

Parliament No:	14
Session No:	2
Volume No:	95
Sitting No:	139
Sitting Date:	7-8-2024
Section Name:	Second Reading Bills
Title:	Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill
MPs Speaking:	Ms Ng Ling Ling, The Senior Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Sustainability and the Environment (Mr Baey Yam Keng), Ms Hany Soh (Marsiling-Yew Tee), Ms Joan Pereira (Tanjong Pagar), Ms See Jinli Jean (Nominated Member), Mr Vikram Nair (Sembawang), Ms Poh Li San (Sembawang), The Senior Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth (Mr Eric Chua), Mr Keith Chua (Nominated Member), Mr Speaker, Miss Rachel Ong (West Coast), Mr Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim (Chua Chu Kang), Mr Gan Thiam Poh (Ang Mo Kio), Mr Edward Chia Bing Hui (Holland-Bukit Timah), Mr Deputy Speaker, Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang (Nee Soon)

GOOD SAMARITAN FOOD DONATION BILL

Resumption of Debate on Question [6 August 2024], "That the Bill be now read a Second time." – [Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang, Member for Nee Soon].

Question again proposed.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Ms See Jinli Jean.

12.34 pm

Ms See Jinli Jean (Nominated Member): Mr Deputy Speaker, I applaud the Good Samaritan Legislation Review Committee, comprising Members of Parliament Louis Ng, Poh Li San, Edward Chia and Hany Soh for the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill. The Bill assures businesses and individuals of legal protection when they donate safe, surplus food to benefit households that struggle to meet their food needs. I support the Bill.

For the Bill to improve food security for those in need, steps must be taken to ensure that surplus food can be channelled safely and efficiently in sustainable and long-lasting arrangements. In this regard, I

would like to suggest three measures for the Review Committee and the Government to consider alongside Bill implementation.

First, the Government could consider extending tax exemptions to businesses and individuals who been regular in channelling surplus food to recipients directly or through intermediaries. This would incentivise businesses to formalise food donation activities which would in turn stabilise food aid supply in Singapore. There is precedent implementation of such initiative in Colombia. Allow me to share.

The Global Food Donation Policy Atlas reported that the Colombian government allows food donors to claim a tax credit of up to 25% of the value of donations made to food bank members and other organisations that promote health, environmental protection, human rights and poverty reduction. I would suggest a closer study of this initiative as there could be valuable learning for Singapore.

Second, if well implemented, the Bill would elevate the extent and scale of food rescue and redistribution. This would mean that food rescue organisations would hope for more resources and support to enhance cold chains, to cater for adequate storage facilities and to continually train their staff and volunteers to know how to keep different types of food safe for consumption. Ultimately, the well-being of recipients is priority and I hope that the Bill can open doors for more of such help to flow.

Third, food rescue and redistribution efforts must be paired with public-private schemes and support that provide lower-income families with dignified, sustained and adequate access to nutritious food.

The Lien Centre for Social Innovation released its Hunger Report in 2020. The report brought to the fore the stigma surrounding food support. The report shared that food-insecure individuals more often experienced negative emotions of sadness, stress and embarrassment that might result in them shying away from help to meet food needs.

Because dining out at hawker centres and coffee shops is a mainstay for many Singaporeans, a lower-income family that can partake in affordable hawker meals alongside others in the community could feel more assured and secured in meeting their food needs and less burdened by negative emotions.

Hawkers that are committed to providing affordable and nutritious meals for lower-income families are thus integral to strengthening the food security and morale of these persons in need. These hawkers should be supported and I urge the Government and operators to consider extending subsidies or stall rental rebates to them. This matters because enhanced welfare for vulnerable families should not be at the expense of economic survival of hawkers, many of whom are self-employed and are working hard to make a living.

In summary, this Bill is a step towards building a kinder society. It shines a light on how some businesses and individuals have helped and how more businesses and individuals can now come forward to help to channel safe, surplus food to households struggling to meet food needs. By strengthening empathy and connections among the broader public, the Bill is a game-changer that can help to dismantle the social stigma surrounding food support while giving food-insecure families the confidence to benefit from food support that is dignified, sustained, adequate and enriching. Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Miss Rachel Ong.

12.38 pm

Miss Rachel Ong (West Coast): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am encouraged to witness the introduction of the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill, which aims to incentivise donors to reduce food waste without fear of legal repercussions. May I share some points of clarification and considerations that need to be addressed regarding the Bill?

Firstly, in conversation with a food rescue organisation we have worked with through the Telok Blangah Pulau Eco Club, it is important to note that while many well-meaning donor retailers or wholesalers contribute items that are past their "best before" dates but still in good condition, some companies use this as a means to dispose poor-quality items.

Food rescue organisations, despite their best efforts, may not be able to thoroughly inspect every donated item. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify whether the Bill will also protect these intermediary groups and who would be held liable if unsafe food is distributed.

Secondly, the term "donor" typically refers to those who give without receiving monetary incentives. However, some food rescue social enterprises may ask for donations or nominal fees to support sustainability efforts. It is important to determine if the Bill will cover these groups and establish requirements for their inclusion.

Moving on to points for consideration, it is essential to complement the implementation of the Bill with public education. This broadens the acceptance of rescued foods and should inform individuals on the different date labels, such as the distinction between "expiry," "best before" and "use by" dates. Understanding the difference between safety-based versus quality-based date labels is crucial to reducing household food waste.

Additionally, educating consumers on what shelf-stable items are is equally vital, especially since overseas manufacturers may not use date labelling terms accurately. Items, such as soy sauce, uncooked rice or salt, can be kept almost indefinitely when properly stored, further supporting this effort.

Rescued food should be embraced by everyone, not just those in need. While it is crucial to prioritise the needy in distributing donated food, it is equally important for the entire society to cultivate a mindset focused on reducing food waste for meaningful and collective effective efforts in Singapore.

Second consideration: public-private partnerships are vital for scaling food waste reduction efforts. I call on the Government to encourage corporations and suppliers to reduce food waste through measures, such as well-designed tax incentives on surplus food donations and supporting companies that implement effective waste reduction strategies.

Why explore tax incentives? While liability protection such as the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill removes barriers to food donation, tax incentives directly encourage food donation. Food donors need to invest time and resources in packing, storing and especially in transporting surplus food. These food

items would otherwise be discarded, often at no cost to them. Tax incentives can help offset these expenses for them.

Having said that, to prevent potential misuse and ensure that the system encourage genuine efforts to reduce food waste, it is important to set sensible limits on the total amount of tax incentives available to each organisational food donor annually. Such tax incentives have already been adopted in the United States (US) and various European Union (EU) member states in efforts to minimise food waste.

In Japan and Australia, companies that adopt innovative waste reduction methods, such as tech-enabled inventory management, receive substantial government support and recognition. Voluntary commitments by organisations across the food system, such as those seen in Australia and the United Kingdom (UK), with initiatives like the Courtauld Commitment, have created industry-wide movements to reduce food waste. These efforts are also strongly supported by the respective governments.

The Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill represents a crucial advancement in the fight against food waste by safeguarding donors with good intentions. By defining liability and expanding protection to social enterprises and food rescue organisations, we enhance its impact across the broader community.

Addressing food waste requires a collective effort from the entire nation and demands a widespread societal transformation. Beyond legislation, it is essential to implement programmes that educate consumers while requiring businesses to take proactive steps in reducing food wastage. I am confident that together, we can establish a more sustainable and responsible food system in Singapore. Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr Keith Chua.

12.44 pm

Mr Keith Chua (Nominated Member): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I first mention my involvement in commercial food services and catering, and also as an office holder in the Restaurant Association of Singapore (RAS).

I would like to thank the hon Member Mr Louis Ng for introducing the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill. I would also commend him on the brevity and general simplicity of the Bill. It makes for easy and pleasant reading.

In introducing this Bill, Mr Ng mentioned it had been a four-year journey. The Bill intends to reduce food wastage and increase food available for the redistribution to food-insecure communities. Food wastage cannot continue to increase without responsible response at both national and international levels. Many initiatives continue in this attempt to curb food wastage. We must do our part in Singapore to reduce food wastage across all the areas, within our ability to do so.

Most of us in Singapore are blessed with the ability to afford all our meals. We are, however, aware that there are communities in our midst facing challenges to place food on the table, each meal, for various reasons.

Food wastage takes many forms. Some years back, a National Environment Agency (NEA) study found that each household disposed of about 2.5 kilogrammes of avoidable food waste each week. If each household took action to distribute some or most of this, Mr Louis Ng will see the tangible results of reducing unnecessary food waste and, concurrently, making food available for the food-insecure communities.

I accept that this may be too simplistic and general. Though efforts in this direction can result in many, many more good Samaritans stepping forward across Singapore. The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrated that we can and should show love for everyone beyond just family and friends.

I would like to now touch on some areas related to food services: catering and general retail and distribution of food.

The food and beverage (F&B) industry continues to face high operating costs. As a result, cost of food, whether raw or prepared, is often carefully controlled. Most operators will control inventory to minimise spoilage from overstocking perishable items. There are constant efforts to keep improving operational efficiencies and managing the bottom line. Controlling food wastage at source is primary in a sustainable F&B business.

Most commercial F&B operators require licensing and follow strict compliance requirements toward food safety and hygiene. Cooked food is to be consumed within stipulated time limits and consumers are provided with this information.

Owing to the health and safety regulations and also the cost controls by F&B operators, there would seem to be limited amounts of prepared or cooked food suitable for donation. Some foods, such as breads and pastries that have longer shelf life, may remain safe for consumption, though the quality may be affected after a period of time.

However, this does not suggest that the F&B industry cannot still be Good Samaritans. I would encourage the F&B industry, wholesalers and retailers of food in all forms, to be generous and work with groups, including the hon Member, to make available food to meet the basic needs of food-insecure sectors of our communities. Many F&B operators donated generously during COVID-19 and this spirit of generosity can find new avenues as we strive toward a more caring society, caring for each other and also caring for the environment.

Moving to the other sectors of food, may I suggest that wholesalers and retailers review the timelines set on donating food reaching expiry dates? It is, of course, clear that every business needs to stay profitable and viable. However, for those that continue to do well, perhaps donating dry goods with a longer shelf life can achieve the dual objectives of reduced wastage and more food for those who can benefit from such donations.

In passing this Bill, there should be guidelines on what types of food should not be donated, purely for health and safety reasons. Some suggestions from a RAS survey include exclusion of milk-based food and shellfish – generally, food that easily spoils.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move now to the second objective, which is the redistribution of consumable food.

Mr Louis Ng did a great deal of research and consultation in the four years and has reached some level of confidence that by absolving donors of liability there would be more food available for donation. In his opening remarks, Mr Louis Ng mentioned that with the removal of liability, some hotels and restaurants would be prepared to step forward and donate food. May I ask if he has identified other groups who are currently reluctant to donate but would possibly step forward with this protection from liability?

I initially struggled with the exemption of liability on some basic principles. The intended beneficiaries are fellow human beings who must retain their dignity and basic rights. In all likelihood, they would be vulnerable and, therefore, may need guidance. Unfortunately, if they do get ill from consuming donated food, they would have the added struggle of medical costs. It remained unclear to me what possible circumstances could contribute to illness if the food donated was safe and healthy at the point of donation. Could Mr Louis Ng provide us some examples the Bill intends to address this?

