

A Seat at the Table

Is Zero Hunger by 2030 achievable given the huge challenges we face?

By Andy du Plessis

South Africans recently celebrated their 25th Freedom Day. In many respects we have come a long way as a nation. And yet, we are behind in so much development and the slow progress means that we are ultimately failing our citizens in numerous areas – poor education; lack of broader access to clean water and sanitation; the lack of jobs; slow economic development; poor governance at our state-owned enterprises and the dire state of food security to name a few.

As a result, the reality is that there are people going to bed without food across South Africa. People going to bed hungry on a regular basis is symptomatic of a country failing its people, since the right to food is a basic human right, enshrined in our constitution. Stats SA reports that between 5 and 6 million South African children die annually from infectious diseases that would not have been fatal had they been properly nourished. Up to 70% of people in informal settlements suffer from persistent hunger or malnutrition, which places them at serious risk of obesity, chronic diseases, and mental health disorders. Food insecure people are forced to cope by skipping meals or eating smaller portions, and breadwinners are constantly worrying about having no food or no money to buy food. Households with children are even more likely to face this reality.

According to a [Stats SA report](#) in 2018, around 25% of South Africans are living below the food poverty line of R531 per month – the level below which individuals are unable to purchase sufficient food to provide them with an adequate diet to meet their basic nutritional requirements. Almost half of South Africa's population is considered chronically poor at the national upper bound poverty line, of R1,138 per person per month. The need is huge. But food security is about more than just the arrival of a meal on the table. It spans a variety of factors that include malnutrition, obesity, hunger seasons and low dietary diversity.

On 28 May we mark World Hunger Day to create awareness around the problem of hunger worldwide and to share sustainable strategies to eliminate hunger, and in light of what seems to be escalating towards a national crisis, the big question remains: Can South Africa meet the [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) target of Zero Hunger](#) by 2030?

The 2018 Global Nutrition Report notes that “malnutrition worldwide is unacceptably high, and progress unacceptably slow.” The 2018 FAO report concludes that the world is not on track to eradicate hunger by 2030.

Despite this, we believe that zero hunger by 2030 is achievable in South Africa.

To do this, we need to get the number of hungry people down – and fast! For that to happen, we need to do things differently. It requires innovation, bold thinking, and leadership from government, along with their willingness to see civil society as partners in this ambitious goal.

Several years ago, government appointed an Interdepartmental Task Team on Food Security which is tasked to implement strategies outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP). For their 2017 – 2022 plan, they requested parliament to set aside R86bn to roll out their proposed strategy to end hunger. This is not sustainable.

For food security to become sustainable, the model itself has to be sustainable. FoodForward SA recently unveiled its plan to scale its foodbanking model to reach 1 million people daily within 5 years through a network of 2,000 beneficiary organisations.

In a country where 30% of all food produced annually goes to waste, the recovery of surplus food is a viable and necessary strategy to combat hunger, and a very cost-effective option. For only R0,90, FoodForward SA is able to facilitate the delivery of a meal's worth of good quality edible surplus food which has a retail value of approximately R11. (The food itself is donated, however the R0,90 cost per meal includes the cost of logistics of collection, sorting, warehousing, refrigeration and distribution of the food, and staffing).

As part of the effort to ensure that South Africa plays its part in helping to meet the UN's 2030 target of a 50% reduction in global food waste, the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA) is encouraging its member organisations to sign voluntary agreements in support of their Food Waste Reduction and Redistribution Initiative, for which FoodForward SA is the official implementing partner.

Last year, FoodForward SA recovered 4,220 tons of surplus food from the supply chain, of which 82% is nutritious food. Yet, this represents less than 0,05% of the surplus food – which we estimate to be in excess of 10 million tons per year – that currently ends up in landfills or is incinerated.

Donating surplus food to FoodForward SA provides major commercial benefits. Food donations to FoodForward SA receive section 18A tax certificates, and those who choose to redirect their surplus food to FoodForward SA are able to significantly reduce their food disposal costs, which are often prohibitively high.

In addition, FoodForward SA's work supports 11 of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, so food donations to FoodForward SA can assist corporates in achieving their sustainability targets. Food donors can also drastically offset their own carbon footprint by donating to FoodForward SA – for every ton of food recovered, four tons of greenhouse gas emissions are saved. And as a level 1 BBBEE contributor, donations to FoodForward SA can help corporates achieve their BBBEE objectives.

As a non-profit organisation, FoodForward SA relies on philanthropy to sustain its operations, which means there is an important role that everyone can play in making a huge impact in solving our country's food insecurity/hunger crisis. Individuals can get involved by joining FoodForward SA's Fill the Gap club and signing up to give a minimum of R50 per month. Just R50 helps FoodForward SA redistribute enough food to give someone 2 meals a day for a month. Signing up is easy and uncomplicated, at www.givengain.com/cc/fillthegapmonthly.

With sufficient public support and the commitment of every player in the food industry, together we can achieve a South Africa without hunger, and ensure that every person has a seat at the table, with sufficient good quality nutritious food to nourish themselves, so that hope and dignity are restored. Only then can we be truly free.

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