

## **DBS PARTNERS FOOD BANK TO BETTER ADDRESS FOOD GAPS FOR THE VULNERABLE THROUGH SINGAPORE'S FIRST VIRTUAL FOOD BANKING APP**

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*With Covid-19 exacerbating food insecurity, virtual food banking app aims to enhance support for individuals and families affected by the crisis*

**Singapore, 4 June 2020** – DBS Bank today announced a partnership with The Food Bank Singapore to enhance Singapore's food donation ecosystem, and better address food gaps for the vulnerable by connecting corporate donors to food support organisations via the nation's first virtual food banking app. This is timely as Covid-19 is expected to have a prolonged impact on the economy, which would inadvertently weigh on the income of many individuals and families, exacerbating food insecurity.

According to Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Food Security Index, Singapore is the most food secure country in 2018 and 2019. However, the 2019 UN report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World found that 4.1% of the population in Singapore still faced moderate to severe food insecurity. This shows that addressing food insecurity is a continuous work in progress, particularly for the more vulnerable in society, and highlights a need for enhancements to Singapore's current food support system to ensure food needs are better matched with the dietary needs of beneficiaries.

Currently, most of the food insecure such as the elderly and low-income families facing prolonged unemployment or health issues, receive support from the more than 100 food-support organisations locally. But a sizeable amount of the food tends to be allocated to beneficiaries residing in rental flats, which often results in food being left till past its shelf life and thrown away. On the other hand, some households which have large families and genuinely need help in putting the next meal on the table but stay in larger flats, or have higher per household income, tend to fall through the cracks and lack sufficient food support. These are issues the virtual food banking app aims to solve.

With the virtual food banking app, greater coordination and targeting of food support will be made possible, as food support organisations can submit requests to donors in real-time and on-the-go. For instance, donors can share the type and quantity of food they have on hand via the app, enabling food support organisations to have real-time visibility of the items available. This also helps facilitate more relevant food matching and support, ensuring beneficiaries receive the right quantum and types of food they need, minimising food waste, which is one of the largest waste streams in Singapore<sup>1</sup>.

Minister for Social and Family Development Desmond Lee said, "Since late 2019, we have brought together government agencies, food charities and volunteers passionate about the food charity landscape, as part of a 'food workgroup' to forge partnerships, co-create solutions to reduce food wastage and address food insecurity issues faced by low-income and vulnerable families. I am heartened by this innovative collaboration championed by DBS Bank and Food Bank. This is a timely initiative, which could enhance the way we organise food aid and coordinate donations as we tide through Covid-19 together."

Said DBS Singapore CEO Shee Tse Koon, "With many families facing a big dent to their income with the Covid-19 situation, we hope that this initiative will provide the impetus for the various participants in Singapore's food donation ecosystem to come together as a united whole. With the virtual food banking app, we will have greater visibility of the support gaps in Singapore, and we hope more donors will be encouraged to come forth and make the commitment with us to help put food on the table for those in need."

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.towardszerowaste.sg/foodwaste/>

Expected to be launched in 4Q2020, the virtual food banking app aims to streamline the food donation process by connecting donors, social service agencies, food support organisations, and logistics providers via a single platform. This removes the need for extra handling, reduces spoilage and ensures that fresh food reaches those in need more quickly. The virtual food banking app also aims to collect data for analysis to enable agencies to better understand needs on the ground. Going digital will also reduce some of the laborious and cumbersome paperwork involved.

“The Food Bank Singapore has been brainstorming possible solutions for the past three years as we realise that there are gaps in feeding programmes across agencies. Without big data, it is tougher to address these gaps. It is crucial for The Food Bank Singapore to digitalise to increase our efficiency. Since we only have a lean team of seven full-time staff, the virtual food bank will gradually reduce our reliance on the need for data entry. The app will be a great starting point to test a circular ecosystem where donors, beneficiary organisations and logistics providers can be looped onto one platform to better facilitate food aid. Covid-19 has allowed us to create a catalyst for change as the needs on the ground will not be the same as before,” said The Food Bank Singapore co-founder Nichol Ng.

DBS and The Food Bank Singapore are also working with TreeDots<sup>2</sup>, a social enterprise supported by the DBS Foundation, to leverage its network of food producers, importers, distributors, and F&B businesses to enhance the supply and predictability of food donations, and to amplify the impact of the virtual food banking platform. This is in addition to the bank’s ongoing efforts to engage its network of corporate clients to come onboard the platform as pilot donors.

DBS is the founding partner for the virtual food banking platform and will be financing its development.

#### Committed to creating a positive social impact

In April, DBS launched its SGD 10.5 million [DBS Stronger Together Fund](#) to help communities hard hit by Covid-19 across the region. Through the fund, the bank will provide about 4.5 million meals and care packs to affected individuals across its six key markets, namely Singapore, Hong Kong, China, India, Indonesia and Taiwan.

As part of the initiative, in Singapore, DBS is partnering The Food Bank Singapore and Itsrainingraincoats to distribute up to 700,000 meals to underserved segments, including the elderly, low-income and migrant workers, with the support of employees and fellow Singaporeans. These meals in turn will be procured from the bank’s SME clients from 23 F&B outlets, including Koufu Group, Chang Cheng Group, Wee Nam Kee and Gao Ji, providing much-needed support to the hard-hit sector amid these challenging times.

DBS Foundation has also been active in providing financial and non-financial support to social enterprises, helping them to tide through this trying period. In this year’s DBS Foundation Social Enterprise Grant Programme, the bank introduced a new Zero Food Waste category, aimed at supporting social enterprises with innovative solutions which reduce food waste. With this programme, DBS is able to support businesses that do good for both the environment and society.

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<sup>2</sup> TreeDots aims to reduce food wastage through a platform linking businesses with unsold inventory to potential buyers, to prevent perfectly edible food from ending up in the bin. Leveraging machine learning and integrated systems, it enhances the efficiency of food distribution. The DBS Foundation Grant awarded to TreeDots in 2018 was used to enhance their online platform.