May I also suggest that there be sufficient channels of guidance for the food-insecure communities to, firstly, assist them in making the right choices; and, secondly, advise them of their rights.

Through this Bill, Mr Ng has continued to advocate for the need to being responsible in the area of food wastage and highlighting the existing needs of fellow citizens and residents who do not have access to three meals a day. We must continue to work on both these areas.

Successful implementation, looking ahead, could, therefore, bring us to this scenario where: firstly, efforts to reduce food wastage bring good results; secondly, food will still find its way to the food-insecure as part of the reduction in food wastage; thirdly, there may, however, be less food available for donation from the many sources as food wastage reduces. However, hopefully, when we get to that stage, there will be a sizeable reduction in those in our community who continue to be food-insecure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in keeping with the brevity and relative simplicity of this Bill, may I conclude by lending support to the Bill and thanking the hon Member, Mr Louis Ng, for bringing this to the House.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr Vikram Nair.

12.53 pm

Mr Vikram Nair (Sembawang): Mr Deputy Speaker, in Tamil, please.

(*In Tamil*): [Please refer to [Vernacular Speech](#).] Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this Bill. It is always a shame to waste food and in Singapore.

According to a 2022 article on the SG Government website, Singaporeans throw away a total of 2,000 tonnes of food every day. The same article suggested at least half of this is in the form of bread, rice and noodles. It could have been prevented.

This Bill aims to alleviate some of this food wastage. In particular, in relation to providers of food donations, provided certain safeguards are met, they would be protected from liability from recipients of their food.

The safeguards are both rigorous and reasonable. These are: one, the food must not have been "unsafe" for consumption when it left the control of the food donor; two, the food donor must inform the recipient of the handling requirements for the food so it remains safe for consumption; three, the food donor must inform the recipient of the food of the time limit for consumption; and four, the food donor should comply with food safety and food hygiene when handling the food.

Many of these are the same matters that the authorities would look into even today if there is a complaint. The main difference is this legislation sets out a positive list of requirements, which if met, would mean the food donors do not have to worry about liability from their food being eaten by recipients.

There are many organisations and people that currently collect and redistribute food from potential donors to recipients. This Bill aims to support the work of these organisations and groups by making their legal responsibilities clear and easy to comply with. I therefore support this Bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Ms Joan Pereira.

[Mr Speaker in the Chair]

12.57 pm

Ms Joan Pereira (Tanjong Pagar): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am confident that this Bill, when enacted, will encourage more food donations, thereby reducing food wastage and increasing the supply of food to our charitable organisations and households who face food insecurity.

Last year, Singapore disposed over 1,700 tonnes of food waste daily, including a lot of usable and edible food in good condition. One of the ways to reduce this wastage and contribute to food sustainability is to get suppliers and stores to donate their buffer stocks and surpluses. As storage space is costly, many companies have found it easier to just throw away and dispose of the food.

I strongly urge the Government to do more to educate and incentivise them to donate these precious foods. This would require some effort and coordination and, hence, I appeal to the Government to provide the necessary administrative and infrastructural support to help them get started on this journey of donation. The Government, food suppliers and stores, voluntary welfare organisations and volunteers, need to work together to develop an efficient and safe logistical supply chain to effectively channel such food donations to charities and beneficiaries. Sir, in Mandarin.

(In Mandarin): [Please refer to [Vernacular Speech](#).] I hope that the Government will provide more information to suppliers and commercial entities about the benefits of food donation and implement measures to motivate them to donate. As the donation process requires them to provide manpower and other resources and do coordination work, I therefore request the Government to provide the necessary administrative and infrastructure support to help them start on their donation journey. The Government, food suppliers and shops, voluntary welfare organisations and volunteers need to work together to

develop efficient and safe logistics supply chains to effectively channel these food donations to charities and beneficiaries.

(In English): In some countries, such as Spain, businesses could face fines of up to €60,000 if they fail to reduce the amount of food they throw away. This Bill does not propose such a punitive measure, but waiving the liability alone may not be enough to move some suppliers and sellers to donate. Perhaps a tax incentive would be helpful and I hope that the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment (MSE) and the Ministry of Finance can consider this suggestion.

The Bill excludes situations of gross negligence, given the requirement that the food donors will still need to comply with all prevailing laws on food safety and food hygiene. May I ask if MSE can share more details of how it will enforce applicable regulations for donated food and whether there will be differences in how checks will be conducted?

I am happy to note that this Bill will provide liability protection for donors as well as the intermediaries, such as food banks and other charitable organisations, distributing the donated food. The Bill is also well-crafted in spelling out the responsibilities and duties of each party at every stage of the donation process, while ensuring food safety and hygiene, protecting the recipients. Hence, I would like to conclude with my support for the Bill.

Mr Speaker: Mr Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim.

1.01 pm

Mr Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim (Chua Chu Kang): Mr Speaker, Sir, I stand in support of the Bill and I applaud the efforts of hon Members Mr Louis Ng, Ms Poh Li San, Ms Hany Soh and Mr Edward Chia for advocating the timely support of this crucial Bill that holds significance for our society and community. This Bill presents us with the opportunity to make a meaningful impact, particularly in the realm of community support and philanthropy, to encourage food rescue and food donation without the risk of criminal and civil liability for donors. Allow me to speak in Malay.

(In Malay): [Please refer to [Vernacular Speech](#).] One major aspect that is addressed by this Bill is to facilitate the processes for food contribution and donation, especially during events and important dates such as the month of Ramadan, the Prophet Muhammad's birthday and the Islamic New Year, when many generous donors will donate food for the congregants in the mosques and our community in general.

Our mosques, madrasahs and Muslim welfare bodies currently play an essential role, such as preparing dishes for the breaking of fast and pre-dawn meals. Many generous Singaporeans are also keen to donate in kind or spend their time cooking for the needy.

One inspiring example comes from the Al Firdaus Mosque located in the Keat Hong area. This mosque has consistently and tirelessly provided and served pre-dawn meals or meals for the breaking of fast for thousands of foreign workers living in the dormitory at Lim Chu Kang, which is near the mosque.

During each Ramadan too, the M³ network in Chua Chu Kang collaborates with the mosque to mobilise the manpower to distribute porridge that was donated by the public regardless of race or religion.

I have visited the mosques in Chua Chu Kang and all of them welcomed this amendment Bill. Previously, mosques that receive food donations would require donors to fill in their details in a form and require them to sign an indemnity form, so that the mosque and volunteers will be released from any claims for damages should anyone fall ill after eating the donated food.

However, that does not release them from any criminal liability. Hence, this Bill is expected to encourage even more donors and organisations to donate food because donors will have immunity from any civil or criminal liability. We will also hope to encourage the habits of food savings.

(In English): Speaker, in Keat Hong Chua Chu Kang, we receive many generous donations and contributions of food by kind-hearted individuals who want to give back to society. These come from individuals and also food rescue from the nearby farms in Keat Hong. Some of them take time to cook each month, specially for this. Take, for example, Mr Ong, a hawker from Teck Whye market who uses his time off to cook vegetarian bee hoon, which we distribute to residents monthly. Mr and Mrs Song, hawkers from Boon Lay, who contribute packets of chicken rice during our People's Action Party (PAP) branch's free monthly haircut sessions for seniors in Keat Hong. These efforts have been ongoing in the town for years. They do this out of the kindness of their hearts but they face the potential risk of liability. It is time for us to repay their kindness.

While we welcome this Bill with open arms, it is essential to recognise that it is not a cure-all solution. One notable inclusion in the Bill is the exclusion of criminal liability, allowing Good Samaritans to step forward and organisations to do more for the community. However, prudent parties may still wish to take certain precautions, such as obtaining waivers or disclaimers of liability from consumers, seeking indemnity from donors, conducting due diligence on donors where possible and providing training to volunteers and raising awareness among beneficiaries regarding the donated food.

It is crucial to strike a balance between responsibility and philanthropy. In this regard, I have a clarification. Clause 4 of the Bill excludes civil or criminal liability in respect of any death or personal injury that results from the consumption of the food. However, section 2C of the Sale of Food Act's definition of unsafe food, which definition is imported in this Bill, uses the phrase "cause illness or injury or other physical harm to a person".

Given this disparity in the definitions used in the Bill as compared to the Sale of Food Act, is the Bill's scope narrower, focusing solely on death or personal injury, or should it also encompass illnesses or other physical harms as envisaged under the Sale of Food Act? This clarity is vital to prevent any ambiguity or disputes in the future.

Based on the current definition used in the Bill, any illness caused by the consumption of the donated food may not be caught under the Bill. If the intent in this Bill is to be consistent with the Sale of Food Act, then may I suggest importing the same phrasing used in section 2C of the Sale of Food Act within the Bill,

meaning to cover "any illness, injury or other personal harm or death" that results from the consumption of the donated food.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I end this speech, I echo Mr Louis Ng's gratitude to the countless people and organisations who have supported in the process of the tabling of this Bill. Back in 2017, in my voluntary role with the self-help group AMP Singapore, we collaborated with Free Food For All to distribute over 9,000 meals to under-privileged households. It was a record number at that point in time. Free Food For All's founder, the late Mr Nizar Shariff, was a Singaporean of the Year finalist and a winner of the President's Volunteerism and Philanthropy Awards. Mr Nizar passed away last year.

I believe that this Bill represents a significant step forward for us to create more such individuals in our society in fostering a more caring and supportive community, where individuals and organisations can come together to make a positive impact without fear of criminal or civil liability from the donated food. Let us embrace this opportunity to extend a helping hand to those in need and create a stronger, more compassionate society for all. Sir, notwithstanding my clarification, I stand in support of the Bill.

Mr Speaker: Ms Hany Soh.

1.09 pm

Ms Hany Soh (Marsiling-Yew Tee): Mr Speaker, I rise in support of this Bill.

The Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill is the culmination of the close collaboration and consultations with various stakeholders for an important social cause. For this, I am grateful for having been able to work with my Parliamentary colleagues, Mr Louis Ng, Ms Poh Li San and Mr Edward Chia, alongside our PAP activists as well as industry players, social enterprises, public agencies and the community. The passage of this Bill is a milestone but not the end of our journey. We will continue to engage with the relevant stakeholders and community. There will always be room for further improvements.

According to the statistics tabulated by NEA, 755,000 tonnes, or rather 755 million kilogrammes, of food waste were generated last year. The amount was 813,000 tonnes in 2022, and 817,000 tonnes in 2021. Against this backdrop, and paradoxically, food insecurity remains a live issue. The Food Bank Singapore Ltd has produced over two million meals annually in the past three years. These are staggering figures.

The purpose of this Bill, as set out in clause 3, is to reduce food waste and increase the availability of food for redistribution to food-insecure communities. Through our consultations, we learnt that a key concern of our current and prospective food donors is liability, both civil and criminal. As shared by my Parliamentary colleague, Mr Louis Ng, in his opening speech, there are many donors and potential donors out there who would like to contribute but are understandably concerned about incurring liability, despite taking every precaution and doing their utmost best.

