

Gartner®



Social Impact of the Year

General Mills



MealConnect — Fighting Food Waste
and Hunger

MealConnect — Fighting Food Waste and Hunger



According to the national nonprofit ReFED, which is dedicated to ending food waste, 38% of the U.S. food supply (about 91 million tons) goes to waste. While a small portion of U.S. surplus food is diverted for donation to the needy, too much of the nation's food goes to landfill, becomes incinerated or is left in the fields unharvested. Feeding America, U.S.'s largest domestic hunger-relief organization, estimates about one in six people turned to charitable food assistance in 2022. Additionally, a recent survey found that 80% of Feeding America food banks reported either increased or steady demand for emergency food services in June 2023.

In partnership with Feeding America, consumer product giant General Mills has helped develop and scale MealConnect, the only food rescue technology available nationwide, providing any restaurant, caterer, local grocery chain, hotel, independent food distribution company, agriculture producers and others in the food ecosystem a no-cost platform to donate surplus meals. And General Mills' supply chain, with 41 owned plants around the world, plays a key role in the process.

In 2017, General Mills provided \$1 million in transformative funding to develop the MealConnect app, a free platform that facilitates the safe and quick donation of food from grocery stores, convenience stores and foodservice locations to nonprofit food pantries and meal programs across the U.S. As the platform grew, General Mills provided an additional \$400,000 to fund pilots with seven food banks so they could use the new technology, refine it, develop best practices and mentor other food banks. The grant also enabled the creation of a national app supported by a robust food sourcing and donation-management program. In 2020, General Mills invested \$2 million to help expand MealConnect's capabilities, including a mobile-friendly design and the ability to connect food banks with farmers to rescue fresh produce.

Benefits

- Since its inception in 2017, more than 49,000 food businesses have donated their surplus food through MealConnect, with more than 60 food transport companies adopting the platform and more than 10,700 nonprofits currently benefiting from the program's rescued food.
- To date, MealConnect has rescued more than 5 billion pounds of food, enabling more than 4 billion meals to go to people experiencing hunger.
- As a result of the billions of pounds of food recovered by MealConnect, about 5 million+ tons of emissions have been saved from being released had the food gone to landfill. That equals 1,268,481 passenger vehicles being driven for one year.
- MealConnect has recently developed new capabilities, expanding to include a new national produce marketplace-and-matching system. This system digitally connects the food bank network with growers allowing for produce sharing in a more targeted and efficient manner.



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