between all assistance organizations limits their ability to share resources efficiently, respond to surpluses or shortages, and collectively address overlapping needs within their communities. This is already happening on a smaller scale. Some observed instances of surplus food at food assistance agencies raised the question of whether there could have been an opportunity to pass that food on to another organization that was able to redistribute it. Additionally, while CFBNJ plays a vital role as a food hub, distance and logistical constraints can complicate partnerships, particularly for smaller or more remote pantries. Local communication channels could foster better regional collaboration and resource sharing.

Other Logistical and Operational Hurdles

Another issue is the timing of the donations. Most food assistance agencies conduct food distribution on only one or two days weekly and volunteers and/or employees may also only be available during limited times. One organization that the MCMUA spoke with had volunteers visiting stores five days per week to pick up donations, but still, they could not be at every store all the time. Sometimes, spoiled/overripe produce was attributable to receipt too far in advance of distribution days. Other times, organizations would miss their opportunity to rescue when they could not send a volunteer or staff to pick up the donation. Often, excess food donors have limited space to store their donations and/or may not have a climate-controlled storage area for refrigerated or frozen donations.

While CFBNJ was recognized as a key source of both food supply and support, one organization noted that distance and schedule posed challenges to consistently take advantage of CFBNJ's food opportunities. CFBNJ is located in Union County approximately 30-40 minutes from many of their partner agencies in Morris County.

Misunderstanding About Acceptable Donations

Organizations agree that some of the issues encountered with donations from large food generators like supermarkets are subject to the employees that work there and their motivations. Some store managers are more motivated to participate in food donation than others. Corporate guidance varies between store chains and may determine how much or if a store will donate their excess inventory. Missed opportunities for donation may occur due to misunderstandings about what acceptable donations are. Store managers do not always know the extent of what they can donate. For example, grocery stores cannot sell cartons with a broken egg and cannot repackage them. Rather than being discarded, these would gladly be accepted by a food pantry who would simply remove the broken eggs. Other potentially missed opportunities for donation were observed in compost bins at supermarkets. Certain discarded foods were whole foods rather than food scraps which raised questions about whether more could have been donated and why it was not. There is a need for improved education and training around food donation and recycling practices among food generating businesses to more effectively divert edible food and organics.

Another misunderstanding around acceptable donations involves date labels. There is already uncertainty among the public about what different date labels mean, which leads to a certain amount of food waste. Part of the uncertainty stems from lack of date label standardization. Some food assistance organizations chose to acknowledge that much food, especially nonperishable food, is safe to eat past "best by" or "sell by" dates. They did not have strict guidelines about expiration dates and do accept some food beyond the stamped dates. Volunteers and staff made decisions about distribution of items with expired quality dates, sometimes adhering to guidelines about how beyond the dates different food could be safely distributed. Other food assistance organizations very strictly did not accept food beyond any date label and discarded these types of donations if they were received. A great deal of opportunity exists in rescuing and redistributing food that is beyond best buy dates of slightly expired.

Food Waste at Food Assistance Organizations

Food waste was observed at some food assistance agencies. Some of it came from donations of past-date items to an organization that did not accept them. It also came from donations of spoiled produce or produce that had gone bad because the times that donations are available do not match the times they can be distributed in a timely manner. Finally, it also comes from rescued food and donations that do not meet the needs of the clientele or the organization. Some of this comes from misunderstandings between donors or the food bank and the recipient organizations. Recipient agencies are hesitant to turn down any donation due to fear of compromising partnerships.

The challenge of composting or food scrap pick up was the cost. There is also a need to prevent food from becoming food waste after it is given to the clients. Clients should be given a choice and there should be consideration given to what will be utilized.

5. Bridging the Gaps: Food Rescue Solutions for Morris County

The following solutions involving various stakeholders are recommended pursuant to observations and evaluations described in this report.

