



MEDIA RELEASE

Waste not, want not this Festive Season

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Celebrating any holiday occasion in feasting and general overindulgence seems to be the natural order for us as humans, and is probably the single most unifying similarity amongst all our many and varied differences. This festive season, The Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA) urges all South Africans to reduce excessive food consumption and wastage, to compost organic waste, and to seek out and support local producers.

The holiday season tends to be a time of largesse, which is all very well, but we really need to be conscious of the fact that food waste, especially, increases at this time of year; something we should not tolerate in our society, and which on the whole, can no longer be justified. It is estimated that almost one in seven people goes hungry worldwide.

Vice-President of the IWMSA, Suzan Oelofse says, "Not only is it an unnecessary expense to buy too many food items that we do not need and cannot possibly consume, it is simply unconscionable in today's difficult economic times. Research has shown that for household food waste alone, the costs to society are approximately R26.7 billion per annum, or 1% of South Africa's annual GDP. In terms of refuse, food, or organic waste is a huge landfill challenge since it represents the major contributing factor to the production of harmful methane gases. Altogether, a staggering 40% of the waste that ends up in our landfills annually is organic; a clue which tells us that as consumers, we are wasteful creatures indeed. We can minimise this type of waste by planning before we shop or prepare food, careful handling and storage so that leftover food is limited and does not become tainted and inedible, and of course, composting wherever possible."

Oelofse continues "However, food waste is not the preserve only of the end consumer; there is the issue of organic waste being produced during the agricultural process, as well as in harvesting, handling, storage, processing and distribution. These factors are critical and very good reasons for us to support our local food producers. There is substantially less overall wastage if the point at which the food originates, to the point of its final distribution is reduced.

“One must also bear in mind that the production of food requires the use of all sorts of the earth’s resources. A horrifying statistic is that yearly, we waste around at least one third of our total global food production. Had that wasted food not been produced in the first place, perhaps more trees could be grown, which would in turn go a long way to offsetting harmful greenhouse gas emissions. Mismanagement of our planet, it seems, is what we do best and yet if we all try to make even a minuscule difference, the cumulative effects could make a tremendous and positive difference,” concludes Oelofse.

The IWMSA focuses on providing education and training for its members, as well as other interested parties, whether private individuals or government entities.

The IWMSA is a non-profit organisation comprising a body of dedicated professionals in their respective fields, who give freely and voluntarily of their time and expertise in order to effectively educate, promote and further the science and practice of waste management. For more information, visit: www.iwmsa.co.za.

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