In Woodgrove, I am grateful to have many community partners and residents who are supportive of our call to embrace green sustainable living, reduce food waste and do good "For the Community, From the Community".

Several green sustainable events in Woodgrove, both large and small scale, have been held through the years, providing opportunities for residents and community partners, such as schools, to contribute ideas and take part in supporting our nation's SG Green Plan goals. Events, such as our Woodgrove's World Environment Day, which is held on an annual basis for our community, would regularly see strong support by our community gardeners, donating their fruits and vegetables that were grown in over 100 plots of community gardens across Woodgrove.

In July 2023, Woodgrove set up our weekly community pantry located at the heart of Woodgrove, where residents are welcomed to help themselves with food rations and daily essential items which were donated by community partners, such as temples, as well as residents who have requested to remain anonymous but chose to do good for our community. I am heartened that during a National Day block party in Woodgrove held over a recent weekend, we announced a Woodgrove-FairPrice Group collaboration, under which the FairPrice Group, being Singapore's largest retailer and one of the working committee members of this Bill, will be on board as another enthusiastic community partner to support our expansion of the community pantry initiative to benefit a larger community in Woodgrove through its Community Fridge Restock Initiative, which aimed at providing blemished but edible fruits and vegetables to families and individuals in need across Singapore for free.

These are just some examples of the many good work we have heard that are in progress in the community, which many are looking to operationalise and even expand under and upon the passage of this Bill, for our residents' and the wider public's benefit.

At the same time, I also hope that the Singapore Food Agency would continue to guide us in this important mission, such as coming up with clear and specific food safety standards and best practices for the purposes of this Bill that will be implemented by all food donors and understood by all of the donees as well. One particular area would be the public education on the significance and difference between "best by" and "expiry" dates used, like what my Parliamentary colleague, Miss Rachel Ong, has shared earlier. Would these categories of food be, therefore, acceptable and safe for consumption?

Mr Speaker, following the passing of this Bill, we should and we will keenly monitor and continue to engage the relevant stakeholders on the implementation and operations of food donation. In Mandarin, please.

(In Mandarin): [Please refer to [Vernacular Speech](#).] The purpose of this Bill is set out at clause 3, which is to reduce food waste and increase the availability of food for redistribution to food-insecure communities. Through our consultations, we learnt that a key concern of current and prospective food donors is liability, both civil and criminal.

We found that the balance of donors' and ultimate recipients' interests may be struck, by providing protection against liability for donating food where food safety laws in the handling of food have been met. This, would be a win-win. Perhaps collaterally, this Bill would also hopefully bolster Singapore's "30 by 30" food security goal. With less wastage, the need for increased production could be ameliorated.

Recently, there has been a spate of mass food poisoning cases which reminded us the importance of complying with food safety laws when handling food. As members of the public, either as donors or

beneficiaries, we must not take it lightly. I hope the relevant authorities such as SFA to continue working with community partners to increase public awareness of food safety. I support this Bill.

Mr Speaker: Mr Gan Thiam Poh.

1.16 pm

Mr Gan Thiam Poh (Ang Mo Kio): Mr Speaker, Sir, I welcome this Bill. This Bill will help to cut down on food wastage while ensuring food safety and hygiene for recipients. The liability waiver will go a long way to empower all stakeholders, from the suppliers to donors and volunteers, to save and distribute edible food with peace of mind.

The amount of food waste in Singapore has increased by about 30% in the last decade. Such wastage is not right nor sustainable. I hope all stakeholders can do their part to anticipate demand more precisely and reduce potential wastage.

In the face of increasing challenges for food production and transportation, due to international conflicts and extreme weather, unpredictable conditions, food prices are expected to keep going up. Moving forward, we will have less room for waste. As a nation which imports 90% of our food, we need to invest more effort to identify points of wastage and work together to move unsold products to the needy expediently.

One of the greatest concerns we all share is our hot and humid weather condition. Food spoil quickly in this climate. For cooked food, for safety, they need to be eaten within four hours of preparation. Other products, such as bread and fruit, mould within days. We require a robust cold chain logistics network to support donors. The unpredictable amounts of donated food from different sources pose a challenge for storage and distribution by voluntary welfare organisations. Would the Government consider supporting interested donors to advise and assist them on food storage and transportation?

Suppliers and stores, together with the Government, should also clarify food expiry labels, such as "best before", "use by", "expiry", for the benefit of consumers and donation recipients. This is an important step to reduce the amount of food discarded prematurely.

Compared to other countries with similar legislation, such as the US, I would say that our proposed conditions are on par with these other countries.

I agree with the proposals in the Bill, such as for the food to meet the Sale of Food Act, that the food must not have been "unsafe" and "unsuitable" for consumption when it leaves the possession or control of the food donor, and that the recipients be informed of handling requirements and time limit for consumption.

In the EU, the labels on the donated food must also indicate the presence of common allergens. It would be a good condition for us to consider including as well. Mr Speaker, in Mandarin.

(In Mandarin): [Please refer to [Vernacular Speech](#).] Food donation can effectively reduce food waste. However, because donors are afraid of trouble or worry about legal liability due to food safety issues, they

would rather throw away the food than donate it. However, there are still many families in need in our society. After all, we cannot stop eating because of the fear of choking. By legislating to exempt food donors who meet food safety and hygiene conditions, we will encourage food donations, reduce food waste, and help families in need. The experience of the US, Italy and other countries has proved that effective food donation laws can significantly promote food donation behaviour.

At the same time, we must have balance in the new legal framework and not go too far. If the conditions for exempting food donors from liability are too cumbersome, it will increase the cost for potential food donors, which will reduce their willingness to donate and lead them to do the convenient – discarding food. This leads to us missing the original goal of our legislation and the loss will outweigh the gain.

In addition to exempting food donors from liability through legislation, the government can also implement incentive measures. I have thought of tax incentives, however, tax incentives have pros and cons. They may inadvertently incentivise people to stockpile or over-purchase, causing unnecessary waste which is exactly the opposite of what we want to achieve.

In general, our legislation needs to balance the interests of food donors and the ultimate beneficiaries. It is the most basic requirement that food donors must comply with food safety regulations when handling food. The implementation of the Good Samaritan Food Donation legislation can not only reduce food waste, but also help people in need and reduce the burden on the environment.

(In English): I would like to conclude with my support for the Bill.

Mr Speaker: Ms Ng Ling Ling.

1.22 pm

Ms Ng Ling Ling (Ang Mo Kio): Mr Speaker, according to NEA's data, food waste accounted for 11% of the total waste generated by Singapore last year. I thus welcome the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill as I believe that it will further encourage the donation of surplus or unsold food to the needy, tackling the problem of food wastage in a meaningful and purposeful manner through redistribution to communities, families and individuals in need.

Notwithstanding this, I would like to raise some clarifications on the implementation of the proposed section 4 on the waiver of criminal and civil liability.

Let me start by first acknowledging the good work of various community organisations in food rescue and redistribution, such as Food from the Heart and GoodHood. These non-profit organisations have been at the forefront of addressing food insecurity among our vulnerable communities through ground-up support for food programmes.

Food from the Heart, for instance, has been collecting unsold and excess food and groceries from supermarkets and bakeries, and distributing them to those who struggle with food insecurity. Their initiatives, such as the School Goodie Bag and Community Food Pack programmes, have benefited the less fortunate families and children in our communities.

Similarly, GoodHood has revolutionised the concept of neighbourhood sharing through their "GoodHood.SG: Neighbourhood App", encouraging residents to share surplus food and other resources with their residents, with their fellow neighbours in need. Such ground-up approach not only fosters neighbourliness but also encourage Singaporeans to actively participate in the sustainability cause.

My residents in Jalan Kayu have benefited from many of such food donation efforts and I am deeply grateful to them.

Like several of my hon Parliamentary colleagues have mentioned, I note that there have been similar legislative efforts by other countries to encourage food donation. In the US, the Federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act enacted in 1996 protects donors from liability when donating to non-profit organisations. Similarly, Italy's Good Samaritan Law protects those who donate food in good faith from civil and criminal consequences of their actions and limits their liability arising from food safety rules. Instead of legislation, some other countries, such as the UK's Courtauld Commitment 2030, is a voluntary agreement amongst stakeholders to reduce food wastage by 50% by 2030. Although there may be different approaches to encouraging food donation, many local businesses prefer legislation that reduces their fear of liability and reputation damage, while helping to balance their corporate social responsibility with any potential legal obligations.

As we move forward, it is thus essential to ensure that the implementation of the Bill can effectively address the concerns raised by potential food donors while ensuring food safety for the recipients. Hence, I would like to seek clarifications on the administration, imposition of penalties, if any, in serious incidents of breaches and possible mediation process for conditions outlined in section 4 of the Bill.

The Bill provides a waiver of criminal and civil liability for donors of food, under four key conditions. Specifically, donors will be protected from liability for any death or personal injury resulting from the consumption of donated food, provided that: one, the food was safe and suitable at the time it left the donor's possession; two, the recipient was informed of any specific handling requirements that is required to ensure that the food remained safe and suitable for consumption after it left the donor's possession; three, the recipient was informed of any time limits for the food's safety; and lastly, the donor complied with all food safety and hygiene laws.

It is essential to establish a clear oversight mechanism to ensure that donors adhere to the safety and hygiene protocols required by the Bill. As such, I hope to understand how the conditions under section 4 will be administered and monitored to ensure compliance by all stakeholders involved. Will MSE be looking at any specific statutory board, such as SFA, to be responsible for ensuring that the four conditions are met for the liability to be waived? Additionally, will MSE be the authority to revoke the waiver of liability if breaches, serious breaches occur? And will the investigation process into serious breaches be conducted similarly to the process for contamination and gastroenteritis incidents?

I also hope that MSE can work with stakeholders to provide training and guidance to potential food donors to help them understand and comply with the requirements of the Bill. This will also foster a culture of responsibility and encourage ethical behaviour among potential food donors.

Secondly, even though the Bill's main intention is to address the fear of liabilities that prevent food businesses from donating their unsold food. I hope the Bill can also address potential penalties if any of the conditions stated in section 4 is seriously breached to safeguard the public who are potential recipients, especially if they are the vulnerable communities.

I would thus like to ask if the Government has considered any potential penalties for the donors if any conditions set in section 4 have been seriously breached. And will this be a graduated scale of penalties based on the severity of the breach, ranging from minor infractions to serious violations to give assurance to potential food donors?

Finally, I believe that establishing a clear and accessible mediation mechanism will be crucial in resolving conflicts efficiently and fairly.

As such, I would like to also clarify if there will be mediation or resolution processes made available to both donors and recipients to address any grievances or misunderstandings arising from possible disputes. I hope that the Government can consider providing a mediating channel that is reliable for all donors and recipients to address any issues that may arise.

Additionally, for small-scale donors who may not have the resources to navigate complex legal disputes, will the Government provide support mechanisms to assist them? Providing such support for smaller donors will encourage broader participation in food donation efforts, ensuring that even the smallest contributions can make a difference.

