

# Safe Produce for Food Pantries: Regional Impact in Food Safety Education

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## Introduction

In 2017, the prevalence of food insecurity was found to be higher in the Midwest than in the Northeast or West regions (1).

One in three people who are food insecure may not qualify for federal food assistance (2).

Community donation gardens support local food pantries that aid in combating food insecurity issues by donating fresh produce (3).

Attention must be paid to food safety issues when growing and donating fresh produce because raw produce can carry bacteria or viruses (4,5).

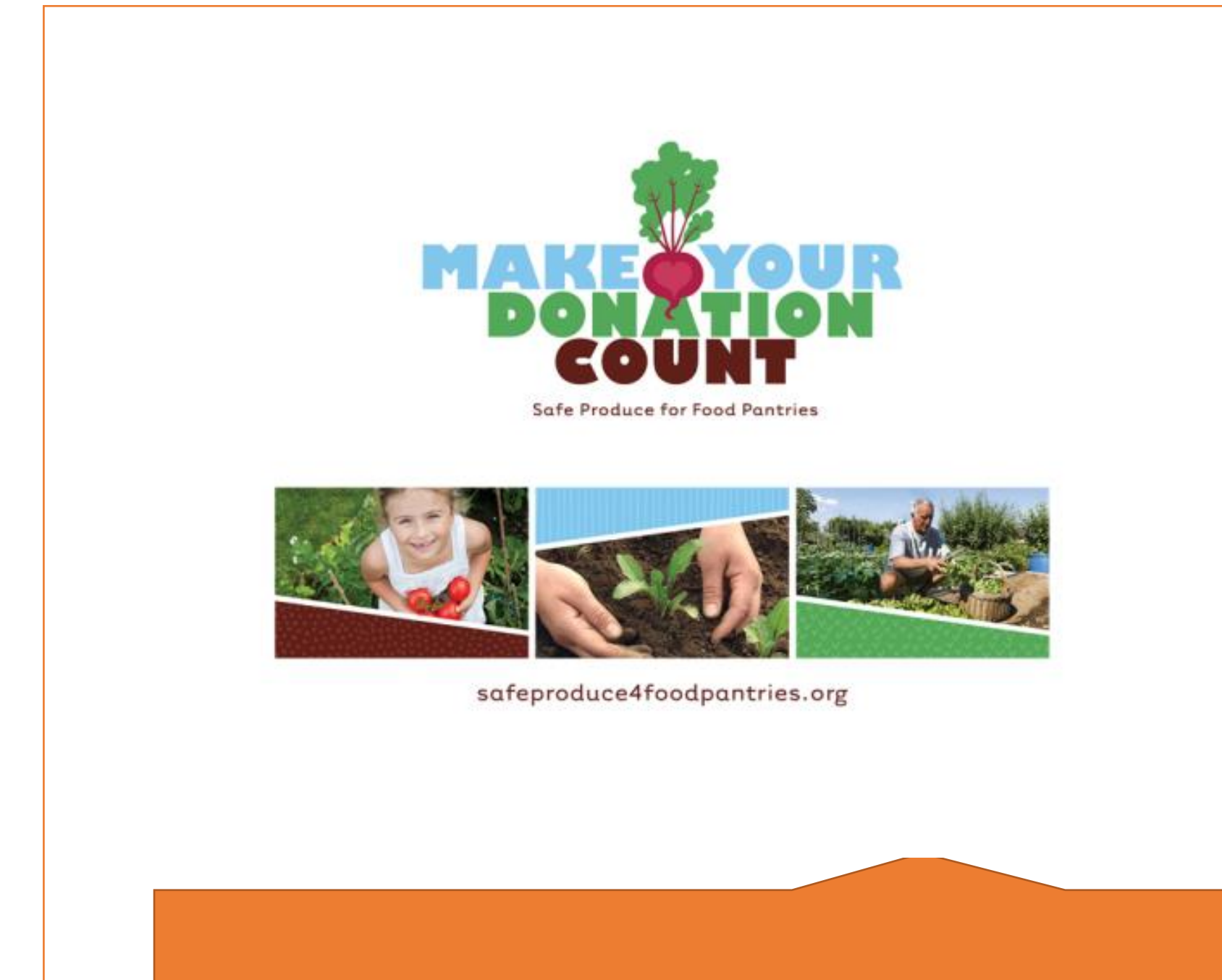
Gardner education is needed to ensure the safe distribution of produce to food pantries, which are frequently utilized by vulnerable populations such as the elderly and young children (6).

