



consumer
goods council
of south africa
Helping members trade better.

SOUTH AFRICAN
FOOD
LOSS & WASTE INITIATIVE

Food Donation Best Practice Guidelines

To ensure food donations are safe, compliant, and responsibly managed.

September 2025



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Disclaimer

The South African Food Loss and Waste Initiative (SA FLWI) is an industry-led initiative supported by the Government and other key stakeholders. It is led by the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA), which also serves as the initiative's secretariat.

The information and guidance provided by SA FLWI, including content related to food safety, food waste reduction, and food donation are intended solely for educational and informational purposes. The initiative seeks to raise awareness and promote best practices in line with national priorities and international commitments to reducing food loss and waste.



Partners and funders

About the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa

The Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA) is an industry association representing over 9 000 member companies in the Consumer Goods, Retail and Services (FMCG) sector. The Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector is one of the largest employers in South Africa providing employment to more than 1.2 million people and contributing up to 20% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Food Safety and Sustainability Initiative (FSSI) is a division of the CGCSA. It provides thought leadership, guidance and technical support on regulatory aspects of the FMCG value chain (including retail and technical services) with focus on food safety, quality, nutrition, health and wellness and related matters.



About the South African Food Loss and Waste Initiative

The South African Food Loss and Waste Initiative (SA FLWI) is an industry led initiative that aims to reduce food loss and waste in South Africa by half by 2030.

The Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA) leads the initiative and serves as its secretariat. Supported by national government, the South African Food Loss and Waste Initiative (SA FLWI) is made possible with Rainier Climate funding provided through the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP).



Supporting government partners

The South African Food Loss and Waste Initiative (SA FLWI) is supported by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic) and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment (DFFE).



Partners and funders

Supporting NGO partner

The SA FLWI is supported by WRAP, an international climate action NGO that works to reduce food waste across supply chains and in the home. Globally, food waste is responsible for around 10% of all Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. Reducing food waste reduces GHG emissions.

Rainier Climate provided catalytic funding to support WRAP and its partners in tackling food loss and waste through existing voluntary agreements in Australia, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa and through the creation of a new voluntary food waste agreement in Brazil.

The funding covers ongoing work with money allocated to each nation to increase the systemic Target-Measure-Act approach to prevent and reduce food waste.



Funding from 2024 - 2026

The CGCSA, in partnership with the dtic and the DFFE, gratefully acknowledge Rainier Climate's funding, provided through WRAP.



Common terms used in this guideline

Charity or beneficiary organisation	<p>A non-profit philanthropic organisation which offers services (including food) to communities, in need. <i>(Adapted from Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain)</i></p>
“Best before” date	<p>The date which signifies the end of the period under any stated storage conditions during which the product will remain fully marketable and will retain any specific qualities for which tacit or express claims have been made. However, food may still be perfectly satisfactory after this date. <i>(R.146/2010)</i></p>
Food distribution organisations	<p>Organisations that use donated food to feed people or build community capacity. Examples include: community kitchens, food banks, food pantries, meal programmes (soup kitchens) and social enterprises (non-profit restaurants). <i>(British Columbia Centre for Disease Control)</i></p>
Food donation	<p>A gift of food to a person, a charity or a beneficiary organisation, without compensation expected, or required. <i>(Oxford dictionary)</i></p>
Food loss	<p>The decrease in the quantity or quality of food resulting from decisions and actions by food suppliers in the chain, excluding retailers, food service providers and consumers. It refers to any food that is discarded, incinerated or otherwise disposed of along the food supply chain (including harvest/slaughter/catch but excluding retail) where this food does not re-enter the food chain for any other production such as for feed or seed. <i>(Food and Agriculture Organisation)</i></p>
Food waste	<p>The decrease in quantity or quality of food resulting from decisions and actions by retailers, food service providers and consumers. <i>(Food and Agriculture Organisation)</i></p>
Food Service	<p>Food service refers to the professional preparation, handling, and provision of meals or food products by a catering company or food service provider, in accordance with applicable food safety legislation and hygiene standards. <i>(adapted from Regulation R.638 of 2018 under the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act 54 of 1972)</i></p>
Section 18A receipts (tax deductible donations)	<p>A receipt for a tax deduction for donations made by taxpayers to registered organisations. Section 18A tax deduction receipts can only be issued by organisations that hold a section 18A approval and the donations received can only be used to fund specific approved Public Benefit Activities. <i>(The South African Revenue Service (SARS))</i></p>
Sell	<p>To offer, advertise, keep, display, transmit, consign, convey, or deliver for sale, as well as exchange or dispose of to any person in any manner, whether for consideration or otherwise. The words “sold, “selling” and “sale” have corresponding meanings. <i>(Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 (Act No. 54 of 1972))</i></p>



<p>“sell by” date</p>	<p>The last date on which the food product should be sold to a consumer, after which there remains a reasonable storage period at home. <i>(R. 146/2010)</i></p>
<p>Surplus food</p>	<p>Excess edible foods that are compliant with both food safety and hygiene regulations, and are fit for human consumption. <i>(Signatories)</i></p>
<p>Surplus food distribution</p>	<p>The timeous identification and redistribution of food that has the potential to become surplus food. It is an effective solution to deal with surplus food and support organisations that address food insecurity and malnutrition. <i>(Signatories)</i></p>
<p>“Use by” date (also referred to as the “Expiry date”)</p>	<p>The date which signifies the end of the estimated period under the stated storage conditions, after which the product probably will not have the quality attributes normally expected by the consumers and after which the food should not be regarded as marketable. <i>(R.146/2010)</i></p>



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Introduction

In 2021, 12.2% of South Africans experienced hunger and 11.6% were vulnerable to hunger (Statistics South Africa, 2022). At the same time, every year up to 10 million tonnes of the food produced in South Africa goes to waste (WWF, 2017 and Oelofse, 2021).

