**Leket Israel**

Leket Israel is the largest food salvaging organization in Israel, and the only one whose sole activity is food salvaging. Leket Israel’s main goal is to eradicate the phenomenon of lack of food security by salvaging and redistributing food surplus to needy populations in Israel.

Leket Israel harvests surplus fresh agricultural yields and collects surplus nutritional, cooked meals, vets the food, packs it and distributes it to those in need throughout the country. The salvaged food is distributed to low socio-economic populations who suffer from lack of food security.

The organization ensures quality control of the salvaged food as related to food safety and proper storage conditions, and as related to the foods’ nutritional value, ensuring that it is nourishing and healthy. For the sake of ensuring these standards, the organization also funds proper infrastructure for the not-for-profits that receive the surplus food for distribution. The organization’s nutritionists also lead nutrition workshops for low socio-economic populations, in order to raise awareness and provide tools to enable proper, healthy nutrition on a limited budget.

The 2018 National Food Loss and Food Salvaging Report was published, for the fourth year, by Leket Israel and BDO. According to the report’s estimations, Israel’s food loss stands at 2.5 million tons, or about NIS 19.7 billion, constituting about 35% of Israel’s food production. Of the food lost, about 1.2 million tons, or NIS 7 billion, is salvageable and suitable for consumption.

In 2018, Leket Israel salvaged about 2.2 million cooked meals from IDF bases, hotels, companies and restaurants, and about 15.5 thousand tons of agricultural produce, worth around NIS 150 million. These food surpluses are distributed to more than 175,000 people in need through around 200 not-for-profits throughout Israel. Leket Israel’s nutritionists led 70 workshops for the needy, and all this activity was aided by 47,000 loyal volunteers.

Limiting food loss and salvaging food has an important economic impact on closing inequality gaps and lowering the cost of living, and on boosting productivity and competition in the food industry in Israel. The activities also have a meaningful impact on the environment, by saving resources and limiting pollutants and emissions.

Founder and chairman of Leket Israel, Joseph Gitler, made Aliyah to Israel from New York in 2000 and soon thereafter came upon Israel’s National Insurance Institute’s Poverty Report. The report then, as today, revealed the unfortunate reality of poverty for thousands of Israelis, people working for their livelihood and struggling to survive every day, while remaining below the poverty line. The organization, which began as local gatherings in Joseph’s home and delivered food surpluses in his personal Subaru, has grown and expanded by impressive degrees, until finally becoming the largest network for food salvaging in Israel.

Recognition of the many advantages of food salvaging and proper budget allocations by decision makers will enable the salvaging of greater amounts of surplus fresh and healthy food and will further close the food security gap in Israel, all while significantly saving on resources and costs.