

# REDUCING WASTE, FROM FARM TO PLATE

A multi-stakeholder recipe to reduce food loss and waste



# The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

## Guiding the Optimisation of Surplus Food Donation



Food waste is a multi-dimensional issue and tackling it needs a holistic approach, where the government along with all other key partners plays a pivotal role

*FSSAI is India's apex food regulating body for laying down science-based standards for articles of food, and regulating their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption. Since 2018 it has embarked on a unique initiative called "Save Food, Share Food" to promote the donation of surplus food in a safe manner.*

### Key messages

- A third of all food in India gets spoiled or wasted before it is consumed.
- FSSAI lays down science-based standards for articles of food and regulates their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- The 'Eat Right India' movement of FSSAI is based on three key themes - Eat Safe, Eat Healthy, and Eat Sustainable. The 'Save Food Share Food' is an initiative of FSSAI that falls within the ambit of the Eat Sustainable theme.

- The IFSA network of food-collection agencies within the Save Food Share Food, through collaborative action is trying to minimize surplus food wastage.
- Key focus areas of the 'Save Food Share Food' initiative are: Integration of food donating and collection agencies, volunteers and beneficiaries; facilitating end-to-end solutions for tackling surplus food waste; providing cross-learning opportunities for stakeholders; increasing outreach of the program pan-India.
- To ensure scale-up of this effort 'State Connects' are being jointly organized by FSSAI and CII to mitigate food waste through surplus food donation.

Reducing food waste has repercussions on addressing food and nutrition security, reducing carbon emissions, and ultimately leading to building more resilient and safe food systems at a macro level.

Globally, an estimated 17 percent of total global food production is wasted in households, in the food service and in retail all together. Yet another stark reality is that between 691 and 783 million people faced hunger in 2022. Food that is lost and wasted accounts for 38 percent of total energy usage in the global food system.<sup>1</sup> India alone with a population of over 1.4 billion, produces 0.5 kg of organic waste per individual per day.<sup>2</sup>

## India, the growing food basket: Turning food waste challenge into opportunity

India is the largest producer of milk and pulses, and second-largest producer of rice, wheat, sugarcane, groundnut, vegetables and fruits globally<sup>3</sup> and is consistently growing in scope, as the food basket for the world.

However, at the other end of the spectrum around 90 kgs of food waste per capita per year is reported in India in the high-income group (Noted as 68, and 63 in the middle- and poor sectors respectively)<sup>4</sup>. Major food wasted in India emanates from hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, residential blocks, cafeterias in airlines and food processing industries.

On the one hand, the lack of adequate and efficient cold chain infrastructure is a critical supply-side bottleneck in India leading to massive post-harvest losses; while on the other, rising incomes and poor levels of awareness on food waste mitigation, contribute to hastening environmental degradation.<sup>5</sup>

India is actively involved in the SDGs and is integrating them within its national development agenda, however it has yet to set course to a food loss and waste reduction target under SDG Target 12.3. Surplus food redistribution can be a way to relieve co-existing challenges of food insecurity and food waste. Food donation has been a cultural practice in India since long. Streamlining this practice with food safety regulation can be a game-changer. No wonder the country's premier food safety body FSSAI, took on this challenge in collaboration with private sector and development sector partners to promote donation of surplus food.

FSSAI ensures food regulations are in place to make sure that safe and hygienic surplus food is being distributed. To this effect it rolled out the "Food Safety and Standards (Recovery And Distribution of Surplus Food) Regulations, 2019"<sup>6</sup> detailing responsibilities for key stakeholders for surplus food collection and distribution, specifically, the food business

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<sup>1</sup> FAO estimates 2022

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Food Waste Index Report 2021

<sup>3</sup> FAO estimates 2022

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Food Waste Index Report 2021

<sup>5</sup> Niti Aayog, Strategy for New India @ 75

<sup>6</sup> Food Safety and Standards (Recovery and distribution of surplus food) Regulations, 2019 ([Link](#))

operators and surplus food distribution organizations with respect to handling, transportation, storage and labeling of food being distributed.

## FSSAI's call to scale action, with the 'Save Food, Share Food' initiative

Food systems are complex in nature and require a more holistic and coordinated approach. The 'Whole of Government' and 'Whole of society' approaches adopted by FSSAI thus reinforce its role as an 'enabler and reinforcer' for fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment for advancing a more sustainable food system for India.



Within the purview of this role the FSSAI has embarked on the 'Eat Right India' movement that is based on three key themes - Eat Safe, Eat Healthy, and Eat Sustainable. The Save Food, Share Food<sup>7</sup> is an initiative of FSSAI that falls within the ambit of the Eat Sustainable theme, and endeavors to prevent food waste in the food industry by promoting surplus food donation.

It encompasses a pan-India network of surplus food distribution agencies, 85 NGOs, known as the Indian Food Sharing Alliance (IFSA) that operate to encourage safe collection and distribution of surplus, hygienic and safe food through structured food collection and distribution mechanisms, to feed those who need it the most.



Still at a nascent stage of working out the particulars, including building more awareness, developing the database of food sharing agencies and NGOs, and congregating key stakeholder consultations, this initiative of FSSAI has on-board also the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII with a formal MoU is a key partner

for leveraging industry support), food donating agencies, and other food and beverage organizations (FBOs).

In a next-level effort, to garner state-level commitments, the first 'State Connect', has been jointly-organized by FSSAI and CII in Goa (a union territory of India) for introducing the Save Food Share Food initiative to encourage local adaptation, create awareness on its Eat Right India initiative and overall strengthen food safety and regulatory ecosystems.