In a country with such high levels of poverty and food insecurity, food waste is senseless and if not addressed, could threaten social stability. Not only are we squandering food that could be safely consumed but we are also depleting the precious resources (water, energy, labour, finances) used to produce both the food and its packaging. In so doing we are negatively impacting our environment and the economy.

As South Africa's population continues to grow, it is key that we produce and consume food in a way that ensures food security for current and future generations.

South Africa has committed to take action to meet the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 which aims to, by 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains (Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 2015).

In 2020, the South African Food Loss and Waste Initiative (SA FLWI) was launched to bring together stakeholders across the food value chain to achieve UN Goal 12.3. Implementation strategies include adopting the food utilisation hierarchy, and identifying food surplus and waste management solutions that respond to a circular economy and sustainable food systems agenda.

The first goal of signatories to the agreement is to prevent food loss and waste from happening in the first place. In cases where food loss and waste are unavoidable, the goal is to make safe and nutritious surplus food available to people who need it.

Signatories to the agreement indicated that while there is willingness to donate surplus food, there are obstacles to doing so. The SA FLWI established a working group to identify and find solutions to food donation barriers in South Africa. One of the first solutions the group identified was the creation of a guideline with pertinent information to ensure that the food donation process is as easy as possible to follow.

We hope that this guideline effectively assists all who are willing and able to donate and redistribute their surplus food to communities across South Africa.



Purpose of this guideline

The intention of the guideline is to contribute to reducing food waste and improving food security in South Africa. It aims to encourage all farmers, food manufacturers and retailers to donate any and all surplus food to people or organisations, in line with recommendations from The South African Food Loss and Waste Utilisation Hierarchy (see Figure 1).

This food waste hierarchy has been adapted from the FAO of the United Nations, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Rethink Food Waste through Economics and Data (ReFED), and Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP). In line with FAO recommendations, it outlines 5 key steps in Reducing food loss with Prevention highlighted as the most important, and Disposal, the least favoured option in the management of food waste.

This Food Donation Guideline focusses on rescuing food and aims to make ‘redirecting (surplus food) to feed people’ as easy as possible. It does not include information related to prevention/reduction, animal feed, or recycling.

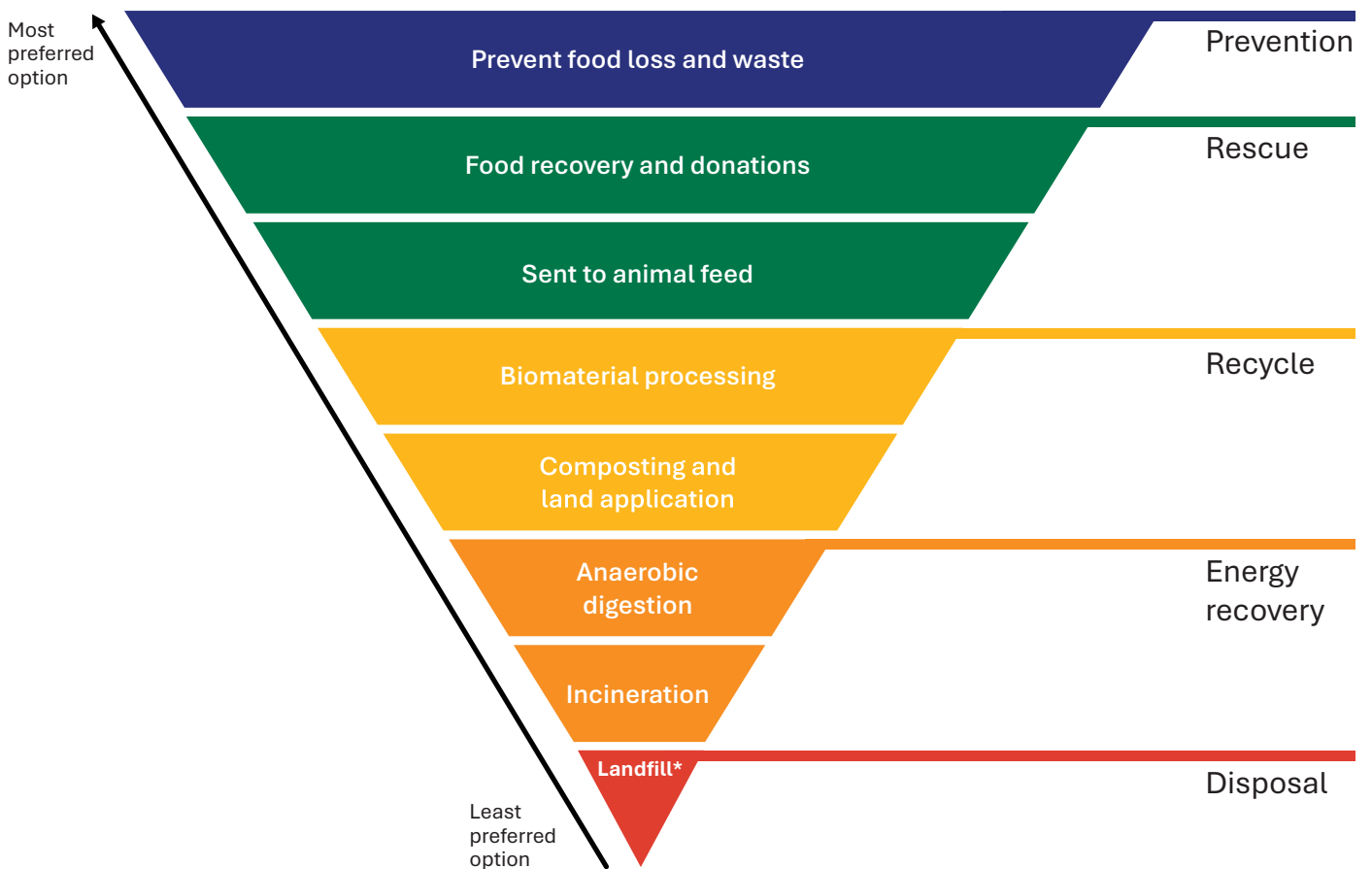


Figure 1. The Food Waste Management Hierarchy (adapted from FAO, US EPA, ReFED, and WRAP)

*Includes incineration without energy recovery.
Note: This hierarchy refers to food waste tonnage.



