

INVESTING IN A FOOD SECURE MICHIGAN: THE MICHIGAN AGRICULTURAL SURPLUS SYSTEM (MASS)

Presented by:

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HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES MEETING
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WHO IS THE FOOD BANK COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN?

The Food Bank Council of Michigan's (FBCM) mission is to create a food secure state through advocacy, resource management, and collaboration among stakeholders and Michigan's unified food bank network.

- Founded in 1984 by Michigan's food banks.
- Statewide association representing **7 Feeding America affiliated food banks.**
- **Serves all 83 counties in partnership with over 2,500 local agencies.**
- Advocates for public policy, provides thought leadership for innovation and strategic initiatives, and coordinates statewide food acquisition and distribution.
- **Network distributed 196 million pounds of food (164 million meals) in 2024.**





WHAT IS A FOOD BANK?

A food bank is a non-profit that safely stores millions of pounds of food that is delivered to communities and local food programs, like a food pantry.

Food bank warehouses are well-equipped for supporting:

- Farm and food producers and vendors, as well as donors, providing semi-trucks full of purchased and donated food items via loading docks.
- Large, walk-in cold and freezer rooms in which fresh, frozen, and refrigerated foods can be safely stored.
- Expansive racks to store large quantities of shelf-stable foods.
- Volunteers that help to sort and pack food for distribution.
- Partner agencies' ability to pick up food from the food bank directly, or in many cases, arrange for food to be delivered to their location.
- Adherence to strict food safety standards.
- Food being inventoried, organized, and ready to deploy in case of an emergency or natural disaster.



WHAT IS A FOOD PANTRY/AGENCY?

A food pantry is a local site or organization where an individual or family can receive food.

While some food pantries operate independently and outside of the food bank network, many food pantries are a member agency of, and obtains food from, their regional food bank.

Food pantries can be located at many different types of sites and organizations such as schools, clinics, libraries, and much more.

Both food pantries and food banks share the same commitment to the communities that they serve: to provide nutritious food to those in need.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE OF FOOD INSECURITY

Many people across the state struggle to meet their basic needs which increases their risk of food insecurity. Every person deserves access to fresh, nutritious food to thrive.

- In 2023, 47 million people, including 14 million children, experienced food insecurity in the U.S.
- **In Michigan, 1.4 million residents, 1 in 7 people, including 1 in 6 children, may not know where their next meal is coming from.**
- FBCM is working to develop a Michigan-specific Hunger Study, funded by a legislative appropriation, to better understand food insecurity and guide strategic, sustainable solutions statewide.



ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

When it comes to food **insecurity** and access **gaps**, no one program or entity can solve this, we must have **collaboration** and **innovation**, and we know this firsthand.

The programs we have championed inside of the FBCM have never been in a silo; the work has never been just ours. It is **all of us**, all industries working **together**.

Cross-sector collaboration, involving strong public and private partnerships, is critical and necessary to achieve our goal of creating a food secure Michigan.

The Michigan Agricultural Surplus System (MASS) is an example of what happens when food banks, farmers and government come together. Managed by the FBCM, MASS exemplifies the power of effective collaboration.

MICHIGAN AGRICULTURAL SURPLUS SYSTEM (MASS)

The Michigan Agricultural Surplus System (MASS) was established in 1990 to **connect farmers and food producers with the state's food bank network**, helping to distribute surplus and cosmetically imperfect but nutritious food to families in need.

Managed by FBCM, **MASS enables food banks to purchase fresh, locally grown products**, including produce, dairy, and protein directly from Michigan farms, processors, and distributors.

MASS strengthens the agricultural economy, reduces food waste, and improves access to nutritious food in all 83 counties.



MICHIGAN AGRICULTURAL SURPLUS SYSTEM (MASS)

The program creates a "win-win-win" scenario: supporting Michigan farmers by providing a market for their surplus and cosmetically imperfect products, supplying food banks with consistent sources of produce, dairy, and protein, and increasing access to nutritious food for those in need.

In FY24, Michigan food bank network purchased nearly **28 million pounds** of produce, dairy, meat and eggs from Michigan farmers and provided over **23 million meals** to Michigan families.

And the program is **continuing to grow** piloting expanded distribution channels in Michigan, including school meal programs.

Due to its success in Michigan, **the program's framework has been adopted in more than 40 states.** When supply exceeds in-state demand, FBCM works with Feeding America to connect Michigan farmers with food banks across the country, expanding markets and nourishing families nationwide



FY 2024 MASS IMPACT:



**55 FARMS,
PROCESSORS
& CO-OPS**



**76 DIFFERENT
FOOD ITEMS
PURCHASED**



7 FOOD BANKS



**27.9 MILLION
POUNDS
DISTRIBUTED**



83 COUNTIES



**23.2 MILLION
MEALS
PROVIDED**

Lake Superior

Sault Ste Marie

Lake Huron

FY24 MASS FARM VENDORS & PROCESSORS

Feeding America West Michigan

Food Bank of Eastern Michigan

South Michigan Food Bank

Food Gatherers

Greater Lansing Food Bank

Gleaners Community Food Bank & Forgotten Harvest

● Farm

▲ Processor

◆ Distributor

▲ Freight Carrier

Milwaukee

Samia

Detroit

Chicago

MASS Objectives

- **Strengthen relationships** with Michigan farmers and producers.
- **Expand the variety** of fresh, locally sourced foods available to food banks.
- **Source food year-round**, especially during Michigan's peak growing season.
- Distribute Michigan-grown fresh food statewide to **all 83 counties**.
- **Support innovation** in food banking, through initiatives such as MASS Rx.



AMPLIFYING THE MASS FOOTPRINT: EXPANDING INNOVATION & PARTNERSHIPS

MASS has been foundational to building the Michigan food bank network's capacity to safely and effectively distribute Michigan grown fresh food across the state.

FBCM is unique in this ability as a non-profit, and our depth of infrastructure, thought leadership, and skills has proven to be critical to the advancement of other key initiatives such as Food as Medicine.



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Food and Other Resources (F.O.R.) Helpline

Through a partnership with MDHHS, FBCM is proud to operate a statewide food assistance helpline, known as The Food and Other Resources (F.O.R.) Helpline.

Through the F.O.R. Helpline, FBCM is able to offer assistance in over 250 languages to Michigan residents in all 83 counties that may need help with applying for the Food Assistance Program, accessing local food programs, or referrals to other resources.

Our statewide helpline has become a critical resource for those that experience a range of barriers in access to food – seniors, individuals with disabilities, families with children, and those seeking assistance in a variety of languages.

Our centralized, statewide helpline is evolving to support innovation and future initiatives in workflows and programming between FBCM and the food banks, as well as with external partners.



**For help finding a food pantry,
assistance in applying for SNAP benefits
or referrals to other resources, call**

1-888-544-8773



Operated by the Food Bank Council of Michigan
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QUESTIONS?



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