



News Release

For immediate release

Government of Canada implements surplus food rescue program to help alleviate food concerns of vulnerable Canadians

June 15, 2020 Ottawa, Ontario - Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, today launched the \$50 million Surplus Food Rescue Program. The program aims to move surplus food commodities such as potatoes and other possible horticulture, fish and seafood, and meat through the food system as efficiently as possible to help vulnerable Canadians.

COVID-19 caused significant disruptions to areas of Canada's food system, as it forced the near closure of the restaurant and hospitality industry in Canada and the United States. Some producers across Canada are left with surpluses of quality food, while increased demand from grocery stores alone is not expected to clear the inventory before it spoils. At the same time, the pandemic has increased the demand for food from food banks and other food security organizations in communities across Canada.

The Surplus Food Rescue Program has two core objectives:

- Provide assistance to organizations serving vulnerable populations to acquire and process surplus commodities and food that would otherwise be lost or destroyed and distribute them to populations in need.
- Connect surplus food commodities to vulnerable populations to avoid food waste.

The program aims to ensure the surplus food reaches vulnerable populations in Canada through the purchase, processing, transportation and redistribution of surplus food. The program is designed to rescue surplus food that may be fresh, frozen inventory or in need of further processing due to its highly perishable nature.

Eligible applicants include for-profit and not-for-profit organizations (industry groups, processors, distributors, food serving agencies, regional and municipal governments and agencies (can include schools or school boards) that can demonstrate an ability to handle the full logistical requirements for acquiring, processing, transporting and ensuring shelf-life stability of surplus commodities and delivery to organizations serving vulnerable populations.

Information on the application process is available through the [Surplus Food Rescue Program](#).



Quotes

“The Government of Canada is working around the clock to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 on farmers, agri-food businesses and all Canadians. The pandemic has caused significant fluctuations in food demand and supply, resulting in surplus food across our country. We are working hard to help manage and redirect this surplus food to those who need it during this difficult time.”

- *The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food*

“The women and men in our fish and seafood sector have worked incredibly hard throughout this pandemic to keep Canadians fed. Nobody wants to see food go to waste, and thanks to this new program, we’re helping the industry redistribute surplus products to vulnerable, local communities where it can make a real difference in someone’s life. This is a win-win situation.”

- *The Honourable Bernadette Jordan, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard*

“A safe and reliable food supply in remote and Northern communities is critical, not only in a pandemic, but every day. The current crisis has placed increased demand on food suppliers and food banks all across the country. Combined with our increased support through Nutrition North Canada, the Surplus Food Rescue Program will help ensure communities in the North continue to have access to healthy and affordable food during this challenging time.”

- *The Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs*

Quick facts

- Applications are being accepted until July 15 beginning immediately.
- In ongoing consultations with industry and government stakeholders, the program is designed to address urgent, high volume, highly perishable surplus products falling under horticulture, meat and fish and seafood. Priority consideration for surplus commodities that have immediate risk of loss will be determined first.
- This announcement builds on the measures we have introduced to keep Canada’s agri-workforce strong, including:
 - Over \$77 million in funding for the Emergency Processing Fund (EPF), whose objectives include helping companies implement changes to safeguard the health and safety of workers and their families.
 - \$100 million for food banks and local food organizations to help Canadians experiencing food insecurity.
 - \$25 million through Nutrition North to ensure food security for Canada’s most vulnerable
 - Travel exemptions for all temporary foreign workers, including seasonal agricultural workers and fish/seafood workers.
 - \$50 million in funding for the Mandatory Isolation Support Program for Temporary Foreign Workers to help the farming, fish harvesting, and food production and processing sectors cover the incremental costs associated with the mandatory 14-day isolation period imposed under the Quarantine Act on temporary foreign workers upon entering Canada.



Associated links

- [Surplus Food Rescue Program](#)
- [Local Food Infrastructure Fund](#)
- [Fisheries and Ocean Canada](#)
- [Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada](#)
- [Food Policy for Canada](#)
- [Supporting Canada's farmers, food businesses, and food supply](#)

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BACKGROUND

The Surplus Food Rescue Program is a \$50 million initiative which will help to support Canada's food system, food processors, and food producers, and distributors to help ensure food availability for all Canadians.

Funding will be used to help manage and redirect existing surpluses to organizations addressing food insecurity and ensure that these surplus products are not wasted.

COVID-19 and Surplus Food

The impacts of COVID-19 have resulted in the disruptions to areas of Canada's food system, as it forced the near closure of the restaurant and hospitality industry in Canada and the United States. Some producers across Canada are left with surpluses of quality food, while increased demand from grocery stores alone is not expected to clear the inventory before it spoils.

Another impact of the pandemic is an increase in demand for food from food banks and other food security organizations in communities across Canada.

The Surplus Food Rescue Program will help to address these imbalances by providing new funding for the repurposing and redistribution of surplus food to vulnerable Canadians.

The Program

In ongoing consultations with industry and government stakeholders, the program is designed to address urgent, high volume, highly perishable surplus products falling under horticulture, meat and fish and seafood.

The program will ensure that the food needs of vulnerable populations in Canada will be addressed, positive relationships with community food providers will be maintained, and efforts to reduce food waste will be supported.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will administer an inclusive and challenge-based approach for non-profit and for-profit organizations in order to ensure coordination and efficiency within the complex supply chain partnerships from wholesalers, distributors, processors to food service agencies.

Priority consideration for surplus commodities that have immediate risk of loss will be determined first. For example, potatoes and some aquaculture products need immediate processing or will be lost or destroyed.

The Surplus Food Rescue Program will award contributions to organizations (industry groups, processors, distributors, food serving agencies, regional and municipal governments and agencies (can include schools or school boards) who:

- can acquire and move the most surplus product (must identify amount to be moved)
- use the most cost-effective approach (for acquiring food (acquiring product at or below the cost of production or through donations as applicable)



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- use the most cost-effective approach for processing (only process if cannot be distributed otherwise) and at minimal cost
- are most efficient, from wholesale purchase to food serving agencies (drawing down on surplus quickly)
- can make sure food reaches the most vulnerable and remote communities, especially northern communities (target of up to 10 per cent for all food under the program)
- have partnerships already established along the supply chain including food serving agencies

Applicants must demonstrate an ability to handle the full logistical requirements for acquiring, processing, transporting and ensuring shelf-life stability of surplus commodities with a target to make available of up to 10 per cent of surplus food under the program to the northern communities.

- Surplus commodities may be fresh or need to be processed and packaged into shelf-stable products for storage or distribution to vulnerable populations
- All surplus commodities are to be donated once processed (surplus food is not to be resold)
- Priority consideration will be given to surplus commodities that have immediate risk of loss due to high perishability

The Food Policy for Canada

The Surplus Food Rescue Program is an emergency measure that the government has created in response to the COVID-19 crisis, which also meets the objectives identified in the Food Policy for Canada.

The Food Policy for Canada seeks to create a healthier and more sustainable food system in Canada; one that builds on the Government's ambitious agenda to support the growth of Canada's farmers and food businesses.

Responsible for one in eight jobs across the country, Canada's food sector is a powerhouse of the economy, particularly in rural communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a lot of pressure on our food system. Now more than ever many vulnerable Canadians are not able to reliably access sufficient amounts of food. In addition, before the pandemic, it was estimated that more than 11 million metric tons of food are wasted every year – worth nearly \$50 billion. The pressures of the pandemic have added to this.