Solutions to Expand the Volume of Food Being Rescued

□ Expand and Facilitate Gleaning from Farms and Food Businesses

Gleaning provides opportunities to sustainably and cheaply obtain free food for the needy that would have otherwise gone to waste. The obstacles to maximizing the amount of gleaning that takes place includes a limited and/or unstable workforce, lack of transportation, scheduling conflicts, and the decentralized nature of gleaning. Food producers do not have resources to expand gleaning capabilities on their own. Assistance with training, organizing, and scheduling volunteers would be beneficial to farms and other producers as well as food assistance recipients. Knowledge sharing between the different groups about their specific needs and limitations would also be helpful. Education for farms about gleaning and donation is lacking and necessary.

□ Employee Training and Corporate Policies

Research for this project revealed that a challenge for food rescue is the personnel involved and lack of training. A structured program for food donation or food donation training does not always exist, and donations may occur only at the convenience of the manager on duty and if it does not interfere with other operations. The amount of food rescued from a supermarket or other food generator is subject to the personnel and management at each location. Since the turnover of personnel can also be high, some food assistance agencies struggled to establish reliable, convenient, and consistent pickup schedules, and had to reiterate the types of food they were looking for, their policy on date labels availability, etc. Some managers also chose to partner only with Feeding America, which is a great outlet for surplus food since it redistributes it to address food insecurity, but agencies felt that they would be able to rescue items beyond what was recovered through Feeding America. Finally, some agencies felt like there were missed opportunities for food rescue if managers did not have the time or simply did not have the commitment to redirecting food that would have been discarded. Corporations and business owners can assist by setting their business policies, expectations, and training on food donation.

□ Highest Impact Targeting of Certain Facilities

The opportunities for surplus foods that will be most beneficial to food assistance agencies are the facilities that supply a consistent source of substantial quantities of foods that match the needs of food assistance agencies. It would be especially beneficial for agencies to target these facilities due to their self-reliance for personnel (volunteers), transportation, and coordination. It is not always simple to find out where the surplus food opportunities are, make connections with the right people, and coordinate regular pickups or deliveries. Some resources, such as the USEPA Excess Opportunities Map (US Environmental Protection Agency, 2026) can provide a starting point for identifying facilities that best to target but they do not address the labor and time that is required to establish these relationships. Food rescue organizations like Table to Table and Share My Meals could target these facilities on behalf of the agencies. More assistance should be provided to agencies to secure additional surplus food donations.

□ Employ Strategies to Increase Volunteer and Staff Capacity

Food rescue and assistance require people to glean, transport, sort, stock shelves, help clients shop, deliver food, maintain the facilities, etc. Hundreds of people already assist with this work in Morris County, many as volunteers who do not get paid. Still, most food assistance agencies stated they always needed more volunteers, especially reliable and committed ones.

□ Provide Operational Enhancements

- Centralized storage

The availability of centralized storage for food assistance organizations, especially those with limited resources, can help mitigate logistical issues such as the need to pick up rescued food at specific times or the need to store food until it is needed for distribution. These logistical issues are often limiting factors in the ability for food rescue to assist more people. Centralized storage for food could be secured as a collaborative effort by organizations. It may also be provided with the assistance of local government assistance. Furthermore, space could be rented on an as needed basis at refrigerated warehouses in Morris County.

- Increased cold storage

Many food assistance organizations could benefit from more cold storage, especially at their primary location. More freezer and refrigerator space helps with more food rescue, since organizations would not have to limit the quantity of perishables they could obtain due to lack of space. Additionally, it would help reduce food waste since more food destined for landfills could be stored for longer periods of time. Many organizations freeze all their meat for distribution. This greatly extends the shelf life of the meat beyond the best by date if it is frozen before that deadline. Additional cold storage for agencies could come in the form of a satellite facility. Financial assistance for these types of capital improvements may be obtained through grants or other external assistance. A list of food assistance grants compiled by the MCMUA and current as of the date of this report is provided as Appendix C: Potential Grants and Funding Sources for Food Assistance.

