



Briefing to Hon Penny Simmonds

Minister for the Environment
Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment



Executive Summary

Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance (AFRA) is a collaboration of 35 community impact organisations that operate from over 100 locations across New Zealand with the support of over 6000 volunteers. All members perform Food Rescue - collecting good, nutritious surplus food from businesses and distributing that food to people in need.

Food Rescue is an environmental and social win.

Each day, on average, AFRA members collectively:

- Rescue 20 tonnes of food,
- Distribute 25 tonnes of food (rescued and donated),
- Provide the equivalent of 55,000 meals,
- Prevent 56 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions to the atmosphere.

Annually, AFRA members distribute food that, if purchased, would cost around \$70 million. They do so on a combined budget of around \$10 million.

Food Rescue has a measurable social and environmental impact with a Social Return on Investment of 1:4.5 - i.e. every dollar invested in Food Rescue delivers \$4.50 worth of social value.

Recommendations

ENVIRONMENT

We recommend that the Government make funding available for food rescue through MfE by amending an existing fund or establishing a separate fund as appropriate. If necessary, funding could be re-prioritised for this purpose in either Budget 2024 or Budget 2025.

We recommend that the Government introduce mandatory and audited reporting on food surplus and waste and to legislate for this as part of the planned work to replace the Waste Minimisation Act and Litter Act.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT

At present Government funding (through MSD) for food rescue is only budgeted until the end of FY2024/25. We recommend the following:

- Funding in Budget 2024 to meet inflation and cost-of-living pressures,
- A long-term commitment to funding food rescue activities at a level adequate to maintain a response to baseline food insecurity and capacity to respond to disruption-related surges in Budget 2025.

CROSS-GOVERNMENT

We recommend that Government works with stakeholders across the food system to establish a community and industry-led, Government enabled, national food strategy.

About AFRA

Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance (AFRA) is a collaboration of 35 community impact organisations that operate from over 100 locations across New Zealand with the support of over 6000 volunteers. AFRA members work together to enhance the effectiveness and impact of their food rescue activities by sharing best practice, research, and data to build capacity across the sector. AFRA's small staff provides expert professional advice, initiates and undertakes research, facilitates collaboration and maintains key partnerships that add value to the sector. In addition, AFRA works to raise the profile of food rescue and advocates for its members, representing around 90% of all community organisations that carry out food rescue.



**Aotearoa
Food
Rescue
Alliance**

Food Rescue in New Zealand:

A Social and Environmental Win

Food rescue is the act of collecting surplus nutritious food that would otherwise become waste and distributing it to people experiencing food insecurity. It has both positive environmental and social impacts, by preventing good food from rotting in landfills and adding to Aotearoa's carbon emissions, while responding to food insecurity.

Food surplus occurs at all stages of the food system - primary production, manufacturing, transport, retail, and consumption. The vast majority of rescued food comes from retail, specifically supermarkets and grocery stores.



While farmers, growers, and businesses throughout the food system are making strides to reduce unnecessary surplus, the volumes remain significant and there is scope for considerably more food to be rescued. Farmers and growers are passionate about feeding people and taking care of their land and communities. AFRA members are enthusiastic about working alongside them to deliver greater social and environmental value.

The service ARFA members provide enables businesses to reduce their waste and associated costs while contributing to positive outcomes in their local communities.

Most AFRA members are multifaceted community organisations. They provide several vital community and environmental services including food rescue. Often the offer of food enables organisations to engage their clients in a suite of services that offer a pathway to greater financial and social independence.

Some AFRA members are stand-alone food rescue organisations. In most cases, they do not directly supply food to individuals. Instead, they supply other organisations such as community social services, schools, women's refuges and others who wish to offer food alongside other responses to need. AFRA's members work with over 1500 community organisations to respond to the needs of their local communities.

Our Measurable Impact

Each day, on average, AFRA members collectively:

- Rescue 20 tonnes of food,
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- Provide the equivalent of 55,000 meals,
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Annually, AFRA members distribute food that, if purchased, would cost around \$70 million. They do so on a combined budget of around \$10 million.

Social Investment

AFRA welcomes the Government's social investment approach to delivering effective social services. We anticipate that, whether or not a Government-funded activity is enabled through the proposed Social Investment Fund, Ministers will expect to see a clear return on investment of taxpayer's money and demonstration of impact through outcomes. AFRA and our members are committed to achieving measurable impact.

To that end, we initiated research conducted at Otago University and [published in the scientific journal Food Policy](#) to measure the social return on investment (SROI) of food rescue in New Zealand.

