

# Can the redistribution of surplus food really improve food security?

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While surplus food redistribution has been promoted as a way of reducing food waste and food poverty, a paper published recently in *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* concludes that unless a distinction is drawn between genuine waste to be recovered and surplus to be redistributed for community benefit, surplus food as a resource is unlikely to be fully utilised.

Informed by an exploratory qualitative case study of third sector actors in north east England, the study explores the logics of surplus food redistribution. The framings and qualities ascribed to surplus foods as they flow through the food chain are examined. This research challenges the idea that food surplus is beyond the market and suggests that practices of distribution are never independent of their original market quality. Maintaining such quality within surplus food distribution processes is difficult and such challenges currently have to be overcome through agreements between charities and the [food industry](#).

As suggested by Dr. Jane Midgley from Newcastle University, 'surplus food redistribution is often presented as a solution to food insecurity and [food waste](#). But my research suggests that without greater guidance from government this will continue as an ad-hoc arrangement between the food industry and charities which may not adequately address either problem.' The research recommends that greater understandings of the values and qualities associated with surplus food and how the tensions surrounding these are managed is essential if surplus food is to be used as a potential resource to improve food security and other current [food](#)

system pressures.

**More information:** Jane L. Midgley, The logics of surplus food redistribution, *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, DOI: [10.1080/09640568.2013.848192](https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2013.848192), [www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09640568.2013.848192](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09640568.2013.848192)

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