

Logistics industry urged to play a role in addressing food waste

By [Marietjie Brown](#)

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As South Africa contends with the scourge of food wastage, estimated at 10.3 million tonnes per year, the logistics and supply chain industries are increasingly called on to play a central role in reducing waste and hunger. This is because an estimated [6 million](#) people in the country fall vulnerable to hunger each day.



Source: [Freepik](#)

So high on the national agenda is food loss and waste, that the [Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries](#) recently opened the Draft Strategy for Reducing Food Losses and Waste for public comment.

Redistributing surplus food

At CHEP, for example, we are taking up the baton to do our part in saving valuable nutrition and ensuring that it reaches those who need it most. Globally, for example, we [commit](#) to collaborate with foodbanks to serve rescued food to 10 million people annually.

This past year alone, 19.7 million people received meals through our support for food rescue organisations. Our collaboration with foodbanks ensures the safety of rescued food for human consumption through a multifaceted approach.

The foodbanks check critical information, such as date labelling (expiration dates), proper storage and transportation practices to maintain food integrity, temperature control to prevent spoilage, and the implementation of stringent quality control measures to ensure that only high-quality, edible food reaches those in need.

At least 31% of households across the country experience hunger, yet every tonne of edible surplus food could provide an estimated 4 000 meals. The food waste dilemma also presents an environmental threat, as wasted food equals wasted water and energy – precious resources we take for granted.

Food wastage

Food waste is a term used to refer to food that is appropriate for human consumption being discarded, whether after it is kept beyond its expiry date or left to spoil due to behavioural issues. Food loss, equally, means a decrease in mass or nutritional value (quality) of food that was originally intended for human consumption.

According to findings from a joint study by the Department of Science and Innovation and the [Council for Scientific and Industrial Research \(CSIR\)](#), 68% of food losses and waste happen in the early stages of production. It further notes that 19% of food wastage occurs during post-harvest handling and storage, and 49% during processing and packaging.

South Africa's Declaration on Food Waste is a voluntary agreement by sector-wide stakeholders in the food, beverages, and associated industries to respond to the scourge meaningfully.

The vision to reduce food loss and waste by 50% in the country by 2030 need not be deemed ambitious if we all do our part as stakeholders in ensuring the proper redistribution of edible and nutritious surplus food to reach those who need it most.

As a collective, the industry must step up efforts to reduce food waste and hunger and remain accountable in doing so. Everyone has a role to play in fast-tracking our commitment to meeting the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG2\)](#) of 2030 to create a world free of hunger.

Eliminating food waste and hunger are key challenges facing the country – each requiring concerted effort and collaboration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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