
Unsold Produce Collected to Fight Hunger in Los Angeles

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"In my culture, the way I was raised, I was always taught that throwing out good food is a sin," Luis Yepiz, Food Forward's Wholesale Recovery manager, told Efe.

Food Forward is "trying to do everything possible to ... reduce the (amount of discarded food) from retail companies that sell fruit and vegetables so that the people who need it can receive it," he said.

When food industry businessmen learned about Food Forward, a volunteer organization founded by photographer Rick Nahmias in 2009 with the aim of recovering fruits and vegetables for food banks, they began to call on the telephone to offer donations.

"There are products, for example like cabbage, that if they get a little yellow on the outside they can't be sold, and so (the businessmen) donate it to us," Yepiz said.

Meanwhile, the quality control manager for food distributor M&M, Antonio Oliva, said that at the company they are aware that there are many poor people who don't have enough food or, in many cases, lack fruit and vegetables.

"So, instead of throwing it out, we contact the companies that collect donations. We prefer to donate it like that instead of throwing it into the trash," Oliva said, noting that the food aid goes to the unemployed or low-income families.

A recent study by the Feeding America organization found that 48.9 million people out of the

U.S. population of 313 million do not enjoy food security.

In California, with 38 million residents, approximately 6.17 million do not have food security and in Los Angeles County, where 10 million people live, 1.6 million are in that category.

“Eighty percent of the people we help in Los Angeles and other nearby counties are Latinos,” said Yepiz, who is originally from the Mexican state of Sonora.