Five reasons to donate food in South Africa

1



Do the right thing, help people in need.

You can reduce hunger by donating safe, nutritious foods to people in need directly or indirectly through food distribution organisations.

2



Reduce your environmental impact.

You can reduce negative climate change impacts by keeping food and packaging out of landfills. Decomposing food in landfills produces methane gas, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

3



Improve your corporate social responsibility profile.

Making beneficial contributions to the communities in which you operate helps build good relationships with the people of the community. Positive relationships can grow brand loyalty and sales potential.

4



Attract and retain dedicated employees.

Being socially responsible is more likely to improve employee commitment and lower employee turnover.

5



Offset costs of surplus food, improve your bottom line.

Donating food that cannot be sold can help offset costs by reducing disposal costs and maximising tax savings. If you donate food to organisations that issue Section 18A tax certificates for food donations, you can claim back funds from the South African Revenue Service (SARS). Food businesses can also sell surplus food at a preferential rate to make up for some of the losses incurred.



Summary of legal requirements for food donation in South Africa

If food is fit for human consumption and cannot be sold, the best thing you can do is to donate it.

This section summarises the key legislations regarding food donations in relation to:

- Liability for harm caused by food;
- Provision of safe food to consumers;
- Communication of key information to consumers; and
- Foods which may not be donated on a once-off basis.

Understanding these legislations enables you to safely meet the basic legal requirements for donating surplus food and in so doing contribute to reducing hunger and food waste.

Liability for harm caused by food

Consumer Protection (Act No. 68 of 2008)

This Act is aimed at ensuring that the South African consumer is protected from preventable harm. Section 61 of this Act indicates that person(s) that supply food that causes harm will be held legally responsible. In relation to food, this may be more than one person or entity in the food supply chain, in which case more than one person or entity may be held responsible. As examples, harm could be a result of the food being unsafe for consumption or because the consumer was not provided with suitable instructions or warnings to help protect them from harm that may arise from the unsafe use of the food.

You can read this Act [here](#)

Provision of safe food to consumers

Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 (Act No. 54 of 1972)

The Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 covers all aspects of food safety, honest and accurate food labelling and wholesome, fit for consumption and healthy foods. It is enacted to ensure foodstuffs do not cause harm to consumers and that consumers are not misled by false marketing and advertising. Liability under this Act, stipulates that a person or entity—including a producer, importer, distributor, or retailer—can be held liable for damages, including injury or property damage, caused by defective or unsafe goods, regardless of whether they were negligent. This principle is known as strict liability, which allows for joint and several liability among parties in the supply chain. This is in line with the definition of food safety where it is indicated.

Regulations governing general hygiene requirements for food premises, the transport of food and related matters, R.638 of 2018 published under the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 (Act No. 54 of 1972)

This set of regulations is key to ensuring that those using any premises for the ‘handling’ of food, do so safely (please refer to exemptions which include a private dwelling and a private dwelling that produces food for donation such as to a charity event). ‘Handling’ is defined in these regulations to refer to any aspect relating to food such as storing, keeping, manufacturing, and transporting, and most importantly, selling as defined in the Act. The regulations require that the ‘person in charge’ and food handlers meets the basic requirements to ensure that foods are safe for consumption. Organisations giving, receiving, and transporting food donations should be in possession of a valid R.638 Certificate of Acceptability, otherwise they are acting outside of the law.

Read these regulations [here](#)



Date marking Interpretation

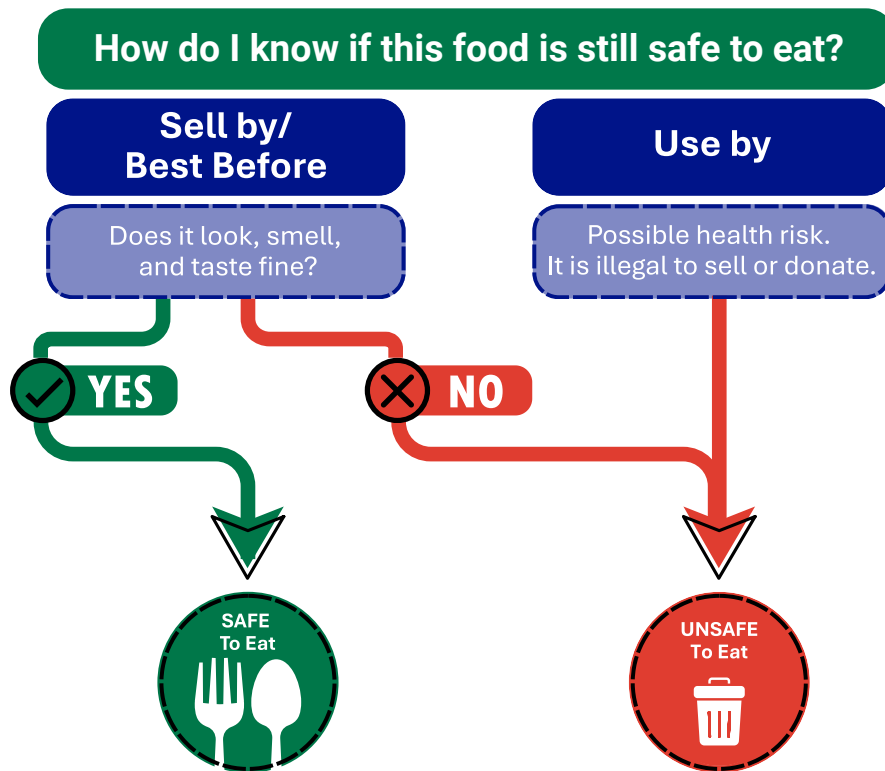


Figure 3. Interpreting date labels. (adapted from infographic developed by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration)

Regulations related to foods regulated by the Department of Agriculture

Agricultural commodities like fruit and vegetables are governed by the Department of Agriculture and have their own set regulations outlining packaging and labelling. These foods are not always sold in packaging and may not have labels.

