

# Waste not: farmers develop taste for orange-aid

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“It just makes me feel good that I can help someone” ... citrus grower Frank Scarfone. *Photo: Vince Bucello*

MORE than 2 million Australians seek food aid each year, and now farmers with surplus fruit and veg are coming to the rescue.

The head of Foodbank NSW, Gerry Andersen, said the increasing costs of utilities and groceries were fuelling the soaring number of people needing help to feed families.

"Our information says that there are 2 million Australians [who] need our help at least once during the year: 1 million need our help on a weekly basis, and half of [those] are kids."

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The organisation works with registered charities to distribute food donated by farmers and corporations. It launched its Waste Not Want Not initiative yesterday and took delivery of food from the Riverina where farmers have given tonnes of fresh produce to Sydney families.

Frank Scarfone is an orange grower at Tharbogang, near Griffith. A few weeks ago he threw out a load of oranges not deemed suitable for sale but since then has become involved in Waste Not Want Not. He now sends four tonnes a week to Sydney. The only thing wrong with the fruit is that it does not meet exacting commercial standards.

"They've been trained to expect nice-looking fruit to eat," he said. "In fact, an orange is an orange - the inside is always the same."

Mr Scarfone said he was happy to send as much of his fruit as he could to Foodbank. It cuts wastage and he is contributing to a project he feels is worthy.

"It just makes me feel good that I can help someone and achieve something," he said.

It was a rural chaplain with the Uniting Church, Julie Greig, who drew together the Riverina community around Carrathool shire and Foodbank NSW.

Working with the council's community development officer and the Department of Primary Industry's drought support worker, the chaplain approached farmers and was overwhelmed at the support she received.

"The extraordinary thing about it is the depth of community commitment for the project," she said. "People in Hillston have become so excited about it as their community project that I have people stopping me on the streets going 'How can I help?' The last time we sent a group out to pick up pumpkins the school sent students and teachers, gave us their school bus and filled it with diesel. So it's become a whole community project."

The Department of Community Services contributes to transport costs and Mr Andersen said he was working hard to encourage the government to throw further support behind the organisation.

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/waste-not-farmers-develop-taste-for-orangeaid-20110623-1ghmv.html#ixzz1Q93cWgKH>