



Your Turn
Nelle S. Miller
Guest columnist

Support our farmers to feed families

Across Florida and throughout the country, two realities are colliding in ways that demand urgent attention: families are struggling to put food on the table, and farmers are struggling to stay afloat.

Today, more than 3.2 million people in Florida – including 800,000 children and more than 680,000 seniors – experience food insecurity.

In the rural communities we support, the problem is even more severe. Limited access to transportation, fewer job opportunities and lower wages create significant barriers to consistent, nutritious food.

At the same time, farmers and ranchers are facing mounting pressures of their own.

The cost of doing business – from fertilizer and fuel to equipment and labor – has risen sharply in recent years, squeezing already thin margins.

Many producers are navigating volatile markets where contracts can disappear with little notice, leaving them with fresh, high-quality crops and no clear path to sell them.

This is where food bank partnerships become essential. Through programs like Farmers Feeding Florida and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) Farm to Food Bank projects, we help stabilize that uncertainty by creating a reliable outlet for surplus products.

This work ensures that the food our farmers have invested time, labor and resources in are not wasted, while also strengthening local agriculture and supporting the people behind it.

Just as importantly, it helps keep Florida-grown products on the tables of Floridians.

At the same time, it allows us to share fresh, nutritious food with our neighbors – delivered with dignity and care. Food banks like All Faiths Food Bank operate at the intersection of these challenges.

Through partnerships with farmers and participation in federal and state programs, we help ensure that healthy, locally grown food reaches families who need it and that farmers have a reliable outlet for their products.

When markets fail or surplus arises, these partnerships prevent food from going to waste and instead redirect it to neighbors facing hunger.

Programs supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including The Emergency Food Assistance Program, are central to this effort.

They create a vital link between farmers and food banks, purchasing U.S.-grown food and distributing it through local networks. This not only helps stabilize the agricultural economy, but also strengthens food security in communities across the country.

These investments are more than just good policy – they are a lifeline.

For farmers, they offer some predictability in an unpredictable market.

For food banks, they help keep shelves stocked with nutrient-rich options.

And for families, they mean access to the kind of food that supports health, dignity and opportunity.

But this system depends on strong, sustained support.

A bipartisan commitment to agriculture and nutrition programs is critical right now.

A strong farm bill and additional investments in food purchasing programs would allow us to scale what is already working – supporting farmers, reducing food waste and feeding families in need.

As we reflect on the importance of agriculture in our daily lives, we must also recognize the people behind it – farmers who work tirelessly to grow our food, and families who rely on that food to thrive.

At All Faiths, we see every day what's possible when we bridge the gap between farm and table.

With the right support, we can build a food system that works better for everyone – one where farmers are supported, food is not wasted and every family has access to the nourishment they need.

Nelle S. Miller is the CEO of All Faiths Food Bank, which serves Sarasota and DeSoto counties.