



Second Harvest

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explained the benefits of participating in the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program his business has experienced, "Second Harvest Food Bank is able and willing to work with the seasonal and weather challenges associated with farming. Plus, knowing that the food is staying in our local communities, reducing time in transit, and helping our neighbors are added bonuses of being involved in LFPA." He added, "By marketing our produce through LFPA, we can significantly reduce waste on our farm."

According to the USDA, over one-third of all available food in the United States goes uneaten through loss or waste. The Feeding America network of food banks, including Feeding Pennsylvania and Second Harvest Food, rescues 4 billion pounds of wholesome, safe food annually.

President and Owner of Flint Hill Farm, Kathy Fields, explained, "The supply chain is fragile, and this program creates strong links between local farm producers, state and county program coordinators, and neighborhood food pantries. It supports local farmers and producers while ensuring our neighbors have enough food on the table." She continued to highlight the importance of receiving continued legislative support of these agricultural programs, "It is my hope that our government officials recognize this and that they would actively educate others and support policies that further this mission."

The panel's moderator, Megan McBride, Director of Buy Fresh Buy Local—Greater Lehigh Valley, echoed this sentiment: "These programs have provided significant opportunities for farmers to increase their capacity while simultaneously expanding access to fresh, locally grown food for those in need. Buy Fresh Buy Local Greater Lehigh Valley is committed to doing everything we can to ensure the continued funding of these impactful programs."

Advocacy to address the impacts of hunger is more important than ever while reauthorization of the Farm Bill remains in limbo. Representative Susan Wild (D-PA-7) shared her experience as a strong proponent of anti-hunger legislation, "Long before I thought about running for Congress, I served on the board of Second Harvest Food Bank. I first ran for Congress in part because I knew our community needed a representative who would be an advocate for a future in which no child- no person- goes hungry in the wealthiest country in the world. The historic reductions in child poverty and food insecurity that we saw when we expanded the Child Tax Credit- and the subsequent rises in these metrics after Congress failed to renew it- are a stark reminder that these are our policy choices. Together let us keep working toward a better future for our farmers, our families and our children alike."

Following the event, Smith-Brubaker commented, "We believe attendees left feeling connected with peers, informed about potential opportunities, and inspired to create new distribution channels and partnerships to strengthen local and regional food systems."

Farmers and producers interested in learning more about the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS), Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) Program, and other agricultural opportunities are encouraged to contact Tom Mainzer, Director of Agricultural Partnerships at Feeding Pennsylvania, at tmainzer@feedingpa.org.