

FLM campaign dents SA's deepening hunger crisis

By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Food Lover's Market's fourth annual Hunger Month campaign raised funds equating to 1,030,888 meals, exceeding the fresh produce retailer's [1 million meal target](#) for 2020. Distributed by long-time NPO partner FoodForward SA, these food donations helped feed vulnerable, food-insecure South Africans who have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Image credit: FoodForward

Held in May every year, as an extension of World Hunger Day, the in-store Hunger Month campaign is Food Lover's Market's flagship CSI project. By purchasing any of the specific partner products, customers contributed the required 85c needed to provide one meal to a hungry person through FoodForward SA. This year's supplier partners included Tru-Cape Fruit Marketing, ZZ2, Westfalia Fruit, Simpl Juice and Crestshelf.

FoodForward was established in 2009, and aims to address widespread hunger in SA by recovering quality edible surplus food from the supply chain environment and distributing it to registered community organisations that serve the most vulnerable. The meals generated through this year's Hunger Month initiative were distributed to a range of children's homes, old age homes and other beneficiaries of the Food Forward programme.

In a webinar held last week to reflect on the campaign and thank partners for their buy-in, Food Lover's Market's CSI facilitator Kate Marais said the initiative has always had a wonderful impact, but she never realised how vital it would prove to be in 2020.

"We all know that there have been hungry people in the country for a long time, but this pandemic has exposed the issue ever more. This is a time when everybody has to step up and do what they can," Marais said.



Food Lover's Market Hunger Month campaign targets 1m meals

4 May 2020



Andy Du Plessis, managing director of FoodForward SA, also noted the timeliness of the campaign hitting the 1 million meal milestone. "I can't believe we hit 1 million in the middle of this pandemic. Covid-19 took the rug out from everyone's feet. We had a desperate food security issue before, and Covid has exacerbated the problem."

A recent [Oxfam report](#) warned that South Africa is joining the list of global hunger epicentres. "Middle-income countries such as India, South Africa, and Brazil are experiencing rapidly rising levels of hunger as millions of people that were just about managing have been tipped over the edge by the pandemic," it said.

The report revealed that even before the pandemic, 13.7 million people did not have access to enough food in South Africa due to high levels of unemployment, lack of access to assets such as land or fishing permits, and rising prices.



SA's hunger is everyone's problem - especially the well-fed

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Unemployment in South Africa [rose to 30.1%](#) in the first three months of 2020, according to Statistics South Africa, and it [could soar to over 40%](#) as a result of the pandemic and related lockdown.

Du Plessis highlighted the plight of workers in the informal sector particularly, many of whom depend on a daily income to survive and were therefore severely affected during the stricter levels of lockdown. "There are more people on grants in South Africa than there are formally employed."

NPO-private sector collaboration vital

He warned that as hunger and poverty grows over the coming months, unrest in the country will too, and this impacts everybody, including the food secure. "Unrest will increase, so the safety of the middle-class and upper-class is also affected by food insecurity. It's in everybody's interest to address the problem."

Du Plessis added, "Healthy food is not affordable for the poor. People have to scrape together what they can to eat anything at all. That means we won't have a healthy workforce; and those people depend on a failing healthcare system."

As demand for food has soared in recent months, resources for non-profits like FoodForward have dwindled. And according to Du Plessis, they "can't rely" on government intervention. Under these circumstances, the need is greater than ever for NPOs and the private sector to collaborate on addressing social issues.

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Future of CSI

Food Lover's Market's director of HR and sustainability, Andrew Milson, was also present during the webinar. He said that we're living in a time where many people are desperate to work, but can't, and he urged people and organisations with a common vision to come together to improve lives.

"Food poverty is a symptom of inequality. How do we tackle that?" he questioned.

Sharing his thoughts on the future of CSI, Milson said that while providing meals is incredibly important, he recognised that we can't "give our way out" of our country's problems, we have to "build" a way out of it.

"How do we encourage more business development? How do we encourage more small businesses to get into our supply chain? How do we give talent opportunities in the workplace, especially people who may not look like us? How do we give social enterprises a foot into the door of our organisation so that they can supply products and services to our businesses?"

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