Rescue Food by the Numbers

At Leftovers, we understand that tracking significant quantitative measures enables us to set appropriate goals, accurately assess our impact, and collaboratively celebrate our successes. When gathering data for the Rescue Food program, we look at three broad areas of impact: food systems, environment, and community engagement.

Food Systems

The primary goal of the Rescue Food program is to reduce the amount of good food wasted. Leftovers tracks the total amount of food redirected (lbs) through our Rescue Food app. Volunteers are equipped with scales to record the weight of food donations on Rescue Food routes, while City Coordinators record the weight of large-scale donations broken down in our Calgary and Winnipeg warehouses. Based on the overall weight of food redirected, Leftovers calculates the economic value of donated food following Food Banks of Canada's standard valuation ($3.21/lb)(1). We then use the total calculated value to estimate the number of meals provided, based on Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap report methodology(2) for an average cost of $3.76 per meal(3).

Environment

Food waste left to decompose organically in landfills contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. Redirecting good food prevents those emissions from occurring, resulting in a measurable environmental impact. Leftovers estimates the total greenhouse gas emissions (measured in lbs CO2 equivalents) that would have occurred had the redirected food been sent to landfill using the US Environmental Protection Agency's Waste Reduction Model (WaRM) tool. This tool establishes conversion factors(4) to account for different municipalities' treatment of commercial food waste (e.g. composting or use of methane capture and flaring when landfilling), which Leftovers then applies on a per-city basis depending on which waste treatment methods are being used.

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1. Updated in 2022.
2. Map the Meal Gap 2021: Technical Appendix: $3.13 USD per meal. 2021 data is based on 2019 costs, so does not reflect the impact of pandemic-related supply-chain disruptions and increasing inflation.
3. Using the 2021 overall average USD to CAD conversion rate of 1.2022.
4. Documentation for Greenhouse Gas Emission and Energy Factors Used in the Waste Reduction Model (WaRM): Organic Materials Chapters: lbs food to lbs CO2 equivalent conversion factor of 0.56 for facilities using landfill gas (LFG) capture, 1.39 for facilities not using LFG capture.

Community Engagement

The Rescue Food program would not exist without our partners: service agencies, food donors, and volunteers. Through the Rescue Food app, we can track the number of active volunteers (app users who have completed one or more routes), volunteer hours contributed, and number of routes in each municipality. We also track the number of regular and one-off food donors, active service agency partners, and new service agency applicants in each municipality.

Measuring Success

Leftovers is committed to keeping our quantitative measures as accurate as possible in order to continue to be accountable to our partners, our funders, and the communities we serve. Changes to municipal waste treatment methods, food valuations, and the average cost of meals lead us to revise our calculation methods on an annual basis. For more information about how Leftovers calculates our quantitative impact, please visit our website or email us at help@rescuefood.ca.

Contact
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