

# KAUA'I FARM TO EMERGENCY FOOD & GLEANING ASSESSMENT

Mālama  
Kaua'i

## 2023 Results

### Needs Assessment Participants

2 food banks and 13 pantries/agencies participated in the needs assessment, with the agencies serving 5,000+ individuals per month, with 138 staff (94 FT and 44 PT) and 142 volunteers, through approximately 119 distribution events per month.



### Incorporating Local Produce is Desired, but Limited

All participating agencies said it was important for them to provide healthy, locally sourced foods to their participants and 85% stated they were purposefully and actively trying to incorporate more local food into their programs. Agencies reported an average of 18% of the food they're currently distributing is local.

### Client Choice is Limited

Client choice (where recipients choose their own foods) has proven to reduce food waste, cut costs, and increase participant dignity. Yet, only 33% of agencies provide partial choice of items by recipients, while 58% provided all bundled items, without any participant choice.



### Storage Space is a Considerable Barrier

46% of agencies stated they did not have enough storage space to meet their weekly needs. Specific needs to address this shortage include 7 reach-in, double door cold storage units; 3 of which were secured as a result of the survey and our referral to a funder for the pantries! Many agencies stated they don't have a dedicated space to store products for any length of time, or host a cold storage unit. Day-of or day-before donations through gleaning would be welcomed.

### Food Transportation is a Challenge

62% of agencies transport food using volunteer or staff personal vehicles, and 8% had no ability to pickup food and required it to be delivered. 77% had capacity to pick up gleaning donations.



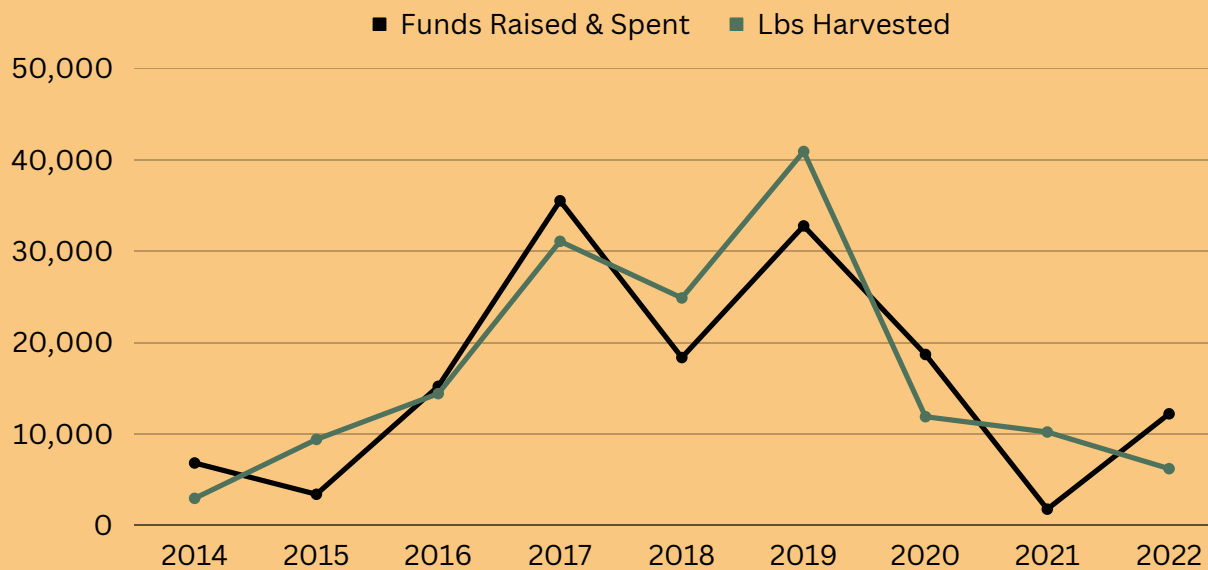
# Gleaning Programs & Community Orchards Offer Promise

3 agencies have room and desire to plant food trees, providing an immediate strategy for increasing long-term produce access for those pantries. 23% of agencies had volunteers able to care for and/or harvest off-site orchards, yet 77% of agencies had volunteers who could pickup donations.

Kaua'i's gleaning program, Village Harvest, has collected and distributed over 150,000 lbs of produce to programs in need. The pounds collected each year is in direct correlation to the available staffing funding, which has wavered greatly over the years, with limited opportunities for any multi-year commitments. To increase capacity and output, staff time for promotion / coordination, and the development of orchard resources would be useful to increasing community engagement and overall gleaned donations.

"Having full choice in our pantry is a dream we have, but don't have the infrastructure to acheive right now."

## 9 Years of Gleaning on Kaua'i



## 2030 Kaua'i Food Access Plan

Food banks, pantries and other food access agencies were heavily involved in the development of the 2030 Kaua'i Food Access Plan, which was just finalized in 2023. Out of the 11 objectives adopted into the plan, three relative objectives touch on this topic:

- Emergency food is available via delivery for those with transportation barriers
- A minimum of 75% of food pantries offer local produce monthly
- Invest in gleaning expansion, and incorporate produce into schools and keiki programs

The Food Pantry Working Group will be establishing specific targeted metrics, indicators, and strategies for moving these objectives forward. For more info or to participate in the Food Access Plan working groups, contact [Stormy@malamakauai.org](mailto:Stormy@malamakauai.org).

## Key Barriers to Accepting Donations

Even when agencies were given credits to choose their own produce donations, only 62% of agencies utilized all of their credits. Challenges included lack of staffing/volunteer capacity, aversion to technology and/or new processes, and limited cold storage space for advanced donation holding. We concluded that donations would be better utilized if they were dropped off to pantries just before distribution (i.e. gleaning) and shopped at the food bank as they typically do (farm to food bank model).

There is also limited production of local food available, with strong competition amongst food banks, food hubs, farmers markets, and other wholesale accounts - far exceeding the local food supply. Sometimes the quality of food donated or purchased at a discount is barely salvageable.

To address this, we cannot ignore the need to invest in local food producers to increase the production and availability of quality food for these programs.

## Next Steps & Advocacy Requests:

The following areas of focus may be key activities of the Food Pantry Working Group stemming out of the Kaua'i Food Access Plan:

- Rebrand program area to **Farm to Emergency Food**, as a more equitable and inclusive way to involve all partners in the emergency feeding space
- Explore further **Transportation Solutions** for food - for both delivery to participants with transportation barriers, and agencies for transporting food from donors and food banks to their locations
- **Secure Funding** for:
  - Farm to Emergency Food Staffing Support & Purchasing (the "Farm to Foodbank" bill may succeed at this)
  - Choice-Based Pantry Model Development & Pilot (pilot model underway utilizing volunteers, expansion for support to other pantries)
  - 3 Food Pantry Orchard Installations
  - 4 Cold Storage Units for Pantries/Agencies (3 secured since survey)
  - Village Harvest Gleaning Coordination
  - Agency Volunteer Recruitment & Coordination
- Obtain **Dedicated Land** for Gleaning Orchard & Nursery Development - by including distribution of trees to those who have land we can begin to reduce dependency on food banks and encourage further inter-community sharing
- Support **Food Production** through increasing land access and funding farmer expansions to be able to meet the demand for local food

"Volunteers  
are not  
always  
available."