Foods that are not pre-packaged

The Consumer Protection Act (CPA) requires that the consumer is provided with suitable instructions or warnings to help protect them from harm that may arise from unsafe food. Those donating food need to ensure that this requirement is met even if the food is not pre-packaged.

The "Hygiene" Regulations referenced above (R.638), as well as the Labelling Regulations under the FCD Act, 1972, also make requirements for foods that are not labelled and are presented either for catering or for sale by street vendors. As stipulated in the regulation, non-prepacked, ready to consume food, including food served as meals and displayed in an open container, must be protected in accordance with the best available method and must be consumed within 4 hours of production.

Foods which may not be donated on a once-off basis

Regulations related to foodstuffs for infants and young children R.991 of 2012 framed under the FCD Act, 1972 (Act No. 54 of 1972)

These regulations indicate that foods covered by these regulations (infant formula, follow up formula, complementary foods, other liquid or milk-like products represented as being suitable for infant and young child feeding (0 months to 36 months) may not be donated to hospices, orphanages or places of safety unless such products comply with the said regulations and are provided for as long as the infants concerned need them. This means that once-off donations of these foods are not allowed if infants and young children require them on an ongoing basis.

Read the regulations relating to foods for infants and young children [here](#)



Steps to take when donating food in South Africa

Once you have a good understanding of and can comply with the legal requirements relating to food donations, the next step is to make decisions about whether the surplus food you have is suitable for donation, how to protect your brand reputation, who to donate the food to and how to track and monitor your food donations.

Step 1: Can this food be donated?

The first step is to determine whether the food is safe to donate or not. Where you are in the food value chain (food service operation, retail, farm) will determine the reasons why you are no longer able to sell the food and will therefore influence how you decide if the food is safe to donate. Companies that wish to donate food should put in place policies and processes, similar to the specifications and record keeping required by the ‘Hygiene’ regulations (R.638) to support and guide your decision making.

Protecting brand reputation and understanding “best before” dates are important issues to consider when donating food. You don’t want your brand’s reputation to be negatively affected by donating food that is not at its best quality, nor would you want food that you donated to be sold on to others. Discuss and address concerns such as these with the organisation/s that you select to distribute your food donation and document these agreements in a simple memorandum. Examples of ways to protect your organisation’s reputation include stickering the product with “not for resale” statements.

Foods are often removed from the retail shelves because they are at or close to the “best before” dates marked on the packaging. This date does not indicate that the food is not safe to eat, but that it may not be of the same quality (texture, colour or flavour) that it was when it was first produced. Businesses may provide food distribution organisations with a “use by” or “expiry date” after which the product should not be consumed. This will ensure that food products can be safely used by these organisations. Do bear in mind that some foods can also be frozen for later consumption.



Is this food safe to donate?

- Was this food incorrectly packaged or labelled during production?
- Was this food left over from a catered function?
- Is the only thing wrong with this food the way it looks? (that is, the food is still of a good quality but it is slightly discoloured or the wrong shape or size)
- Is this food past its “sell by” or “best before” date?



This food may be safe for donation. To make the final decision as to whether or not to donate this food refer to company policy, a manager’s decision or consult your quality assurance department.



Food produced in a commercial catering/ food service environment is intended to be consumed within 4 hours of production. Food that has been held outside safe temperature control for more than 4 hours cannot be served to customers or donated for human consumption. Such food should be directed down the Food Utilisation Hierarchy, starting with the highest feasible non-human use and progressing to the least preferred option.

dispose of the food in landfill.



- Is this food part of a food-safety recall?
- Does this food require refrigeration and has it been left unrefrigerated?
- Is this food mouldy, badly bruised or limp?
- Is there potential that this food has been contaminated?
- Is this product poorly sealed or has its packaging been damaged?
- Is this food past its “use by” date?



Is the food suitable for use as animal feed?

Divert to animal feed



Can the food be used as a biomaterial input (e.g: bio-based products, industrial uses)?

Send to biomaterial processing



Is the food suitable for composting or application to land?

Direct to composting or soil amendment



Can the food be used for energy recovery via anaerobic digestion?

Send to anaerobic digestion



Can the food be incinerated with energy recovery

Direct to incineration

Figure 4. Determining whether a food can be donated or not. (adapted from British Columbia Centre for Disease Control Industry Food Donation Guideline)



Step 2: Who can I donate this food to?

It is important to 1) identify charities, beneficiary organisations and/or food distribution organisations (FDO's) that are a good fit for your business and 2) make sure your business understands the needs and preferences of the organisations you are donating to.

Depending on the size and internal resources of your organisation, it is useful to identify someone who will be responsible for managing the food donation process within the business. This person's responsibilities can include: identifying, liaising, building and maintaining relationships with the FDO, managing the food donation approval process within the business, training employees to distinguish between edible surplus food and waste and, keeping records of your food donations.

Things to consider when selecting beneficiaries/ Food Distribution Organisation (FDO) include:

Location – selecting organisations that are physically located close your business can reduce both transport costs and the time it takes to deliver your food. This is especially important when donating perishable foods.

Storage and handling – make sure the organisation you select is able to store, handle and accept the volume of food you will be donating. The recipient organisation must be able to store the donated food, in the right conditions, considering maintenance of the cold chain, cross-contamination (physical, chemical, microbiological), and space constraints and must be able to meet all government handling and storage regulations.

Transport – Some charities have logistics and fleet capacity which allows them to collect surplus food thus overcoming the barrier and cost of transportation. All donated food must be transported in accordance with health regulations. See below the *Food Distribution Vehicle Requirements*.

