

A major step for food security in SA: The SABS food donation standard is published

FoodForward SA's advocacy over the past few years is gaining meaningful traction toward the realisation of a national Food Donations Policy for South Africa.

By [Andy Du Plessis](#), issued by [FoodForward SA](#) 11 May 2026



In June 2023, FoodForward SA (FFSA) engaged with the CEO of the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), Sadvir Bassoon, and his senior leadership team to propose the development of a national standard for the donation and redistribution of surplus food. The SABS responded with strong interest, recognising both the scale and urgency of the issue - more than 10 million tonnes of largely edible food is lost or wasted across South Africa's food system each year.

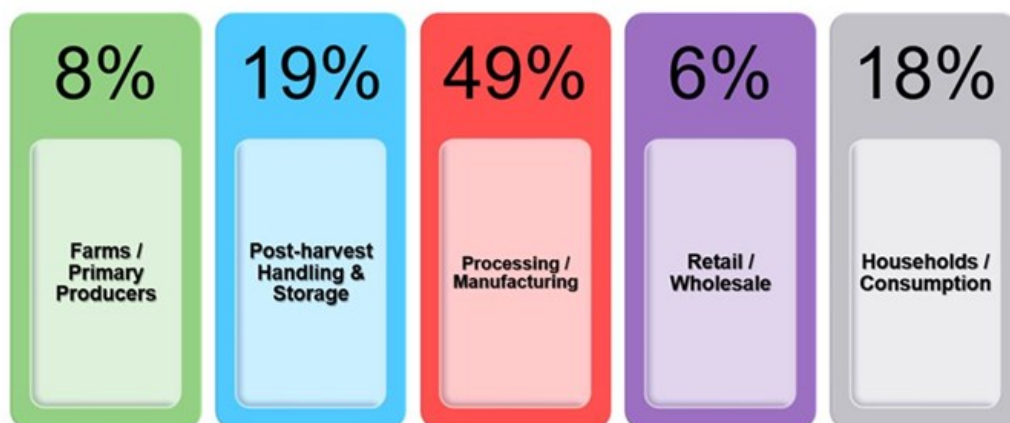
While the SABS was open to developing a voluntary standard, its protocol required a formal ballot among food industry stakeholders to determine whether such a standard was necessary. In October 2023, industry partners were canvassed, and the outcome was unanimous: South Africa needs a national standard for food donations.

From January 2024 to April 2026, a multi-stakeholder working group - of which FFSA was an active participant - met monthly to develop the standard. Following review by the SABS internal advisory committee, the [South African National Standard \(SANS\) 2088](#), was officially published on 17 April 2026. The draft is open for public comment until 16 June 2026, after which it will be finalised and available to relevant industries and sectors.

Developed through extensive multisectoral collaboration, including contributions from leading global experts such as the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic (FLPC), this milestone standard will:

- Provide clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the donation, recovery, and redistribution of surplus food
- Reference various national legislation and regulations, intended to strengthen food safety protocols for donated food
- Unlock greater volumes of safe, edible surplus food from across the food system
- Enhance traceability and accountability
- Reduce the environmental impact of food loss and waste by diverting surplus food from landfills to communities in need

WHERE LOSS AND WASTE OCCUR



This standard marks a significant step forward in building a more inclusive, efficient, and sustainable food system – one that ensures nutritious food reaches those who need it most. It comes at a critical time, when household food insecurity intensifies, and the rising cost of food and living expenses places increasing pressure on vulnerable communities.

FoodForward SA's recent research, conducted in collaboration with the University of Cape Town's South African Labour and Development Research Unit, shows that 70% of respondents interviewed in the study experience moderate to severe food insecurity: [FoodForward SA Household Food Insecurity Report 2026](#).

The standard will serve a dual purpose:

- 1) to encourage food system actors to donate more of the 10 million tonnes of food lost or wasted across South Africa each year, and
- 2) to ensure that this edible surplus is redirected to safely address food insecurity and malnutrition – a critical opportunity that is currently being lost, at significant social and environmental cost.

In a country facing deep structural challenges that may take decades to resolve, recovering and redistributing edible surplus food presents a powerful, immediate intervention. It has the potential not only to improve access to nutritious food and reduce stunting in children under five, but also to contribute to broader economic and social transformation.

The opportunity is clear, the need is urgent, and the pathway is within our reach. What is required now is collective action across government, business, and civil society to unlock the full potential of surplus food and ensure it reaches those who need it most.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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