

UTILIZING NEW METHODS OF CROP HARVESTING TO INTRODUCE NUTRIENT-DENSE SPECIALTY CROPS TO LOW INCOME CONSUMERS FY 2009

The project was carried out by the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) in partnership with the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The goal was to work with California growers to obtain nutrient-dense, field-packed cull row crops for distribution to food banks and food insecure people. Cull row crops are ordinarily left behind in the field, either because they do not meet commercial standards or because fluctuating market conditions mean that harvesting a given field is not cost effective. Over the course of the project, CAFB increased its overall distribution of specialty crops including broccoli, cauliflower, and celery by 27%, from 90 million pounds to 115 million pounds annually.

CAFB worked with growers in California to educate them on the new markets for cull row crops, retrain workers harvesting product, and redesign mobile packing sheds in the fields. In addition, CAFB worked with food banks around the country to help them upgrade operations. These efforts enabled them to receive and distribute specialty crops and create new markets by introducing clients to specialty crops that are often not a regular part of their diet, either due to budgetary constraints, lack of availability, or unfamiliarity with the product.

This project follows on a successful FY 06 FSMIP project conducted by the current project partners to expand a program to cull shed-packed fresh produce and donate it or sell it at a discount to food banks across the state.

FINAL REPORT

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Federal-State Market Improvement Program (FSMIP)

“Utilizing New Methods of Crop Harvesting to Introduce Nutrient Dense Special Crops to Low-Income Consumers”

California Association of Food Banks & California Department of Food and Agriculture

Final Report – December 23, 2011 (revised)

Executive Summary

The California Association of Food Banks (CAFB), with the support of FSMIP funds, initiated a project to work with growers to obtain nutrient-dense row crops for distribution to food banks and food insecure people.

CAFB worked with growers to obtain cull products that are ordinarily left behind in the field, either because they do not meet supermarket standards or because fluctuating market conditions mean that harvesting a given field is not cost effective. During the course of the project, CAFB was able to increase its overall distribution of specialty crops by 27%, from 90 million pounds to 115 million pounds annually, with a focus on obtaining highly desirable broccoli, cauliflower, and celery.

CAFB worked with growers in California to educate them on the new markets for row crop culls, retrain workers harvesting product, and redesign mobile packing sheds in the fields. In addition, CAFB worked with food banks around the country to help them upgrade operations. These efforts enabled them to receive and distribute specialty crops and create new markets by exposing low-income people to specialty crops that are often not a regular part of their diet, either due to budgetary constraints, lack of availability, or unfamiliarity with the product.

Background

In recent years, obesity in the U.S. has been rising, with two-thirds of Americans now classified as obese or overweight and at least 17% of the nation's children are classified as obese. Because obesity and poor diet are linked to a number of preventable diseases, including diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, this is considered a national epidemic. A wealth of recent research supports the importance of including fresh fruits and vegetables in an individual's diet for optimum health and obesity prevention, but in many cases, low-income families choose high-calorie, nutrient-poor foods due to cost or because they simply do not have access to retail outlets supplying fresh fruits and vegetables where they live.

The recent recession has meant that more Americans than at any time since the Great Depression have sought food assistance, with record numbers utilizing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program and many foregoing other basic necessities in order to put food on the table. The nation's food banks have been challenged not only to provide more food to people in need, but also to find sources of low-calorie, nutrient dense foods that promote optimum health.

CAFB has seen dramatic successes in increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables for low-income Californians through its Farm to Family program. Each year, CAFB's 42 member food banks distribute fresh produce through the Farm to Family Program to 5,000+ community agencies throughout the state. In turn, these agencies provide food to over 2 million low-income individuals each month (see attachment A for food banks participating in the concurrent picking program).

CAFB successfully developed the Farm to Family Program by creating a network of food solicitors in three primary agricultural regions in California: the Central Valley, Imperial/Coachella Valleys, and the central coast region. These food solicitors work directly with growers and packers to provide cull products to food banks by capturing those crops as they are sorted in the packing sheds, where they are packed for distribution to food banks statewide. These new methods ensured that growers would have a market that yielded an additional revenue stream, rather than dumping or using the crops for animal feed, and food banks would have a reliable source of affordable fresh produce.

