

“Farm to Food Shelf” FAQs

The Minnesota Legislature has appropriated a “Farm to Food Shelf” grant to help offset Minnesota growers’ costs to harvest and package donated fruits and vegetables that would otherwise go unharvested or be discarded. Second Harvest Heartland will coordinate with the five other Feeding America food banks serving Minnesota to facilitate the distribution of this produce to our neighbors in need at food shelves and meal programs statewide.

What growers are eligible to participate? All agricultural producers and processors that receive reimbursement must be located within the state of Minnesota and must complete and sign the ***Farm to Food Shelf Grower Agreement*** form. Growers and processors must donate Minnesota produce that would otherwise go unharvested or be discarded.

Where can I donate produce that would otherwise go unharvested or be discarded?

Produce can be donated to any of the six Feeding America food banks that service Minnesota or their agency partners. These include:

Second Harvest Heartland – 1140 Gervais Ave., Maplewood, MN (651) 484-5117

Channel One Regional Food Bank – 131 35th St. SE, Rochester, MN (507) 287-2350

Second Harvest Northern Lakes Food Bank – 4503 Airpark Blvd., Duluth, MN (218) 727-5653

Second Harvest North Central Food Bank – 2222 Cromell Drive, Grand Rapids, MN (218) 326-4420

North Country Food Bank, Inc. – 424 N Broadway, Crookston, MN (218) 281-7356

Great Plains Food Bank (Clay County Only) – 1720 3rd Ave. N., Fargo, ND (701) 232-6219

Not sure which one is in your area? Call (877) 547-0245 for assistance. We would be happy to help you find the nearest food bank or food shelf.

How do I get reimbursed if I participate? Call (877) 547-0245 to get the correct information and paperwork to complete at the time of your donation. At the time of donation you will be asked to sign a receipt and Grower Agreement and you will be instructed on where to mail those along with an invoice for reimbursable costs in order to receive payment.

How much will I receive? The Farm to Food Shelf grant is designed to help growers offset costs of harvesting and packaging donated produce into a form that can be distributed through food banks. Reimbursement costs vary based on the crop and are available by contacting us at the phone number or email listed at the end of this document. ***These funds are not designed to cover the cost of the produce itself***, but to encourage growers to donate produce out of their fields that would otherwise go unharvested or be discarded.

What types of produce are eligible? We will accept edible and commonly consumed fruits and vegetables as listed on the Minnesota Grown website (<http://minnesotagrown.com/whats-in-season/>). Reimbursement is not available for decorative produce, including pumpkins grown primarily for use as jack-o’-lanterns.

What about food safety? Growers are responsible to ensure that all produce that they donate complies with applicable regulations. Responsibility includes proper handling and that the food is safe, wholesome, and unadulterated. For assistance on obtaining information about Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), water potability, organic and related items, please contact the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) at (651) 201-6027.

Farm to Foodshelf is funded by the State of Minnesota.

What are the quality standards? In order for farmers to receive reimbursement costs, the produce must be fresh and fit for human consumption. Decayed and/or spoiled produce is not acceptable. However, produce that has cosmetic imperfections such as blemishes, misshapen, and off spec sizing is acceptable. It also needs to be “surplus that would otherwise go unharvested, discarded or be sold in a secondary market.

We do ask that produce meet the following shelf life guidelines:

- o 5-7 days of shelf life is needed if produce is donated to a food bank.
- o 3-5 days of shelf life is needed if produce is donated to a qualified charitable organization that distributes directly to those in need.

Will you be able to take all of the produce that I have? There is a great need for fresh produce to help our neighbors in need, but given the unpredictable supply of produce, it is possible there will be produce at times we will need to turn away. We will do our best to find a solution for these situations, but we can unfortunately only reimburse for produce that we can effectively distribute to our neighbors in need.

Can you pick up my produce? We know farmers are busy and the six Feeding America food banks serving Minnesota would like to pick up produce directly from the farm whenever possible. However, costs related to picking up produce, as well as limited availability of food bank vehicles, may make this difficult to do. Here are some guidelines we would like to use in these situations:

- o **Farmer Delivery:** Produce qualifying for reimbursement that is in a quantity of less than 1,000 pounds (approx. 30 bushels @ 30/pounds per bushel) needs to be delivered directly to a qualified food bank, food shelf or feeding program by the grower.
- o **Food Bank Pick Up:** Produce in quantities over 1,000 pounds may be delivered to the nearest qualified food bank, food shelf or feeding program, or it may be picked up by the food bank based on availability of food bank vehicles.

Is there a minimum reimbursement amount? A donating producer will receive payment once that individual’s total reimbursement amount related to qualifying donation exceeds \$100. Multiple donations may be used to achieve this minimum \$100 in related reimbursement costs with proper documentation submitted.

What if I already partner with a local food shelf? You may participate in Farm to Foodshelf by donating qualified produce directly to any of the food shelf partners served by the food banks below. To find your local participating foodshelf, and get correct information and paperwork, call (877) 547-0245. Before making a donation, contact the foodshelf to find out when and how much food they are able to take.

Further Questions? Consider donating! Call (877) 547-0245, email produce@2harvest.org or visit <http://minnesotagrown.com/whats-in-season/>.



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