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**The State of Israel is ranked last among OECD countries regarding implementation of food rescue policies**

Leket Israel’s Food Waste and Rescue Report, produced in collaboration with Israel’s Ministry of Environmental Protection and Harvard Law School’s Food Law and Policy Clinic and written by BDO, reveals, for the first time, that the scope of food waste in Israel in 2021 is estimated at a value of approximately NIS 21.3 billion (US $6.1b) and consists of 37% of food production in Israel. In a special chapter of the Report, an international comparison shows that Israel ranks last among the OECD countries in the number of policy tools it has implemented to eradicate the food loss crisis.

The 7th Annual Food Waste and Rescue Report, examines in depth, with the help of globally accepted measurement tools, the governmental steps in OECD countries to implement policy tools to reduce food waste. **While the government ministries formulated various plans to reduce poverty and to minimize the social gaps, it appears that when it comes to food waste and rescue, this issue is not a priority.**

According to the Report’s estimates, the extent of food loss in Israel in 2021 is 2.6 million tons (52 billion lbs.) valued at NIS 21.3 billion (US $6.1b) which consists of 37% of food production in Israel. Of this, 50% of the food is salvageable and is fit for human consumption, translating to over 1 million tons (2 billion lbs.) at a value of NIS 7.5 billion (US $2.14b).

A comparison with countries around the world reveals that the food waste crisis is not unique to the Israeli economy. **However, among the 18 countries measured in the policy index supporting food rescue and food waste reduction, Israel has implemented the fewest number of policy tools to eradicate this phenomenon, ranking it last** of the 18 countries measured.

Encouraging the implementation of food rescue policy tools is imperative. From an environmental perspective, it will enable optimal utilization of existing natural resources and the reduction of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Economically, food rescue is a proven alternative to food production; preventing waste of precious resources and saving the Israeli economy NIS 5 billion (US $1.43b) annually. Socially, food rescue contributes to reducing the poverty level in Israel and strengthens the vulnerable populations suffering from food insecurity. **Rescuing just 20% of the food currently going to waste will close the entire food insecurity gap in Israel and cost only NIS 1.1 billion (US $314m).**

**Gidi Kroch, CEO – Leket Israel:** “Israel’s position in last place in the implementation of policy tools to reduce food waste is not surprising but is cause for real concern. For the last six years, Leket Israel has published a comprehensive Food Waste and Rescue Report, signed by Israel’s Ministry of Environmental Protection, and supported by data from the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, issuing warnings about the volumes of food which are thrown away each year. At a time when not just 20% of the country’s population is in need of assistance, but the entire world is facing a climate crisis, wars and pandemics that are undermining everything we knew about food reserves and food security, the time has come for a complete overhaul of priorities in Israel, coming directly from the Prime Minister’s Office with food rescue at the top of the list. The greatest advantage of rescuing food is the ability to not only close the food insecurity gap in Israel by a quarter of the budget, but also greater utilization of natural resources and waste prevention. Additionally, food rescue helps reduce gas emissions and pollutants and strengthens the fight against the global climate crisis. It is incomprehensible that there is a solution that exists which would be effective across the board with economic, social, environmental and health benefits, and yet, the government ignores it with its indifference. We no longer have that privilege. The entire world is under real threat. The time to act is now, we need to take effective steps to reduce food waste and to preserve existing resources. Israel must come out of its indifference and immediately join the fight to reduce this crisis.”

**Prof. Emily Broad Leib, Director, Food Law and Policy Clinic of the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation:** “In this year’s Food Waste and Rescue Report, through a collaboration between the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic and Leket Israel, an international comparison of food waste and food rescue policies highlights the issue of food waste as a global concern, which is only exacerbated by the climate crisis. Israel remains far behind other OECD countries, however; with the tools presented in this Report, there is hope that Israel will be able to formulate a national plan to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030 and close the food insecurity gap in Israel.”

**Chen Herzog, Chief Economist – BDO and Editor of the Report**: “Israel ranking lowest among countries with food rescue policies, requires the new government, as part of the fight against the rising cost of living, to adopt a comprehensive food rescue policy. The cost of food waste comes out of the consumers pocket and greatly impacts the cost of living in Israel, causing an 11% rise in food prices. The increase in the cost of food due to the war in Ukraine further strengthens the economic viability of food rescue. Food rescue is an economic and socially advantageous solution to combating food waste. Every NIS 1 (US $.3) invested in food rescue contributes NIS 4.3 (US $1.22) to the national economy.

More than ever, this Report demonstrates the importance of adopting a food rescue program, as is customary in many countries around the world. The plan should include the 8 policy tools to encourage food rescue which are included in the Report’s findings.

Developing a plan to rescue and distribute surplus food is imperative as most of the average Israelis are spending the majority of their money on food. Additionally, it would save the national economy NIS 2.5 billion (US $714m) and NIS 4 billion (US $1.14b) if you include the social and environmental benefits.”

**Tamar Zandberg, Minister of Environmental Protection**: “This Report is published at a time when world leaders gather in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, to discuss solutions to solve the climate crisis and related global issues, such as the food waste crisis. Food rescue and minimizing food waste are necessary actions that need to be taken to preserve Israel's environmental, social, and economic resilience. It is critical that the State of Israel bridge gaps to align with other OECD countries addressing the issue of food waste and rescue. And through a ministry-wide and sweeping government move, we will be able to meet the challenge."

**About Leket Israel**: Serving as Israel’s largest food rescue organization, in 2021, Leket Israel rescued 1.7 million cooked meals from IDF army bases, hotels catering companies, and restaurants and 25 thousand tons (55 million pounds) of agricultural produce. All this rescued food was redistributed to 223,000+ needy people weekly through Leket Israel’s network of 263 nonprofit agency partners throughout Israel. For more information, please visit: [www.leket.org/en](http://www.leket.org/en).

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