

# Busting Food Date Labelling Myths







# Agenda

- Welcome & Intro to Second Harvest
- Identify difference between date label terms
- Identify when a food is safe to eat or not



# The Problem.



**46.5%**

of all food in Canada is  
**wasted every year**

**\$58B**

is the value of avoidable  
food waste annually

The amount of  
avoidable food waste  
is enough to feed

**17M+**

people **three meals**  
**every single day for a**  
**year**

**41.7%**

of all food waste is  
**avoidable** and can be  
rescued to support  
communities across  
Canada

**23%**

of avoidable food waste is  
**caused by best before**  
**dates**, from processing to  
purchase



A photograph of a crowded street scene, likely a food bank distribution line. A large green circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text. The background shows a street with people, cars, and buildings. On the left, a white truck has "second harvest" written on its side. On the right, a brick building has a sign for "Wisdom's Barber" and "SPECIALIZING ALL LINES OF CO". A person in a wheelchair is visible in the foreground on the right.

At the same time,  
**10 million**  
Canadians are food  
insecure.





**Canada's  
climate is  
warming 2x  
as fast as  
the global  
average**

If wasted food were a country,  
it would be the

**third-largest**

producer of greenhouse  
gas emissions in the world,  
after China and the US.

**8-10%**

of GHGs are  
produced by  
food waste



An aerial photograph showing a road that runs vertically through the center of the image. To the left of the road is a dry, brownish landscape with sparse vegetation and many dead or dormant trees. To the right of the road is a dense, vibrant green forest. A large, semi-transparent green circle is overlaid on the image, centered over the road, containing white text.

**By diverting food from  
landfill we are not  
only feeding people,  
we also have a  
positive impact on the  
environment.**





# Our Vision

No Waste. No Hunger.

# Our Mission

Our mission is to keep food where it belongs: on plates and out of landfills.





# Second Harvest in Action: National Food Rescue



Our food rescue and redistribution program reaches **6.5 million Canadians** through:



Our **award-winning Second Harvest Food Rescue App**, which takes a local approach to food waste by giving food donors a simple and fast system to connect directly with social service programs in their community.



Our **third-party logistics partners**, who enable us to transport large volumes of food across the country by truck, boat, plane and train, across terrain that includes ice roads, allowing us to reach as far north as the Arctic circle.



Our **fleet of 18 trucks** rescue and redistribute food seven days a week to non-profit partners providing hunger relief across the GTA.



# Our impact from coast to coast to coast.



In 2024, we rescued 87.1 million lbs. of food and redistributed it to 6.5 million people through 12,400+ food programs at 5,000+ non-profit organizations across Canada.

## Northwest Territories

17 communities  
37 non-profits  
17,200+ meals  
13,500+ lbs of GHGs

## Yukon

3 communities  
9 non-profits  
18,100+ meals  
31,500+ lbs of GHGs



## British Columbia

112 communities  
694 non-profits  
10.1 million+ meals  
32.2+ million lbs of GHGs



## Alberta

96 communities  
564 non-profits  
12.1 million+ meals  
41.1+ million lbs of GHGs



## Saskatchewan

39 communities  
214 non-profits  
3.4 million+ meals  
10.8 million+ lbs of GHGs

## Manitoba

54 communities  
371 non-profits  
6.4 million+ meals  
18 million+ lbs of GHGs

## Ontario

288 communities  
2,441+ non-profits  
39.8 million+ meals  
140.1 million+ lbs of GHGs



