**Food Donations in San Diego**

**Time:** 15 minutes with independent pre activity

**Supplies**: PowerPoint with video, pen and paper

**Background:**

The USDA defines food insecurity as the appearance of food access-problems, or when a person does not have reliable and consistent access to food. In San Diego County, 1 in 8 people are food insecure, and 1 in 6 children are food insecure. This is due to many intersecting issues, including socioeconomic status and location. It is important to understand that food insecurity can affect anyone at any time, and can vary from very low food security to marginal food security.

Because of San Diego’s high cost of living, the average cost of a meal in 2019 was $3.23, while the national average was $3.02. The average cost of a meal can vary across the county, widening the gap for people to achieve food security.

Currently, about 40% of the food prepared and purchased in the US goes to waste, most of which is avoidable. It is estimated that by diverting just 15% of that wasted food, food insecurity in the country would be reduced by more than half. In San Diego, many organizations are working to rescue edible food and distribute it to families and people in need. Federal nutrition programs do not reach everyone in need, and these local organizations can help fill the gap.

**Sources:**

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>

<https://feedingsandiego.org/about/hunger-research/map-the-meal-gap/>

<https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/understand-food-insecurity/>

<https://moveforhunger.org/food-waste>

<https://map.feedingamerica.org/>

<https://feedingsandiego.org/about/>

<https://sandiegofoodbank.org/about/our-impact/>

**Goal**: Students will think about the implications of food waste through the lens of social responsibility. Students will understand what food insecurity means and the state of food insecurity in different parts of California. They will also learn about organizations in San Diego working to provide food to those in need.

**Independent Activity (10 minutes):**

After looking up the definition of food insecurity, students will use the “Food Insecurity in the United States” interactive map from Feeding America (<https://map.feedingamerica.org/>) to research food insecurity in a county in California. Make sure at least one student looks at San Diego County. Ask students to write down the following:

* Food insecurity rate
* Average meal cost
* How do you think groups and organizations could lower the food insecurity rate in this area?

Have students share and compare their findings in class before presenting the PowerPoint.

**PowerPoint (15 minutes):**

Use the PowerPoint provided to inform students about the statistics in San Diego County, organizations that are working toward food security, and how they can help.

*Slide 1:* Now that you’ve seen what food insecurity looks like across California, let’s look closer at what’s happening in our own county.

*Slide 2:* Can someone remind us what food insecurity means? *Students may raise hand and be unmuted.* In San Diego County, about 1 in 8 people are food insecure, and 1 in 6 children are food insecure. That equates to around 400,000 individuals, about 160,000 of whom are children. Why do you think so many people are food insecure (financial hardship, disability, lack of access, no member of the household able to secure food)? How do you think being food insecure would affect other aspects of your life? *Students may type answers in the chat or be unmuted.* Many factors play into food insecurity, but let’s look at some local organizations that are helping the situation.

*Slide 3*: Has anyone volunteered with a food bank or pantry before? Feeding San Diego provides over 26 million meals every year to people in San Diego County. They also set up School Pantry programs at elementary schools and college campuses, mobile pantries to distribute food to more rural areas, and rescue usable food from corporations and retail companies.

*Slide 4:* Feeding San Diego rescues unsold food from companies like Ralphs, Target, and Food4Less. They also receive donations from the San Diego Zoo, and have a program to collect unsold food from county Starbucks locations at the end of the business day. Raise your hand if you have been to one of these locations recently. What do you think would happen to this food if Feeding San Diego weren’t picking it up? *Students may type answers in the chat or be unmuted.*

*Slide 5:* You can dedicate just a few hours to helping with this mission. Volunteer with Feeding San Diego by packing, boxing, sorting, or cleaning food before distribution. Currently, they are restricting who is able to volunteer, but you can support them in the meantime by following their pages and keeping an eye to see when volunteer programs open up again.

*Slide 6*: Another local organization, the Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank, partners with nonprofits with localized distribution programs, and has helped to feed 350,000 people every month across the county.

*Slide 7:* The San Diego Food Bank also runs a range of programs, from emergency food assistance and neighborhood distribution, to senior and youth food programs, as well as college hunger relief. They also rescue excess prepared food from food vendors and restaurants. Does it surprise you that food insecurity is experienced across all ages, even college students? *Students may type answers in the chat or be unmuted.*

*Slide 8:* The San Diego Food Bank utilizes volunteers to sort and label donations, bag food for distribution, and clean fresh produce. You can also host a food drive to collect donations for the Food Bank! They are actually in high need of volunteers currently for COVID relief efforts.

*Slide 9:*This video will shed more light on what food insecurity looks like in San Diego.

Discuss the following questions as a class:

1. How do you feel after watching that video?
2. Where does Feeding San Diego get most of the food it rescues?
3. How does Feeding San Diego help limit greenhouse gas emissions?
4. What kinds of programs does Feeding San Diego offer to schools and communities?
5. What are some daily challenges you think Feeding San Diego faces to accomplish its mission?
6. Did this video help you gain a better understanding of what food insecurity is and looks like? How can we inform others and motivate them to help?