Farm to Family has been enormously successful, increasing from 22 million pounds distributed in 2006 to over 102 million pounds distributed in 2010, and with an increase of 27% over past two years (during the grant period). FSMIP funding allowed CAFB to take this program statewide, which was an important factor in the growth and success of the program. But, despite these successes, there remained a strong demand among food banks for nutrient-dense crops, particularly broccoli, cauliflower and celery, which CAFB has not been able to access through Farm to Family because these crops never reach the packing sheds, but rather are packed in the fields as they are harvested, generally with culls left behind.

While CAFB also pursued other row crops such as green beans, brussel sprouts, melons, corn, and eggplant, and occasionally obtained an individual load, they have not yet achieved the steady supply as with the crops mentioned above.

For many row crops, growers typically use teams of pickers which harvest only the market-grade crop and leave the remainder in the field where they are tilled under, reducing the cost of harvest. Still other fields, called "walk-by fields", are never harvested at all. This occurs when prevailing market prices mean that growers cannot recoup their costs, and rather than harvest at a loss, they choose to cut their losses and simply till under the entire field.

The scope of this project has been to identify and implement new ways of working with growers to develop field sorting and packing methods that capture nutrient-dense row crop culls for food banks that would otherwise remain in the field to be tilled under. In addition, with the anticipated success of the project, we wanted to ensure that CAFB's administrative staffing level and technical capacity were able to handle the increased workload and associated data needs.

Approach

CAFB had identified three barriers to address in order to make this project successful and therefore established three primary objectives for the project:

Directly working with growers to develop field packing methods for cull products.

The work of helping growers to understand the benefits of concurrently harvesting and packing cull products for food banks was labor intensive, involving many contacts and many meetings. Grower resistance to the concept was initially significant, with the largest objection centered on the issue of retraining workers. Growers felt that they had spent many years training workers on exactly which plants to harvest to meet the rigorous specs retailers demand. To reduce this resistance, CAFB focused on both educating growers and their workers in the field.

With respect to growers, CAFB focused not only on direct contact, but also worked with agricultural organizations and the California Department of Food and Agriculture to place articles in respected farmer publications and obtain direct, word of mouth referrals from trusted sources that “opened doors” to further conversations. Once contact was established, CAFB staff walked the fields with the growers to point out the product that food banks considered desirable. This demonstrated the range and quantity of useable product, and created the understanding that CAFB could be a long-term recipient of significant quantities of product. Resistance related to worker training was more substantial, and was alleviated by CAFB staff directly working with crew leaders in the field, clearly identifying product that was not acceptable for retailers, but was acceptable for food banks. For example, pin rot in broccoli is not acceptable, but broken florets or areas with small blemishes or sunburn is useable.

The first breakthrough came from Ocean Mist, a large grower of broccoli and cauliflower, who identified the small but significant changes that were crucial to making the program work. These changes centered upon retraining workers sorting and packing product in the field. Because workers had been rigorously trained to select only top-quality product, retraining pickers to select two grades and packers to sort the grades into the appropriate containers in the field was the first challenge to overcome. Secondly was rearranging already crowded mobile packing sheds and the accompanying flatbed to ensure that food bank produce and supermarket grade were clearly distinguishable from one another. As the mobile packing stations move down the field, this ensured that more product could be accommodated on the line at a time, so that harvesting operations would not be slowed down by picking additional product.

Training was concentrated on the workers packing trays, as opposed to the cutters. It was fairly easy to retrain cutters to be more liberal with what they harvested, but it is the packers who sort market grade from food bank grade from unusable product. While growers declined to share costs involved in retraining, we were assured these were minimal and a one-time investment. During the first few weeks of delivery, CAFB gleaned feedback on quality from food banks, communicated it to the growers, who made adjustments, and there have been no subsequent issues in this regard.

One of the important lessons for both CAFB and growers was how receptive workers were to the concept for two reasons. First, workers take a great deal of pride in what they produce, and were enthusiastic to see their products available to a wider market. Second, and more importantly, when workers (many of whom are food bank clients) came to understand that these products would help feed needy families at no cost to them, they were highly motivated. They clearly took great pride in the knowledge that their efforts would be going to help their own communities.

Understandably it was important to demonstrate value for the grower in changing field operations. In order to communicate the benefits of the program, CAFB developed a 'fact sheet' (attachment B – Farm to Family). While growers do not profit from the produce that is harvested for food banks, the few cents per pound that food banks provide does cover the costs of harvesting. In this way, growers benefit from the satisfaction of seeing more of their crop consumed, but more substantially by both increasing cash flow and being able to offer workers more hours in the field. For example, one grower has noted that participating with the CAFB program and offering more work hours allows workers to earn more by moving from an hourly to a piece rate, which is a win-win-win for growers, food banks, and workers. On the food bank side, nutrient-dense crops are often more expensive to grow and harvest, and CAFB worked with food banks to understand the need to commit more resources to covering grower costs in order to obtain the product.

