



# Closing the Distribution Gap: Increasing Access To Dairy In New York State



## THE PROBLEM

Those seeking services through the emergency food network do not always have access to dairy. In New York, there are over 3,500 dairy farms supporting the food industry. In such a dairy-rich state, it's hard to believe there are problems with dairy access and distribution. However, over 2.6 million residents of New York State do not have sufficient access to dairy to maintain a balanced and wholesome diet. As a result, there is a gap of about 67 pounds per person of dairy that individuals in the emergency food network are not receiving to maintain a plentiful diet.

## PILOT PROGRAMS

1. Just-In-Time Delivery – In this model, Feeding NYS shows up within the hour to distribute dairy products right from a refrigerated truck onsite for food programs without the capacity to carry enough dairy products to feed their patrons.
2. Direct Delivery – In this model, Feeding NYS will provide dairy coolers to pantries that have the capacity to hold them. Dairy processors will then drop off fresh products directly to those pantries along their routes for distribution.
3. PACT (Pantry Annex Community Trailer) Units – In this model, Feeding NYS provides PACT units to regions with multiple food pantries. PACT units are exterior coolers that are pulled by a truck and plugged in onsite. After a PACT unit is supplied, food pantries can show up to the unit to pick up fresh dairy products for distribution.

## FEEDING NYS

This past year, Feeding NYS requested dairy distribution data from 2018, 2019, and 2020 from the ten member food banks across the state. I was tasked with analyzing the data from four of these food banks, three out of four of which were the largest food banks in New York State. For this project, I summed the pounds distributed by each food program within these four food banks over three fiscal years and calculated the percent change of dairy distributed by these programs between 2018 and 2020. As a result, Feeding NYS has the data to understand which food programs in their network have the capacity to increase dairy distribution.

## BARRIERS

In order to increase access to dairy in NYS and close that 67 pound per person gap, statewide barriers to dairy distribution must be addressed. Many food programs under Feeding NYS's ten regional food banks do not have the capacity to store dairy products. This is a result of outdated equipment, a lack of warehouse space, a lack of dairy coolers onsite, or the size of the food program. For example, if a food pantry operates out of the basement of a recreation center, they might only have the capacity to plug in one or two refrigerators to carry dairy products.



## IMPLICATIONS

The data collected will help break down distribution barriers and assist Feeding NYS in implementing a variety of initiatives designed to assist food banks in dairy dispersion and deliveries. With the dairy distribution data, Feeding NYS will attempt to increase access to dairy by working with their regional food banks and food programs to close that 67 pound per person gap. Feeding NYS hopes to identify the top 25 food programs that have the capacity to increase distribution. This work will move the needle 5-10% each year, closing that 67 pound per person gap, to reach a goal of providing everyone with enough dairy for a balanced and wholesome diet.