Program Team: Food Waste

Discussion Area: Policy

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1. Recommendation

In the Bay Area 1 in 4 children live below the poverty line putting them like their peers at the risk of starvation yet farms alone are throwing out 20% of some fruits with consumers and stores throwing out even more produce. This wasted food not only hurts those below the poverty line but fuels climate change. It is because the San Jose Youth Commission wants to fight climate change and starvation that we ask the Honorable Mayor and City Council consider the following recommendation.

* 1. The City should create misfit markets.

1. Background

Environmental conservation has been a major topic of discussion for decades, yet food waste has continued to be omnipresent in homes, farms, and restaurants. After the 2008 recession the situation became dire as starvation became a threat to many children and seniors. Infact, today in the Santa Clara County a whopping 44% of children and 12% of seniors have been affected by hunger. Meanwhile, food waste has also fueled climate change more than every country except the U.S. and China, so it is imperative that we create misfit markets in order to protect those at risk of starvation and our youth from the effects of climate change.

1. Research

Hunger Background: After the Great Recession wages began to rise, but poverty rates and the cost of housing also rose according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In Santa Clara County counting the cost of housing shot up 20 percent and the poverty rate increased from 8.6% to 9.9%. Wages have increased by only 9.9%. These increased wages led to some people becoming ineligible for food stamps, raising the cost of living. The increased cost of living became a burden on families who on average have to bring in an annual income of over $114,000 to pay bills and provide food for their children. Because of these astronomical cost 1 in 4 children live below the poverty line. This increased poverty created low-income communities known as “food deserts.” In “food deserts” grocery stores are far too expensive for families, causing them to turn to cheaper food that has less nutritional value. These food deserts led to hunger affecting 44% of the children and 12% of the seniors in Santa Clara County. Simply put, hunger has become a greater problem and attempts to curtail hunger like raising wages haven’t worked well enough as evident by the graphic below.

Food Waste Background: In 2015 San Jose started a pilot food waste collection program with Garden City Sanitation a recycling corporation. The plan was to turn food waste into animal feed. In the pilot 3850 households were given the option to get rid of 20 gallons of food waste every collection day and 2800 households were allowed to get rid of 46 gallons of garbage and 18 gallons of food waste in a split cart. The mid pilot results showed:

* 20-gallon cart
  + 35% participation
  + 5 lbs per week per home
* 64-gallon split cart
  + 65% participation
  + 11 lbs per week per home
* 110 total opt outs.

This program enjoyed some success and will be rolled out in the future but there are 2 key problems. The program doesn’t limit farmer’s or retailer’s waste of healthy produce. In addition, the program has limited participation from consumers. This limited participation means that enormous amounts of food are being wasted. Thus, the programs to curtail food waste have only seen modest success. Meanwhile, in 2014 the European Union recognized food waste as a threat. Soon the French retailer Intermarche launched their misfit market which sells produce that farmers usually throw away for not conforming to stereotypes. The retailer sold the discarded produce at a 30% discount and sold soup and shakes made with the ugly fruit to convince the public the food was healthy. After an advertising campaign the program was extremely successful. Overall store traffic rose by 24% in the pilot stores. In fact, the program was so successful that misfit markets were put in all 1800 of Intermarche’s stores by October. In addition, the programs have raised awareness about emissions caused by food waste multiple other corporations in France, New York, and Britain have all launched similar initiatives.

1. Advantages

Misfit Markets have many benefits which include:

* Farmers stop throwing away healthy produce lowering food waste.
* The program provides affordable produce
  + Affordable produce effectively solves“food deserts.”
  + The cost of living decreases
    - People have more money due to less expenses
      * More people lifted out of poverty.
* The program creates new jobs
  + These jobs and the selling of produce create a recovery rate of over 100%.
  + More people are employed due to the creation of new jobs.
    - More jobs leads to more people lifted out of poverty.

1. Solvency

After seeing the effectiveness of these programs as commercial ventures in France, Britain, and other areas it is clear to me that we can and must implement Misfit Markets.

1. Potential Setbacks

The program would be costly during the first few months due to the hiring of workers, the acquiring of produce, and the construction of infrastructure. Delays may come up and the cost of the program could potentially exceed the budget, yet over time Misfit Markets will become a sustainable venture that like the programs in France, Britain, and New York has a recovery rate of over 100%.

1. Closing Statement

Right now programs to combat food waste have lacked consumer participation and the threat of starvation and climate change looms over the heads of everyone. Thus, I urge the Honorable Mayor and City Council consider my recommendation.

1. Sources

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IX. Collaborated With: