

September 19, 2024

To the Senators and Members representing Florida in Congress:

Across the United States, about 40 percent of all food goes unsold or uneaten.¹ As a result, farmers, manufacturers, households, and businesses across the state of Florida are spending over \$40.6 billion every year to grow, process, transport, and dispose of food that is never consumed.² Despite this surplus of food, 1 in 8 Floridians are experiencing food insecurity.³

One of the leading drivers of food waste is consumer confusion over the meaning of food date labels. Currently, there is no federal standard for date labels on food products. This has led to a patchwork of inconsistent state regulations and myriad date labeling terms, such as “sell by,” “best by,” and “expires on.” With almost 60 different date labeling terms found in the grocery store to interpret, many consumers incorrectly assume that date labels indicate the date after which food is no longer safe to eat.⁴ In reality, date labels are often a manufacturer’s estimate of a product’s optimal quality.⁵ **Research shows confusion over date labels accounts for 8.2 percent of food waste, costing the state of Florida around \$2.64 billion per year.**⁶

With rising food prices, and tight budgets, standardizing date labels will save consumers money and limit the amount of food unnecessarily thrown away. The undersigned partners respectfully request that you support the simplification of the voluntary date-labeling standard for any food products in the United States that have date labels and provide accompanying consumer education to better understand the new standard.

We support clarifying date-labeling, as proposed in the bipartisan Food Date Labeling Act of 2023 (H.R. 3159; S. 1484). **This commonsense, no cost legislation would:**

- Clarify that if a food business voluntarily chooses to include a date label on their food product, they must use one of two date labels. They may select either a quality label indicating the date after which a food product’s quality may deteriorate using the phrase “BEST If Used By” or a discard label indicating the date after which a food product should be discarded using the phrase “USE By.”
- Require the USDA and the FDA to work together to provide education on the meaning of the standardized date labels.
- Make the sale and donation of food past the quality date universally permissible, provided it meets safety specifications.

¹ *Food Waste Facts*, REFED, <https://refed.org/food-waste/the-problem> (last visited August 8, 2024).

² *Insights Engine Food Waste Monitor - Florida*, REFED, https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break_by=destination&indicator=us-dollars-surplus&state=FL&view=detail&year=2022 (last visited August 12, 2024).

³ *What Hunger Looks Like in Florida*, Feeding America, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/florida> (last visited August 8, 2024).

⁴ Roni Neff et al., Misunderstood food date labels and reported food discards: A survey of U.S. consumer attitudes and behaviors, 86 WASTE MANAGEMENT 123–132 (March 2019) (available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0956053X19300194>).

⁵ Roni Neff et al., Misunderstood food date labels and reported food discards: A survey of U.S. consumer attitudes and behaviors, 86 WASTE MANAGEMENT 123–132 (March 2019) (available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0956053X19300194>).

⁶ Note these statistics are regularly updated and the information cited here was captured on August 12, 2024. *Insights Engine Food Waste Monitor - Florida*, REFED, https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break_by=destination&indicator=us-dollars-surplus&state=FL&view=detail&year=2022 (last visited August 12, 2024).

Standardizing and clarifying date labels is one of the most practical, no cost ways to reduce food waste nationally, save households money, and ensure more food reaches the people who need it.

We the undersigned organizations and businesses strongly support streamlining food date labels at the federal level to clear up consumer confusion and reduce wasted food. **We respectfully request you demonstrate your support by co-sponsoring the Food Date Labeling Act.**

360 Eats
Accountable Impact
AllWays a Farm
Ascension
Bread for the World
Broward Clean Air / Compost For Life Miami
Broward Climate Alliance
Careit
Center for Biological Diversity
Climate Reality Project North Broward and Palm Beach County, FL Chapter
Community Harvest SRQ
COTC Events
Donated With Love
Dream in Green
Earth Ethics, Inc.
Edible South Florida
Epic Cure Inc.
Farmer's Choice Inc
Florida Festivals and Events Association
Florida Impact
Florida Keys Children's Shelter
Food Recovery Network
Food Rescue US - Southwest Florida
Food Rescue US - South Florida
FoodRecovery.org
Fort Lauderdale Rescue Tabernacle Inc, dba Faith Farm Ministries
Global Cooking School
Good Neighbors Inc
Green Girl Events
Joanna Berens Hospitality Inc.
Just Food Network
Laica Worms & Vermicast LLC
Make a Statement Events
Move For Hunger
New Town Success Zone Inc.
Overalls
Peelon
Pollock Hospitality, Inc.

Renuable LLC
Rock The Ocean Foundation
Rust Nutrition Communications Services
Southeastern Food Bank
Success Gardening LLC
Sunshine Organics & Compost
Sustainable Events Network Florida & Caribbean
Tamiami Food Rescue Inc.
The Farmlink Project
Too Good To Go
UNF Center for Nutrition and Food Security
United Against Poverty
Vacation Donations