## Methods



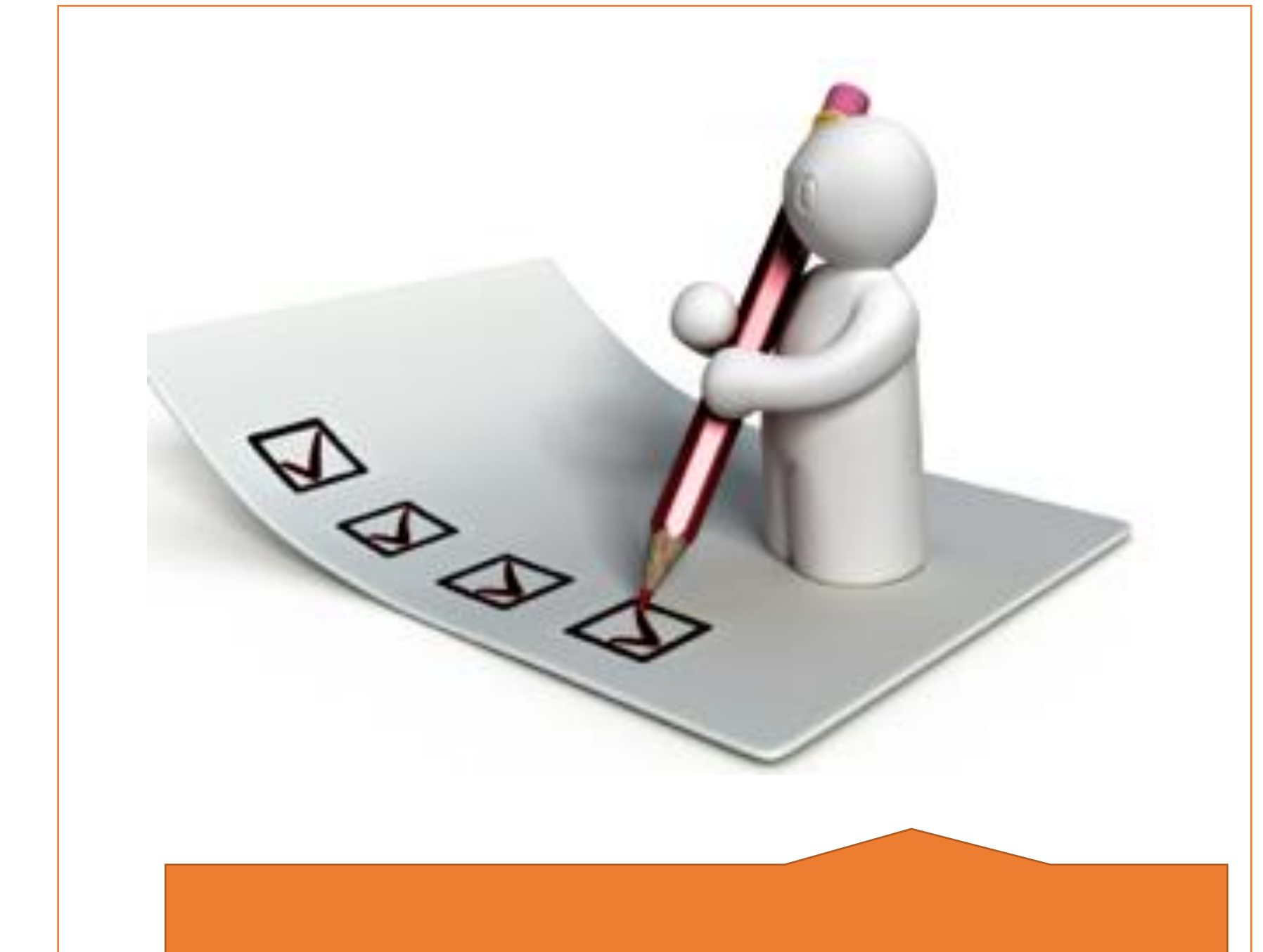
### Collaboration

Educators in Iowa, Michigan, North Dakota, and Wisconsin trained gardeners and food pantry staff using lessons from the *Safe Produce Food Pantries Project* (7).



### Dissemination

Two PowerPoint lectures were disseminated. Gardeners donating fresh produce learned to *Make Your Donation Count* and food pantry staff and volunteers learned to *Keep Produce Fresh and Healthy* (7).



### Evaluation

Participants completed paper surveys post-lecture dissemination that were used to evaluate their percent increase in understanding of food safety practices for fresh produce. Participants used a 5-point Likert scale to rate their responses.

## Results

**Table 1.** NCR participants (n= 167) percentage of understanding of four key food safety practices related to fresh produce donation to local food pantries.

Topic	Percent Increase of Understanding
Why safe produce is important for food pantry guests	92%
Steps to ensure safe produce is available to food pantry guests	94%
The importance of safe produce donations	100%
The importance of a clean and sanitary food pantry environment	92%

**Table 2.** Iowa participants (n= 40) average response rate and standard deviation of understanding three key food safety practices related to fresh produce donation to local food pantries.

Topic	Average ± SD
Why produce safety is important	4.1±0.84
How my growing/gardening practices affect the safety	4.3±0.78
Steps to make sure my produce donations are safe and high quality.	4.4±0.81

## Conclusion

Overall the training was rated as 'good' to 'excellent' across all participants. Food safety educators in the North Central U.S. have taken a regional approach to food safety education that has demonstrated impact across the region.

## Acknowledgements/References

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