The study concluded that for every dollar invested in food rescue activities, \$4.50 worth of social value is generated. This is a robust and conservative measure of the social impact generated by food rescue and demonstrates that funding the sector is a valuable social investment for the Government, philanthropists, private enterprise and others to make. A summary of the findings can be found at impact.afra.org.nz.

On a [visit to AFRA member Good Neighbour](#) the Prime Minister indicated that he was supportive of Government funding community impact organisations as long as they could show how their projects will benefit local communities.

He added that local organisations such as Good Neighbour can do "a lot more" than Government to aid local communities with their on-the-ground knowledge and experience, and for many volunteers, provide a pathway to work, breaking an unemployment "cycle".

We agree with the Prime Minister and we look forward to working with the Government to ensure investment in food rescue continues to demonstrate clear benefit to communities.



Photo credit: Taylor Rice / SunLive



Key Relationships

AFRA maintains a variety of relationships and partnerships that add considerable value to the sector and contribute to our members being more effective and efficient.

Government Agencies

- Ministry of Social Development
- Ministry for the Environment
- Ministry for Primary Industries

NGOs

- New Zealand Food Network
- Kore Hiakai | Zero Hunger Network

Corporate Partners

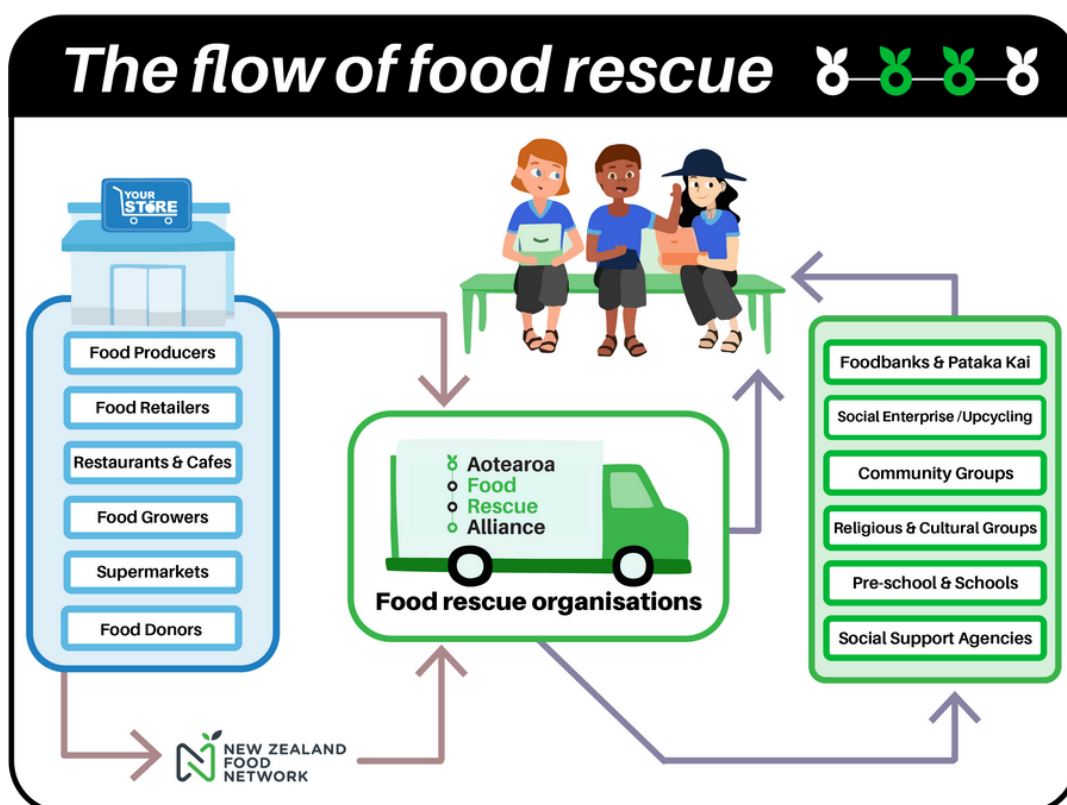
- Woolworths New Zealand
- Foodstuffs

Networks and Associations

- WasteMINZ
- Sustainable Business Network
- Environment Hubs Aotearoa
- New Zealand Food Waste Champions 12.3

