

# Dundee Courier

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by Sandra Gray

A CHARITY has called for retailers and consumers in rural Scottish communities to make greater efforts to reduce food waste.

With estimates suggesting that Scots bin more than £1 billion in food each year, Humanos Aid International believes that changes must be made.

The organisation, based in Grandtully, has spent the last two years carrying out research into recycling, which has included surveying the policies of various supermarkets.

This has raised concerns about the practices used by one of the main retailers in Highland Perthshire, the Co-operative store.

Founder of Humanos Aid International, Billy, contacted The Courier to highlight what he believes are failings of the company to cut down on food waste.

"Our survey revealed that a large volume of food is being binned each day by this supermarket and we believe this is due to over-stocking," he said.

"It is amazing to see that daily fresh bake on and off bread is just being discarded at close of business, among other items.

"In an interview with several of the staff at the Co-operative, we were told that, due to legislation and health and safety, all food that reaches its end of shelf life has to be discarded.

"Looking at larger supermarkets elsewhere in Scotland, however, and it would appear that quite a few have some brilliant policies in place."

These include recycling waste through a pet and animal food manufacturer and offering for free food that has reached its sell-by date.

Billy called for The Co-operative Group, which is one of the main food stores in Pitlochry and Aberfeldy, to adopt similar policies.

He added: "In our rural Scottish Highlands and Islands communities, food waste on a large scale is a crime and the Co-operative should start thinking about food waste and land refill in Scotland, as well as poverty and a number of current issues.

"It is quite normal and easy practice to pay

companies to collect your discarded food but this does not have to be the case, especially when you consider the large quantities collected each week.

"Let us not forget that in Perthshire alone, some 16,000 people go to bed hungry each night and unemployment is around 11,000 and rising."

As part of efforts to help those in need and reduce food waste at the same time, Humanos Aid International is conducting a feasibility study into setting up a food bank in Highland Perthshire.

A spokesman from The Co-operative Group told The Courier that it could not offer out-of-date food to customers due to health and safety policies,

"The Co-operative endeavours to keep food waste to a minimum

and has procedures in place to minimise waste, while bearing in mind a responsibility to ensure that the food we sell is of a fit quality and condition," he said.

"In stores, food items are reduced by between 25% and 75% as they approach the end of their shelf life.

"We have systems in place to ensure we have optimum stock levels in our stores, therefore reducing the amount of products that reach the end of their shelf life and keeping waste to a minimum."

He also revealed that the company worked closely with UK charity, Fareshare which takes surplus food and drink from retailers and distributes it among local communities. This work is mainly carried out at The Co-operative food distribution centres.

But it is unlikely this will be extended to stores like those in Aberfeldy and Pitlochry.

"As the majority of our food stores are convenience stores and mid-sized supermarkets, they do not generate the amounts of waste that larger supermarkets do, so it is not practicable for us to operate a Fareshare scheme at an individual store level.

"However, to help our customers reduce their waste, we are also an active supporter of WRAPS Love Food Hate Waste campaign, which raises awareness of the need to reduce food waste, as well providing practical advice and solutions to help consumers waste less food," the spokesman said

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**Billy**