- Improved transportation capability

Some well-established food assistance agencies possess vans or other vehicles and even hire paid drivers, but most agencies do not have this capability, largely relying on volunteers in their own vehicles. Obtaining better, more, and dedicated modes of transportation allows agencies to rescue larger quantities of food, and move them from centralized points to distribution locations, or deliver them to people and other organizations. The reliance of personal vehicles for these activities is a limiting factor.

□ Increase Investment and Funding Sources

Main sources of funding for food assistance organizations are private and corporate donors. Support from federal, state, and municipal governments also play a role in stocking food banks and agencies. This type of support can vary based on grant periods or the priorities of the administration in power. Additional and stable funding makes a big difference in the ability of agencies to help people and even stay open. Towards the end of this project, the MCMUA learned of the temporary closure of one of the organizations it interviewed due to lack of funding. This was an active organization that rescued hundreds of pounds of food and helped many hundreds of families weekly. It had dedicated space with refrigerators and freezers, many volunteers, and an organized process but despite their dedication and obvious impact, they were not immune to the downfalls of not bringing in enough money. Therefore, maintaining a certain level of financial investment is critical to support food assistance and by extension, food rescue. Food assistance requires sustained and increased support from the government, their donors, and any other potential funding sources. The MCMUA researched and compiled a grant list for food assistance agencies that appeared active at the time of this report's publication (Appendix C: Potential Grants and Funding Sources for Food Assistance). The MCMUA could assist in disseminating this information, advocating for the organizations of Morris County, and establishing its own grant program for specific needs, like cold storage for example, if budgets allow.

□ Provide rescued food options for external organizations at soup kitchens

Through its engagement in this project, the MCMUA learned of a type of meal assistance that occurs at several agencies, where outside organizations bring in and serve meals with the help of volunteers. The host organization, which provides the infrastructure for serving meals, is not responsible for the procurement or purchase of the food items. They are donated by the visiting organization. The MCMUA surmised that rescued food was not being utilized in these meals and the visiting volunteer groups did not partner with food rescue groups like Table to Table and Share My Meals. There may be opportunities to educate these groups on rescued food options and establish another outlet for surplus food.

□ Engage public health departments and donors to ensure there are no barriers to donation

Through mandatory inspections and food safety enforcement, health departments at the county and municipal levels regularly communicate with food waste generators and would-be food donors. This channel creates an opportunity to also communicate about opportunities for food rescue, donation, and composting or recycling. It also creates an opportunity to educate donors about liability protections for food donation. The Morris County Division of Public Health has developed some fact sheets that provide education about donating and handling food safely (Appendix E: Morris County Division of Public Health Food Donation and Food Safety Education) and The New Jersey Meal Recovery Coalition is also working on documents summarizing their NJ Food Donation Guidelines (The Meal Recovery Coalition, 2025). Other external guidance, like guidance from the Natural Resources Defense Council about engaging health departments in food waste reduction (NRDC, 2026), provides additional information on leveraging public health departments for the purpose of rescuing and donating more of the surplus available food.

Solutions to Expand the Rescue of High Demand Foods

□ Produce, Fresh Meats, and Other Quality Foods

Perishable items like produce, meat, and dairy are always in high demand by food assistance organizations that can distribute these items. A challenge is maximizing the recovery of these items from local farms. With over 300 farms, Morris County likely has a solid base of high-quality food items. A 2018 study by the Foodshed Alliance evaluated the concept of a “food hub” to see if and how it could benefit New Jersey’s farm economy. This hub would aggregate production from farmers and sell it to various vendors such as restaurants, grocery stores, and institutions. The study concluded that a food hub could help strengthen the farm industry by giving farmers easy access to institutional buyers to fill the need for locally grown, fresh healthy food, and that there is both a need and an opportunity in northern New Jersey for the establishment of a food hub (Foodshed Alliance, 2018). A hub like this would also provide another source of food supplying pantries and soup kitchens. Many food assistance organizations had the resources to purchase their inventory. They regularly purchased from large food distributors like Sysco but did not purchase from local farms because they were not as easily accessible. They lacked the equivalent of a food distributor for local farms. Through a food hub they would be able to support local farmers by purchasing from them the food items that are most in demand. A food hub would support food waste reduction and food security efforts in Northern New Jersey. It is recommended that any stakeholder interested in moving forward with such a project review the recommendations of the Foodshed Alliance report.