Vulnerability of beneficiaries – Some FDO's may service clients with specific medical or nutritional needs, which may mean that certain foods may not be acceptable for donation. Risk assessment should be conducted before donating the food to identify the specific risks associated with the recipients of the food donation, which may make them more vulnerable to food quality. Vulnerable groups include infants and young children, the elderly, sick/infirm, pregnant and lactating women, people with chronic illnesses, homeless people and/or those with compromised immune systems.

Risk of the food you are donating – High-risk food requires careful handling to prevent foodborne illnesses, while low-risk foods are generally a safer option to donation. For more on high-risk vs low-risk foods see the *Other Resources* section which categorises food according to their risk and outlines safety and storage guidelines. Food from catering companies is highly susceptible to post-cooking contamination and the correct storage conditions and handling procedures are critical to limit cross-contamination. There is a risk of spore and toxin production in food that is not cooled and re-heated correctly.

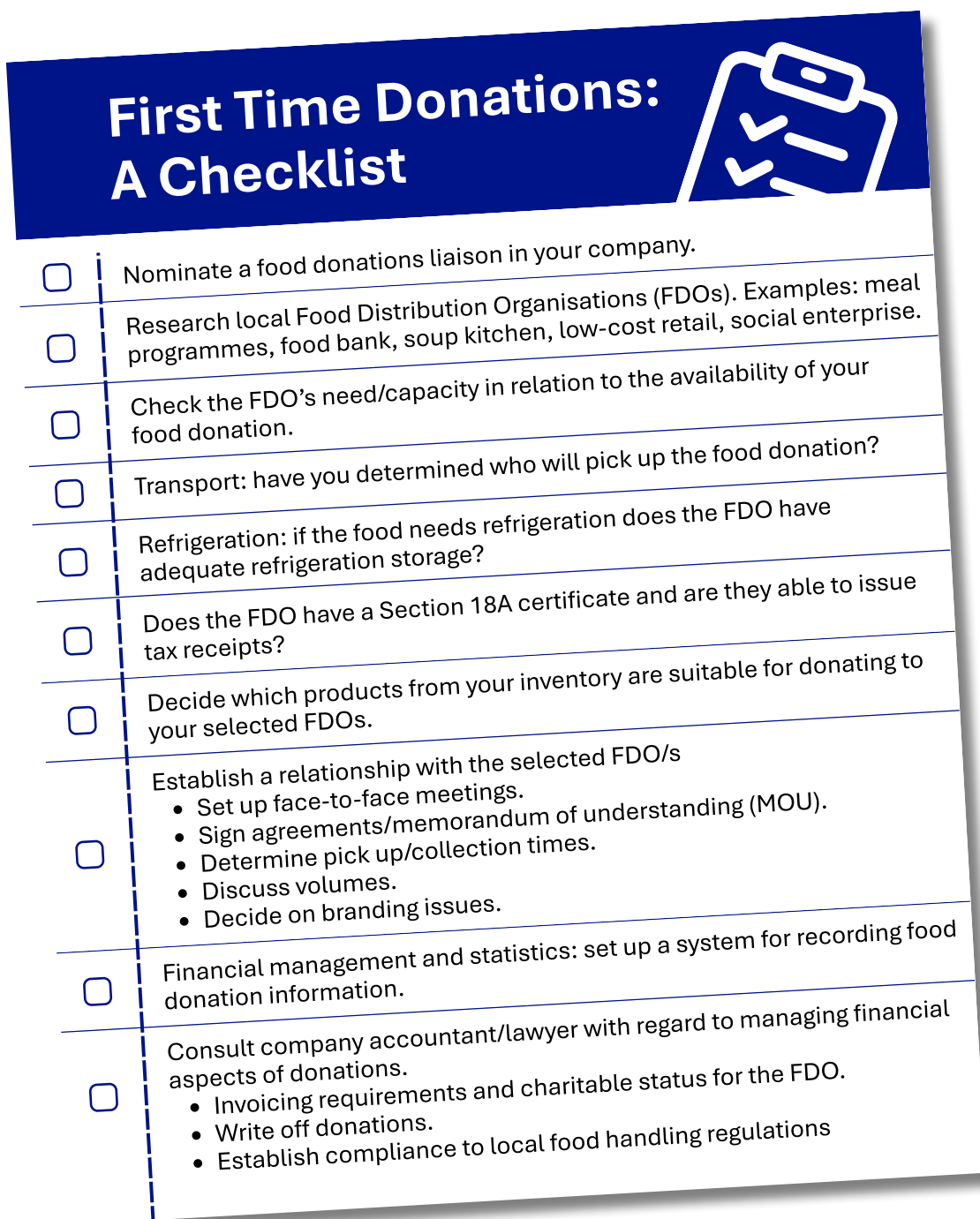
Nutrition and health - Food Distribution Organisations (FDO's) need access to healthy foods that can help meet the needs of their beneficiaries. *The South African Food-based Dietary Guidelines (2012)* can be used to determine whether a food is nutritious or not and whether a food can be consumed frequently or not. See below a *Summary of the General Dietary Guidelines* for people five years and older. The South African Food Guide can also be used as a tool to determine which foods are necessary as part of a healthy diet. See below the *Summary of the South African Food Guide*.



The Department of Social Development has a registry of food distribution organisations across urban and rural areas in South Africa. Do consider donating to organisations in both settings. There is often a greater need for donations in areas outside of major cities.

The availability of surplus food isn't always predictable and so both donors and beneficiaries need to be flexible to ensure that surplus food reaches people in need.

Once you have identified a suitable food distribution organisation/beneficiary, draw up a memorandum of understanding that outlines key information and agreements between your business and the organisation/s receiving the donation. This can be a simple, uncomplicated guiding document.