Now that new harvesting methods were adopted, packing and processing issues were identified, in order to keep required value-added processing fees affordable for food banks. These included packing containers and cooling costs. This issue was resolved by approaching IFCO Systems Worldwide, which agreed to donate use of reusable plastic containers (RPCs) to the program. This eliminated the cost of cartons but also eliminated the need for hydro cooling or ice packing in favor of more affordable air cooling, as RPC's allow adequate air circulation.

Once these problems were solved and CAFB could demonstrate success to other growers, another joined the program. The other largest company to participate is Pacific International Marketing (PIM), and as a result, CAFB was able to deliver 3.78 million pounds of nutrient-dense row crops, (broccoli, cauliflower, and celery) to California food banks through the duration of the project. As the project will continue indefinitely, CAFB successfully created a permanent, year-round supply of these specialty crops for food banks, which will continue to yield millions more pounds for the program each year. Because this program moves to obtaining field-packed product where formerly Farm to Family obtained only shed-packed product, both of these growers were new to the program. With these first two growers on board with the program, CAFB hopes to add two more in the coming year, as more and more food banks indicate a demand for these products.

The table below displays the commodity breakdown in pounds as provided by Ocean Mist and PIM.

Vendor	Concurrent Picking Product
	BROCCOLI CAULIFLOWER CELERY

Pacific International Marketing	322,452	932,679	448,750
Ocean Mist Farms	1,373,323	702,880	
Sub-Totals	1,695,775	1,635,559	448,750
Grand Total	3,780,084		

As the project will continue indefinitely, CAFB successfully created a permanent, year-round supply of these specialty crops for food banks, which will continue to yield millions more pounds for the program each year.

The second method of obtaining row crops for the project was to secure walk-by fields, which are labor-intensive to start-up due to the number of contacts needed to educate growers to the opportunity to recoup harvesting costs when they might otherwise till under an entire field. Perhaps not surprisingly, farmers proved very reluctant to discuss or even acknowledge that entire fields are not harvested, making these conversations highly sensitive. Again, demonstrating the potential of new markets for these crops was labor intensive and involved many conversations with farmers.

We achieved success with accessing walk by fields in two specific ways. The first came in early January 2011 from Orange County Produce during a low market for cauliflower. Rather than disk the fields of cauliflower, they agreed to harvest them, and charged only for post-growing costs (from harvesting to cooling). CAFB food banks obtained four full truckloads of beautiful cauliflower for just pennies on the dollar. Second, both Ocean Mist and PIM used the concurrent picking infrastructure during low markets to automatically harvest entire fields of broccoli, cauliflower and celery for food banks because they knew the food banks could use the product. At least 15% of total concurrently harvested product came from walk by fields.

The second objective was to increase CAFB’s administrative capacity and staffing to ensure that it could adequately process the increased volume of row crops. In order to ensure the program’s success, it was necessary to ensure that CAFB could efficiently move the increased number of loads so that food banks received the product in a timely manner, growers’ costs are reimbursed in a timely manner, and to create capacity for continued growth in the program beyond the program period.

CAFB hired a new full-time Farm to Family Assistant in March 2010 who has been fully trained and has become an integral part of program operations. Initially it was anticipated that these duties might be fulfilled by a part-time person, but additional support from Kaiser Permanente allowed CAFB to hire a full-time staff member.

CAFB then upgraded its accounting software from Access and QuickBooks programs to NaVision, a program designed in conjunction with the national food bank organization, Feeding America, specifically for use by food banks. The conversion was completed in

the spring of 2011, and has allowed CAFB to negotiate the 27% increase (in overall distribution of specialty crops during the grant period) with minimal additional staff hours and a greater level of customer service. As a result, the anticipated outcomes have been achieved:

- Allow for program growth with minimal addition of staff hours,
- Assure data integrity for order and invoicing data,
- Achieve integration and automation of the data to eliminate duplicate data entry and reduce data entry error,
- Assure appropriate data backup,
- Provide accurate, timely information to growers, food solicitors and food banks, and
- Maintain high level of customer service to growers and food banks.