Another solution that would support the local farm economy, the utilization of high-quality farm items, and food security efforts is the expansion of SNAP and Good Food Bucks at Farmers Markets. Sustained and expanded funding for programs like these by the federal and state governments supports health and prosperity for Morris County residents. In addition, it is important that the availability of these benefits is known by people who need them. Eligible recipients may not know

where farms are located or where these benefits could be used. Outreach and education about participating vendor locations should be part of the initiatives.

□ Culturally Appropriate Foods

Issues regarding the misalignment of available and desired food related to cultural preferences were identified several times during this project. In some cases, recipients returned pantry items they were given or were hesitant to take even fresh produce items if they were not common in their traditional cuisine. The Community Food Bank of New Jersey stated that it tried to source as many items as they could that would meet cultural needs in their various service areas. Food rescue efforts should consider the demographics and wishes of the clientele, but efforts should also be made to support the increased use of what is available. One way to do this is to educate recipients about ways to utilize unfamiliar items and items commonly found in pantry distributions. A larger pantry in Morris County does this type of education, through the creation of recipes and cooking classes at their location. Farms with community supported agriculture (CSA) programs sometimes include recipes for the CSA contents to promote their utilization. These could be also shared with food insecure populations receiving pantry distributions or food assistance benefits. The Bergen County Office of Food Security hosts a recipe page providing examples of recipes using ingredients commonly found in food pantries.

Solutions that Minimize Food Waste Heading to Landfills Post-Rescue

□ Matching Supply with Need

The danger of donations of surplus that do not match the client's needs is that it simply becomes food waste somewhere else. Strengthening communication channels between donors and food assistance providers can help bridge this gap. Outlets for overproduced items that are difficult to repurpose through food assistance should be expanded. For example, prepared meal rescue should branch out to other organizations that could benefit from the budget relief of not having to buy food to prepare. Food waste recycling infrastructure and programs that can process items that cannot be redistributed should be promoted.

□ Date Labeling Standardization and Education

Confusion around the meaning of various food date labels leads to food waste when consumers discard products after the date due to erroneous concerns about food safety. Manufacturers or retailers may also face confusion about their ability to sell or donate past-date food. Likewise, food assistance organizations may discard donations received with past-date labels if they do not understand the meaning of the labels. Most labels only indicate freshness or quality and do not suggest the food is inedible or unsafe to eat. In conversations with these agencies, the MCMUA observed a variety of policies regarding date labels, which may lead to additional confusion over what is donatable. The MCMUA has begun generating educational materials about the meaning of food waste labels (Appendix D: MCMUA Food Waste Labeling Education). Other helpful resources about date labeling best practices and New Jersey policy are provided by ReFed (ReFED, 2026) and Harvard's Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation (Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2021). This type of information should be shared throughout Morris County, in all venues where food waste can occur, especially among donors and recipients. Legislation like the Food Date Labeling Act that was introduced in 2023 (ReFED, 2026), can play a role in reducing confusion and unnecessary food waste through the standardization of food date labels.

□ Increase Opportunities for Food Scrap Pick-up

While this is beyond the scope of the current project, the expansion of organics collections from food waste generators, including food assistance agencies, should be further explored. Drop-off locations could include farmers' markets and municipal recycling depots.

Solutions that Support Food Rescue through Regulations and Policies

Food rescue and waste reduction policy is outside of the purview of the MCMUA. Notwithstanding, there are policy solutions that would support the goals of this project. These include:

- State and federal policies that support food rescue;
- Enhanced tax incentives and liability support for food donors; and
- Local government involvement and support, such as the implementation of food waste reduction initiatives in Morris County municipalities. The MCMUA strives to serve as a resource for the municipalities and support them to the extent possible in these types of projects.