Mr Speaker, as I conclude, I would like to emphasise the significance of the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill in helping to solve the country's food waste problem while mitigating the fear of liability and encouraging more potential donors to step forward. This will help to foster a more giving and compassionate community in the long term.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Parliamentary colleagues – Mr Louis Ng, Ms Poh Li San, Ms Hany Soh and Mr Edward Chia – for their hard work and efforts in bringing this Bill to fruition today. Their dedication and hard work in engaging with relevant stakeholders have been instrumental in shaping this piece of legislation.

I hope that the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill will become a pillar to sustain our collective work towards reducing food wastage, supporting food-insecure communities and fostering a culture of generosity and responsibility.

Notwithstanding my clarifications raised, I support the Bill.

Mr Speaker: Mr Edward Chia.

1.30 pm

Mr Edward Chia Bing Hui (Holland-Bukit Timah): Mr Speaker, Sir, firstly, I would like to declare that I own and operate a food waste recycling company. Through my professional experience, I have witnessed

first-hand the shocking amount of perfectly edible food that is discarded into recycling bins. This has reinforced my firm belief that edible food should be redistributed, not recycled.

Therefore, I fully support this Bill put forth by the hon Member Louis Ng as it will enable more effective redistribution of edible food. It has been a real privilege to be part of this discussion along with Parliamentary colleagues, Ms Poh Li San and Ms Hany Soh at the onset. I would like to thank all the workgroup members for assisting in drafting this Bill.

In this speech, I will share the various opportunities that this Bill gives rise to. These opportunities support our nation's efforts to combat food waste and enhance the support for our food-insecure communities.

Firstly, by protecting food donors from liability for any harm that may arise from the consumption of donated food, under specific conditions, the amount of food that would be donated is expected to rise. This bodes well for any type of operation as economies of scale are key.

The increase in food sources enables non-profit organisations and social enterprises to achieve the required scale to optimise operations and logistics. With more food available, food caring organisations (FCOs) can optimise their processes. They can better match the food with appropriate recipients and plan logistics more effectively. Also, with greater food volume, organisations can recover their investments in better infrastructure, such as transportation and storage, improving their overall efficiency.

The increase in food sources will also optimise the matching of donors' and donees' preferences. When businesses, restaurants and individuals donate more surplus food, it increases the potential diversity of food available for redistribution. This helps organisations have a more consistent and diverse supply to redistribute to those in need.

Combined with digital solutions, the increase in scale can also spark innovations in redistribution methods, such as using technology to track and manage food donations more effectively.

In the US, Olio is a food-sharing app that connects neighbours and local businesses with excess food to those nearby who can use it. Such hyperlocal innovations have the potential to enhance community bonds too.

Another area of opportunity is the issuance of a quality mark that ensures food is safely and effectively redistributed to those in need. Such certifications and standards typically focus on food safety, operational standards and efficiency. There are a few notable examples.

First, ISO 22000, an international standard that specifies requirements for a food safety management system to ensure that food is safe for consumption. Organisations involved in food rescue and redistribution can obtain this certification to demonstrate their commitment to food safety.

Second, Feeding America's "Certified Member Food Banks". Feeding America has its own set of standards and guidelines for member food banks. Certified members must meet rigorous criteria for food safety, handling and distribution practices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in creating a quality mark for the redistribution of food, food caring organisations benefit in several ways: one, ensure consistency in food safety and quality; two, build trust and credibility with donees; three, improve efficiency as processes are streamlined and staff and volunteers are provided stipulated training; four, facilitate partnerships and funding as partnership organisations and funding organisations look for evidence of quality and reliability when partnering or awarding funds; and five, support continuous improvements and monitoring as quality marks offer valuable feedback for ongoing improvements and adjustments.

For food caring organisations to harness the opportunities presented in this Bill, we need to enable them to take strategic and impactful steps. There are three ways we can do so.

Firstly, we must enable food caring organisations to pursue quality mark accreditation. To facilitate this, I propose that the Government provide grants to cover costs associated with adopting these standards and conducting necessary training. Furthermore, Enterprise Singapore's Quality and Standards division should consider developing a standard specifically tailored to our local context, ensuring it meets the unique needs of our community.

Secondly, FCOs need to address the challenge of logistics. While investing in additional refrigerated vehicles is one option, it may not always be the most efficient and can also contribute to traffic congestion. Instead, I recommend we focus on creating hyperlocal partnerships and community-based redistribution networks.

The Community Development Councils (CDCs), organised by districts, are ideally positioned to enable this. The CDCs could serve as the key node to enable FCOs to operate a hyperlocal hub and spokes redistribution. Within these hubs, several cold storage facilities can be added to extend the shelf life of perishable items. By collaborating with FCOs within the CDC districts, the CDCs can enhance existing support to resource low-income families.

This suggestion is built upon our existing weekly food rescue initiative that we have started in Zhenghua. Launched in September 2022, we have rescued approximately 7,600 kilogrammes of food and redistributed it to the residents of Zhenghua. We collaborated with local supermarkets and wholesalers to gather all unsold food items, which are transported to Zhenghua, where it is distributed among residents.

It is important to note that we have framed this as a Zhenghua green initiative, where all are welcome to collect the rescued food. In this way, we mobilise all in our community to do our part to reduce food waste.

Our on-ground experience shows how hyperlocal initiatives can successfully mobilise volunteers and consistently provided food to the community. This approach reduces logistical cost by keeping food redistribution hyperlocal, ensuring food reaches those in need quickly and efficiently. Furthermore, it enhances community resilience and promotes sustainability by fostering a strong network of support within the neighbourhood.

Thirdly, Mr Speaker, an exciting opportunity arises for food caring organisations in Singapore to issue carbon credits by redistributing food. By aligning with international methodologies that quantify greenhouse gas emission reductions, these organisations can not only contribute to environmental

sustainability but also generate revenue through carbon credits. The revenue generated can support FCOs in their recovery of logistical costs.

This initiative presents a dual benefit – reducing food waste and contributing to our nation's carbon reduction goals. To fully harness this potential, I recommend supporting FCOs in adopting digital solutions to effectively track the amount of food waste redistributed. Such technologies will enhance transparency and accuracy in measuring their impact, enabling these organisations to capitalise on carbon credits. This potential further amplifies the impact of the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill, fostering a more sustainable and responsible approach to food management in our society.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill offers transformative opportunities for addressing food waste and enhancing support for food-insecure communities.

To fully leverage these benefits, we should: one, support food caring organisations with grants for quality mark accreditation and Enterprise Singapore's Quality and Standards division should consider developing a standard specifically tailored to our local context; two, focus on hyperlocal partnerships and community-based redistribution networks, utilising the CDCs to enable hub and spoke operations; and three, support FCOs to adopt digital solutions to effectively track the amount of food waste redistributed. Such technologies will enhance transparency and accuracy in measuring their impact, enabling these organisations to capitalise on carbon credits.

These steps will maximise the Bill's impact, ensuring a more effective and sustainable approach to food waste and community support.

Mr Speaker: Ms Poh Li San.

1.39 pm

Ms Poh Li San (Sembawang): Singapore is a food paradise filled with eateries and restaurants at every corner of our country. However, many of us are unaware of what happens to food that is unsold and how much food is wasted.

An elephant can weigh up to six tonnes. The food waste produced in 2023 was a staggering 755,000 tonnes. That is a gradual increase from 744,000 tonnes in 2019.

Here are some facts: one, while food prices are increasing consistently, the options for affordable food supplies for low-income families are still very limited; two, even though SFA has been working hard to meet the "30 by 30" national nutritional goal, a huge quantity of edible food is being thrown away daily; three, 11% of total waste collected in Singapore is food waste and this percentage can be reduced; four, we have a shortage of waste collection workers.

We need to ask ourselves why are we throwing away so much food when they can be channelled to feed our under-privileged groups? This food paradox arises because food is perishable, expensive to store and transport and food that does not look fresh is hard to sell or may even cause health issues.

It is not disputed that it is cheaper, more convenient and less risky for food suppliers and restaurants to simply throw away unsold and unconsumed food rather than to donate them. This practice is especially so for well-known food establishments. It is just not worth the risk of damaging an established food company's reputation should the quality and safety of the unconsumed food be compromised in the course of collection and distribution.

As Singaporeans become more affluent, many people tend to take a nonchalant and risk-averse attitude when it comes to wasting food. However, as a small and resource-scarce nation, we must stop the following from increasing – food waste, food costs, food insecurity, manpower needs and carbon footprint.

The Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill will be a good solution. This legislative amendment can be a significant game-changer in the management of under-utilised food resources and waste reduction while helping low-income families cope with rising food expenses and assisting them in monitoring their nutrition intake.

Presently, there are already several volunteer groups addressing the collection of unconsumed food and redistributing them to various communities. Just to name a few, the Food Bank rescues more than 800,000 kilogrammes of food annually. Food from the Heart will collect unsold bread, while Food Rescue Sengkang picks up vegetables and fruits from wholesale markets and food donors.

These rescued food items are mostly limited to those that are easier to transport, store, distribute and safe to mark as consumables. There are still plenty of untapped opportunities to rescue unconsumed high-quality foods from restaurants, hotel buffets, supermarkets and so on.

If sufficient protection from liability or even benefits are provided for the donation of unconsumed food, more food donors and distribution groups will come onboard. Such collaboration efforts can potentially create solutions for more ground-up initiatives and attract various communities to work together to reduce food waste and to do good. We can turn a vicious circle of waste into a virtuous circle of good deeds.

The Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill is a good solution. But needless to say, a lot more needs to be done in order to reduce significant amounts of food waste and to redistribute edible foods to the under-privileged communities in Singapore. The logistics is viable because Singapore is small with good transport accessibility to reach anywhere in a short time.

We need to create awareness of the Good Samaritan Food Bill and hopefully promote an enhanced liability protection extended to food donors. We have to encourage lighthouse partners such as the Restaurant Association of Singapore, Singapore Hotel Association and major supermarket chains such as FairPrice and Cold Storage to come onboard as examples for other food suppliers and operators.

We will need to increase the number of volunteers in various localities across Singapore to assist with the collection and distribution roles. Key food collection points, donation drop-off nodes and distribution points must be established in various zones across Singapore. Volunteer drivers of large vehicles could then ply between the collection nodes and the distribution points while volunteer distributors could help with sorting, cleaning, repacking and distributing the donated foods to beneficiaries. It is also important for the distribution points to be located at convenient and accessible locations for the beneficiaries. The

Singapore Armed Forces can also consider activating some National Servicemen to be involved in this process.

We have to identify and reach out to more potential beneficiaries who are open to receive donated food and as much as possible, provide fresh and healthy foods. We also need to help these beneficiaries develop healthy eating habits, especially for growing children. It would be good for the local Social Service Offices and Family Services Centres work with and to support food donation groups in order to achieve more targeted outreach to low-income families that would benefit from regular food distribution. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now share my suggestions in Mandarin.

(In Mandarin): [Please refer to [Vernacular Speech](#).] The purpose of the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill is to encourage food donations by providing liability protection for donors, so as to help more families and people in need and reduce waste and burden on the environment. We need to take the following steps to expand donation efforts and deliver donated food to more beneficiaries.

