

HOW GLEANING ORGANIZATIONS CONTRIBUTE TO FOOD WASTE REDUCTION & FOOD SECURITY

Session: A, Breakout Room #6

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Food waste in the United States is estimated between 30-40 percent of the food supply and accounts for a significant portion of food insecurity in this country. Gleaned produce offers an alternative to food waste and food insecurity. In addition, it promises improved health for people and the environment. The purpose of this study aims to inform community organizers and the general public on what the opportunities and challenges are in operating a gleaning organization in hopes that local gleaning organizations will gain more support. Gleaning discussed in this study refers to the process of collecting and redistributing leftover crops after they have been harvested. Through a four-month internship at a Seattle gleaning organization called, City Fruit, I participated in their summer operations as an in-person, case study observer. To supplement my research, I conducted a literature review and an online survey within the organization to understand these opportunities and challenges better. The findings show that gleaning has the potential to immediately serve and support many underserved communities with fresh, free produce and reduce food waste. However, the evidence for long term food security is insufficient. Ultimately, gleaning produce will not be sufficient to mitigate food waste and food security as a long-term, single-handed solution. A government shift in favor of food system reform rather than maximized profits is vital to sustain the environment, reduce food waste, and promote food security.