The upgrade in technical and personnel capacity was an important foundation for the program expansion and has highly impacted distributing additional specialty crops during the program period and going forward.

The third objective focused on increasing the capacity of food banks to handle and distribute row crops. This was accomplished through technical support and individual coaching by CAFB staff for California food banks. However, the market for specialty crops extends far beyond California. During the program period, CAFB worked closely with Feeding America to distribute specialty crops to food banks in neighboring states as well, and at time as far as the east coast, through the national Feeding America system.

In addition, CAFB attended and presented at several national events designed to increase fresh produce distribution through food banks, and continues to consult on an individual basis. Various tools have been developed to assist CAFB with information transfer and education: see Appendix C - Fact Sheet: Obtaining Row Crops for Food Banks, and Appendix D - Concurrent Picking Power Point Presentation. In particular, this has resulted in several strong partnerships with food banks in Las Vegas and Washington State, which now receive California specialty crops through CAFB on a regular basis. In effect, the program has supported not only increasing the consumption of specialty crops by low-income Californians, but also low-income people throughout the country.

In addition to California food banks, there were numerous partners involved in supporting the program. As mentioned, Feeding America has been an important partner, but the project also received particular attention from the State Board of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, which adopted the program and helped publicize it to other relevant organizations such as the Farm Bureau Federation and Western Growers, as well as to individual growers throughout the state.

Current / Future Benefits; Results and Lessons Learned

CAFB is pleased to be able to say that FSMIP support was critical to helping the Farm to Family Program successfully develop a regular supply of nutrient-dense specialty

crops that would otherwise have been left in the field. In particular, these crops spurred an increase of 27% in the amount of specialty crops being distributed by food banks, and this amount will continue to grow as more and more food banks in California begin handling more specialty crops.

It is also important to note the achievement of additional expected outcomes, including:

Expansion of market share – As anticipated, once food banks received their first loads of nutrient-dense row crops, demand for further supply was high. While the program goal was to provide over one million pounds, nearly four million pounds were actually delivered.

Model for other states – Also as anticipated, CAFB staff members are regularly invited to other food banks and national food bank events to present the concurrent picking program and help other food banks to implement the model in their localities.

Model for growers – CAFB has also been invited to discuss the model with other growers, most recently at the annual meeting for Western Growers, which is anticipated to generate even greater participation and supply.

More efficient CAFB operations – As mentioned above, the upgrade of the CAFB database and increased administrative staffing will ensure that CAFB has the capacity to continue to efficiently support a growing program for years to come, continuing to facilitate the market for specialty crops and bring those products to low-income people who will derive great benefits, including better long-term health.

Less waste – The program is helping to capture crops that are routinely wasted and bring them to needy people as well as improve the revenue stream to growers.

A healthier population - The more nutritious fresh produce that is distributed through this project, the more active cultivation of healthy diets will occur. Long term success will be measurable through lower rates of childhood obesity, diabetes, and a myriad of other conditions associated with a poor diet.

Overall, this program is considered a win-win-win:

- For growers, who receive a value added processing fee for their crops, most of which would have gone unharvested,
- For food banks, who have a greater source of nutrient-dense fresh produce, and
- For food bank clients, who now have more fresh produce in their diet.

It is also anticipated that as food banks continue to expose low-income consumers to specialty crops they will continue to use their food budget to purchase more of these products.

As with any project, there were important lessons learned:

1. Working with growers to obtain row crops for food banks is time consuming up front, but results are lasting.
2. Growers do not wish to acknowledge that whole fields are not harvested, and this subject must be approached with them very sensitively.
3. Growers of row crops have a considerable investment in training their crews to select only top-grade produce, and can be resistant to retraining to simultaneously harvesting culls.

With respect to the database upgrade, CAFB perhaps naively anticipated that we would have unique requirements for our systems. Instead, we learned that there were other well-developed COTS (Customizable Off-the-Shelf) database packages already available, and thus we did not have a unique circumstance that would add to the body of knowledge in this field. This did not diminish the impact of the project, but rather to utilize existing manuals rather than develop our own. Rather than publish a report or manual detailing software selection, we are prepared to refer others to those materials.

