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SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK OF ORANGE COUNTY NAMED FIRST FOOD BANK IN WORLD TO ACHIEVE TRUE CERTIFICATION FOR ZERO WASTE FOR ITS SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

The milestone reflects Second Harvest's commitment to community health by ensuring as much food as possible reaches those in need and reducing negative environmental impacts

IRVINE, Calif. (AUGUST 22, 2023) — More than two years ago, Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County committed to reducing its environmental footprint and food waste – and now announces it is the first food bank in the world to be awarded TRUE (Total Resource Use and Efficiency) certification for zero waste by the world's leading sustainability and health certification organization, Green Business Certification Inc. This system helps facilities to measure, improve and recognize zero waste, which is a goal of reducing the amount of material that is thrown away and is instead reused or recycled in some way. Second Harvest is now proven to be using resources more efficiently by avoiding waste —and is the first food bank around the globe to achieve TRUE certification for its zero-waste leadership.

As an organization dedicated to the health and well-being of the community and environment, Second Harvest is intently focused on reducing food waste and diverting food from landfills. For example, its Grocery Rescue program has helped to divert food collected from local grocery stores into the hands of food-insecure individuals in the community. Second Harvest also grows produce at Harvest Solutions Farm, a farming partnership near its distribution center. This proximity allows Second Harvest to cut down carbon emissions by reducing transport miles to the distribution center.

“We're proud to be the first food bank in the world to achieve TRUE certification for zero waste, a direct result of the dedication and commitment of our team,” said Claudia Bonilla Keller, CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank. “Though it's been a long journey, this is just the beginning of an organizational shift we are making to continually improve our sustainability efforts and care for our community at all levels.”

To achieve TRUE certification, Second Harvest completed more than the 31 required credits during the application process. Second Harvest's efforts included:

- Creating an environmental purchasing program to focus on buying recycled and eco-friendly products such as paper and janitorial supplies, and training employees on how to find and buy sustainable goods
- Using reusable and multi-use items including hot beverage mugs and utensils in place of disposable items for operational purposes
- Providing partners and pantries with reusable plastic bins to replace cardboard bins that had previously been used to collect and store food
- Utilizing a nearby compost company for any food that is unable to be distributed, thereby reducing the food bank's carbon footprint
- Switching to 30 percent recycled paper and printing in black and white ink, rather than color
- Swapping from paper to electronic where possible – one switch made in the logistics department led to saving 20,000 sheets of paper

The result of these efforts was an increase in Second Harvest's waste diversion rate from 60 percent to 95.2 percent. Less than five percent of what Second Harvest's operations produce, in terms of unused materials, go to a landfill. Instead, these materials are reused, recycled, and reduced.

Beyond positively impacting its own business practices, TRUE certification allows Second Harvest to promote small businesses within the community by partnering with a local composting company, a local recycling company and more.

"Zero waste is a powerful part of any company's sustainability strategy," said Peter Templeton, President and CEO of U.S. Green Building Council and GCBI. "Through its TRUE certification, Second Harvest has enhanced its operations in a way that maximizes the lifecycle of every product to promote a full circular economy."

For more information about Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, please visit [feedoc.org](https://www.feedoc.org).

About Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County

At Second Harvest Food Bank, we envision an Orange County with food and nutritional security for all. In collaboration with our partners, we provide dignified, equitable and consistent access to nutritious food, creating a foundation for community health. Our partner network includes houses of worship, schools, after-school programs, colleges and universities, senior centers, shelters for the unhoused, soup kitchens and transitional housing facilities, with sites at over 300 locations throughout the county. In fiscal year 2021-2022, we distributed 32.4 million pounds of food to an average of 332,000 neighbors in need each month. Approximately 50,000-60,000 pounds of produce is harvested each week at the 40-acre Harvest Solutions Farm, which is located in Irvine and began in August 2021. Second Harvest is a member of the Feeding America network. For more information, visit [feedoc.org](https://www.feedoc.org).

About Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI)

GBCI is the world's leading sustainability and health certification and credentialing body. Established in 2008, GBCI exclusively administers project certifications and professional credentials and certificates within the framework of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating systems, as well as the PEER standard for power systems, the WELL Building Standard, the Sustainable SITES Initiative (SITES), EDGE (Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies), TRUE certification for zero waste and Investor Confidence Project (ICP) for energy efficiency retrofits. Visit [gbci.org](https://www.gbci.org).

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