**Introduction**

The National Food Waste and Rescue Report is being published for the seventh consecutive year by Leket Israel and BDO, with the cooperation – for the third time – of the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

According to estimates in the report, 2.6 million tons of food, worth NIS 21.3 billion was wasted in Israel in 2021. This quantity of food loss is equivalent to approximately 37% of Israel’s domestic food production. Of this amount, approximately 1.0 million tons, worth NIS 7.5 billion, is rescuable.

Worldwide increases in food prices, as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as the shortage of goods caused by extreme climate events that impact the global economy, further intensify the growing need to rescue food.

In Israel, where food expenditures are relatively high by international standards, food waste is among the factors that contribute to the high cost of living, due to both overspending on food and because waste drives higher food prices. In 2021, food waste’s overall impact on the cost-of-living was an additional NIS 6,900 per household annually.

Moreover, the climate crisis and the Israeli government’s commitment to lower greenhouse gas emissions underscore the need to reduce food waste and increase food rescue, as policy tools that will help lessen greenhouse gas emissions.

The prevention of food waste and promotion of food rescue are important economic and environmental tools for implementing the government’s July 2021 decision mandating a 71% reduction in the amount of waste sent to landfill by 2030. According to the report’s findings, 2.0 million tons of food and packaging waste were discarded in the last past year. The environmental damage done by food waste is estimated at NIS 3.6 billion.

This report is based on an economic model for the food industry developed by BDO. It includes comprehensive, detailed research on the extent of food waste of all types in Israel. Furthermore, the report reveals the potential for food rescue at each stage of the value chain in the food production process, and the environmental costs of food loss at each stage.

The findings presented below show that food rescue is extremely worthwhile from economic, social, and environmental perspectives. Every shekel invested in food rescue produces food with a direct value of NIS 3.6. If the environmental impact of food rescue is taken into account, the economic value of each shekel invested in food rescue creates NIS 4.2 in value for the national economy.

The current report includes a special, expanded chapter presenting an international comparison of food waste per capita and policy concerning food rescue. This chapter was written in collaboration with the Global Food Donation Policy Atlas prepared by the Food Policy and Law Clinic of Harvard Law School (FLPC) and the Global FoodBanking Network (GFN). The comparison shows that the problem of food waste is not unique to the Israeli economy, and that the extent of waste in Israel is similar to that in developed countries around the world. The chapter further shows that varied policy tools can be used to reduce food waste. In order for Israel to realize its potential to reduce food waste and encourage food rescue, thereby diminishing inequality and food insecurity among the country’s population, it needs to formulate an expedient government policy that encourages reducing food waste, and adopt advanced policy tools. The report ranks 18 countries according to their current policy support for reducing food waste and increasing rescue. On that scale, Israel ranks last. This indicates that Israel needs to shift its priorities, and that all government agencies ought to be enlisted in implementing that change.

It is our hope that this report will serve as the foundation for public discourse on food waste, and as a tool for developing national policy to stimulate genuine change in food waste and rescue patterns in Israel.

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