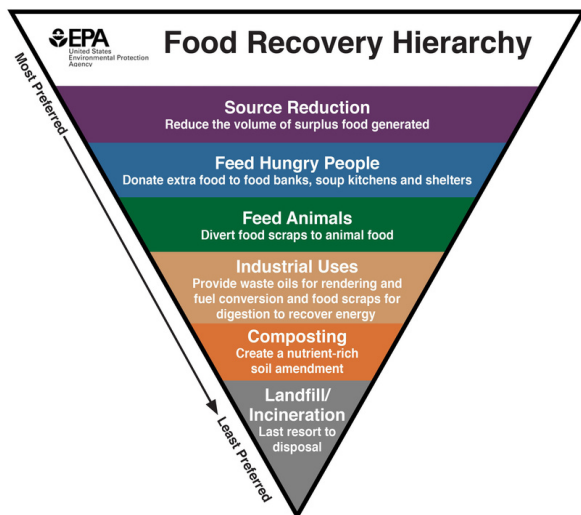


Individual AFRA members maintain a wide variety of local and national partnerships with businesses, NGOs, Ministries, philanthropic trusts and others.



Connection to Your Portfolios

Environment



One-third of all food produced in the world for human consumption never reaches the consumer's table. This not only means a missed opportunity for the economy and food security, but also a waste of all the natural resources used for growing, processing, packaging, transporting, and marketing food.

Food waste produces methane and accounts for eight percent of global carbon emissions. If food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases behind only China and the USA. One of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to reduce food waste.

Food rescue is one effective and efficient way to reduce food waste and represents an excellent return on investment for the Government. Food rescue sits high in the food waste hierarchy and, unlike more expensive options to deal with food waste, actually prevents waste from occurring in the first place, making better and more efficient use of limited resources.

Waste Minimisation Fund

AFRA and our members have a constructive relationship with the Waste Minimisation team at the Ministry for the Environment. We maintain regular contact to discuss the Ministry's wider suite of activities focussed on food waste reduction. In the past, AFRA members have received funding through the Waste Minimisation Fund to enable their growth and increase impact. However, the current funding criteria, especially minimum investment requirements, put the fund out-of-reach for most, if not all, members.



Food Rescue aligns well with the stated objectives of the fund:

- Accelerate system-level change,
- Shift attitudes and behaviours higher up the waste hierarchy,
- Protect the environment from harm, including greenhouse gases,
- Increase reuse, recycling, and recovery of resources.

We wholeheartedly support activities designed to make longer-term changes to people's behaviours to reduce food waste in the home and to reduce unnecessary surplus at the production, logistics and

retail nodes of the food system. However, that work will take time to achieve its aims. Right now, we have surplus food that can be rescued and repurposed. Food rescue is a practical and efficient way to prevent food waste while larger system changes take effect.

We propose that the Government fund food rescue as both a food security initiative through MSD and a food waste prevention initiative through MfE. We propose a contribution through MfE of \$1.92 million, 64% of which to go to AFRA members. This could be achieved by amending the criteria of the Waste Minimisation Fund or through a separate fund with appropriate criteria.

We recommend that the Government make funding available for food rescue through MfE by amending an existing fund or establishing a separate fund as appropriate. If necessary, funding could be re-prioritised for this purpose in either Budget 2024 or Budget 2025.

Mandatory Reporting of Food Waste

Legislating mandatory and audited reporting on food surplus and waste by all food growers, producers, manufacturers, and retailers is a necessary step if New Zealand is to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goal of halving food waste by 2030.

Currently, there is no standardised method for measuring and reporting food surplus and waste across the food supply chain. Work is underway on this at Otago University and we look forward to the outcomes of that work.

However, having an understanding of the current level of food waste in New Zealand and a system of measurement is just the first step. By mandating reporting and audits, we can establish a consistent method for tracking food waste and identifying opportunities for reducing it. This approach will allow us to set a baseline and targets, track progress, and hold businesses accountable for their role in reducing food waste.

Mandatory reporting will raise awareness about the scale of the problem and the need for action. Many businesses are unaware of the amount of food waste they generate or the impact it has on the environment and society. By measuring and reporting their food surplus, businesses will be able to confront the scale of the problem and take action to reduce their food waste.

By requiring reporting and audits, we can also identify opportunities for redistributing and recovering surplus food and ensure that it is used to its full potential.

We recommend that the Government introduce mandatory and audited reporting on food surplus and waste and to legislate for this as part of the planned work to replace the Waste Minimisation Act and Litter Act.

Connection to Your Portfolios

Associate Social Development and Employment

The Ministry of Social Development is the key government agency for AFRA and our members. We work constructively with the Food Secure Communities team at MSD.

During the COVID-19 pandemic response, food insecurity surged due to supply chain disruption and the impact of lockdowns on people's earning capacity and access to food. Amid that global crisis, MSD partnered with community impact organisations providing food rescue and food relief to distribute food to people in need. Making use of existing community infrastructure and knowledge greatly improved the effectiveness and impact of Government funding for food relief. Local organisations with credibility in their communities helped foster greater trust in this aspect of the pandemic response. Through the Food Secure Communities programme, the Government funded community organisations to make capital investments that continue to enable effective food rescue activities today.



