

Action brief

# Food bank in Botswana: exploiting food waste to increase food security

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Country: Botswana

Themes: Nutrition-sensitive

Sub-themes: Food security

Date: 2023



## Overview



Reducing food waste is key to alleviating nutrition and accelerating food systems transformation. After all, more than a billion of tons of food is wasted and lost along the food value chain each year around the globe – as much as a third of all food produced, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, 26.7 per cent of households in Botswana (700 000 people in all) are severely food insecure, according to the 2023 edition of *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, and the United Nations Environment Programme in its *2021 Food Waste Index Report* estimates that 8 to 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions are associated with food that is not consumed.



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By recovering food destined for the garbage can, FoodBank Botswana aims to strengthen food security while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



## Objectives of the action brief

This action brief aims to showcase the importance of rescuing food that is considered waste.



## Period covered

FoodBank Botswana, created and registered in 2014, has conducted food rescue activities since 2017.



## What action was taken?

Conversations with independent organizations along the value chain in Botswana have revealed that they dispose of food waste by incinerating the food, feeding it to pigs or dumping it in the landfill. However, much of this food is edible but simply unfit for sale due to packaging issues, such as dents in boxes or cans.

Recognizing this, FoodBank Botswana began intercepting these food items for use by households in need, thus increasing their food security. To do this, FoodBank Botswana approached various members of the food value chain to rescue the food at different stages. Grains and other raw products can be salvaged from distributors, for example, while retail stores are good for milk and other perishable foods.

Rescuing this food does not impact a company's profitability but rather helps it reduce waste and loss while contributing

to its corporate social responsibility. The involvement of the private sector is key to the success of food banks.

FoodBank Botswana redistributes the food it collects to other agencies in the area, repackaging it when needed. For its activities, FoodBank Botswana has a total budget of more than \$300,000, mainly from the Global FoodBanking Network.

The creation of food rescue operations in the southern district of Botswana has significantly decreased the amount of food waste and loss. In 2022, FoodBank Botswana distributed 38 tons of food to 26,242 beneficiaries via more than 15 community-based agencies, including orphanages and women's shelters.



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## What would the country do differently?

### Challenges:

- The initiative is limited by a lack of resources. Additional resources would mean that more commercial farms – particularly those producing fruits and vegetables – could be targeted and the number of beneficiaries increased. New storage facilities, such as cold rooms, also could be set up.

- Negotiating with the private sector can be challenging. For example, many companies are concerned about the risk of food-related diseases affecting their brand. To increase the involvement of the private sector and convince more companies to contribute, FoodBank Botswana absolves donors from responsibility.



## Adaptation and applicability

- Most countries have organizations in the food value chain that eliminate what they consider to be waste and loss. This food often can be rescued, and food recovery organizations must exploit this opportunity.
- When distributing food, particular attention should be paid to respecting the dignity and integrity of beneficiaries.



## Next steps

- Training on the preservation of perishable items would promote more efficient and secure rescues. Smartphone apps also could contribute to limiting food waste.



## Further information

- [www.foodbank.org.bw](http://www.foodbank.org.bw)
- [info@fbbt.org.bw](mailto:info@fbbt.org.bw)



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