WHAT MOTIVATES FARMERS TO SAY YES! TO GLEANING?

More Motivating  Motivating  Less Motivating

Social Impact  Environmental Impact  Economic Benefit

Social Impact of Gleaning

Personal Benefits (to farmer)
- 57% Feeding people
- 52% Food loss prevention
- 43% Making a difference
- 26% Connection with community

Societal Benefits
- 83% Feeding people
- 35% Increased farm awareness
- 26% Community building

Perceived Drawback to Farmer
- 26% Discomfort with strangers on farm

Perceived Drawback to Society
- 9% Reliance on donations year after year

Key Takeaway: Gleaning organizations should consider emphasizing community impact and hunger-reduction when recruiting prospective farmers.

Environmental Impact of Gleaning

Farm-scale Benefits
- 35% Food loss reduction
- 35% Improved plant health
- 17% Reduced emissions

Global Benefits
- 30% Food loss reduction
- 26% Reduced emissions
- 22% Localized food system

Perceived Drawback to Farm
- 48% Lost opportunity to improve soil fertility treatment

Perceived Drawback Globally
- 9% Lost opportunity to improve soil fertility treatment

Key Takeaway: Every farmer understands problems related to food loss differently, so gleaning organizations should approach food loss from several different angles when engaging with prospective farmers.

Most food goes into landfills. And when food and carbon-based things decompose in landfills, [they] produce methane instead of like CO2 because there’s no oxygen, and methane is so much worse [of a] greenhouse gas ... I think on the whole, most gleaning is net 1,000% for the environment.

— Farmer Interviewee

It’s a very simple way to give back to my community and to reduce food waste. If you put effort into growing something, you might as well at least have somebody eat it, even if [you’re] not able to sell it.

— Farmer Interviewee

Key Takeaway:

- Personal Benefits (to farmer)
  - 57% Feeding people
  - 52% Food loss prevention
  - 43% Making a difference
  - 26% Connection with community

- Societal Benefits
  - 83% Feeding people
  - 35% Increased farm awareness
  - 26% Community building

- Perceived Drawback to Farmer
  - 26% Discomfort with strangers on farm

- Perceived Drawback to Society
  - 9% Reliance on donations year after year

Social Impact of Gleaning

- 57% Feeding people
- 52% Food loss prevention
- 43% Making a difference
- 26% Connection with community

Environmental Impact of Gleaning

- 35% Food loss reduction
- 35% Improved plant health
- 17% Reduced emissions

- 30% Food loss reduction
- 26% Reduced emissions
- 22% Localized food system

Perceived Drawback to Farm
- 48% Lost opportunity to improve soil fertility treatment

Perceived Drawback Globally
- 9% Lost opportunity to improve soil fertility treatment

Key Takeaway: Every farmer understands problems related to food loss differently, so gleaning organizations should approach food loss from several different angles when engaging with prospective farmers.

Most food goes into landfills. And when food and carbon-based things decompose in landfills, [they] produce methane instead of like CO2 because there’s no oxygen, and methane is so much worse [of a] greenhouse gas ... I think on the whole, most gleaning is net 1,000% for the environment.

— Farmer Interviewee

It’s a very simple way to give back to my community and to reduce food waste. If you put effort into growing something, you might as well at least have somebody eat it, even if [you’re] not able to sell it.

— Farmer Interviewee

Key Takeaway: Gleaning benefits me as an individual ... I got into farming because I love to feed people and make sure that people have healthy food to eat. So being able to get that food to underserved communities, as close to home as possible, is just very fulfilling to me and makes me sleep easier at night.

Farmer Interviewee

Gleaning benefits people who need high quality nutrition but can’t afford it. They have a better outcome in life, health wise and mentally, when they’re eating healthier food ... specifically food that’s gleaned, that’s vegetables, grains, things that combat heart disease, or combat obesity or diabetes.

Farmer Interviewee
In the past two years, pandemic grant funding allowed us to get paid for [donations] at wholesale price. That funding is out, and we looked for more funding. [Gleaning] was too engrained in my soul to stop bringing them lots of food, so we just kept on doing it. -- Farmer Interviewee

Study interviewees included 23 fruit/vegetable growers from rural, suburban or urban farms in Connecticut, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina who participate in gleaning.

Research findings suggest that farmers recognize social, environmental, and economic benefits of gleaning participation. Farmers in our study were most motivated to participate in gleaning due to social benefits, specifically hunger reduction. Economic benefits were not as incentivizing as expected, based upon findings from previous studies. Participants generally did not recognize the connection between gleaning and environmental benefits, such as emissions reductions. The findings suggest that gleaning organizations should place special emphasis on the hunger-reduction aspects of their work. There is also opportunity for gleaning organizations to inform prospective farmers of gleanings’ wide-ranging benefits, especially related to the environment.

Key takeaway: Gleaning organizations could talk with prospective farmers in a politically sensitive manner on the relationship between food loss and environmental problems affecting farmland.

**Economic Benefits of Gleaning**

**Effect on Farm Profitability**
- 57% No effect
- 22% Loss
- 22% Profit

**Use of Federal Tax Deductions**
- 39% Qualify, but don’t use tax deduction by choice
- 35% Would like to use tax deduction, but don’t qualify
- 26% Use tax deduction

**Other Important Economic Benefits**
- 52% Improved public relations
- 30% Decreased inputs
- 22% Increased customer support
- 17% Tax benefit
- 4% Improved Farm Safety

**Perceived Drawbacks**
- 74% Increased inputs
- 17% Negative customer opinion

In the past two years, pandemic grant funding allowed us to get paid for [donations] at wholesale price. That funding is out, and we looked for more funding. [Gleaning] was too engrained in my soul to stop bringing them lots of food, so we just kept on doing it. -- Farmer Interviewee

Most of what’s being gleaned is excess anyway. We really don’t have any market for it. So, to this point, gleaning has no negative impact on our profitability -- Farmer Interviewee

**Key takeaway:** Farmers in this study are more motivated by social and environmental factors to participate in gleaning than economic incentives, with social benefits being the strongest.

**Key takeaway:** Federal-level tax deduction did not seem to be a significant motivator for farmers to participate in gleaning.

**About this Research**

Study interviewees included 23 fruit/vegetable growers from rural, suburban or urban farms in Connecticut, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina who participate in gleaning.

Research findings suggest that farmers recognize social, environmental, and economic benefits of gleaning participation. Farmers in our study were most motivated to participate in gleaning due to social benefits, specifically hunger reduction. Economic benefits were not as incentivizing as expected, based upon findings from previous studies. Participants generally did not recognize the connection between gleaning and environmental benefits, such as emissions reductions. The findings suggest that gleaning organizations should place special emphasis on the hunger-reduction aspects of their work. There is also opportunity for gleaning organizations to inform prospective farmers of gleanings’ wide-ranging benefits, especially related to the environment.

Research authors:
- Samantha Schulteis (Yale), Norbert Wilson (Duke), Charlotte Clark (Duke)