## Nunavut

21 communities  
29 non-profits  
111,000+ meals  
60+ lbs of GHGs



## Newfoundland and Labrador

51 communities  
124 non-profits  
487,700+ meals  
1.5 million + lbs of GHGs

## Quebec

90 communities  
219 non-profits  
8.2 million+ meals  
26 million+ lbs of GHGs



## Prince Edward Island

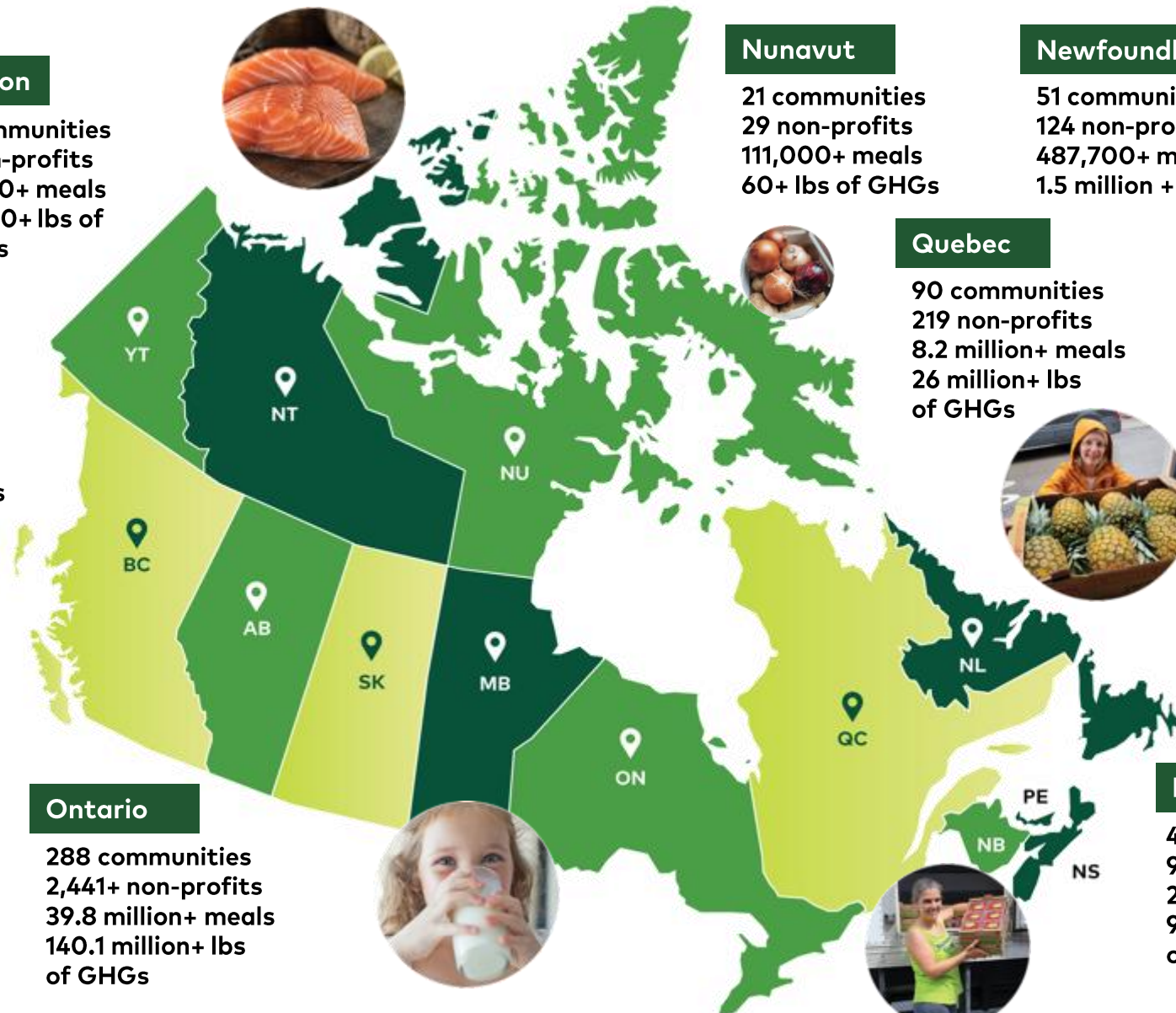
18 communities  
53 non-profits  
124,800+ meals  
350,300 + lbs of GHGs

