

FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTH AFRICA: STATUS QUO AND POLICY IMPERATIVES

AEASA Presidential Address

1 October 2013, Bela Bela

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ABSTRACT

Although the term itself was only developed in the 1970s, food security has played a central role in policies that have shaped the history of South Africa from the 17th century. As with the changing international interpretation of food security over the past four decades, South African food security determinants have been interpreted differently by different ruling authorities and governments over three centuries. The Natives Land Act of 1913 played a significant role in determining the food security context of the country in terms of the character, composition and contribution of the agricultural sector, shaped consumption patterns and determined rural livelihoods. While food security is expressed as a national objective in a plethora of strategies and programmes, no formal evaluation has been carried out of the food security impact of these programmes, and there is a dire lack of coordination and no enforceable policy to ensure food security. Any national food security policy will need a framework of enforceable legislative measures and statutory coordination and reporting. This article explores the current national and household food security and nutrition situation in South Africa, and it offers recommendations for a comprehensive food security policy.

Keywords: food security, food security policy, agriculture policy

JEL classification: I38

1 FOOD SECURITY – A LONG-STANDING POLICY OBJECTIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although the term *food security* was only coined in the 1970s, food security has played a central role in almost every major governance declaration that has shaped the history of South Africa since the 17th century. As with the changing international interpretation of food security over the past four decades, South African food security determinants have been interpreted differently by different ruling governments over three centuries.

The arrival of the Dutch East India Company in 1652 was driven by food security needs. The Company recognised the need for fresh fruit and vegetables to ensure the health and proper functioning of its crews on the long trade journeys from Europe to the East. This led to the establishment of formal agriculture at Cape Town. Over time, political and food security needs drove settlers further afield in search of independence and more productive land. In less arable areas, farming shifted to extensive livestock systems.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, white settlers and black farmers flourished as they responded to growing demand for food from new mining towns and settlements. In 1860, over 80% of the nearly half a million hectares of white-owned land was farmed by black tenants (NDA, 1998). White farmers complained of labour shortages and competition from black tenants who participated in the growing commodity markets under conditions of relative land abundance, low population pressure, weak government intervention and undistorted markets (NDA, 2002; NDA, 1998).

The Natives Land Act (No. 27 of 1913) – also known as the Black Land Act – changed the context through territorial segregation, legislated for the first time. The law created reserves for blacks (approximately eight per cent of the country's farm land) and prohibited the sale of white territory to blacks and vice versa. Many believed its aim was to meet demands from white farmers for more agricultural land and force blacks to work as labourers on mines and in agriculture (NDA, 1998). The Act effectively eliminated competition from black farmers in the agricultural sector.

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Consequently, the Natives Land Act of 1913 played a significant role in determining the food security context of the country and households in terms of the character, composition and contribution of the agricultural sector; shaped consumption patterns and influenced rural livelihoods. The creation of Bantu homelands in 1951 led to further inequalities with regard to access to land and other resources, creating household food insecurity, particularly in the rural areas (Van der Merwe, 2011; Vorster *et al.*, 1996). Kirsten *et al.* (1993) report that agricultural productivity in these areas was very poor and agricultural development programmes had limited success in improving productivity.

The Act initiated the dualistic future of agriculture in South Africa. From about the same time, white farmers started receiving subsidies, grants and other aid for fencing, dams, housing, extension advice for production and subsidized rail rates, special credit facilities and tax relief (NDA, 1998). The Masters and Servants Act of 1911 and 1932 ensured the supply of cheap labour, locking labourers into contracts and reducing mobility (NDA, 1998). Over 80 Acts of Parliament passed over the next half a century strengthened the commercial farming sector, especially in marketing.

Successive administrations before South Africa's democratic transformation in 1994, equated national food security with large-scale commercial farming, a sector dominated by white South Africans. In this period, South Africa's agricultural policy focused on self-sufficiency through commercial production (Van Zyl and Kirsten, 1992), especially in the 1980s period of international sanctions. The 1984 White Paper on Agricultural Policy (RSA, 1984:8–9) motivated this as follows: "For any country, the provision of sufficient food for its people is a vital priority and for this reason it is regarded as one of the primary objectives of agricultural policy. Adequate provision in this basic need of man not only promotes, but is also an essential prerequisite for an acceptable economic, political and social order and for stability."

2 THE POST-1994 FOCUS

Post 1994, the need for action to achieve food security was first outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (ANC, 1994). The RDP identified food security as a basic human need and food insecurity as a legacy of the apartheid socio-economic and political order. The RDP ideas with regard to food security were elaborated in subsequent papers, such as the Agriculture White Paper (NDA, 1995) and the Agricultural Policy Discussion Document (Ministry for Agriculture and Land Affairs, 1998). Tregurtha and Vink (2008:2) comment that the Agriculture White Paper "is by its own admission, not a traditional policy document but rather a statement of the broad principles guiding policy development in the sector". A change in leadership following the drafting of the Agricultural Policy Discussion Document meant that it was never formally adopted as a policy, but informed the Strategic Plan for South African Agriculture released by the Presidential Working Committee on Agriculture in 2001 (Tregurtha and Vink, 2008). One of the nine outcomes of the Strategic Plan was improved national and household food security (Ministry for Agriculture and Land Affairs, 2002).

Across sectors, national strategies and programmes have declared food security for all citizens as a priority. Government has reprioritised public spending to focus on improving the food security conditions of historically disadvantaged people. This has led to increased spending in social programmes in all spheres of government such as:

- School feeding schemes;
- Social grants - child support, pensions, disability etc.;
- Free health services for children between 0-6 years and expectant and breastfeeding mothers;
- Public works programmes;
- Agricultural programmes: community food garden initiatives such as *Kgora* and *Xoshindlala* production loan schemes, infrastructure grants for smallholder farmers and the presidential tractor mechanisation scheme; and
- Land reform and farmer settlement programmes (NDA, 2002).