Solutions that Increase Communication, Awareness, and Community Involvement

□ Formalize a Pantry Network/Coalition

A platform for food assistance organizations that allows them to communicate with each other, share food rescue opportunities, and share their excess with each other may help more food be rescued and saved from the trash. An electronic hub could make sharing food and knowledge between food assistance groups easier. This type of program would require an external host and funder. A coalition of food access organizations and programs could meet regularly to discuss challenges and tackle inefficiencies.

□ Provide Education About Donation Incentives and Outlets

The MCMUA observed a general lack of knowledge about food waste diversion options and incentives for reducing food waste on the part of surplus food generators. In New Jersey, there is no legal requirement for generators to recycle or donate their food waste, unless they generate a minimum of 52 tons of food waste per year. Thus, the impetus must come from other sources. Food waste generators are not likely to investigate all their options when they do not have a ton to gain from food waste diversion, and their operations are concentrated on other objectives. More focused and simple education for businesses should be a component of food waste reduction strategies in the County. This will be the focus of the next phase of food waste initiatives at the MCMUA. The MCMUA has developed a flowchart for businesses that provides an easy-to-follow guide for waste diversion options (Appendix F: Food Waste Flyer for Businesses). The Morris County Division of Public Health assists in the distribution of this document during inspections.

□ Awareness Campaigns for the Public

Education campaigns should raise awareness about food waste and encourage participation in food rescue initiatives. Donation information can be shared with the public to encourage them to share their excess. As a result of this project, the MCMUA has compiled a resource for the public interested in donating food or receiving donations. It includes links to food assistance organizations and compiles each's specific needs to ensure proper matching of needs and donation, and details donation and recipient policies. All agencies on the page were verified operational by the MCMUA. (https://news.mcmua.com/?page_id=4034).

Where to Donate/Receive Food

Across Morris County, many food assistance organizations welcome donations from individuals, businesses, and institutions. Each organization has its own storage capacity and specific needs, so it's important to check their guidelines before donating or receiving food. See the list below to explore food assistance organizations within Morris County. Prior to donating, check the organization's linked 'Current Needs List' webpage or call to ensure your donation fits their criteria.

Organization	Address	Accepted Donations	Donor Process	Recipient Process
Interfaith Food Pantry	2 Executive Drive Morris Plains, NJ 07950	Current Needs List – Perishable food – Non-perishable food	For large donations or perishable items call 973-538-8049 ext.236 to make drop-off arrangements. Otherwise, items can be dropped off at pantry Monday-Thursday, 9:30am-4:30pm.	Clients must call 973-538-8049 ext. 210 preregister with the pantry and participate in a short intake interview.
Town of Boonton Food Pantry	100 Washington Street Boonton, NJ 07005	– Non-perishable food – General hygiene products – Cleaning products	Call (973) 402-9410 ext.634 to make drop-off arrangements.	Check website for current food pickup days.
	513 Birch Street	Current Needs List	Donations can be dropped off	Check website for current

A food waste page with various facts and resources (https://mcmua.com/sw_recy_food.asp) was also created for the public and is advertised with QR codes on MCMUA materials. Donation flyers created by the Morris County Division of Public Health (Appendix E: Morris County Division of Public Health Food Donation and Food Safety Education) are other examples of public education.

- Foster collaboration between various stakeholders: food businesses, non-profits, and government agencies

The MCMUA has been in talks with various stakeholders about the possibility of bringing them together in various formats that aim to educate the public and/or other stakeholders. The MCMUA has also facilitated connections between different groups. The MCMUA will continue to pursue such opportunities following the publication of this report.

Solutions that Improve How to Measure and Track Food Rescue

This project highlighted challenges in identifying exact quantities of rescued food as well as food waste. The State of New Jersey does not currently require food waste to be source separated or measured, so much of the information that is available is measured optionally or voluntarily. The exception to this is when food waste is recycled, since generators of any recycled materials must report the quantities of recycled materials to the municipality in which they operate annually. Tools and policies that assist in producing more and better metrics surrounding food waste would assist in maximizing the amount of food rescue that occurs.