First Time Donations: A Checklist

- Nominate a food donations liaison in your company.
- Research local Food Distribution Organisations (FDOs). Examples: meal programmes, food bank, soup kitchen, low-cost retail, social enterprise.
- Check the FDO's need/capacity in relation to the availability of your food donation.
- Transport: have you determined who will pick up the food donation?
- Refrigeration: if the food needs refrigeration does the FDO have adequate refrigeration storage?
- Does the FDO have a Section 18A certificate and are they able to issue tax receipts?
- Decide which products from your inventory are suitable for donating to your selected FDOs.
- Establish a relationship with the selected FDO/s
 - Set up face-to-face meetings.
 - Sign agreements/memorandum of understanding (MOU).
 - Determine pick up/collection times.
 - Discuss volumes.
 - Decide on branding issues.
- Financial management and statistics: set up a system for recording food donation information.
- Consult company accountant/lawyer with regard to managing financial aspects of donations.
 - Invoicing requirements and charitable status for the FDO.
 - Write off donations.
 - Establish compliance to local food handling regulations

Figure 5. Checklist for determining who foods can be donated to (adapted from *British Columbia Centre for Disease Control Industry Food Donation Guideline*)



Summary of the General Dietary Guidelines

These general guidelines from the South African Food-based Dietary Guidelines (2012) outline dietary recommendations for people five years and older:

- Enjoy a variety of food.
- Be active!
- Make starchy foods part of most meals.
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit every day.
- Eat dry beans, split peas, lentils and soya regularly.
- Have milk, maas or yoghurt every day.
- Fish, chicken, lean meat or eggs can be eaten daily.
- Drink lots of clean, safe water.
- Use fats sparingly. Choose vegetable oils, rather than hard fats.
- Use sugar and food and drinks high in sugar sparingly.
- Use salt and foods high in salt sparingly.

You can read more about these guidelines [here](#)

Summary of the South African Food Guide

The South African Food Guide displays the following seven food groups to be eaten regularly:

1. Vegetables and Fruits
2. Starchy foods (rice, cereals, pasta, bread, maize meal)
3. Legumes (dry beans, peas, lentils, soya)
4. Dairy (milk, maas, yoghurt)
5. Oils (fats, vegetable oils, nuts)
6. Flesh foods (chicken, fish, meat, eggs)
7. Water

These food groups are all composed of local and affordable foods that are necessary for healthy eating. The size of each food group segment reflects the volume the group should contribute to the total daily diet. Unlike other food guides, it does not include items whose consumption should be limited, such as highly processed foods that are high in sugar, fat and salt.

For more information on healthy eating, contact the Association for Dietetics in South Africa (ADSA) at www.adsa.org.za



Figure 6. The South African Food Guide



Food Distribution Vehicle Requirements

- All donated food must be transported in a vehicle that has a certificate of acceptability (COA) as required by regulation R.638, Regulations Governing General Hygiene Requirements for Food Premises, the Transport of Food and Related Matters. You can find a guide [here](#).
- Food can only be transported in a vehicle that is clean and represents no chemical, physical or microbiological contamination risk to the food.
- Vehicles used for the transportation or distribution of food shall be clean, free from any odours and spillages.
- Food cannot be transported in a vehicle that has been used to transport contaminated food or waste, chemicals, poison or harmful substances, animals or any other object that may contaminate the food.
- No vehicle that transports food should be used for the simultaneous transport of people or any other item that may contaminate the food.
- In the case of vehicles with refrigeration, the refrigeration unit shall be adequate to maintain the food at the required temperatures.
- Where the same refrigerated transport is used for deliveries to several points, care must be taken to ensure that the temperature in the food section is maintained at the correct level.

Step 3 - Record and monitor food donations

Food safety recalls can happen at any time and food businesses and food distribution organisations need to work together to ensure that any donated food is traceable. The same principles that apply to traceability of foods that are sold for monetary gain should also apply to foods that are donated, as is required by the FCD Act and its Regulations. The general labelling and advertising regulations indicate that batch identification is the responsibility of the manufacturer of the product.

Read these regulations [here](#)


When recording food donations, it is important to note these batch numbers, the volume of food donated and who this was donated to, so that this can assist with a food safety recall if necessary. Please refer to the CGCSA's Food Recall Guideline for more guidance regarding recalls. It is also important to ensure that the organisation receiving food donations is familiar with the recall procedures and traceability requirements in Regulation 10 of the 'Hygiene' regulations, as all aspects of those Regulations also apply to beneficiary organisations as well i.e. a recall can result from any incident and not only National Consumer Commission initiated recalls, which are required to be reported under the CPA and CGCSA Code of Practice.

Some charities, beneficiary organisations and/or food distribution organisations are registered with the South African Revenue Service and can issue tax receipts (Section 18A certificates) to businesses that donate food to them. Businesses wanting to receive these receipts for food donations need to check whether the organisation is registered with SARS and can issue these receipts before making the donation. A record of these receipts must be kept and used when submitting tax returns.

Keeping a record of how much food was donated is necessary to form part of the food loss and reporting required by Core Signatories as part of the South African Food Loss and Waste Initiative and may be useful for other kinds of reporting required by your business.



The following checklist can be used to help ensure you are tracking the correct information:



Food donation records

Donation date

Name of the Food Distribution Organisation

Name and description of the food donated

Unit of measure of the donated food items

Quantity donated

Best before date

Use by date

Production dates:

Specific batch numbers

Universal Product Code (UPC)

Lot numbers

Unit cost of the item

Cost of goods donated


Weight of the donation (kilograms/tonnes)

Number of meals by portion donated

Reason for donation

Graciously donated by.....

