

Potatoes SA steps up to tackle SA food crisis

Against the backdrop of the country's growing food crisis, Potatoes South Africa has stepped up to the plate to donate over 2,000 kilograms of potatoes to feed the hungry this festive season - and is challenging other South Africans to "pass the potato" and do the same.



Source: Lars Blankers via [Unsplash](#)

Highlighting the depths of the crisis currently gripping the country, a recent Ipsos study revealed that as many as 46% of households experienced hunger during the Covid-19 pandemic, impacted by job losses, economic pressures, and rising food prices. Meanwhile, unemployment rose to new record highs of 34.9% in the third quarter of 2021, seeing thousands more breadwinners lose their livelihoods, and further exacerbating issues of food insecurity.

"Millions of households are currently gripped in a desperate struggle for survival, not knowing where their next meal may come from – a situation which collectively as a society we should find simply untenable," says Potatoes South Africa CEO Willie Jacobs.

"As we enter the December festive season, we are therefore calling on all South Africans, both as individuals and as businesses, to join in the spirit of giving and take urgent action to support the poor and needy."

Pass the potato

On behalf of the country's potato industry, the organisation has therefore launched a new charitable initiative called "Pass the Potato". This initiative aims to encourage South Africans to donate potatoes to those in need, and to challenge friends and family members on social media to do the same using #PassThePotato.

To kickstart the campaign, the organisation has provided hundreds of bags of potatoes for the cause, including 50 bags personally donated by Jacobs as a gesture of goodwill in honour of his fiftieth birthday. These potatoes are being distributed to various charities around Gauteng, sharing the gift of food security in what could be termed the country's worst festive season.

The organisation has already stopped by the Eleos Community Centre in Pretoria West, which supports underprivileged children and their families, as well as the Thuthuzela Aid Community Centre, an orphanage and child day care centre in Alexandra.

It has also rallied support from a variety of other businesses including Grow Fresh Produce Agents, Al3Boerdery, Tammy Taylor Dainfern Square, PR Worx, and Instant Pot South Africa, who have all donated towards buying potatoes to help curb hunger, and who will also be joining the social media challenge during December.

Jacobs adds that in addition to their versatility, potatoes offer particularly significant benefits in the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition.

"Notably, potatoes are host to several important vitamins and minerals, including potassium, zinc and calcium, which is crucial for households lacking diverse diets. A single 150g skin-on potato even provides nearly half an adult's recommended daily amount of vitamin C," he explains.

"But perhaps most significantly, potatoes offer an important source of complex carbohydrates for increasing feelings of satiety and providing sustained energy – a vital benefit for households facing issues of hunger.

"The need in our country is great, and government cannot solve the problem alone. As a nation, it's time to come together, and offer hope and relief to those households and communities who are suffering in these difficult times for our country."

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