References

- Best Places. (2026, February 24). *Morris County, NJ Cost of Living* . Retrieved from https://www.bestplaces.net/cost_of_living/county/new_jersey/morris
- Center for Ecotechnology. (2024). *Wasted Food Solutions for Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority Marketplace Analysis and Roadmap*. Retrieved from Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority: <https://mcmua.com/docs/2023%20MCMUA%20FoodWaste%20SWOT%20Analysis%20Report.pdf>
- Community Food Bank of New Jersey. (2022, September 1). *Community FoodBank of New Jersey Reports New Statewide Food Insecurity Statistics In Time For Hunger Action Month*. Retrieved from <https://cfbnj.org/community-foodbank-of-new-jersey-reports-new-statewide-food-insecurity-statistics-in-time-for-hunger-action-month/>
- congress.gov. (2026, 03 18). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Related Nutrition Programs in P.L. 119-21: An Overview*. Retrieved from https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/HTML/R48552.html
- Drewnowski, A. (2022). Food insecurity has economic root causes. *Nature Food*, 3, 555-556.
- Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis . (2026, January 29). *Unemployment Rate in Morris County, NJ*. Retrieved from <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/NJMORR5URN>
- Feeding America. (2026, January 23). *Feeding America*. Retrieved from Hunger in America: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity>
- Food Law and Policy Clinic Harvard Law School. (2021, November). *Legal Fact Sheet New Jersey Food Donation: Tax Incentives* .
- Food Law and Policy Clinic Harvard Law School. (2023, June). *Federal Liability Protection For Food Donation Legal Fact Sheet* . Retrieved from <https://chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Emerson-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- Foodshed Alliance. (2018). *Food Hub Feasibility Study for Northern New Jersey*. Foodshed Alliance.
- Good Food Bucks. (2026, January 28). Retrieved from <https://www.goodfoodbucks.com/>
- Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic. (2021, November). *Legal Fact Sheet New Jersey Food Donation: Date Labels*. Retrieved from https://chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NJ-date-labeling-legal-fact-sheet_Final-Edits44.pdf
- ICF. (2020). *Documentation for Greenhouse Gas Emission and Energy Factors Used in the Waste Reduction Model (WARM) Organic Materials Chapters*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery.
- Jaglo, K., Kenny, S., & Stephenson, J. (2021). *From Farm to Kitchen: The Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Research and Development.
- Kenny, S. (2025). *Estimating the Cost of Food Waste to American Consumers*. US Environmental Protection Agency Office of Research and Development.
- Krause, M., Kenny, S., Stephenson, J., & Singleton, A. (2023). *Quantifying Methane Emissions from Landfilled Food Waste*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Research and Development.
- Legal Action Center. (2026, 3 18). *THE BUDGET BILL (H.R. 1) HAS BEEN SIGNED INTO LAW: What to Know and Do About Changes to SNAP*. Retrieved from Legal Action Center: <https://www.lac.org/assets/files/The-Budget-Bill-Passed-What-to-Know-and-Do-About-Changes-to-SNAP.pdf>

