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By Michael Barker

Thursday 18th May 2017, 14:31 GMT

Surplus fruit and veg redistribution rises

Fresh produce industry praised by FareShare for tackling food waste and helping reduce hunger across the country



Suppliers are redistributing nearly 15 per cent more surplus in-date fresh produce to charities than a year ago, new figures show.

An analysis by food redistribution charity FareShare revealed that almost 1,900 tonnes of fresh fruit and vegetables was delivered to charities and community groups in the last year, compared to 1,641t a year earlier.

Companies such as AMT Fruit and G's Fresh have joined suppliers including Mack, Thanet Earth, Produce World, IPL, Albert Bartlett and Greenvale in sending fruit and veg to charity rather than letting it go to waste.

Over 6,723 frontline charities and community groups, feeding nearly half a million people every week, have benefitted from redistributed food. They include homeless shelters, women's refuges and breakfast clubs for disadvantaged children.

FareShare director of food Mark Varney said: "It's clear that the industry is realising that there's a business benefit to tackling food waste. A recent report showed that for every £1 invested in food waste reduction, an average of £14 is saved. Food redistribution is a big part of that, because staff can see a tangible benefit. No one wants to see good food thrown away, and by redistributing it you know that food is going to people who need it. It's not just consumers but employees who value companies who do the right thing with their surplus food."

"We're also seeing a step change in the way that supermarkets are talking about food waste, and that's being reflected right up the supply chain. In the past food waste has been a bit of a dirty word, something to be swept under the carpet. There's a lot more transparency now. Tesco in particular have been urging their suppliers to ensure that food should go to feed hungry people before it's used for animal feed, sent to

anaerobic digestion plants or to landfill – and this has led to real results."

"Charities and community groups feeding vulnerable people really value the surplus fruit and veg they receive. Not only is fruit and veg the cornerstone of a healthy diet, the ability to access a range of fresh and nutritious surplus food means charities can offer their beneficiaries more variety as well. UK charities who get good-quality surplus food from FareShare save an average of £7,600 a year - money that they can plough back into their existing services."

Naomi Pendleton, head of technical at AMT, added: "Everyone that works at AMT Fruit is passionate about fresh produce and good nutrition. It always pains us to waste perfectly useable food and our partnership with FareShare over the last 18 months has meant that we now have a fantastic opportunity to contribute to a very worthwhile cause."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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