We need to raise awareness of the Bill and promote enhanced liability protection for food donors.

We must encourage large partners to participate, such as the Singapore Food and Beverage Industry Association, the Singapore Hotel Association and large supermarket chains, such as NTUC FairPrice and Cold Storage, to set an example for other food suppliers and operators.

We need to increase volunteers in various districts, including volunteer drivers of large vehicles, to assist in the collection, delivery and distribution of donated food. The Singapore Armed Forces could consider mobilising some National Servicemen to participate in this process. Collaboration between the community and the Family Service Centres and food rescue organisations is important to reach more low-income families in a targeted way who would benefit from regular food distribution.

(In English): I am very eager for the passing of the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill as this will help scale up our food rescue and distribution efforts in Singapore. Our residents and volunteers in Sembawang West will also get to benefit more.

Mr Speaker, Sir, please allow me to share our Food Rescue experience in Sembawang West. Five years ago, my PAP Sembawang West Branch volunteers and I started our "Colourful Food, Vibrant Life" fruits and vegetables distribution programme. We distributed free fruits and vegetables once a month to our residents staying at our rental block, as well as the 2-room and 3-room blocks. Apart from a few months during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we had to pause the programme, unfortunately, this programme has brought much joy to both volunteers and beneficiaries.

Our key partner, Sengkang Food Rescue will collect multiple truckloads of unwanted fruits and vegetables from the Pasir Panjang Wholesale markets and from other food donors and store them at their Fernvale facility. There are approximately 20 to 40 pallets collected each Saturday.

Thereafter, my branch volunteers will collect one truckload of fruits and vegetables from Fernvale and transport them to Sembawang West rental block. My volunteers will unload, sort, clean and display the food items at the void deck of the rental block. Typically, between 80 and 100 families will come by to collect the produce. Some of them will collect on behalf of their neighbours who may be out or unwell.

We started with the intention of reducing food waste, encouraging low-income families to eat more nutritious greens and also helping them reduce their food expenditures.

Over time, we got to know the residents better and we forged friendships with them through our chit-chats while they wait in the queue. Even though they may not be well-endowed or well-educated, many of these residents are very hardworking, warm and down-to-earth. They are very appreciative of our efforts and we often get warm hugs whenever they see us. There are many unexpected beautiful blessings and thank you notes from these distribution sessions are very much appreciated by our volunteers.

During the process, our volunteers, especially the youths, have the opportunity to learn about how we can help under-privileged living in our midst. It is a great eye-opener that brings valuable life education and experiences to these volunteers. In helping senior residents carry their bags of fruits and vegetables to their humble homes, the youths learn to appreciate how fortunate and well-endowed they themselves are.

There is a lot of good done whenever our branch volunteers collaborates with other community or corporate social responsibility groups who have come forward to contribute as well. Besides Sengkang Food Rescue, Sembawang Town Council, companies like TreeDots and Saint Gobain and volunteer groups like Smile!SG and MAD, have joined forces with Sembawang West Branch, to donate household necessities like toys, books, frozen foods, pillows and more, to augment the fruits and vegetables. Especially during festive periods, the additional donation items indeed bring lots of joy and relief to residents who are not able to afford such basic pleasures.

Recently, our volunteers even started additional services, by roping in hairstylists to provide free haircuts for residents who turn up for the food distribution. Residents will not only eat healthily but also look better and feel more comfortable. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will like to share our takeaways in Malay.

(In Malay): [Please refer to [Vernacular Speech](#).] We started the "food distribution" initiative with the intention of reducing food waste, encouraging low-income families to eat more nutritious meals, and also helping them reduce expenses on food.

Over time, we had the opportunity to get to know the residents better and we developed friendships by chatting with them while they wait in queue. Even though they may not be affluent or well-educated, many of these residents are very hardworking, warm and down-to-earth. They are very appreciative of our efforts and greet us warmly whenever we meet. We receive many blessings and truly appreciate the thank-you notes that were given to us from these distribution sessions.

Throughout this process, our volunteers, especially the youths, have the opportunity to learn about how we can help the under-privileged living in our midst. It is a great eye-opener that brings a lot of meaning and real-life experiences to these volunteers, including helping senior residents carry their bags of fruits and vegetables to their humble homes, which helps the volunteers learn to appreciate how fortunate they themselves are.

There is a lot of good done whenever our branch volunteers work with other community or corporate social responsibility groups who have come forward to contribute as well. Besides Sengkang Food Rescue and Sembawang Town Council, companies like TreeDots and Saint Gobain, Smile!SG and MAD,

have joined forces with Sembawang West Branch, to donate household items like toys, books, frozen food, pillows, fruits and vegetables. During festive periods especially, this additional donation brings lots of joy and relief to residents who are not able to afford such basic pleasures.

Recently, our volunteers started additional services, by roping in hairstylists to provide free haircuts for residents who turn up for the food distribution. Residents will not only eat healthily but also look better and feel more comfortable.

(In English): Thanks to the "Colourful Foods, Vibrant Life" programme, my Branch volunteers have forged a stronger camaraderie. Though it is hard work, we are always happy to be there for fellow Singaporeans who are less privileged in life. Everyone looks forward to the third Saturday of the month and we are passionate about helping our residents.

Hence, with the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill, I hope more food donors and Samaritans will come forward to contribute. With the additional support, programmes like Sembawang West's food distribution programme can be replicated in other localities and to many more towns in Singapore.

Finally, I would conclude with my sincere thanks to the leadership of fellow Member, Mr Louis Ng and his legal assistant, Ms Charmaine Yap, and many more Samaritans in the committee who have contributed in the drafting of the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill, over the past four years.

The Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill will assist in the reduction of food waste, help low-income families, inspire stronger volunteerism amongst more Singaporeans and make us a more caring society. Let us all turn a vicious circle of food waste into a virtuous circle of good deeds! Mr Speaker, Sir, I support the Bill.

Mr Speaker: Senior Parliamentary Secretary Eric Chua.

1.57 pm

The Senior Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth (Mr Eric Chua): Mr Speaker, I would first like to thank Mr Louis Ng and his team for tabling the Private Member's Bill and for bringing this important issue to the fore.

In my speech, I will touch on three areas: one, how the work of food charities in Singapore fits with our social compact; two, how the Bill will support their work; and finally, how, as a society, we can join hands across Government, community and businesses to support more intentional giving.

Food support organisations play an important role in our society. They are a positive model of how community partners with families and the Government and exemplify our "many helping hands" approach.

In Singapore, we encourage self-reliance and family support. Individuals do their best for themselves and their families and families provide the first line of support.

The next layer of support is a caring community, comprising neighbours, community organisations and other partners, including corporates. Members of the community, like our food support organisations, contribute their time, resources and expertise and help create opportunities for those they help.

The Government helps to create conditions and opportunities for Singaporeans to provide a better life for themselves and their loved ones. On occasion, some families fall on hard times for a variety of reasons and the Government steps in to provide support, in essence, provide a social safety net to help them regain stability and self-reliance.

Thus, food charities do not work alone, but alongside many others who seek to help individuals and families in need.

There are many food charities in Singapore. Together, they provide a wide range of food support, such as cooking and delivering hot meals, distributing dry rations, setting up community shops, as well as providing digital credits that allow beneficiaries to select the food that best meets their dietary requirements.

Food charities complement the Government's support, by offering additional aid and expanding the range of choices for families in need. Their efforts go a long way in helping to alleviate the burdens of these families.

Not many people see their work. They are often unsung heroes, operating behind the scenes. Many food charities and their dedicated volunteers work tirelessly around the clock, including at night and in the wee hours of the morning. They collect donated food, prepare and repack them for their beneficiaries and help prepare cooked meals. Many also work closely with social services to identify needy families and make plans for supporting them, in line with their needs.

I have had the privilege of leading the Charity Food Workgroup, or CFWG, over the past four years. The CFWG was first formed in 2019 and today comprises 15 private and public stakeholders, such as food charities, Government organisations and corporate partners.

Our goal is to bring partners within the food donation ecosystem together so that we can harness our collective strengths to practise "good giving and giving right". We have done this by: (a) helping those in need identify and receive food support; (b) reducing duplication of food support and reducing food wastage through better coordination; and (c) encouraging better giving through a shared emphasis on providing food support that meets beneficiaries' dietary needs and in a way that gives beneficiaries greater choice and dignity.

The CFWG's work is beneficiary-centric and largely driven by the food charities which are the key enablers of these efforts. The workgroup has also risen to the occasion during difficult times. During the circuit breaker, the work of many food charities was disrupted, with many unable to operate. Recognising that there was higher demand for food support then, CFWG members rallied together and developed a central repository of food support beneficiaries' data. This enabled charities that were still able to operate to take over to provide support to those who needed help.

Today, that initiative has led to the establishment of a FoodConnect Database. Launched in 2022, the FoodConnect database provides food charities with a consolidated view of food support received by a household, thus facilitating better coordination and avoiding duplication. And we continue to encourage more food charities to come on board the database.

We have also launched a FoodConnect Directory that enables families to access food charities according to where they live and their dietary requirements. This has helped families more easily find food support that best meets their needs. The Directory has become more comprehensive over time. Today, it includes food charities offering halal, non-halal and vegetarian food support options in all service regions in Singapore.

The introduction of the Good Samaritan Food Donation, or GSFD Bill is a significant step forward to bolster efforts in the food support space. The Bill reflects the collective efforts of stakeholders in the food donation space who have come together to think about how to incentivise food donation and reduce food wastage in Singapore.

We welcome the protections conferred by the Bill, as more donors can confidently participate in food donation and less food will go to waste. Through our food charities and food support organisations stepping in to organise these donations, more food can be given to those in need. And organisations can also benefit from the assurance that there are legislative protections in place, as they carry out their work. I hope that, collectively, these measures will help encourage greater community giving while, at the same time, reducing food wastage. The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) supports the spirit of the Bill.

With the GSFD Bill, we can look forward to an increase in the quantity and variety of donated food, as more businesses and individuals are encouraged to donate. My hope is that this will lead to greater choice and dignity for beneficiaries of food support, who will be better placed to get food support that best meets their needs and preferences.

With this Bill, I encourage food donors who are considering stepping forward to also work with food charities to understand the needs of food support recipients and donate in ways that provide greater choice, including healthier food options. We also encourage donors and food charities to work with CFWG and, together, we can address the community's needs more effectively.

Mr Speaker, in my past four years of involvement in this space, I have had the distinct privilege of seeing first-hand how giving has evolved over time. For our beneficiaries to have the option of choice is not simply or merely about preferences. I have a four-year-old boy at home, so, I know for young children, having a choice over food options not only helps them feel like they have some control over their lives, but learning to decide is also a key part of growing up. And yet, for others, being able to choose the food that they eat comes from a position of need. For diabetic patients, for instance, white rice and sugar, items that are often found in standard ration packs, would be of little help for them.

And that is why I have been so deeply inspired by the many big hearts that have been involved in this space, working hard to evolve our giving models, so that we do not just give but, more importantly, give better. And for that, I salute all who have been, and will continue, to be hard at work in our food charities. Sir, I support the Bill.