- Morris County. (2026, January 28). *Aging Disabilities and Community Programming*. Retrieved from Get a Farmers' Market Voucher: <https://www.morriscountynj.gov/Departments/Aging-Disabilities-Community-Programming/Nutrition-Program/Get-a-Farmers-Market-Voucher>
- Morris County Aging, Disabilities, and Community Programming. (2026, January 27). *Food Pantries and Meal Services*. Retrieved from <https://www.morriscountynj.gov/Departments/Aging-Disabilities-Community-Programming/Food-Pantries-and-Meal-Services>
- National Equity Atlas*. (2026, 5 25). Retrieved from <https://www.nationalequityatlas.org/>
- NJ Department of Health. (2026, January 28). Retrieved from <https://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/wic/>
- NJ Food Democracy Collaborative. (2026, 3 18). *Jersey Fresh for All* . Retrieved from <https://www.njfooddemocracy.org/farmtopantry>
- NJDEP. (2023). *Food Waste Reduction Plan*. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.
- NJDEP. (2025, February 11). *Division of Sustainable Waste Management*. Retrieved from 2022 New Jersey Generation, Disposal and Recycling Rates by County (TONS): <https://dep.nj.gov/dshw/rhwm/statistics/2022-disposal-rates/>
- NJDEP. (2026). *New Jersey's Food Waste Reduction Act 50x30 Report*. Retrieved from <https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/dshw/fw-reduction-progress-report-4.21.26.pdf>
- NJEDA. (2026, January 28). *Food Desert Relief Program*. Retrieved from <https://www.njeda.gov/food-desert-relief-program/>
- NRDC. (2026, January 12). *Engaging Health Departments: Overview Guide*. Retrieved from Natural Resources Defense Council: <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/engaging-health-departments-overview-guide>
- Rabbitt, M. P., Reed-Jones, M., Hales, L. J., & Burke, M. P. (2024). *Household Food Security in the United States in 2023*. U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service.
- ReFED. (2025). *From Surplus to Solutions: 2025 ReFED U.S. Food Waste Report*. ReFED.
- ReFED. (2026, May 14). *Food Date Labeling Act*. Retrieved from <https://policyfinder.refed.org/federal-policy/food-date-labeling-act>
- ReFED. (2026, May 26). *How Do Date Labels Contribute to Food Waste—and What Do They Really Mean?* Retrieved from [refed.org: https://refed.org/food-waste/date-labeling/](https://refed.org/food-waste/date-labeling/)
- Rotuno-Johnson, M. (2026, February 24). *Patch*. Retrieved from Morris Is Most Expensive County In NJ For Household Bills, Study Finds: <https://patch.com/new-jersey/mendham-chester/morris-most-expensive-county-nj-household-bills-study-finds>
- Royer, M. F. (2024). The Folly of Food Waste amidst Food Insecurity in the United States: A Literature Review. *Challenges*, 15(2)(21). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3390/>
- State of New Jersey 221st Legislature. (2026, January 23). *Legiscan*. Retrieved from New Jersey Senate Bill 2426: <https://legiscan.com/NJ/text/S2426/id/3010607>
- The Meal Recovery Coalition. (2025, October). *New Jersey Food Donation Guidelines*. Retrieved from [mealrecoverycoalition.org: https://mealrecoverycoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/NJ-Food-Donation-Guidelines-3.pdf](https://mealrecoverycoalition.org/)
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2026, January 29). *Local Area Unemployment Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/lau/home.htm>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2026, January 29). *Explore Census Data*. Retrieved from data.census.gov

- U.S. FDA. (2024, May 30). *U.S. Food and Drug Administration*. Retrieved from FDA News Release: FDA, USDA, EPA enhance efforts to reduce food loss and waste, welcome USAID to interagency collaborative:
<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-usda-epa-enhance-efforts-reduce-food-loss-and-waste-welcome-usaid-interagency-collaborative>
- United Nations. (2026, January 23). *Sustainable Development Goals*. Retrieved from 12 Responsible Consumption and Production:
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/>
- US Environmental Protection Agency. (2026, January 27). *Excess Food Opportunities Map*. Retrieved from <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/excess-food-opportunities-map>
- USEPA. (2025, December 4). *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*. Retrieved from United States 2030 Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal:
<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/united-states-2030-food-loss-and-waste-reduction-goal>
- USEPA; USDA; FDA. (2024). *National Strategy for Reducing Food Loss and Waste and Recycling Organics*.
- Wasted Food Scale*. (2026, January 20). Retrieved from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:
<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/wasted-food-scale>

Appendix A: Questionnaires for Food Assistance and Rescue Organizations and Generators

Appendix B: Potential Grants and Funding Sources for Food Assistance

Appendix C: MCMUA Food Waste Labeling Education

Appendix D: Food Waste Flyer for Businesses