Contact Information

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Appendices:

Appendix A	Food Banks Distributing Farm to Family Produce
Appendix B	Farm to Family Fact Sheet for Growers
Appendix C	Fact Sheet: Obtaining Row Crops for Food Banks
Appendix D	Concurrent Picking Presentation

Appendix A**California Association of Food Banks****Food Banks Receiving Farm to Family Concurrently Picked Produce, 2009 – 2011**

Alameda County Community Food Bank	Oakland, CA
Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency	Sonora, CA
California Emergency Food Link	Sacramento, CA
Feeding America San Diego	San Diego, CA
FIND Food Bank Inc.	Cathedral City, CA
Food Bank for Monterey County	Salinas, CA
Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano	Concord, CA
Food Bank of Yolo County	Woodland, CA
Food for People, Inc.	Eureka, CA
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank	Los Angeles, CA
Napa Valley Food Bank	Napa, CA
Redwood Empire Food Bank	Santa Rosa, CA
San Diego Food Bank	San Diego, CA
San Francisco Food Bank	San Francisco, CA
Second Harvest Food Bank of San Joaquin/Stanislaus Counties	Manteca, CA
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara & San Mateo	San Jose, CA
Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz
Westside Food Bank	Santa Monica, CA

Good for families, good for farmers

For the last ten years, growers and shippers across California have generously provided fresh produce to food banks and people in need throughout the state and beyond through California Association of Food Banks' Farm to Family program. Along the way, many have found that participation in the program not only helps to feed hungry people, but also *positively impacts their bottom line*.



How it works

There are two ways to participate in the Farm to Family program. Many growers and shippers simply donate surplus product by calling or e-mailing CAFB. Once accepted, CAFB provides transportation that is assured to be reliable and on-time. Others find that outright donation is not possible, and in those instances CAFB may be able to provide funding to cover value-added processing costs such as harvesting and packaging, which is typically negotiated as a price per pound of product.

Here are some of the benefits that farmers have found

◆ Cash flow

While participating with Farm to Family does not necessarily generate a profit, CAFB is committed to ensuring rapid payment for any expenses associated with its donations. Many program participants have cited this as having a positive impact on working capital.

◆ Economies of scale

One large grower has made Farm to Family an integral part of his business model by increasing his block size. The ability to recoup costs for a portion of the additional product, particularly culls, reduces the overall cost per pound for production. Even if a grower does not plant bigger blocks, recouping costs for culls can be a new or increased source of income for these products.

◆ Flexibility of harvest time.

Growers and shippers who work with Farm to Family on a consistent basis receive orders a week ahead of shipment date. This additional time allows for growers to add flexibility to their harvesting schedule to maximize crew efficiency.

◆ Happier workers

For some growers that participate with Farm to Family, harvesting culls as well as #1's and/or planting bigger blocks results in more employment opportunities for workers. For example, some growers of row crops do a second or concurrent pick of culls that would have been left in the field, producing more hours of work for employees. Others have found that planting larger blocks means that pickers have a longer day, moving them from an hourly rate to a piece rate and thereby producing more income for workers.



◆ Quick disposal of surplus product can equal fewer costs

CAFB is noted for rapid response to available product. Once a donated load is accepted, CAFB will provide reliable, on-time pick up from a professional carrier. This can reduce costs, for example by eliminating dumping fees or allowing coolers to be emptied and turned off, saving energy costs. Some program participants have found that when market prices fluctuate unfavorably, moving excess inventory through Farm to Family can help maintain pricing.

◆ Tax deductions.

Donations to the Farm to Family program may be tax deductible. Interested growers and shippers should consult their tax advisor.

◆ Feed your community first

Donations to Farm to Family are first offered to the food bank serving the local community, so that growers can be assured that their gifts are providing for the needs of their workers, friends, and neighbors. Product in excess of what the local community can accommodate is then made available to other food banks statewide.

◆ Recognition

Sadly, growers often receive national media attention only when a negative event occurs. CAFB is committed to helping the general public develop a better understanding of the role generous growers play in feeding people in need in our country. In the last year, Farm to Family has been featured in media outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *California Country*, and *CBS Sunday Morning*.

About California Food Banks

California's efficient food bank network distributes over **200 million pounds** of food each year to people in need. Statewide, 44 food banks provide about **5,000 non-profit agencies** with food. These agencies in turn distribute food directly to over 2 million hungry families and individuals. More than **25,000 volunteers** support the food bank network.

The mission of California Association of Food Banks is to provide a unified voice among food banks to maximize their ability to build a well nourished California.



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The California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) represents 44 community food banks working to build a well-nourished California.