Mr Speaker: Senior Parliamentary Secretary Baey Yam Keng.

2.06 pm

The Senior Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Sustainability and the Environment (Mr Baey Yam Keng): Sir, MSE supports food waste reduction, whilst ensuring supply of safe food for Singapore.

Reducing food waste helps us realise our vision of a zero-waste nation. The total amount of food waste generated in Singapore in 2023 was 755,000 tonnes, which accounted for about 11% of the total waste generated in Singapore. We support the GSFD Bill as we believe it will help reduce food waste by facilitating the donation of surplus food to beneficiaries.

Mr Yip Hon Weng asked about my Ministry's broader goals in managing food waste. Mr Speaker, food waste is a priority waste stream under the Zero Waste Masterplan and we have implemented a range of efforts under the Masterplan. We have set out regulatory measures in the Resource Sustainability Act that progressively require, from 2024, large commercial and industrial food waste generators to segregate food waste for treatment or conversion into useful products and to submit annual food waste reports. Concurrently, we are building up our food waste treatment capacity through the construction of the upcoming Food Waste Treatment Facility, which will produce biogas and boost electricity generation.

The preferred way to manage food waste is to avoid food production in excess of consumption at the onset. We encourage all food establishments, including manufacturers, caterers and retailers, to review processes and practices, to reduce the incidence of excessive food production upstream. Stakeholders may consult the food waste minimisation guidebooks available on the NEA and SFA websites. Where there is unsold or excess food, we support food donation as a possible avenue to reduce wastage.

The GSFD Bill thus complements existing efforts to reduce food waste by facilitating food donation which would then avoid the need for food waste treatment and its associated operational costs. Ms Hazel Poa, Mr Yip Hon Weng, Ms Jean See, Miss Rachel Ong and Ms Joan Pereira suggested further measures to encourage food waste reduction through food donations. We thank the Members for their suggestions and will study them further together with MSF as they continue to look at ways to strengthen efforts in the food support space.

As we facilitate and support measures that reduce food waste, we must also ensure that the donated food is safe and suitable for our consumption. Mr Don Wee and Mr Gan Thiam Poh spoke about food safety risks and the importance of ensuring that donors with ill intentions do not misuse the protection accorded by the GSFD Bill. The Bill aligns with MSE and SFA's approach to assure food safety and strikes a balance of roles and responsibilities among various parties. It makes clear that the safety of donated food is a joint responsibility of the Government, food donors, intermediaries, such food distribution organisations, and consumers.

MSE and SFA are responsible for establishing the regulatory framework for food safety and providing an enabling environment for the food industry. Mr Don Wee, Ms Hany Soh and Mr Edward Chia mentioned the need for clear guidelines and standards to guide food donors. Mr Yip Hon Weng asked about how we could ensure that food donors are well-informed and fully compliant with existing food safety and hygiene regulations. Since 2021, SFA has published a set of guidelines for food safety practices during the preparation, delivery, storage and distribution of food for charitable causes. These

guidelines are refreshed periodically to ensure their continued relevance to food donors and food distribution organisations, and they are available online.

Mr Don Wee, Mr Yip Hon Weng, Mr Zhulkarnain and Ms Ng Ling Ling also mentioned other measures to ensure that food donors maintain proper food safety standards, such as the need for training of staff and volunteers, maintaining records for accountability and tracing, and regular inspections. These are good food safety practices which SFA will continue to raise awareness of and educate the food industry, food distribution organisations and consumers on. Where feedback is received and preliminary checks suggest food safety lapses, SFA will also utilise its levers, including inspection, sampling and testing, to investigate and take action.

Food donors and food distribution organisations continue to have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the food they are donating or distributing. For example, premises and equipment for food preparation and distribution should be kept clean and well-maintained, and employees and volunteers handling the food should adopt good hygiene practices. Recipients should also be advised by food donors and food distribution organisations on measures they could take to ensure food safety, such as checking the condition of food upon receipt and consuming it within the recommended timeline.

To this end, MSE and SFA support the inclusion of the four conditions in the GSFD Bill that food donors must comply with, before the protection from criminal and civil liability can apply. First, the food should not have been unsafe and not unsuitable at the time it left possession and control of the food donor. Second, the food donor should have informed the recipient of any food handling requirements to ensure that the donated food remained safe and suitable. Third, the food donor should have informed the recipient of any time beyond which the food would no longer have remained safe and suitable. Last, the food donor should have taken all reasonably practicable measures to comply with any applicable requirement under any written law related to food safety and hygiene when handling the food to be donated.

These conditions provide clarity to donors on the requirements that they should meet in order to be eligible for protection from any criminal or civil liability arising from food safety incidents. To address Ms Ng Ling Ling's query on whether MSE would be the authority to revoke the waiver of liability if food safety breaches occur, the Bill does not warrant the need for revocation of waiver as food donors would automatically forfeit their protection under the Bill if they failed to meet any of the four conditions. The conditions thus provide assurance to food donation recipients that donors would have taken necessary measures to safeguard the safety of the food they provide.

Recipients of donated food also have a part to play to ensure food safety. They should exercise due diligence and take responsibility in noting the information provided by donors or food distribution organisations so that the donated food remains safe and suitable to consume.

While the Bill facilitates food donation, it does not impede SFA's responsibilities as a regulator or its ability to investigate food safety lapses and take action against non-compliance with food safety directions.

Ms Joan Pereira and Ms Ng Ling Ling asked about MSE and SFA's enforcement and investigation processes. Assoc Prof Jamus Lim also enquired on what would happen when donors do not follow safety guidelines.

In the event of food safety incidents, SFA will continue to conduct investigations to determine the facts of the case and take appropriate measures to manage the risk to food donation recipients. The Director General (Food Administration) can issue directions to suspend food donation or distribution activities until appropriate rectification has been done.

Miss Rachel Ong asked whether intermediary food rescue groups would be held liable if food was found to be unsuitable and unsafe. The Bill covers all food donors, including food distribution organisations such as food charities, which distribute food donated by others for charitable purpose. If the donor or food distribution organisation is found to have donated or distributed unsafe or unsuitable food or did not take reasonable measures to ensure food safety, they would not be protected from liability under the GSFD Bill as they would have failed to meet the conditions stipulated in the Bill. SFA will continue to be judicious in its investigations and will only take action against the errant party.

For example, if a food distribution organisation had done its due diligence to ensure the food was safe and suitable when it left its possession, but unknowingly passed on erroneous information from the food donor, the donor would be held responsible while the food distribution organisation will continue to enjoy the protection under the Bill.

To better assure food safety in food donation activities, MSE and SFA will be strengthening SFA's regulatory powers through the upcoming Food Safety and Security Bill (FSSB).

As announced earlier this year, the FSSB will bring together food safety and security legislation from eight existing Acts into one single Act and provide an overarching framework to ensure coherence across the entire food value chain. We are currently engaging and consulting relevant stakeholders on FSSB. Given that similar food safety risks exist in both sale and donation of food, we intend to extend food safety requirements in the FSSB to cover food donation and distribution activities beyond the sale of food.

For example, Assoc Prof Jamus Lim and Mr Yip Hon Weng spoke about the importance of clear and accurate labels on donated food, containing information such as the presence of cooked food and allergens. These are current requirements for food that is sold, which we are looking to extend to all food, whether sold or donated, under the FSSB.

The Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill will complement the upcoming FSSB by requiring food donors and food distribution organisations to comply with prevailing food safety requirements before protection from criminal and civil liability can apply.

To conclude, the Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill will help encourage donation of surplus food and contribute to reducing food waste. Importantly, this will be conducted in a manner that does not compromise food safety and consumer health. It also provides assurance to food donation recipients that reasonable measures have been taken to ensure food safety.

On that note, my Ministry and I support the Bill.

Mr Speaker: Mr Louis Ng.

2.20 pm

Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang (Nee Soon): Mr Speaker, I thank Members for their strong support for the Bill as well as their comments and very useful suggestions. This might be the shortest Bill with the most number of speakers – 17 Members spoke on our eight-page Bill.

One of our main aims was not just to pass legislation to waive liability for food donations but to shine a spotlight on this very important issue which is seldom debated in this House. I am glad to say we have achieved this through the debate we had over the past two days.

Allow me some time to now address key points and questions Members have raised. I will also address some of the key concerns that were raised to the Good Samaritan Legislation Review Committee through our consultations with stakeholders and members of the public. I will also explain why some suggestions raised to the Committee have not been incorporated into the Bill.

Ultimately, the purpose of the Bill is to encourage food donation to address food wastage and food insecurity by waiving liability.

As Senior Parliamentary Secretary Baey Yam Keng just shared, food waste reduction helps us to realise our vision of a zero-waste nation. Senior Parliamentary Secretary Eric Chua also shared that this Bill embodies the spirit of a caring society.

I should stress that more importantly, the waiver of liability is just one piece of the broader food donation ecosystem. There are many other things we can, should and must do to encourage food donation beyond this Bill. This Bill is just a starting point.

With these goals in mind, I will provide some clarification on the Bill. Members have raised several issues and I have grouped this reply into six areas of concern: one, the unintended and opposite effect of the Bill; two, who is covered under the Bill; three, meeting the four conditions; four, support and help for food donors; five, support and help for recipients; and six, public education and partnerships

Let me start by addressing one of the most common feedback we have received. The elephant in the room is whether this Bill might have the unintended and opposite effect of chilling food donation. We have worked hard to avoid this. This is a big elephant and as we learnt from Ms Poh Li San today, an elephant can weigh up to six tonnes.

There were concerns about whether this Bill will make some food donation activities illegal or whether existing food donors will be dissuaded because compliance with the four conditions is too difficult. Let me stress again that this is not the intention of the Bill. The Bill should not make it more onerous for donors to donate food. What it does is to strike a balance between encouraging food donation and at the same time, safeguarding food safety and hygiene standards. It is about striking the balance between responsibility and philanthropy that Mr Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim so rightly said.

We aim to inspire more food donations and we are confident of achieving this through this Bill without compromising food safety and hygiene standards. As Ms Jean See shared, the well-being of recipients of donated food is priority.

Next, who is covered under the Bill? The Committee intended for the definition of a food donor to be as broad as possible to cover as many food donation activities as possible. For this reason, the Bill does not differentiate between an individual, a community food rescue group, a religious organisation, a business or a registered food charity.

NTUC FairPrice asked to clarify if a co-operative society is included in the definition of an "entity". Let me assure FairPrice that the definition of an "entity" is broad enough to cover a co-operative society.

Members of the public and Members here, including Mr Yip Hon Weng and Miss Rachel Ong, asked about the donation of food past the "expiry", "best before" and "use by" dates. The donation of food past the "expiry", "best before" and "use by" dates will not be covered under this Bill. The Committee debated this issue extensively but ultimately, one is not allowed to sell food past the "expiry", "best before" and "use by" dates. Taking that into account, we should not waive liability when one donates the same food. If it is illegal for sale, the Committee felt it would not be appropriate for donation of the same food to be protected from liability.

I should add that Singapore currently takes a relatively simple approach where "expiry", "best before", "use by" and all other dates are treated the same. I do note that there is room to debate this issue further, especially for the "best before" date. I understand MSE is studying this issue further and I eagerly await an update.