Post-pandemic, AFRA members played a pivotal role in enabling nimble, targeted responses to regional disruption events. In response to the North Island cyclones of early 2023, many of our members provided two key services: They used Government and philanthropic funding to efficiently purchase and distribute food to impacted communities. They also used their food rescue capacity to collect food from flooded and/or closed supermarkets and distribute it to people in need. Without food rescue, that nutrition would have become waste. Instead, the unexpected surplus was used to meet unexpected needs. That's exactly what food rescue is there to do.

New Zealand has experienced an extraordinary number of natural and human-induced disruptions over the last 15 years. Climate change is likely to result in a greater incidence of weather, health and other disruptive events. Organisations that conduct food rescue have the infrastructure, expertise, partnerships and local connections necessary to provide an effective response to surges in food insecurity caused by these disruption events. However, to be available to respond, community organisations need to maintain their food rescue capacity outside of specific events. That requires funding.

Unfortunately, food insecurity doesn't only occur during regional, national or global events. According to the Child Poverty Related Indicators Report 2023, 13% of children experienced food insecurity in 2021/22, which means their families did too. Data is scant on general population food insecurity but our members know that it isn't just families with children that present with food-related needs. Universally, community impact organisations that provide any kind of food support to their clients report that demand remains high and they have less ability to meet demand now than they did during the pandemic. The cost of living, particularly the impact of food price inflation, is having an immensely negative impact on baseline food security in New Zealand.



That baseline level is not representative of the level of chronic food insecurity in New Zealand. It is generated by individuals and households experiencing their own surges in food insecurity due to events such as losing a job, having work hours reduced, a family member becoming ill or seriously injured, loss of accommodation, etc. Chronic food insecurity does exist, and we need to be mindful not to create dependency by enabling people to remain in that state, but in most cases, people only need food relief temporarily and the provision of that relief is part of the support they use to get back on track.

While it is important to do more than simply respond to food insecurity, that response is still necessary. We wholeheartedly support action to empower people to become more food secure and reduce their reliance on food relief support. As well as that, we propose that funding continue to be made available through MSD to fund food rescue activities. That funding has a dual purpose: To part-fund food rescue activities as part of the response to baseline food insecurity and to maintain the community infrastructure and expertise needed to ensure effective and efficient responses to surges in food insecurity caused by disruption events.

At present Government funding for food rescue is only budgeted until the end of FY2024/25. We recommend the following:

- Funding in Budget 2024 to meet inflation and cost-of-living pressures,
- A long-term commitment to funding food rescue activities at a level adequate to maintain a response to baseline food insecurity and capacity to respond to disruption-related surges in Budget 2025.

Food Strategy

Multiple agencies have a role in our nation's food system, including MPI, MfE, MSD, Health New Zealand, MBIE and others. This is appropriate and each agency has an important part to play. However, it can also mean that activities, funding, and responses are disjointed and siloed, leading to suboptimal use of resources and outcomes.

Additionally, the industry has many actors and many moving parts. Our free-market system does a good job of ensuring that this multitude of participants work effectively to deliver a high-value sector with exports that drive much of New Zealand's economic activity. Unfortunately, our current system does a less effective job of ensuring that people in New Zealand have food security and that the environment in which food is produced will continue to be productive into the future.

We recommend that Government works with stakeholders across the food system to establish a community and industry-led, Government enabled, national food strategy.

This would align the work of Government and industry players and to drive the changes needed to shift from a predominantly linear food system to one that is more circular. Such a strategy would balance the important and considerable economic benefits of food production with the need to ensure that people in New Zealand have enough affordable, nutritious food to eat and that our food system operates in a way that enables future generations to enjoy the abundance we currently do.

There are good examples from overseas to draw on, notably Australia and Canada, although we emphasise the need to develop a strategy that is fit-for-purpose for our farmers, growers, businesses, consumers and communities here in New Zealand.

Tax Incentives

We recently submitted on IRD consultation regarding a proposal to make the current temporary treatment of Disposals of Trade Goods at Below Market Value permanent.

AFRA supports making permanent the current temporary tax treatment of trading stock donations to approved donee organisations. The key benefit of doing so is to remove a perceived disincentive to donating food and making surplus food available for rescue.

We believe the benefit outweighs any perceived risk, especially given there appears to be little evidence the potential risks have manifested during the periods the temporary measures have been in place. We hope the change will be made in advance of the expiry of the current exemption on March 31 2024.