



New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse & Recycling Inc.

Spring 2016

Price Chopper Joins EPA Food Recovery Challenge

In January, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Judith A. Enck was joined by Mona Golub, VP of Public Relations and Consumer Services for Price Chopper and Market 32; Joseph Berman, Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility for Price Chopper and Market 32; and Mark Quandt, Executive Director of the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York to announce Price Chopper's participation in EPA's Food Recovery Challenge. The program promotes reducing food waste generation, increasing the donation of un-saleable but still edible food, and composting excess food in order to save money, feed hungry people and protect the environment.

"A staggering amount of edible food is wasted every day, winding up in landfills where it produces methane gas. This uneaten food accounts for almost 25 percent of U.S. methane emissions," said Judith A. Enck, EPA Regional Administrator. "The EPA commends Price Chopper for committing to feeding people and not landfills."

"U.S. families throw out over a third of the fruits and vegetables they purchase including, for instance, a third of the fresh tomatoes families buy each year at an estimated annual cost of \$2.3 billion. That's a lot of money to throw away," said Enck. "And that's only tomatoes."

Food accounts for the greatest percentage, 21 percent, of waste going to landfills in the United States. One way to reduce that volume of waste is by donating edible food that

would otherwise be thrown away. According to EPA, Americans generated more than 37 million tons of food waste in 2013. This translates into a loss of approximately \$125 billion annually. At the same time, 14.3 percent of households in the U.S. were food insecure in 2013, meaning they did not have access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

"We believe that it is our obligation as a food retailer with integrity, to ensure that the un-saleable fresh product we handle benefits our ecosystem in the best way possible," said Berman. "Feeding hungry people in the communities around our stores and composting to minimize both carbon emissions and excess landfilling, continue to be priorities for us."

He said Price Chopper has already taken steps to promote sustainability and enhance food recovery efforts within the company. In 2015, Price Chopper and Market 32 stepped up its Fresh Recovery efforts to steer more edible salvage to those who are struggling with food insecurity. The progressive, homegrown chain also composted nearly 600 tons of food waste across 36 stores and its main office facility. Price Chopper's sustainability programs and partnership with Feeding America align well with the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy to Feed Hungry People. After source reduction, this partnership emphasizes food donation and fresh recovery as a food waste management top priority. Additionally, Price Chopper maintains longstanding relationships with regional food banks,

including the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York.

"We are very pleased the EPA has made waste reduction and food recovery such high priorities, and that Price Chopper has joined the effort so enthusiastically," said Quandt. "We are already receiving large donations of good, edible food from Price Chopper that previously would have been landfilled, and we look forward to growing this program further to reduce waste and get more nutritious food to the hungry people who need it."

EPA's Food Recovery Challenge program is a national initiative in which any business or organization can participate. By joining, Price Chopper will receive technical assistance, as well as access to EPA waste tracking software. Price Chopper will develop new benchmarks to measure its food recovery and donation progress and will submit these goals to EPA in February. Additional progress reports will be provided to EPA by March 2017.

Excess food, leftovers and scraps that are not fit for consumption and donation can be composted into a nutrient-rich soil supplement. There is also a tremendous waste of energy and natural resources that goes to the growth, processing, transporting and marketing of food, all of which goes to waste when food is thrown away.

In 2014, 800 Food Recovery Challenge participants prevented and diverted nearly 606,000 tons of wasted food from entering landfills or incinerators.