## Nova Scotia

74 communities  
177 non-profits  
2.3 million+ meals  
8.1 million+ lbs of GHGs

## New Brunswick

40 communities  
93 non-profits  
2.9 million+ meals  
9.8 million+ lbs of GHGs







# \$3,872

Annual cost of avoidable food waste in  
Canada per household

# 17%

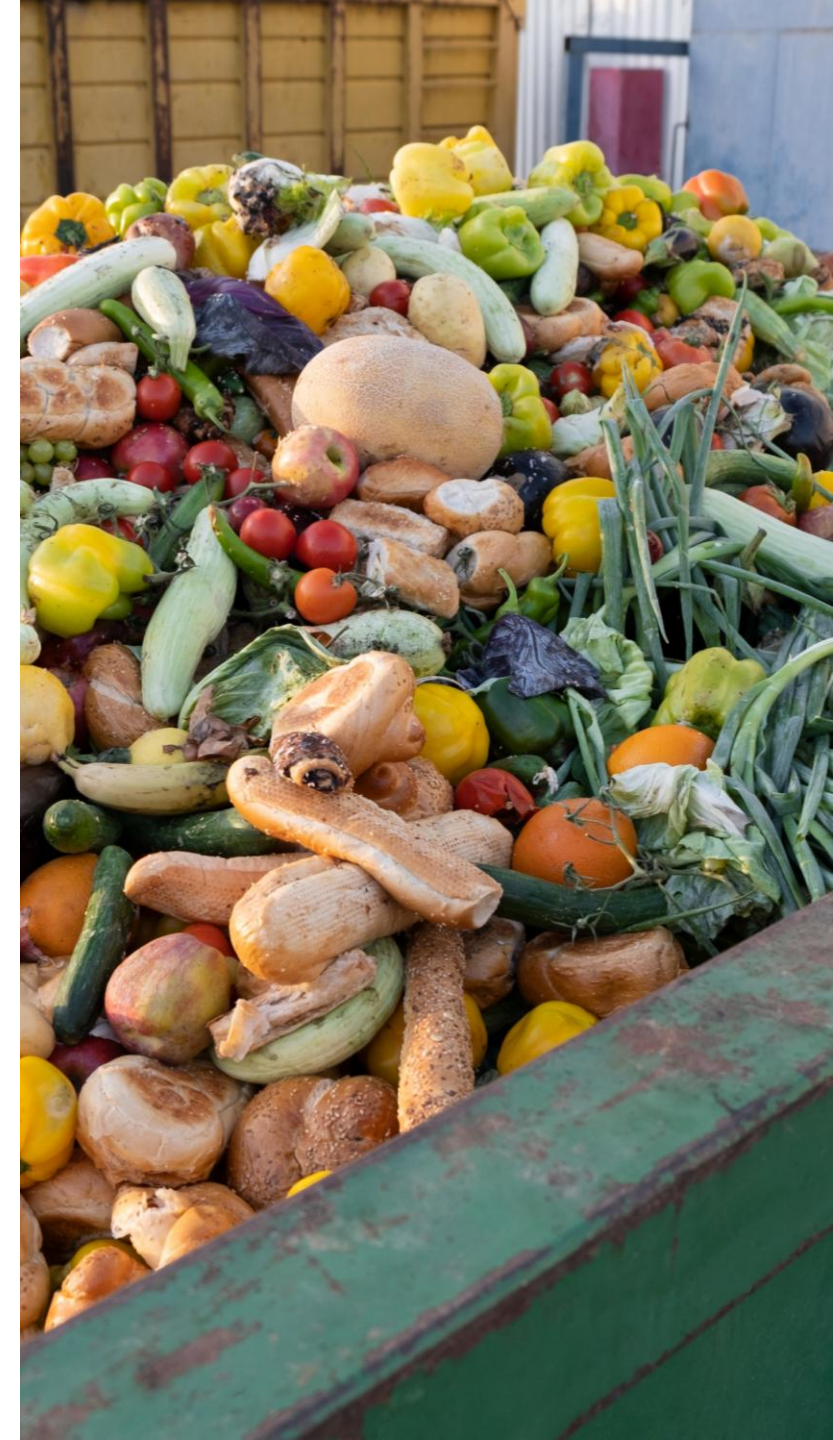
of avoidable food waste  
occurs at home





# Common Causes of Food Waste

- **Date labelling**
- Over-purchasing
- Inventory control
- Storage
- Human error
- Not using scraps
- Unfamiliar ingredients
- Food literacy, **preservation**







# 23%

of avoidable food waste  
from processing to purchase is  
caused by best before dates



# Best Before Dates

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Duration of a properly stored, unopened food product will maintain its:

- Taste
- Freshness
- Nutritional Value
- Other qualities the manufacturer claims



Not an indicator of food safety

Voluntary for products with shelf life of 90+ days

***Best before does not mean bad after***



# Expiration Dates are limited to...

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- Nutrition supplements
- Human milk substitutes
- Very low energy foods
- Meal replacements
- Formulated liquid diets







# Taste or Toss





**Milk**

**5 days  
past BBD**

After opening...

**?**





**Canned  
fruits and  
vegetables**

**9 months  
past BBD**





# Tofu

**3 days  
past BBD**

After opening...