Background

California Association of Food Banks operates the Farm to Family program, which works with growers and packers to obtain fresh produce for distribution by food banks to obtain shed-packed cull products. These products, which do not meet supermarket grade specifications due to weight, shape, or slight blemishes, are nonetheless perfectly edible and highly desirable for food banks and food bank clients, many of whom have extremely limited access to fresh produce.



While the program has been extremely successful, distributing over 100 million pounds of fruits and vegetables in 2010, some row crops were not routinely included in the program because they are culled and packed in the field, rather than in a shed or packing house. These include products such as broccoli, cauliflower, and celery.

Most often, only the top grade row crops are harvested and the remainders are left in the field to be tilled under. Sometimes, entire fields may go unharvested, when market conditions do not allow the farmer to recoup costs. In 2009-2011, CAFB conducted a highly successful pilot project to obtain nutrient-dense row crops in significant supply for food banks for the first time, with support from the USDA's Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program. The following is a summary of learnings from the project for food banks who wish to work with growers to obtain nutrient-dense row crops.

Working with Farmers

Working with farmers can be a time-consuming process with potentially big benefits. Food banks must be prepared to devote staff time and resources to developing their contacts and relationships over time and exercise patience and understanding of the difficult business of farming.

- ◆ Cultivating relationships is important, and should begin during the off-season. Farmers are much too busy during the growing season to learn about food banks.
- ◆ Often, it may take many contacts, conversations, or meetings to obtain a commitment. Do not be discouraged. Many well-meaning farmers are simply that busy running their farms and your request is not a top priority for them. Be patient and persistent.
- ◆ Visit the farm and learn something about how the crop you are seeking is produced. How and when is it planted and harvested? What are the primary considerations for the farmer? How does it need to be handled after harvest, for example, does it need to be cooled immediately? Demonstrate to the farmer that you are seeking to be a partner, not simply asking for a donation.
- ◆ Keep your approach grounded in the farming business. Too often, food banks are unsuccessful in obtaining donations because they deliver a standard pitch that focuses exclusively on hunger and the need in their community. While farmers want to address these issues, and it is fine to mention them, in general they will respond better to a pitch that focuses on their business and gets to the point.



Obtaining Row Crops for Food Banks

- ◆ Look for opportunities to publicize your program through local Farm Bureaus and other farming organizations. The more a farmer hears about you from trusted sources, the more likely s/he is to participate.
- ◆ Seek to solve farming problems. These may include things like overstock at the end of the season when the farmer may be able to save energy costs by emptying a cooler, dumping fees for product with no market, and providing farm workers with more work and thus more hours.
- ◆ Keep your word. Nothing will sour a deal more quickly than lack of reliability. If you've promised your truck will pick up at a certain time, ensure that it's there. If you've agreed to reimburse some costs, do it promptly.
- ◆ Approach the subject of unharvested fields gently. Farmers do not like to acknowledge that they may till whole fields under.
- ◆ Watch markets closely. When wholesale prices drop is the perfect time to let a farmer know that you can provide a market for unsalable crops.

State funds for this project were matched with federal funds under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program of the Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

About California Food Banks

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The mission of California Association of Food Banks is to provide a unified voice among food banks to maximize their ability to build a well-nourished California.



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Food Sourcing and Operations

INSIGHT2011
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Concurrent Picking



In Partnership with

California

ASSOCIATION OF

Food
Banks



Farm to Family Challenge



Weekly access to
nutrient dense row
crops at an
affordable cost.



Could you buy this at your local supermarket?



Or this?

FEEDING
AMERICA



Or this?

FEEDING
AMERICA



NO!



Why?

Because it doesn't meet market grade and won't be harvested. It will be disked under.



Concurrent Picking



Field Packing Primer:



Workers select market grade produce in the field, cut it and put on conveyor belt to mobile packing shed pulled by a tractor.



Concurrent Picking



Concurrent Picking



Unmarketable but perfectly usable produce is left behind to be plowed under.



Concurrent Picking



We have persuaded Ocean Mist and Pacific International Marketing in Salinas to harvest this valuable produce at the same time they harvest market grade – thus the term concurrent picking.



Concurrent Picking



The produce itself is donated. We pay the shipper for:



Harvesting costs



Packaging costs



Cooling costs



Storage and loading costs



Concurrent Picking



BUT, packaging costs run at least \$1 a box, or about 10 cents a pound



SO, we convinced IFCO Packaging Systems to DONATE the rental fees for the use of their RPC's



Concurrent Picking



Now we can all eat our broccoli

