

# Prevent this worldwide hunger

The current waste of one-third of all food produced for human consumption would be enough to feed one billion people who go to bed hungry

Analysis

BAHER KAMAL

BELIEVE it or not, the way to eradicate hunger from the face of the Earth is as feasible as it is necessary. In fact, the loss and waste of one-third of all food produced for human consumption would be just enough to feed the nearly 1 billion people who go to bed hungry every night.

The figures are self-explanatory. As much as 1.3 billion tons per year of food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain, from initial agricultural production down to final household consumption, according to the UN.

Moreover, it is not just about losing or wasting food – it also implies a waste of resources used in production such as land, water, energy and inputs, increasing the greenhouse gas emissions.

“Up to one third of all food is spoiled or squandered before it is consumed by people. It is an excess in an age where almost 1 billion people go hungry,” adds the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

### But what is food loss and food waste?

Food loss and food waste refer to the decrease of food in subsequent stages of the food supply chain intended for human consumption. Food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain, from initial production down to final household consumption, FAO says.

The decrease may be accidental or intentional, it adds, but ultimately leads to less food available for all.

Food that gets spilled or spoilt before it reaches its final product or retail stage is called food loss, it says.

This may be due to problems in harvesting, storage, packing, transport, infrastructure or market price mechanisms, as well as institutional and legal frameworks. Harvested bananas that fall off a truck, for instance, are considered food loss, according to FAO.

Food that is fit for human consumption but is not consumed because it is left to spoil or discarded by retailers or consumers is called food waste.

This may be because of rigid or misunderstood date-marking rules, improper storage, buying or cooking practices. A carton of brown-spotted bananas thrown away by a shop, for instance, is considered food waste, the UN agency says.

### Where is food lost and wasted?

Significantly, the World Resources Institute (WRI) says that food loss and waste occurs more “near the fork” in developed regions and more “near the farm” in developing regions.



**WASTE NOT:** A woman carries a bowl of peppers harvested from Food and Agriculture Organisation supported farms in Borno state, northeast Nigeria. On September 16, 2015 the first ever national food loss and waste goal in the US was launched, calling for a 50% reduction by 2030.

In the case of EU member countries, for instance, recent estimates of European food waste levels (Fusions, 2016) reveal that 70% of the European bloc of 27 states, food waste arises in the household, food service and retail sectors, with production and processing sectors contributing the remaining 30%.

Such high rates led the EU member states to commit to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in September 2015, including a target to halve per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030 and reduce food losses along the food production and supply chains.

Meanwhile, in the US, food waste is esti-

imated at 30-40% of the food supply.

This estimate, based on estimates from USDA's Economic Research Service of 31% food loss at the retail and consumer levels, according to the office of the chief economist, US Department of Agriculture.

This amount of waste, adds the office of the chief economist, has far-reaching impact on food security, resource conservation and climate change.

Wholesome food that could have helped feed families in need is sent to landfills.

The land, water, labour, energy and other inputs used in producing, processing, transporting, preparing, storing and disposing of

discarded food are pulled away from uses that may have been more beneficial to society – and generate impacts on the environment that may endanger the long-run health of the planet.

Food waste, which is the single largest component going into municipal landfills, quickly generates methane, helping to make landfills the third largest source of methane in the United States.

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### What to do?

Back to the global level, the UN specialised

agency reminds that hunger is still one of the most urgent development challenges, yet the world is producing more than enough food.

The FAO-led Save Food: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction is partnering with international organisations, the private sector and civil society to enable food systems to reduce food loss and waste in both the developing and the industrialised world.

The governments, research institutions, producers, distributors, retailers and consumers all have different ideas about the problem – the solutions – and the ability to change. What are they waiting for? – IPS

*Baher Kamal is an IPS correspondent.*

## Paying tribute through good citizenship and human rights

Analysis

MANSOOR JAFFER

THE Deputy Minister of Home Affairs Fatima Chohan will host a public gathering on good citizenship and human rights at Azaadville, near Krugersdorp tomorrow.

The event, one of the deputy minister's many outreach programmes for the year, pays tribute to the late Ahmed Timol, who was murdered by the apartheid state in 1971.

The gathering takes place at the Ahmed Timol Secondary School at 7:30pm where she will hand over smart ID cards to members of the Timol family who have deep roots in the Roodepoort and Azaadville areas.

Anti-apartheid activist Timol was 29 at the time of his arrest on October 22, 1971. He was murdered five days later, following interrogation and torture by the feared security police. Magistrate JL de Villiers, who presided over the inquest that followed, delivered a finding that said Timol had committed suicide.

Last month, a court found that Timol was murdered by members of the security police who either threw him from the 10th floor or the rooftop of John Vorster Square, now called the Johannesburg Central police station.

Timol and many others fought for justice and human rights for all. The Preamble to the country's constitution illuminates the context in which much of our work takes place in the present. It states:

“We, the people of South Africa  
Recognise the injustices of our past,  
Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;  
Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country and  
Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.”

Our Constitution further beseeches us to vigorously promote humanistic values such as non-racialism, non-sexism, equality, dignity, respect and freedom.

The extension of identity cards and other documents to all South Africans, is a constitutional imperative and a tribute to people like Timol, Oliver Tambo, Ahmed Kathrada, Nelson Mandela, and many other freedom fighters.

ID documents were denied to most South Africans in the past. Some black South Afri-



**GOOD CITIZENSHIP:** Deputy Minister Fatima Chohan will pay tribute to anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol in Azaadville tomorrow.

cans were forced to hide their identities in order to eke out work and other opportunities while many others were humiliated daily by the inhumane dompas system.

In 1994, the process was started to restore the dignity all South Africans, especially the victims of apartheid, and ID documents became available to all. Smart IDs which are

more secure and manageable, were introduced from 2013. More than 8 million South Africans now have smart IDs.

The deputy minister will talk about the role of the department in restoring dignity and what the struggles of the Timols and others mean for South Africans in 2017. The event will be a step in the journey of bringing closure

in one of the many tragedies from our dark past.

Timol's nephew Imtiaz Cajee who has been leading the campaign to establish justice in this matter, will be giving a report back on issues related to the inquest.

The event will be attended by comrades, family and friends of the late Ahmed Timol,

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representatives of government and civil society and residents from a range of communities, especially Roodepoort and Azaadville, where the Timols and many others have their roots. Veteran human rights lawyer and counsel in the Rivonia trial, advocate George Bizos, will also be in attendance.

The deputy ministry's outreach programmes generally entail educational elements on citizenship and identity as well as the hand over of smart ID cards to different individuals or sectors.

This year, the deputy minister has worked with senior citizens in Lenasia, with youth in the Cape and with the Tambo family on the occasion of the 100th year anniversary of the late Oliver Reginald Tambo.

The ministry is also interacting with a range of other sectors to further enhance services, facilitate empowerment and meet other broader objectives. These include people from the disability, social services, education and youth sectors.

The programmes create awareness of the work of the department, connecting with citizens and deepening the scope and quality of our service delivery efforts. The department has a huge responsibility that includes the provision of identity and travel documents, birth certificates within days of birth and refugee and asylum seeker management.

The deputy minister heads up the Moe-tapele (Leadership) programme, aimed at streamlining and enhancing the experience of the client, whether a citizen or a foreign national.

The Good Citizenship event, in tribute to Ahmed Timol, is in essence part of an overall strategic plan to implement provisions of the country's Constitution by extending citizenship, identity and human rights to all South Africans.

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