



## National 'Food Waste Challenge' focuses on food recycling

Effort to reduce 33 tons of annual food waste

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By [Lara Yamada](#)



**HONOLULU** — "We pick up donations every day, seven days a week," said Hiram Johnson, delivery driver for nonprofit organization Aloha Harvest. Mid-way through his day, Johnson is on his way to one of 40 deliveries of donated food.

"We have over 160 social services that we take care of," he said. Aloha Harvest just had its busiest month ever in its 13-year history, with seven drivers picking up and delivering 186,000 pounds of food in May.

"There is sushi from Sheraton, potatoes, snow crab and shrimp from Red Lobster, and pizza from Boston Pizza," said Johnson -- all of it part of a spread for Hawaii Cedar Church in Kalihi.



"A lot of people when they see Aloha Harvest truck totally they're just excited," said Johnson.

Drivers usually show up about once a week on Tuesdays, feeding an average

"We also have some pastries from Sheraton and Starbucks,"

"This helps a lot because we get limited income like social security," said retiree Veronica Rachez.

It is a role-model for a national program launched on Tuesday called the Food Waste Challenge.

"The USDA and EPA are aiming for 400 partner organizations by 2015 and 1,000 by 2020.

"Were targeting larger organizations to help them reduce their food waste," said Asia Yeary, the Environmental Protection Agency's Hawaii Sustainability Coordinator.

Americans throw away more than 40 percent of their food. In 2010 alone, 133 billion pounds of food from U.S. food stores, restaurants, and homes was wasted.

And that waste cost businesses and consumers more than \$165 billion. "We are working toward solutions, but I think it is really critical for everyone to be a part of this, organizations and individuals, because we are on an island and we really need to not waste," Yeary said.

Aloha Harvest is the only certified organization of its kind in Hawaii that picks up and delivers day-of perishable foods.

It runs solely on grants and donations.

Director Kuulei Williams said they're working with 267 establishments -- with no added cost or liability.