

STATE POLICY OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN FOOD SECURITY BY REDUCING FOOD WASTE

MISSISSIPPI
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE

Food security—the condition in which all people at all times have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for a healthy and active life¹—is necessary to safeguard and strengthen the health, productivity, and stability of our communities.

In order to achieve food security in Mississippi, we must address serious economic, social, and physical challenges. This resource focuses on state policy opportunities to promote food security and eradicate hunger by reducing food waste.



Mississippi's Food Insecurity Crisis (FY 2016)²

600,840 or **1/5** 

Mississippians were food insecure.

176,580 or **1/4** 

children in Mississippi were food insecure.



In 2015, food insecurity cost Mississippi between **\$1.08–2.22B** in avoidable health care expenditures alone.³

A WASTED OPPORTUNITY TO FIGHT FOOD INSECURITY

Each year, Americans waste....⁴

40%

(or **133B lbs**) of all food produced in the U.S.

\$161B

of uneaten food at retailers, restaurants, & homes



Just a **15%** reduction in U.S. food waste could reduce the number of food insecure Americans by half.

STATE POLICY OPTIONS FOR FOOD WASTE PREVENTION & RECOVERY

Standardized Food Date Labeling

Confusing date labeling practices on food products cause 90 percent of Americans to throw out still-fresh food, and lead to an estimated 20 percent of wasted safe and edible food.⁵ In the absence of federal regulations, Mississippi has the authority to standardize food date labeling. Currently, its only date labeling requirements pertain to shellfish and pertain to food quality, not food safety.⁶

Opportunity: codify a date labeling system standardizing language for food safety (“USE By”) and food quality (“BEST If Used By”) for ready-to-eat perishable foods. Food products should only bear one label, and the quality label should be optional. This approach is endorsed by the Grocery Manufacturers Association and the Food Marketing Institute—the two largest trade associations for consumer products and retailers manufacturing.⁷

Food Donation Tax Credits

Surplus food is often wasted because of the costs associated with donation, including preparation, storage, and transportation. Federal food donation tax deductions generally favor large businesses over low profit-margin companies.⁸ Eleven states now offer tax credits to make food donations more cost-effective and economically beneficial for companies of all sizes, including farms.⁹

Opportunities:

- Offer a dedicated state-level tax incentive for food donations, targeting donors who do not receive much under the federal deductions, such as farmers and small retailers.
- Offer an additional tax incentive to cover transportation costs associated with food donation.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource was created by the Mississippi Center for Justice with support from MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, and last updated 12/18. The Mississippi Center for Justice advances racial and economic justice through systemic change. For more information about this resource or policy opportunities to advance food security, contact Madeline Morcelle at mmorcelle@mscenterforjustice.org. For more information about the Mississippi Center for Justice, visit www.mscenterforjustice.org.

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