Next, Mr Yip Hon Weng asked for greater clarity on the Bill's stance on community fridges and food rescue initiatives and whether the Bill extends liability protection to them. This was also raised at the second public consultation by Ms Robin, a zero waste advocate.

The Bill does not rule out waiver of liability for community fridges and food rescue initiatives, assuming that the four conditions are met. That said, the Committee acknowledges that it may be more difficult for donors or groups involved in community fridges to meet the four conditions since there might not be any direct communication or even face-to-face meetings between the donor and recipient. For community fridges, there are times we might not even know who the food donor is.

Food rescue initiatives, on the other hand, can more easily meet the four conditions. For the past few years, we have a monthly food rescue initiative in Nee Soon East. I have spoken to the team managing the food rescue and we are confident we can meet the four conditions.

Next, during the first public consultation, the Committee surveyed the public on exempting logistics providers from liability. The proposal received strong public support, with around three-quarters of respondents agreeing that logistics providers should enjoy protection from civil and criminal liability.

The Committee ultimately decided to take an incremental approach and waive liability only for food donors for now and not logistics providers. However, if our initial legislative efforts are successful in

encouraging food donation, future amendments to expand the law to cover logistics providers is a possibility.

Next, on the definition of food donation, the Committee wanted to ensure that the focus of the Bill remains on charitable giving. To be considered a donation, the food must be given without payment to the donor. This includes any nominal sum or logistics fee. If in exchange for the food donation, the donor receives non-monetary benefits, such as publicity, the food given will still be considered a food donation.

Miss Rachel Ong asked if the Bill covers donors who receive monetary donations from the public who collect donated food. If the monetary donation is provided from members of the public and not the recipient of the food, the food donation still enjoys liability protection under the Bill. However, if the recipient is the one providing the monetary donation, this is akin to a pay-as-you-wish arrangement, which will not be protected under the Bill.

The Committee wanted to draw a very clear line on situations where the Bill applies as the focus of this Bill is on food donation for a charitable, benevolent and philanthropic purpose. I should also point out that where food donation is to needy families, it is fairly unlikely that the recipients will be asked to pay for the food.

NTUC FairPrice also raised a hypothetical situation of a supermarket paying a food surplus management company to redistribute the donated food to the community. The donation in this scenario will still enjoy liability protections. This is because no payment is received by the supermarket for the food given.

Next, Mr Keith Chua asked how the Committee determined that absolving donors of liability will increase the food available for donation. He also asked about the identity of potential donors who are currently reluctant to donate.

The Committee consulted extensively with restaurants, hotels, social enterprises, primary food producers, food processing companies, distributors, wholesalers, food logistics, transport and delivery provider companies, supermarkets and merchants, bakeries and non-governmental organisations. These stakeholders shared their direct experiences on how liability concerns have a chilling effect on potential food donors, including hotels, restaurants, bakeries and supermarkets.

The survey conducted by the RAS on the Bill also support this, with 60% of respondents saying that they are very or somewhat likely to participate in food donation if this Bill is passed. This sentiment is echoed by Mr Dellen Soh from the RAS who shared that "Restaurants do want to donate excess food to reduce food waste and help our communities. But the very real risk of liability from donated food has a chilling effect for many restaurants."

Finally, on this section, Mr Zulkarnain Abdul Rahim asked whether the Bill covers the waiver of liability only in cases of death or personal injury from consuming the donated food. He asked whether illnesses or other physical harms are covered.

For the purposes of this Bill, personal injury includes any disease and any impairment of a person's physical or mental condition. This is similar to the definition adopted under the Civil Law Act, the Limitation

Act and the Contributory Negligence and Personal Injuries Act. As such, illnesses and physical harms are covered.

I will, now, move on to clarifications on the four conditions to enjoy liability protection. I thank Mr Vikram Nair for his view that the four conditions are both rigorous and reasonable. I also thank Ms Hazel Poa for sharing that these conditions are reasonable and should not pose an excessive impediment to food donors.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary Baey Yam Keng spoke about how ensuring donated food is safe and suitable for consumption is a shared responsibility among Government, food donors, community organisations and recipients of food donations. I cannot emphasise enough how this must be a shared responsibility. I also cannot emphasise enough that food safety cannot be compromised. Food safety was a non-negotiable component in all our consultations and in drafting this Bill.

Mr Gan Thiam Poh spoke about how the Bill should not be misused by those with ill intentions. As Mr Gan Thiam Poh pointed out, a key challenge is ensuring that the liability protections are appropriately scoped. After much debate, the Committee came up with the four conditions that I have shared.

At the second public consultation, food donation groups asked how it will be determined whether food is unsafe and unsuitable. NTUC FairPrice, similarly, asked whether supermarkets can refer to established standards under food safety legislation to determine safety and suitability for consumption. The existing interpretations of whether food is unsafe and unsuitable, under section 2C and 2D of the Sale of Food Act, will apply in determining whether food is unsafe and unsuitable under this Bill.

For example, under section 2D of the Sale of Food Act, "food is deemed unsuitable if the food is damaged, deteriorated or perished to an extent that affects its reasonable intended use. Food is unsuitable if it has packaging that is damaged, deteriorated, perished or contaminated to the extent of affecting the food's reasonable intended use." Existing food safety legislation and case law on food safety will also apply.

Mr Keith Chua asked about when recipients might fall ill from consuming donated food, if the food was safe and suitable at the point of donation. Despite the best efforts of food donors to ensure that the donated food is safe and suitable, a recipient may still fall ill if the food was not properly handled, not properly stored and not consumed within the appropriate time.

During our consultation, one restaurant owner shared with us that some cleaners had packed leftover food from the restaurant to take home with them. The food had included delicacies, such as prawns. Seeing how good the food was, the recipient kept the food for the next day. The food likely went bad and the recipient suffered from food poisoning. After that incident, the restaurant did not dare to allow the leftover food to be packed and taken back.

Of course, in this situation, the restaurant would also have to inform the recipient of the handling requirements and the time limit for consumption and comply with all written laws on food safety and hygiene to enjoy protection from liability. However, this is a real story that shows how food that was safe and suitable at the time of donation, might still cause injury not through any fault of the donor.

Next, Assoc Prof James Lim referred to the four-hour rule under the NEA guidelines, which limit the consumption time of food from the time it is cooked. He asked whether the fourth condition, requiring a donor to comply with existing written law on food safety and hygiene, include this four-hour rule. I should clarify that the four-hour rule is not just an NEA guideline.

Regulation 13A of the Environmental Public Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations prohibit caterers from selling or supplying food for consumption after four hours from when the food was first prepared. Breaching this regulation is an offence. The four-hour rule is a written law on food safety and hygiene and must be complied with to enjoy liability protection under this Bill.

Assoc Prof Jamus Lim also suggested that in addition to the four conditions, we should also require that food donors act in good faith in order to enjoy liability protection. The Committee had considered this suggestion. The Committee decided, that good faith would introduce too much uncertainty for food donors on when they will enjoy protection, when uncertainty from the risk of legal liability is the precise problem this Bill is trying to address.

As I shared, the survey by RAS found that 80% of surveyed restaurants were unsure whether the law will adequately protect businesses, even with the express waiver of liability. Including good faith as a requirement, while it sounds good and I understand where Assoc Prof Jamus Lim is coming from, we feel it might cause even greater concerns for businesses and undermine what the Bill is trying to achieve.

The Committee decided that four clear conditions that donors can fulfil, to know that they enjoy liability protection, will provide responsible donors with certainty and peace of mind that is very much needed.

Next, Mr Yip Hon Weng asked for guidelines for donors to follow to prevent unintentional non-compliance with standards. He also suggested having resources to be made available on proper handling. Mr Don Wee and Ms Hany Soh also spoke about having guidelines, best practices and safety standards.

SFA has, in 2021, published the Guidelines for Social Service Agencies and community groups involved in food preparation and distribution activities for charitable causes. These guidelines would be relevant in considering if the four conditions for a waiver of liability have been met.

I urge SFA to expand these guidelines to also cover food donors, such as restaurants, hotels and bakeries. This will provide them with the much-needed guidance. I also urge organisations to familiarise themselves with these very good guidelines and strictly adhere to them. I hope SFA will also consider doing briefing sessions for food donors to ensure food donors understand the guidelines and clarify any doubts they have. SFA should also make these guidelines more easily accessible to the public.

As mentioned in my Second Reading speech, complying with these guidelines is one of the conditions to enjoy the waiver of liability. Before I end this section, I should address another point that Mr Keith Chua made about providing guidelines on what can and what cannot be donated. This should actually be included into the SFA guidelines as well. It is a good suggestion.

During our consultations with the hotels, some of the hotels actually mentioned that they already have these guidelines on what they will donate and what they will not donate. That could be a good starting

point of including this current list into the existing SFA guidelines.

As another example, Food from the Heart also have guidelines on what bread they will accept for donation and what bread they would not accept. For example, bread with fillings would not be accepted by Food from the Heart. Again, we have a starting point in terms of developing guidelines on what can and cannot be donated.

Next, Mr Yip Hon Weng and Assoc Prof Jamus Lim suggested that we consider mandating information labels on donated cooked food. NTUC FairPrice also asked about the role of packaging and labelling in meeting the conditions on communicating handling requirements and expiry date.

Properly packaging and labelling donated food are examples of how a donor can meet the conditions on communicating handling requirements and time limits for consuming donated food. There are other ways that a donor can communicate handling requirements and time limits to recipients. For instance, they can do so through text messages. We are mindful that mandating labelling might be too onerous for some small donors and we do not want this Bill to have the unintended effect of turning food donors away.

However, as the Senior Parliamentary Secretary Baey Yam Keng had just mentioned in his speech, I understand MSE is considering mandating labelling and I look forward to the Food Safety and Security Bill.

Lastly, on this section, Mr Don Wee suggested other methods for ensuring accountability, including maintaining records of donation, requiring reporting on food donation, regular audits and publication of donation data and impact reports. Mr Don Wee's suggestion on requiring reporting on food donation is a next step that the Government should seriously consider. The mandatory requirements on segregation and reporting of food waste came into effect this year for industrial and commercial buildings that generate large amount of food waste. As a further step, I hope the Government will look into food donation reporting requirements for these big players as well. It is a good suggestion from Mr Don Wee.

The Government should also look into the suggestion and ideas by Mr Edward Chia about using technology to track and manage food donation more effectively. Mr Edward Chia gave good examples, which follow on nicely from Mr Don Wee's suggestion. Apart from the four conditions, the Committee however decided against having some of the mandatory requirements Mr Don Wee raised as they might be a burden for some donors, especially the smaller ones.

We intended for these conditions to be reasonable to meet and not any more than what a food donor would already be expected to do before they donate food. As Mr Yip Hon Weng pointed out, we need to take a balanced approach on this. However, the suggestions that members have raised are all good ideas that MSE, SFA and MSF should look into. I hope MSE, SFA and MSF will continue to engage the industry on how they can meet the four conditions and provide the support needed.

