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## **PMA InSight: When the Expo is over, what happens with all the produce?**

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Anyone who has been to Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit Conference & Expo can speak to the excitement, the buzzing energy and the fresh and delicious produce and floral on display. For two days the industry comes together to put their best on display and to walk aisle after aisle taking in the unmatched samples across all varieties of all commodities. Two full days of sampling the freshest fruits and vegetables and two full days of admiring floral displays. The question then becomes, what happens to the product after these two days?

Since 1983, due to the generosity of Fresh Summit exhibitors, produce has been donated to local food banks and communities in need — accounting for what is usually the largest fresh produce donation these communities will receive all year. PMA works with Second Harvest food banks in the host cities to organize the donation, and each year the industry can rest assured that the product will not go to waste and instead will go to individuals and families who are served by the food banks in their communities. Floral is also donated each year, with display arrangements, bouquets, and potted samples going to local nursing homes, hospitals, and care facilities. These donations are just one way the industry helps to grow a healthier world, starting in the very place that hosts the industry's biggest event each year.

The impact of these donations can be difficult to capture, but since 2005, PMA has facilitated post-Fresh Summit donations of over 4 million pounds of fresh produce. In some years, donations have been diverted to communities in exceptional need. For example, in 2017, after Fresh Summit in New Orleans, donations were also sent to Houston in the aftermath of hurricane Harvey and to Florida where communities were recovering from the impact of hurricane Irma.

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“One of the most important things a person can do to live a healthier life is to consume more fruits and vegetables,” said PMA Chief Marketing Officer Lauren M. Scott. “Providing such a generous amount of these nutrient-rich and delicious fruits and vegetables to those who may otherwise not be able to access our products is great way for us to engage with our consumers.”

With the incredible diversity of products at the Fresh Summit Expo, this may be the first-time people have been able to try many of these new commodities.

“The Second Harvest donation allows us to provide a connection with our consumers that speaks to our vision of growing a healthier world and also increases the likelihood these families will consider our products as they make future decisions for their families,” said Scott. “Our products are our best ambassadors. The taste, flavor and freshness — the products speak for themselves.”

The Fresh Summit Second Harvest donation is one of the many traditions associated with the yearly conference. As PMA celebrates its 70th event this year in Anaheim, CA, it’s appropriate to think about the other traditions important to the produce and floral industries.

“The food bank donation is a great example of the tradition of sustainability that’s present in the way we do business every day,” said PMA vice president, Ed Treacy. “We have been practicing sustainability long before the term became as omnipresent as it is today.” Sustainability was added to Treacy’s role at the beginning of 2019 and reflects his leadership in industry sustainability efforts, including the PMA sustainability committee and countless working groups that support improving efficiencies in supply chain operations.

“Our industry is built on the health and viability of our land, making us the original sustainability advocates,” said Treacy. “One of the most important things that we can do to expand our efforts in this area is to celebrate the ways our industry is already successfully making an impact. Addressing food waste after an event like Fresh Summit for over 35 years is just one of those stories and one that we couldn’t accomplish without the generosity and participation of our exhibitors.”

Celebrating the industry is another one of the great traditions at Fresh Summit and there is a lot to celebrate after 70 years of bringing the industry together.

*(Jamie Hillegas is the director of trade shows for the Produce Marketing Association)*

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