Figure 7. Checklist of information to be kept on record for food donations (adapted from British Columbia Centre for Disease Control Industry Food Donation Guideline)



Checklist for routine food donation

- Confirm that unsellable food is safe to donate (no safety issues with product)
- Confirmation from quality assurance manager
- Food donation has been assigned to a Food Distribution Organisation (FDO)
- All required paperwork for food product is completed
- Label
- Relevant product information
- List of ingredients if not in existing package
- Best before date
- FDO contracted
- Pick up/drop off confirmed (location, date & time)
- Donation information recorded
- For write-off
- For charitable tax gifts from inventory (invoice FDOs monthly)

Figure 8. Checklist for routine food donations (adapted from British Columbia Centre for Disease Control Industry Food Donation Guideline)



Food Donation Decision Tree

Step 1: Determine if the food is donatable?

1 Product Rejection: Item not sellable

Is there a safety issue?

Consider food scrap recovery options

✓ YES

✗ NO

Potential reasons for rejection:

- Recall
- Temperature issues
- Contaminated

Product may be donated

Product stock issues

Product aesthetics / imperfections

Potential reasons for product aesthetic/ imperfection or stock issues:

- weight
- aesthetics
- packaging errors
- inventory control
- product near or after *Best Before Date* but before *Use By Date*.
- overstock

Step 2: Assign product to approved FDO

2 Select FDO from your list based on their need and capacity

Determining FDO need and capacity:

- Product type:** is item needed?
Size of donation: can FDO handle the amount?
Storage: is there adequate storage at required temperatures?
Main Recipients: Children, ill, elderly, pregnant people etc

Individual packages: correctly labelled

Suitable to donate to community kitchens, meal programmes, social enterprises

Individual packages: incorrectly labelled

All products are able to be donated to any party if unlabeled or incorrectly labeled (additional information on products and reasons for donation are highly recommended)

Bulk: not labelled.

Suitable to donate to food banks/ low cost retail outlets

Step 3: Record Keeping

3 Things to keep track of:

- Recipient FDO
- Name of food product
- Product identifiers (barcode)
- Date markings (BB, Use by, Date of manufacture)
- Batch number

- Amount donated (weight/ volume, no of cases)
- Donato












Other resources

Safety guidelines and storage requirements for food donations waiting to be delivered/distributed

The tables below categorise food groups according to their shelf-life and their risks of contamination. They serve only as a guideline, as actual dates and storage conditions are determined by food manufacturers based on the food safety technology available to them. Where these are available, recipients of donations are advised to follow the instructions on the product.

The food categories tabled below are:

	Very long shelf-life shelf stable goods are low risk foods		Long shelf-life moderate to low risk
	Limited shelf-life moderate to low risk		Breads and staples moderate risk
	Fruits moderate to low risk		Fruit beverages moderate risk
	Vegetables moderate risk		Dairy and eggs high risk
	Meats and seafood high-risk categories for food safety issues and are currently not included in this guideline		

Source: Food Standards Australia New Zealand. (2024). Safe food for people at risk. Retrieved from www.foodstandards.gov.au



VERY LONG SHELF-LIFE

(Shelf stable goods – low risk foods)

Food item (product description)	Characteristics of a damaged product	Storage Guidelines (NB: to be aligned with the relevant product-related regulations under the FCD, APS and NRCS Acts*)
Flour, dried beans, lentils, soya, maize meal	<p>No rotting if stored dry. Mouldy taste is possible after a very long period. Pay attention to weevil, moth and/or insect contamination.</p> <p>Keep an eye out for hardening, absorption of humidity, turning rancid or mouldy.</p>	<p>These products can be stored up to one year after best before on condition that the product still has its characteristic qualities and the product and its package is not defective. Temperature requirements stipulated by the Hygiene regulations must be adhered to.</p> <p>Some products such as dry pasta and dry rice without herbs or flavourings can last longer, up to two years if stored in an airtight container after opening)</p>
Dry pasta (spaghetti, macaroni)		
Couscous, semolina		
Coffee/tea/sugar/salt		
Rice		
Instant (low-fat) powder (coffee, spices, pudding)		
Water, soft drinks and UHT drinks (milk, fruit juices)	Deterioration of taste or colour change (enzymatic browning)	
Tin cans/glass bottles (vegetables, fruit, soup, meat, fish, condensed milk, jam)	Oxidation of the can/tops (look for rust/black colouring) Gassing, (bulging, swollen, or battered can), colour or smell change. Dents at seams of cans, any pin holes or any signs of tampering of lids.	
Syrup, molasses, honey	Saccharification (look for thickening/ crystals)	
Sweets (hard sweets, lollipops, confectionery products consisting of flavoured/and or coloured sugars)		
Frozen products	Desiccation (drying out) or rancid fat	
Any alcoholic beverage as described in the Liquor Products Act, 1989 (Act 60 of 1989)		
Chewing gum		
Vinegar		

Source: Adapted from Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, 2013; *FCD: Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants; APS: Agricultural Product Standards; NRCS: National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications.



LONG SHELF-LIFE

(moderate – low risk)

Food item (product description)	Characteristics of a damaged product	Storage Guidelines (NB: to be aligned with the relevant product-related regulations under the FCD, APS and NRCS Acts*)
Dry biscuits	Mouldy taste, occurrence of moths/ insects, tasteless, change of taste, desiccation (drying out) or change of texture.	<p>These products can last up to two months (even longer) after best before on condition that the product still has its characteristic qualities and the product and its package are not defective.</p> <p>Temperature requirements stipulated by the Hygiene regulations must be adhered to.</p>
Muesli, breakfast cereals, cornflakes		
Spreads (peanut butter, chocolate and other spreads)	Rancid fat, change of smell, change of colour, oxidation, mouldy or occurrence of insects.	
Chips, salty biscuits, peanuts		
Oil, frying fat		
Instant high-fat powder (soup, powder milk)		
Margarine, butter		
Hard cheese (gouda, cheddar, parmesan)		
Sweets (soft with fillings e.g. chocolate/ liquorice)		
Sauces (including mayonnaise, tomato sauce, mustards)		
Sterilised bottled milk and dairy products	Change or loss of taste. Damaged packaging	

Source: Adapted from Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, 2013; *FCD: Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants; APS: Agricultural Product Standards; NRCS: National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications.