Next, I will talk about support and help for our food donors. I fully agree with the Senior Parliamentary Secretary Eric Chua that food charities augment the support provided by the Government. Food charities truly embody the spirit of the "many helping hands" approach that the Senior Parliamentary Secretary Eric Chua spoke about. They are our unsung heroes and I thank them for the work they do behind the scenes to ensure that families never go hungry or without nutritious food.

Businesses who donate food are equally important too and we should also support them. Ms Ng Ling Ling spoke about how businesses would like the help of legislation that reduces the fear of liability and reputational damage so that they can meet their societal responsibilities. I spoke to many businesses, including restaurants, hotels, bakeries, supermarkets and merchants. I can assure the public that food donation is not just a matter of checking off a corporate social responsibility obligation.

Many of the businesses I spoke with, see food donation as one way of giving back to the community. The liability protection is one way of helping these businesses and food charities do good. But as Mr Yip Hon Weng suggested, liability protection essentially removes a barrier but we must now provide active encouragement. Members have raised many good ideas for further incentivising and supporting food donation.

Mr Yip Hon Weng, Miss Rachel Ong, Ms Joan Pereira, Ms Jean See and Ms Hazel Poa suggested tax benefits for food donation. Mr Yip Hon Weng also suggested subsidies for logistical costs and Ms Hazel Poa suggested tax incentives for transport or platform companies who assist in providing food pick-up and delivery services for larger F&B enterprises.

Mr Yip Hon Weng raised examples of tech-enabled inventory management that receives substantial government support and recognition in Japan and Australia. These were suggestions that were commonly raised during our consultation. We heard from many businesses that some additional financial support from the Government could make it easier for them to donate food.

One possible avenue for support is to give subsidies or tax incentives for capital-heavy equipment, such as blast chillers. These chillers can be used to quickly freeze cooked food, extending its shelf life beyond the normal four-hour mark and making it easier to donate.

Many businesses are already doing this and what would help further is to incorporate guidelines on the use of blast chillers into the expanded SFA guidelines that I called for earlier. These guidelines will help provide some certainty to food donors. Businesses and food charities also shared with us that refrigerated trucks would be very useful for supporting food donations and hope to receive subsidies for purchasing these. All these suggestions will help food donors and, very importantly, help to ensure safer and more efficient handling of donated food.

Another suggestion raised, is tax deduction for donated food. As Mr Yip Hon Weng noted, this is currently being done in other countries, including the US and Italy. As Ms Jean See shared, this could help incentivise businesses to institutionalise food donation activities.

We studied these tax deduction suggestions. We put this through a public consultation as well and an overwhelming majority of the public supports this. However, there are currently challenges with accurately valuing food for the purpose of tax deduction and preventing any potential abuse. After exploring these options with the Ministry of Finance, the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore, MSF and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, the committee concluded that these financial incentives have to be studied further and can be considered for future implementation.

Mr Yip Hon Weng, Mr Don Wee and Ms Ng Ling Ling also raised other suggestions, including public recognition programmes for food donors and encouraging food donors to purchase liability insurance as

an extra layer of protection. These, again, are all good suggestions. I hope the Government will continue to study the possibility of additional support that can be extended to food donors. The Charities Food Work Group that the Senior Parliamentary Secretary Eric Chua chairs, may be a good platform for these suggestions to be explored further.

For instance, while liability insurance may be difficult to mandate because it may not be feasible for smaller players. There is scope to explore this option for larger players. The Government can take steps to encourage liability insurance and monitor the take-up rate of such insurance.

Next, Mr Yip Hon Weng suggested mandatory training programmes or certification for frequent food donors. He suggested that SFA develop such programmes. Mr Don Wee, Mr Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim, Ms Ng Ling Ling and Ms Jean See, similarly, suggested training programmes. The Committee considered and consulted the public on requiring food charities to be certified, accredited and undergo training. While the proposal received significant public support, smaller food charities and community groups expressed concerns that the accreditation and training requirements may hamper their work.

Smaller groups shared that their volunteer pool may be individuals who volunteer on an ad hoc basis. These volunteers may be dissuaded if they have to undergo compulsory training. The groups also shared that they may not have the resources to meet the accreditation requirements.

After considerable debate – and it is a tough balancing act – the Committee decided that requiring accreditation to enjoy liability protections may again have the unintended effect of reducing food donations in Singapore.

That said, voluntary training and certification are steps that may be good for the Charities Food Work Group to explore further. The Government can also provide the much needed assistance on this.

Mr Edward Chia had shared about the importance of accreditation and suggested that the Government provide grants to cover costs associated with adopting these standards and conducting necessary training. His suggestion of Enterprise Singapore's Quality and Standards division developing a standard specifically tailored to our local context, ensuring it meets the unique needs of our community, should also be looked into.

As I mentioned earlier, a good start which can be done very soon would be for SFA to do a briefing session for food donors on the SFA guidelines. That would be a good starting point.

Lastly, on this section, Ms Ng Ling Ling asked about mediation mechanisms and legal assistance for small donors. Mediation is always a possibility for civil disputes. As for donors who require legal assistance, there are existing avenues for legal support, including legal clinics for individuals and the Singapore Association of Trade and Commerce, which provides legal support for businesses.

I will now talk about support and help for recipients of donated food.

Mr Yip asked if the Bill offers legal protection for donors who unintentionally provide food that does not align with a recipient's dietary needs. The Bill does provide this legal protection as long as the four conditions are met.

Mr Keith Chua suggested that we introduce channels of guidance for food-insecure communities to assist them in making the right choices and advising them on their rights. The usual channels for legal aid and assistance, including the Legal Aid Bureau and Pro Bono SG, are available.

On helping food insecure communities to make the right choices, our social service agencies, food charities and Government agencies play an important role in helping those they serve make informed choices while respecting their autonomy to decide for themselves. What Mr Chua suggested is very much needed and public education is key to this Bill.

Finally, on public education and partnerships.

Waiving liability is just one part of the food donation picture. Miss Rachel Ong spoke about how public education alongside the Bill's implementation is key. I could not agree more with Miss Ong's point that rescued food is not meant only for the needy, but for all of us. The rest of society must adopt a similar mindset for food waste reduction efforts in Singapore for it to be significant and effective.

Mr Gan Thiam Poh noted that there is a need for education and understanding, especially over social and cultural norms on food wastage. Mr Don Wee suggested fostering partnerships between donors and reputable charities to ensure proper distribution and use of donated food.

These are good questions. Encouraging food donation requires tackling a much broader set of issues than just liability. As Ms Poh Li San rightly noted, there is much work to be done after we introduce this Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill. We will need to encourage businesses and supermarkets to come onboard as examples for other food suppliers and operators. We will also need to increase the number of volunteers, food collection points, donation drop-off nodes and distribution points.

Stronger partnerships between food rescue groups, Social Service Offices and Family Service Centres will also help in strengthening food donation networks. As Mr Edward Chia suggested, the CDCs also have an important role to play in terms of establishing community-based redistribution networks.

I feel like I am just shooting arrows here, but the point is that many people have to come onboard this journey for this to be a successful journey. The Good Samaritan Food Donation Bill is important, but, again, it is just one part of a larger picture. I hope the Government will continue working with businesses and food charities to look into what else we can do to encourage food donation.

As Ms Joan Pereira suggested, the Government should also consider providing the administrative and infrastructural support to help organisations get started on this journey of donation. MSF's Food Charities Work Group that I have mentioned many times in this speech is an important platform for such conversations.

I should add that following this Bill, I will continue to speak up about tackling food waste. This is not the end of my journey. I promise to continue to file Parliamentary Questions on this and to continue to push the Government to, as always, do more and, before I forget, do more, more quickly.

Sir, let me conclude. It has been an absolutely rewarding four-year journey in drafting this Bill. As Mr Yip Hon Weng pointed out, this Bill can be a catalyst for positive change in how we, as a society,

approach food waste and food security. It is about developing a more sustainable and compassionate society. I hope we become more compassionate.

I sincerely hope we can achieve what Ms Jean See shared in her speech, that this "Bill is the gamechanger that can help to dismantle the stigma surrounding food support while giving food-insecure families the confidence to benefit from food support that is dignified, sustained, adequate and enriching". I hope we become more sustainable.

Miss Rachel Ong shared about how reducing food waste is a nationwide effort and requires a society-wide change. We have to change. I have to stress that the key point of this Bill is not just about urging people to donate food but to really have people rethink our throwaway culture. Think about not wasting food in the first place. Change our habits. It is scary that food waste is so ingrained in our society now. Some of the businesses were telling me that they already factored food waste into their business costs. Do not need to worry about throwing food away. They already factored it in.

The work of the Committee and the Government is far from done. This Bill is only a starting point to create an effective legal and policy framework for the food donation ecosystem in Singapore. I hope that the learnings from this Bill will form the foundation for future improvements in our food donation landscape and I hope we will see an update in the next few years.

As I worked on this Bill, I was constantly reminded of my late grandmother. Actually, I constantly nag people about not wasting food because my grandmother constantly nagged me when I was young to not waste food. One of my tasks at family meals when I was a little boy was to scoop rice for everyone. I always remember opening the rice cooker and seeing my grandmother's food there.

She was always one meal behind the rest of the family. When we were having dinner, she was having the leftovers from lunch. After dinner, she stored the leftover food overnight to eat the next day. For her, and for many of our Pioneer Generation, even the smallest scrap of food waste is unthinkable.

My grandmother did not even want to waste gas to warm up her food. She warmed up her food using the steam in the rice cooker as we cooked our rice.

We now live in a time when food is more abundant as compared to the past. Most Singaporeans not only have more than enough food available, we are spoilt for choice, with food from all corners of the world being imported into Singapore daily.

But let us not forget that there are also many Singaporeans who are not sure what or when their next meal will be. I hope this Bill will bring back the spirit of the Pioneer Generation, the true champions against food waste, and cultivate these habits in our younger generations.

Sir, I hope I have answered all the clarifications that Members have raised and I again thank everyone for your strong support and for your very good questions. I would be glad to answer any further clarifications.

Let me now end with a quote, as always, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every person's needs, but not every person's greed". Let us treasure our precious resources and, together, tackle this throwaway culture.

Sir, you have no idea how much it means for me to say the next few words, how much it means for our extremely hardworking Good Samaritan Legislation Review Committee members and my Legislative Assistants, for the passionate food donors and dedicated food charities and community groups, how much it means for those struggling to have three meals a day and how much it means for our planet. Sir, I beg to move. [Applause.]

2.54 pm

Mr Speaker: Mr Ng, my grandmother and my mother had exactly the same behaviour as your grandmother. Any clarifications for Mr Ng? Looks like, Mr Ng, your wrap-up speech was very, very comprehensive. None?

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Committee of the whole House.

The House immediately resolved itself into a Committee on the Bill. – [Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang].

Bill considered in Committee; reported without amendment; read a Third time and passed.

Mr Speaker: Order. I propose to take the break now. Members are reminded that when you have your food in the Members' Room, do not waste food.

I suspend the Sitting and I will take the Chair at 3.20 pm. Order, order.

Sitting accordingly suspended

at 2.57 pm until 3.20 pm.

Sitting resumed at 3.20 pm.

[Mr Speaker in the Chair]