These efforts are set to build momentum for the initiative at the national, state and district levels. The CII's role has been pivotal here, supporting the FSSAI and working with private sector businesses, hand-holding and guiding them to help understand their specific roles.

"FSSAI doesn't just restrict itself to the agenda of being a regulatory body, but also its initiatives like Eat Right India, and Save Food, Share Food, are facilitating varied partners to come together to collaborate on solutions for tackling surplus food wastage in the country. CII has been at the forefront for supporting such initiatives" says Jane Karkada, Executive Director at Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

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<sup>7</sup> Save Food Share Food at FSSAI Website at [\(Link\)](#)





90 kgs of food waste per capita per year was reported in India just in the high-income group. Improvements in food safety, food loss and waste stand to accelerate food systems transformation efforts.

## **Public-Private Engagement: Joining forces to fight food waste**

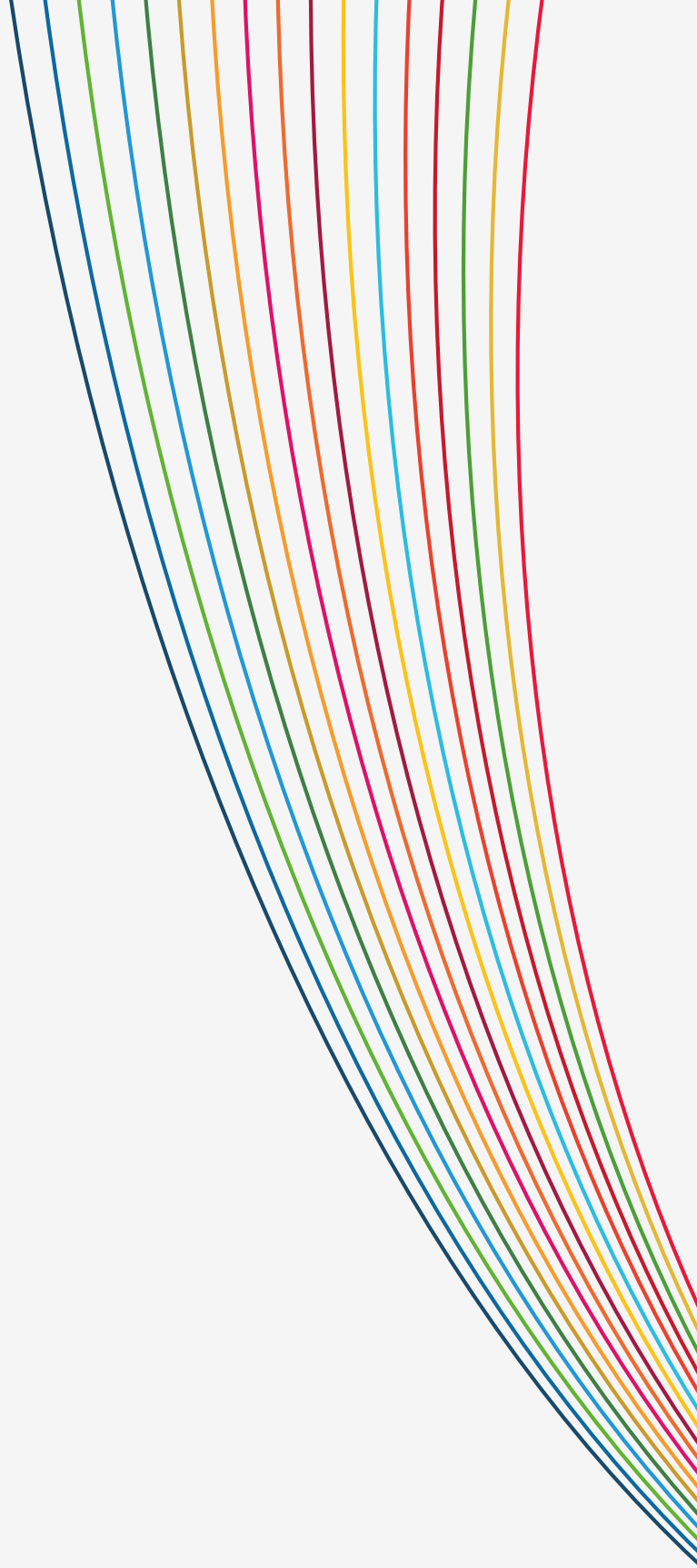
There are various challenges pertaining to manpower and infrastructure support for surplus donated food to reach on time, via the necessary transport vehicles, is stored properly and refrigerated as needed. Food donating agencies however mostly run on philanthropic models and lack these support facilities, and are mostly operated by volunteers. Multi stakeholder collaboration however can spell innovative and localized solutions.

“The government can not solve this challenge on its own, especially in a huge country the size of India; for the government to reach everywhere with solutions is difficult. But having an active and robust private sector which is ready to support and partner with us on many such programmes, is critical to the success of such a project especially since the programme is totally voluntary. Despite that, there are so many food donating agencies and FBOs who are reaching out for participating in Goa, Gujarat and other parts of the country.” says Sharma.

## **The way forward: Saving and sharing the right and safe food**

There are some interesting developments underway to look forth to within the Save Food Share Food initiative, in the near future. With its revamped website, an IVR-based helpline number to help food donors connect with surplus food distribution organizations, and even a mobile application in-the-making to help donors easily access and donate; the initiative is set to see a savvier version roll out soon.

Being a food regulating body for the country, FSSAI's role for preventing surplus food waste is all the more critical for generating large-scale awareness on the issue among citizens, food businesses and recovery agencies. Thus raising the momentum of dialogue and action on this issue, the FSSAI is geared up for its next level of state-level consultations for ensuring food safety, preventing surplus food waste, and promoting surplus food donation. State Connect



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