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Food aid organisation pleads for logistical aid

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Source: Africa.com

Leading food rescue and hunger relief organisation, SA Harvest, has made a strong case for the critical role of logistics in reducing food waste and hunger.

With over 10.3 million tonnes of edible food wasted annually in South Africa, while 20 million people are on the spectrum of food vulnerability, the non-profit organisation is working to bridge the gap by rescuing surplus food from farms, manufacturers, and retailers, and distributing it to those in need.

According to Ozzy Nel, SA Harvest's CEO, an immediate and urgent need has arisen, resulting from the generous donation of 1 000 tonnes of citrus fruit from Indigo Fruit Farming.

"The donation of the fruit is just one piece of the food rescue puzzle.

"It is a massive logistical undertaking to transport 68 tonnes of fruit every week from the pack house in Nelspruit to either Durban or Johannesburg and we are calling on the logistics and transport industry to support us in ensuring that the fruit reaches our beneficiary organisations."

Nel added they are grateful to have secured support from Unitrans and Maersk, who are providing trucks for the first four weeks of this joint venture in food rescue, and from HelloChoice, who have procured the agri bins.

“This leaves us with a weekly transport requirement of 68 tonnes of citrus between Nelspruit and either Johannesburg or Durban from 5 June till 28 August.

“We are also in need of trucks to return the agri bins to Nelspruit each week.”

Nel explains that the bulk of food loss and waste in South Africa is associated with processing and packaging, with 49% lost, followed by 19% lost during the post-harvest handling and storage phase, and 18% at the consumer/household level.

Cereals contribute half of the overall losses and waste, followed by fruit and vegetables (19%), milk (14%) and meat (9%).

The organisation works with food donors such as manufacturers, farmers, and retailers to rescue this food and redirect it to beneficiaries who convert it into nutritious meals.

Logistics plays a crucial role in its food rescue operations, from coordinating with food donors to collecting and transporting surplus food to ensuring the safe and efficient distribution of the food to local community organisations and charities.

It has a fleet of refrigerated and other vehicles operating from warehouses in Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Lusikisiki.

A proprietary technology platform is being built to enhance its logistics capability, which will help maximise the efficiency of the entire food rescue supply chain.

"This platform will allow for knowledge and data sharing with NGOs and other key stakeholders and bring about the collaboration needed to build solutions. It empowers how we tackle the problem of food waste in South Africa and eventually scale sufficiently for our industry to be more effective," Nel said

Apart from the brands mentioned, SA Harvest receives support from logistics companies such as Meridian Logistix, Waterford Carriers, Time Link Cargo and Bulldog Hauliers.

However, the organisation is calling on the logistics industry for more support to assist with reverse logistics and the transportation of surplus food to their warehouses.

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