

January 17, 2024

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable GT Thompson
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Scott:

Approximately 40 percent of all food in the United States goes unsold or uneaten and 1 in 8 Americans experience food insecurity.¹ In the U.S., farmers, manufacturers, households, and businesses spend over \$444 billion every year to grow, process, transport and dispose of food that is never eaten.² The Zero Food Waste Coalition³ – led by Natural Resources Defense Council, World Wildlife Fund, the Harvard Food Law Policy Clinic, and ReFED – is striving to advance the U.S. goal to cut food waste in half by 2030 by uniting the government, nonprofits, and businesses to inform and influence food waste reduction policy at the local, state, and federal levels.

The undersigned respectfully request swift action be taken to reauthorize the 2024 Farm Bill early this year and that the following recommendations be included in the bill:

- Improve federal coordination through the creation of a Food Loss and Waste Reduction Office within the USDA;
- Fund planning and infrastructure to reduce food waste and enhance surplus food recovery;
- Support research in food waste prevention, upcycling, and recycling solutions; and
- Clarify and standardize the food date labeling system.

The coalition is requesting up to \$100 million in annual appropriations and \$20 million in mandatory funding for a total of up to \$120 million per year in funding for the Food Loss and

¹ ReFED, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://refed.org/food-waste/the-problem>; U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Food Security and Nutrition Assistance,” last updated October 18, 2022, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/food-security-and-nutrition-assistance/>.

² ReFED, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://refed.org/food-waste/the-problem>

³ <https://zerofoodwastecoalition.org/>

Waste Reduction Office within the USDA. This recommendation builds upon the success in the 2018 Farm Bill, which authorized the creation of the USDA Food Loss and Waste Reduction liaison position. An office of food loss and waste would improve government wide coordination of food waste activities, ensure better national outreach and education to reduce food waste in communities and schools, ensure better collaboration with USDA research agencies and the EPA to develop new strategies and maintain databases, and provide grants and cooperative agreements to support food waste education and recovery efforts across the United States.

We also request that \$50 million be authorized in annual appropriations for the Community Compost and Food Waste Reduction Cooperative Agreements program and we recommend expansion of the program to better support a broad range of food waste reduction policy implementation and infrastructure projects. In addition, we recommend a portion of that funding and new funding be directed to support infrastructure, staffing, and supply chain upgrades for businesses and nonprofits to prevent and recycle food waste and enhance surplus food recovery. The 2018 Farm Bill allocated funds to USDA for community composting and food waste reduction projects resulting in \$2 million being granted to 24 local governments in 2021 and \$900,000 in 2020. In 2022, with an influx of American Rescue Plan Act funding, USDA invested more than \$9.4 million in 45 cooperative agreements that support innovative, scalable waste management plans to reduce and divert food waste from landfills. The grant program has been a huge success.

In order to fund research in food waste prevention, upcycling, and recycling solutions, we request an additional \$50 million per year in mandatory funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and recommend a new priority for projects that target food waste reduction within the program. We also recommend the creation of a food waste reduction research priority within the Agriculture Food and Research Initiative, which would work to expand shelf life, upcycle, and recycle food products.

Finally, the coalition requests that Congress establish a dual date-labeling scheme that applies to any food products in the United States that have date labels. The dual date-labeling scheme should have one label to indicate food quality using the phrase “BEST If Used By” and a separate label to indicate food safety using the term “USE By.” The USDA’s Food Loss and Waste Reduction Office, in coordination with the Food and Drug Administration, would be required to provide education on the meaning of the standardized date labels. The current confusion with date labels accounts for 8 percent of consumer food waste, costing the country around \$30 billion per year.⁴ With no federal regulation currently in place, the standardization and clarification of date labels could be one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce national food waste and save households money.

We the undersigned organizations, businesses, and nonprofits strongly support the efforts of the Zero Food Waste Coalition in reducing our nation’s food waste. Additional background can be found here: zerofoodwastecoalition.org/farm-bill

⁴ ReFED, Insights Engine, accessed April 20, 2023, https://insights-engine.refed.org/food-waste-monitor?break_by=cause&indicator=us-dollarssurplus&view=detail&year=2021

Sincerely,

Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
New York, NY

Harvard Law School Food Law Policy Clinic
Cambridge, MA

ReFED
New York, NY

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
Washington, DC

A Circular Future
Chicago, IL

A Simple Gesture
Greensboro, NC

After the Harvest
Kansas City, MO

Agrofresh
Philadelphia, PA

Anytime Foods
Los Angeles, CA

Asheville Buncombe Food Policy Council
Asheville, NC

Biocycle
Emmaus, PA

Blanchet House of Hospitality
Portland, OR

Bread for the World
Washington, DC

Bounty & Soul
Black Mountain, NC

Buddy System MIA
Miami, FL

Careit
Chatanooga, TN

Center for Science in the Public Interest
Washington, DC

Clean Terra Projects, LLC
Seattle, WA

Compost Collective KC
Kansas City, MO

Compost Marketing Agency
Cleveland Heights, OH

Divert Inc.
Concord, MA

Don't Waste Food SC
Columbia, SC

Epi-Cure Inc.
St. Augustine, FL

Florida Food Recovery Coalition
Sarasota, FL

Florida Impact to End Hunger
Tallahassee, FL

Food and Farm Council of Riley County and the City of Manhattan
Manhattan, KS

Food Bank of East Alabama
Auburn, AL

Food Conservation Alliance
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Food Cycle KC
Shawnee, Kansas

Food for the Soul / Society of the Transfiguration
Cincinnati, OH

Food Forward
Los Angeles, CA

Food Link
Arlington, MA

FoodPLUS Detroit
Detroit, MI

Food Recovery Network
Washington, DC

Food Rescue US
Stamford, CT

Friendship Donations Network
Ithaca, NY

Green Minds Lake Forest/Lake Bluff
Lake Forest, IL

Global Cooking School
DeLand, FL

Go Green Barrington
Barrington, IL

Go Green Winnetka
Winnetka, IL

ICT Food Rescue
Wichita, KS

Illinois Environmental Council
Springfield, IL

Incite
San Francisco, CA

Industrious Labs
Cincinnati, OH

Island Harvest Food Bank
Melville, NY

Kipster
New York City, NY

La Soupe
Cincinnati, OH

Lafayette Community Garden
Lafayette, CA

Last Mile Food Rescue
Cincinnati, OH

Lovin Spoonfuls
Greater Boston, MA

Make Food Not Waste
Detroit, MI

MEANS Database
Washington, DC

Midwest Compost LLC
West Chicago, Illinois

Mill Industries
San Bruno, CA

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Washington, D.C.

Nebraska Recycling Council
Lincoln, Nebraska

Ohio State University
Columbus, OH

Palatine Cool Cities

Palatine, IL

Pete's Garden

Kansas City, MO

Project Green Fork

Memphis, TN

Queen Mother's Market Cooperative
Cincinnati, OH

Rescuing Leftover Cuisine
New York, NY

Rethink Food NYC, Inc.
New York, NY

Second Chance Foods
Brewster, NY

Seven Generations Ahead
Oak Park, IL

Share My Meals
Princeton, New Jersey

Solid Waste Environmental Excellence Performance Standard (SWEEP)
New York City, NY

StopWaste
Oakland, CA

The Farmlink Project
Los Angeles, CA

Too Good to Go
New York, NY

Upcycled Food Association
Denver, CO

US Composting Council
Raleigh, NC

U.S. PIRG

Denver, CO

Vivaria Ecologies
Pine Brook, NJ

Wanda
Washington, DC

Waste Less Solutions
Salt Lake City, UT

We Don't Waste
Denver, CO