



May 18, 2022

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To our valued agency partners,

We are brought together by a noble mission: To create healthier, hunger-free communities. The past few years reminded us that our neighbors are resilient, rising up in challenging times to care for their families. So too have each of you responded time and again to community needs amid new challenges.

Across the nation, this is a difficult time for America's emergency food system. Rising costs for housing, fuel, child care, and food are squeezing family budgets and driving increased demand for services. Supports for families like stimulus payments, expanded unemployment benefits, and the expanded Child Tax Credit have expired, and families are feeling the pinch. We see the impact across the network and at your doorsteps.

Supply chain issues are affecting foodbanks and food pantries and impacting how we obtain food. The past two years have provided hunger relief systems with unprecedented access to food and resources. As those programs expired, we've experienced returns to pre-pandemic levels, along with substantial reductions in available product. We do not have the variety that we're used to having, and we don't know when that will change.

The core of our work is surplus food, both in donations and from federal programs. We stretch every available dollar and then purchase those items we cannot source anywhere else:

- **Government Food** sources are down by 38% so far in this fiscal year with big reductions since January. This represents a reduction of nearly 19 million pounds—a significant loss to our network. That's why we are continuing to advocate at the federal, state, and local level for additional support to our mission.
- **Donated Food** has declined in recent months, particularly since January of this year. We are leaving no stone unturned as we seek new sources for food that we can pass along to our network at no cost. We also continue our support for partners to acquire food directly from retail sources in their local communities.
- **Purchased Food** makes up the difference: We are purchasing a larger share of our food mix and those items cost more than before. In this fiscal year, we have purchased 15 percent more produce; the cost per pound is up approximately 19 percent. We are working tirelessly to seeking new sourcing and packaging—whatever it takes to offer wholesome food at the lowest possible prices.





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Mid-Ohio Food Collective works hard to reduce costs for our partners so that you can feed your neighbors when they need it. This is a partnership. Here's how we're offering support during these trying times:

- **Making produce available to partners at no cost, even when we buy it**

It's core to MOFC's mission to provide families with access to fresh, nutritious foods. That's why we make it a priority to distribute fresh food throughout our partner network. Our dollars also go further when we buy fresh produce because it costs roughly half as much as shelf-stable goods: Currently produce costs about 40 cents per pound versus approximately 90 cents per pound for shelf-stable foods. 54 percent of all the food we distributed in 2021 was fresh, including more than 32 million pounds of produce.

MOFC is still committed to providing fresh produce to our partners at no cost, even when we buy it. In recent months we've had to buy more than ever, and at higher prices. We are absorbing those costs to ensure our mutual customers have fresh, wholesome food on their dinner plates.

- **Pausing shared maintenance fees for government and donated product**

Feeding America allows food banks to charge a Shared Maintenance Fee of up to \$0.19 per pound to cover storage and distribution expenses. In January 2021, we paused those fees on all government and donated product to reduce barriers to distributing food throughout our network. MOFC will continue the pause on these costs so you can focus your limited resources on food and other operational costs.

- **Continuing to advocate for additional resources**

During the pandemic, targeted programs and resources allowed MOFC to reduce costs on agency partners. This is what allowed us to issue retroactive credits in some months, and to entirely waive costs on PUR products for part of 2021. We continue to advocate at all levels of government for additional resources to purchase more food and extend support to our partners.

As ever, each of your organizations are part of the solution to ending hunger in our communities. If you're a church, ask your congregation to assist with food donations to support their neighbors. Ask your local community for support. And if you're willing to help us tell the story of how these systemic issues are impacting the families that you serve, we would love to advocate alongside you.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to feeding your neighbors despite these trying times. We also invite you to speak with your agency relations team if you want to talk through anything in more detail.

Thank you,

Matt Habash
President & CEO
Mid-Ohio Food Collective



foodbank | farm | pharmacy | kitchen | market

