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**Leket Israel, the largest food rescue organization in Israel, releases its Sixth Annual National Food Waste and Rescue Report in Israel on the topic of the urgent need for action in the treatment of food waste and rescue in Israel**

**The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that a comprehensive national plan is needed to reduce food waste and increase food rescue volumes immediately according to data from BDO**

**According to the Report’s findings, there was a decrease of 50,000 tons in food loss, due to changes in consumption habits;** an increase in online food purchase, a reduction in purchase from open markets and a shift from consumption from the closed institutional sector to food consumption at home, where the public spent most of 2020.

**In the household sector,** food worth NIS 9 billion (US $2.59 billion) was discarded, an increase of NIS 800 million (US $230 million) compared to 2019. On the other hand, there was a decrease of NIS 2.2 billion (US $634 million) in the institutional sector which is a 50% reduction in the value of food loss compared to the year before.

**In the retail sector** (supermarkets etc.), the total loss of food in 2020 was approximately 420,000 tons which constitutes a decrease of about 4% compared to food loss in 2019. This resulting from the transition from buying in open markets which are categorized by high loss rates, to online purchase which is categorized by low loss rates. The total value of food loss in the retail sector amounted to NIS 4.3 billion (US $1.25 billion).

**In the agriculture sector,** there was an increase of 20,000 tons of food loss. A total loss of 640,000 tons of agricultural produce valued at NIS 2.6 billion (US $749 million) which is up about 3% in the quantitative loss compared to 2019.

In 2020, 150,000 people joined the circle of food insecurity. The pandemic exacerbated the issue of food insecurity in Israel and emphasized the importance of food rescue as a key policy tool to diminish it. This illustrates the ability to reduce food loss by changing habits and consumption patterns. **According to the Report, rescuing just 25% of all the wasted food in Israel, at a cost of NIS 1.1 billion (US $.3 billion), will close the entire food security gap in Israel.**

The Covid-19 crisis is an inequitable pandemic from both a health and an economic perspective. The populations whose health has been most impacted in Israel are the elderly, ultra-orthodox Jews, and Arabs, which are characterized by the highest rates of poverty and food insecurity.

The environmental cost of food waste in Israel as of 2020 is estimated at NIS 3.42 billion (US $1 billion), of which NIS 1.35 billion (US $.4 billion) is due to the unnecessary waste of land and water resources, NIS 1.27 billion (US $.4 billion) in greenhouse gas and air pollutions and NIS .8 billion (US $.2 billion) as a direct cost of waste collection and processing.

 The result of food waste in Israel, in 2020, is that additional manufacturing resources were wasted as well: 180 million cubic meters of fresh water that could fill 56,000 empty Olympic size pools, 210 million cubic meters of effluent, 1 million dunams of agricultural land equivalent to 20 times the size of Tel Aviv, 1,230 million kWh of electricity required to produce computers and electrical equipment, 70,000 tons of fuel which could fuel 160,000 cars a year, 200,000 tons of waste (packaging and industrial waste etc.), 50,000 tons of fertilizers as well as livestock ammonia emissions of about 3,000 tons. Food waste contributed to the emission of 5 million tons of greenhouse gases in 2020 which constitutes about 6% of the total greenhouse gas emissions in Israel.

**The total amount of food loss in Israel is 2.5 million tons, valued at NIS 19.1 billion (US 5.5 billion) which is equivalent to NIS 615 (US $177) per month per household in Israel.** Of the total food waste, 50% (1.1 million tons) of it is edible saleable food, worth NIS 6.4 billion (US $1.85 billion) a year. In monetary value: approximately 21% of the food loss value, which constitutes NIS 4 billion (US $1.15 billion), is already lost in the production stages, equivalent to approximately 13% of the total value of agricultural output in Israel. The remaining 79% of the loss value, worth about NIS 15.1 billion (US $4.35 billion) is in the retail and distribution stages.

**Gidi Kroch, CEO – Leket Israel: “**The findings of the Sixth Annual Food Waste and Rescue Report illustrate the dire consequences and effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the social and economic aspects and emphasize the urgent need for action and recognition by the state on food rescue, which can provide a complete response to millions of people already living with food insecurity and the tens of thousands of people who joined them due to COVID. The great advantage of rescuing food is the ability not only to close the entire food insecurity gap in Israel by a quarter of the budget, but also higher utilization of resources and waste prevention. Additionally, food rescue helps reduce emissions and pollutants and strengthen the fight against the global climate crisis. Therefore, as recommended in the policy chapter of the Report, the Prime Minister’s Office should lead and promote the preparation of an inter-ministerial plan to advance the field of food rescue in a way that will holistically reflect the many benefits of food rescue.”

**Chen Herzog, Chief Economist** **- BDO and Editor of the Report:** “The loss to the national economy due to food waste in 2020 amounted to NIS 19.1 billion (US $5.5 billion), with an additional environmental cost of NIS 3.4 billion (US $1 billion). The cost of food waste comes out of the pocket of the consumers and taxpayers in Israel and therefore also affects the cost of living, imposing a surplus burden of NIS 3,600 (US $1,045) per year per household. The lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic reinforce the need to formulate a routine and emergency food rescue plan. It is an economic folly that in the year of Covid-19, in which there was an increase of 150,000 people living with food insecurity, no national food rescue policy was formulated. Food waste prevention and food rescue are economic, social, and environmental policy tools. Without formulating a national plan to rescue food and prevent food waste, we will not meet the climate goals and declarations of the Glasgow Conference to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the field of waste.”

**Tamar Zandberg, Minister of Environmental Protection:** “The Food Waste and Rescue Report in Israel indicates a close connection between food loss and the environment and the inconceivable cost we pay for this waste. Food loss becomes waste that we then have to invest a lot of resources to treat. Food: land, water, energy, pollutant emissions etc. Reducing food loss is an important contribution to Israel’s compliance with the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets that Israel pledged on the eve of last month’s climate conference of National Climate Change. “

About Leket Israel: Serving as Israel’s largest food rescue organization, in 2020, Leket Israel rescued 2.4 million cooked meals from IDF army bases, hotels catering companies, and restaurants and 18.5 thousand tons (41 million pounds) of agricultural produce. All this rescued food was redistributed to 246,000+ needy people weekly through Leket Israel’s network of 330 nonprofit agency partners throughout Israel. For more information, please visit: [www.leket.org/en](http://www.leket.org/en).