**?**





**Carrots**

**That have gone  
soft**





# Best Before vs. Expiry











## Best Before Timetable

Most people confuse the terms "expiry date" and "best before date." This confusion continues to be a major source of avoidable food waste in Canada. Only five foods should not be consumed past the expiry date: infant formula, meal replacements, formulated liquid diets (medical), very low-energy foods (medical), and nutritional supplements. Everything else is edible after the best before date has passed. Always use your senses to evaluate food quality if food is past the best before date.

While food may be edible past the best before date, non-profits cannot always use this type of food. Please try to donate food as fresh as possible.

BBD = Best Before Date

FOOD CATEGORY	ITEMS	DONATE BY	CONSUME BY
 <b>PRODUCE</b>	Perishable fresh fruits and vegetables	No spoilage, blemishes, visible decay, mold or bio-degrading smell	No spoilage, blemishes, visible decay, mold or bio-degrading smell
	Shelf stable canned fruits and vegetables, pickles, sauces, or pastes	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
 <b>DAIRY</b>	Perishable milk (including dairy alternatives), butter, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, sour cream	On or before BBD	2 weeks past BBD <b>IF FROZEN</b> 2-3 months past BBD
	Shelf stable evaporated, powdered, or milk alternatives	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
	Shelf stable baby formula, supplemental beverages (i.e.: Ensure)	1 month prior to expiry date	Expiry date
 <b>MEAT &amp; FISH / EGGS &amp; SOY / LEGUMES / NUT PRODUCTS &amp; NUTS</b>	Raw meat and fish	Before BBD or <b>FREEZE on or before BBD date to extend shelf life</b> Sushi cannot be rescued	<b>BBD or IF FROZEN:</b> Beef, lamb, pork, whole poultry: 1 year past BBD Poultry pieces: 6 months past BBD Ground meat: 2-3 months past BBD Fish: 2-6 months past BBD
	Cooked luncheon meats, tofu, eggs	On or before BBD	1 week past BBD
	Shelf stable canned meat, fish, beans, chickpeas, nuts, nut butter, peanut butter, seeds, spam	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
 <b>BREAD / CRACKERS &amp; CEREAL / GRAIN</b>	Perishable bread, buns, bagels, pitas, tortillas, flat bread, na'an, matzah	No spoilage, blemishes, visible decay, mold or bio-degrading smell	No spoilage, blemishes, visible decay, mold or bio-degrading smell
	Dry, shelf stable cereal, crackers, flour, oats, pasta, rice, quinoa, meals or sides, energy bars	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
	Meal replacement or supplement bars	3 weeks prior to expiry date	Expiry date
 <b>BAKED GOODS / SNACKS / DESSERTS</b>	Perishable cakes, cookies, pies, danishes, chocolate, pudding	Before BBD or <b>FREEZE on or before BBD date to extend shelf life</b>	72 hours past BBD <b>IF FROZEN</b> 1 month past BBD
	Shelf stable cookies, chips, popcorn, bagged snacks, snack cakes, granola bars	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
 <b>PREPARED</b>	Pre-cooked or ready-to-eat meals; deli salads, pizza, sandwiches	Immediately or <b>FREEZE to extend shelf life. Must not have been "plated", exposed to public touch, or temperature-abused</b>	72 hours past BBD <b>IF FROZEN</b> 1 month past BBD
	Frozen dinners, microwavable meals	3 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
	Shelf stable canned soups, stews, meals	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
	Shelf stable baby food	1 month prior to BBD	1 year past BBD
 <b>CONDIMENTS</b>	Frozen sauces, gravies	3 months past BBD	6 months past BBD
	Shelf stable mustard, relish, ketchup, jam, margarine, mayonnaise, oil, salad dressing, vinegars, spices, sauces, toppings	6 months past BBD	1 year past BBD
 <b>BEVERAGES</b>	Juice, water, coconut water	30 days past BBD	3-6 months past BBD
	Other drinks; coffee, tea, sport or energy drinks, crystals	30 days past BBD	3-6 months past BBD

# Take Home Messages



**Best before dates tell you the duration the food will maintain its taste and nutritional value**



**Best-before dates are not an indicator of food safety**



**By storing foods properly, most foods will remain safe to consume well past the best-before date**



What is the avoidable food  
waste crisis?

What did you learn about food  
date labels?





# Thank You

Questions?