LIMITED SHELF-LIFE

(moderate – low risk)

Food item (product description)	Characteristics of a damaged product	Storage Guidelines (NB: to be aligned with the relevant product-related regulations under the FCD, APS and NRCS Acts*)
Bread, partially-baked bread	Mouldy taste, mould, rancid fat or occurrence of insects	Respect the best before, exceptions are possible but a good evaluation is needed. Fresh bread can be frozen and consumed within two weeks Temperature requirements stipulated by the Hygiene regulations must be adhered to.
Soft cheese (brie, ricotta, camembert, cream cheese, cottage cheese)		
Cake, biscuits with fillings, soft biscuits		
Semi-preserves that need chilling (marinated herring, pickled vegetables)	Fermentation, odour/smell and or bulging packaging	

Source: Adapted from Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, 2013; *FCD: Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants; APS: Agricultural Product Standards; NRCS: National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications.

BREADS AND STAPLES

(moderate risk)

Food item (product description)	Room Temp (21° C)	Refrigerator (2° to 5° C)	Freezer (-12 to -18°C)	Comments
Fresh bread	Store at room temperature. Use the date as a guide or use within three to five days.	Storing in the refrigerator will make it go stale faster. Promotes staling	Two weeks (peak quality) Three months (safe to eat)	Wrap well and cover completely to prevent drying out. Thaw at room temperature.
Unbaked dough (bread/rolls)		One to two days	Two months	
Pizza		Three to four days	One to two months	
Stuffing (bread-based mixtures combined with seasonings, herbs, vegetables and, sometimes meat)		Three to four days	One month	

Source: Adapted from Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, 2013



FRUITS (canned/ dried)

(moderate – low risk)

Food item	Unopened	Opened	Comments
Canned Fruits	12 to 24 months	Two to three days	Do not store in an opened can. Store in an airtight container.
Dried fruits cooked uncooked	Six months	Three to five days	

FRUITS (fresh)

(moderate – low risk)

Food item	Room Temp (21° C)	Refrigerator (2° to 5° C)	Freezer (-12 to -18°C)	Comments
Apples		Three to five months		
Apricots, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums		Three to five days	Six months	See preserving instructions for individual fruits
Avocados		Two to three days after ripened	Five to 10 days	
Bananas	Store at room temperature			
Berries, Cherries		Two to three days	Eight to 12 months	
Cranberries		Three to four weeks	Eight to 12 months	
Grapefruit	Seven days	Two weeks	Four to six months	Wrap cut surfaces to prevent loss of Vitamin C
Grapes Guavas, Papayas, Paw-Paw		One to two weeks		
Kiwi Fruit	Three to five days after ripening	Four to six months if unripe.		
Lemons, Limes	One week	Two to five weeks		



FRUITS (fresh)

(moderate – low risk)

Food item	Room Temp (21° C)	Refrigerator (2° to 5° C)	Freezer (-12 to -18°C)	Comments
Melons		One week	Eight to 12 months	Wrap cut surfaces to prevent Vitamin C loss, control odours.
Oranges	Three to four days	Five to six weeks		
Peaches	Ripen at room temperature	Two to three days		
Pineapple	One to two days	Three to five days		
Tangerines	Two to three days	One week		
Watermelon	Uncut watermelon can be stored at room temperature for a few days	Six to eight days		

Source: Adapted from Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, 2013

FRUIT BEVERAGES

(moderate risk)

Food item	Room Temp (21° C)	Refrigerator (2° to 5° C)	Freezer (-12 to -18°C)	Comments
Fruit drinks/ juices in cartons	Seven to 10 days	Three weeks	Eight to 12 months	

Source: Adapted from Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, 2013



VEGETABLES

(moderate risk)

Food item	Room Temp (21° C)	Refrigerator (2° to 5° C)	Freezer (-12 to -18°C)	Comments
Canned Vegetables		Opened - three days		Do not store in an opened can. Store in an airtight container.
Beets, Carrots		Two weeks	Eight to 12 months	
Beans, Broccoli, Peas, Summer Squash		Three to six days	Eight to 12 months	
Cabbage		Cabbage	Do not freeze	Too watery to freeze well
Cauliflower		One week	Eight to 12 months	
Corn			Eight to 12 months	Use immediately for best flavour
Green Onions		Three to five days	Do not freeze	Become limp if frozen
Lettuce and Salad Greens		One week	Do not freeze	Too watery; becomes limp
Mushrooms		One to two days	Eight to 12 months	Slice thinly and sauté before freezing, otherwise they become rubbery and lose flavour
Tomatoes			Three to four months	Cut in wedges, freeze in usable portions in freezer bags. Use in cooked dishes

Source: Adapted from Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, 2013



DAIRY AND EGGS

(high risk)

Food item	Room Temp (21° C)	Refrigerator (2° to 5° C)	Freezer (-12 to -18°C)	Comments
Butter		One to three months	Six to nine months	Leave in original wrapping; cover completely.
Fresh Pasteurised Milk		Seven days	One month	Allow room for expansion in the freezer container; thaw in the refrigerator. Freezing affects flavour and appearance; use in cooking and baking.
Sour cream		Seven to 21 days	Do not freeze	
Yogurt, cultured milk and fermented dairy		Seven to 21 days	Do not freeze	Maintain the cold chain in transport and storage. The longer the product is kept, the following changes can be anticipated: texture changes (syneresis – watery layer forming on the top), increase in sour taste in fruit flavoured variants.
Eggs: Fresh, in shell		Three to five weeks	Do not freeze	Shells break; eggs lose quality
Eggs: Raw whites		Two to four days	One year	Gently stir whites together; freeze in ice cube trays; remove blocks to plastic freezer bags when solid. Each contains about two tablespoons. One cube - one egg white
Eggs: Raw yolks		One week	Do not freeze	Yolks can clump

Source: Adapted from Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, 2013



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