



For Immediate Release: August 21, 2023

Food Bank of Western Massachusetts Announces Sale of its Hatfield Facility to Women-Owned Produce Distributor

[HATFIELD, MA] – The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts is pleased to announce the successful sale of its Hatfield building and property to Myers Produce, a woman-owned regional produce distributor and trucking company offering farmer-focused distribution, freight, and warehousing services. The strategic decision to sell the building marks a significant milestone for both businesses. The Food Bank will move to its new location at 25 Carew Street, Chicopee, during the last week of August and Myers Produce will move into its new Hatfield facility in October.

"We are thrilled that Myers Produce has purchased the Food Bank's Hatfield building," said Andrew Morehouse, Executive Director of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. "The Food Bank Board of Directors decided that an extension of our mission is to sell our Hatfield facility to Myers Produce to help expand markets for local farmers and strengthen our region's farm economy. The Food Bank relies heavily on local farmers for a large portion of the fresh produce it provides for free every year to households who otherwise would not be able to afford it."

Myers Produce has a longstanding commitment to bolster access to regionally grown food and to support farmers in Western Massachusetts and Vermont. With this strategic move, Myers Produce is taking a significant step to expand the purchasing of food from local growers and producers, and transporting and reselling it to food retailers throughout the region and beyond.

"We are excited to embark on this new chapter as we celebrate ten years of operation," said Annie Myers, Owner of Myers Produce. "Our mission has always been to support our region's agricultural communities by increasing farmers' access to wholesale markets within the Northeast. This acquisition allows us to take our efforts to the next level. In addition to allowing for the expansion of our distribution and freight operations, this facility will enable us to offer short-term storage and cross-docking services to farmers, producers, distributors, and carriers throughout our region."

Moving to Hatfield will generate employment opportunities and place Myers Produce close to farmlands, close to highways, and at a central crossroads for serving growers, customers, and fellow distributors in Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Maine.

Both the Food Bank and Myers Produce are looking forward to sharing resources at their respective new facilities, including cross docking and temporary storage. This arrangement will facilitate Food Bank deliveries to its member food pantries and meal sites in Hampshire and Franklin Counties. For Myers

Produce, this arrangement will contribute to their current “donation transportation” program, facilitating the free transportation of donated food to the Food Bank for distribution to the local community.

“The planning board voted unanimously to approve the Myers Produce project,” said Stephanie Slysz, Hatfield Planning Board Chair. “We are sad to see a landmark organization such as the Food Bank go, and we wish them well. We’re thrilled to welcome Myers Produce, which is a great fit for the parcel and for Hatfield with their commitment to local agriculture and farms in our town and in the region.”

Foreseeing it was running out of space many years ago, the Food Bank purchased 16.5 acres of vacant land in the Chicopee River Business Park in 2020. In 2021, it launched a successful \$26 million capital campaign to raise funds to build a larger facility, with generous support from individual and business donors, state and federal governments, and volunteers. In 2022, construction began on its new distribution center and headquarters, which is nearing completion.

Morehouse explains, “At the crossroads of the region’s major interstates, our new home has the capacity to receive, store, and distribute much more nutritious food more efficiently to households facing food insecurity across all four counties of Western Massachusetts.” The new Food Bank distribution center is a 62,000 square foot net zero carbon emission green building and twice the size of the Hatfield facility.

“The Food Bank is grateful to everyone in the community who invested in our new home and mission,” said Morehouse. “Now, we will be able to provide more healthy food assistance to more people facing food insecurity for decades to come both directly and in partnership with our region’s food assistance network of 172 local food pantries, meal sites and shelters.” The Food Bank and its local partners provide the equivalent of almost one million meals monthly to more than 94,000 individuals facing food insecurity. During the height of the pandemic, that number reached as high as 123,000 individuals.

The Food Bank has operated in Hatfield since 1984. It expanded its facility several times. The last expansion was in 2005, which prepared it to respond to skyrocketing food insecurity three years later caused by the Great Recession. The impact of the Great Recession on the regional economy persisted long after it ended. Food insecurity remained high, and the Food Bank began running out of space in 2017. During the pandemic, food insecurity skyrocketed again. In response, the Food Bank dramatically increased its food supply and distribution across the region’s food assistance network. For lack of space, it was forced to turn away hundreds of thousands of pounds of food during the pandemic.

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Food Bank of Western Massachusetts media contact: Deb Ondo, Communications and Engagement Manager, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. debo@foodbankwma.org. Phone: 413-419-0170.

About the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts: *Since 1982, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts has been a community partner to end hunger. We provide healthy and culturally responsive food directly through our own programs (Mobile Food Banks and Brown Bag: Food for Elders), and through the food assistance network in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties. These independent pantries, meal sites and shelters are on the front lines providing food and resources to individuals and families, including seniors, children, and people with disabilities, and veterans, so they may lead healthy and meaningful lives. The Food Bank also provides other food assistance and engages in public education and advocacy to solve systemic barriers that lead to hunger. The food Bank believes everyone has a right to healthy food. For more information, visit <https://www.foodbankwma.org/>*

Myers Produce media contact: Annie Myers, Owner, Myers Produce. annie@myersproduce.com.

About Myers Produce: Myers Produce is a woman-owned regional distributor and trucking company founded in 2013. We offer farmer-focused distribution, freight, and warehousing services to growers and producers throughout the Northeast. We source from within our region as a rule, and the majority of our sources are certified organic. Our hubs are located in Northern Vermont, Western Massachusetts, and Brooklyn, NY. We specialize in fresh produce and carry fresh fruit, eggs, meat, cheese, grains, flowers, and added value products as well. We deliver primarily to independent retail stores and restaurants in New York City, the Greater Boston Area, and the Cape. For more information, visit <http://www.myersproduce.com/>