The Agriculture White Paper Discussion document (Ministry for Agriculture and Land Affairs, 1998) set out the aim of agricultural policy as the establishment of an environment where opportunities for higher incomes and employment are created for resource-poor farmers alongside a thriving commercial farming sector. It set out three major goals for policy reform as:

- Building an efficient and internationally competitive agricultural sector;
- Supporting the emergence of a more diverse structure of production with a large increase in the numbers of successful smallholder farming enterprises; and
- Conserving agricultural natural resources and put in place policies and institutions for sustainable resource use.

Post 1994, South African agricultural and food security programmes have focussed almost exclusively on subsistence and smallholder agriculture. This is justified in the Agricultural Policy Discussion Document (Ministry for Agriculture and Land Affairs, 1998: section 1.3):

While there is adequate food at national level, some 30 to 50 per cent of the population has insufficient food, or is exposed to an imbalanced diet as a result of low incomes. Emphasis will therefore be placed on food security at household level. Programmes will be examined in terms of their direct as well as indirect contribution to household food security through their impact on rural incomes and the distribution of those incomes. Increasing the production of small scale farmers will improve the availability and nutritional content of food, and hence food security generally among the poor.

A large number of programmes in agriculture, rural development, health, education and social development focus on backyard production of vegetables, despite a lack of international evidence that backyard gardening has a significant and measurable impact on the nutrition of young children (USAID IYCN, 2011; Berti *et al.*, 2004). Similarly, local studies have found that agricultural interventions have only had an impact on children's nutrition when targeted at improving the intake of single nutrients (such as orange flesh sweet potato consumption to improve vitamin A intakes) or on food security where production extends beyond subsistence production to generating at least some income (Hendriks, 2013a; 2013b; Faber *et al.*, 2011; Shisanya and Hendriks, 2011; Hendriks, 2003; Kirsten *et al.*, 1998). While agriculture has played an important historical role in providing food for low income households, household food security in South Africa depends primarily on total household income, however derived, and much less on household food production (Shisanya and Hendriks, 2012; Hendriks *et al.*, 2006; Hendriks, 2003).

The Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) was initiated in 2002. The strategy was seen as a tool for inter-sectoral action and coordination of food security interventions and information systems. The strategy purportedly adopted a broad developmental approach to food security, rather than focusing only on agriculture and food stocks. Its vision was "to attain universal physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all South African at all times to meet their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (NDA, 2002). It had five broad pillars: production and trading, income opportunities, nutrition and food safety, safety nets and food emergency, and information and communication (NDA, 2002). The Special Programme for Food Security (the Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Programme or IFSNP) was implemented in 2002 to coordinate and manage all interventions that pertained to food production and trading strategic objectives of the IFSS (NDA, 2002).

The expected outcomes of the IFSS were the following:

- Greater ownership of productive assets and participation in the economy by the food insecure
- Increased competitiveness and profitability of farming operations and rural enterprises that are owned and managed by, or on behalf of the food insecure;
- Increased levels of nutrition and food safety among the food insecure;
- Greater participation of the food insecure in the social security system and better prevention and mitigation of food emergencies;
- Greater availability of reliable, accurate and timely analysis, information and communication on the conditions of the food insecure and the impact of food security improvement interventions;
- Enhanced levels of public private civil society common understanding and participation in agreed food security improvement interventions; and
- Improved levels of governance, integration, coordination, financial and administration management of food security improvement interventions in all spheres of government, between government and the private sector and civil society (NDA, 2002).

3 FOOD SECURITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Section 27 of the Constitution obliges the state to take reasonable legislative and other measures, within the context of its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of: health care services, including reproductive health care; sufficient food and water and social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance (RSA, 1996). With respect to children, section 28(1) of the Constitution determines that every child has the right, among others: to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services and to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation (RSA, 1996). Sections 28(1) (c) and (d) concerning children's rights, including the right to basic nutrition, are not dependent on the availability of state resources; the obligation to ensure the full realisation of these rights

(and other section 28 rights) is unqualified (Hendriks and Olivier, 2013). Cabinet ratified the UN International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 2012. This Covenant includes the right to food (GCIS, 2012). However, no legislative measures are in place to realise the right to food as enshrined in the constitution.

Due to the nature of food security, national policies dealing with this complex concept need to be comprehensive (HLPE, 2012). One of the constraints to the development and implementation of food security policies, strategies and programmes is the lack of a common understanding of the term and a clear vision for its attainment. A diverse interpretation among stakeholders of what food security means was identified by the IFSNTT (2006) as a major institutional challenge and barrier to policy development.

The overall goal of a food security policy is to achieve household food security and support individuals in accessing adequate individual dietary intakes to meet their needs at different stages in the human life cycle. While the 1996 World Food Summit definition of food security (FAO, 1996) is often touted as the definition, conceptualisation of the concept is not consistent across sectors. Guidance needs to be taken from the 2012 Committee on World Food Security deliberations on the definition (CFS, 2012). In the South African context, the appropriate term is “food security and nutrition” and refers to “actions required such as securing adequate and safe food supplies and stable food prices. Ensuring that individuals consume the right quantities of an appropriate variety and quality of food at the household level and that they are healthy enough to absorb the nutrients from the food are part of the concept” (as per CFS, 2012).

In this context, comprehensive national policies and legislative measures should underpin a stable and sustainable national food supply through various intervention programmes to achieve two outcomes: sound nutrition at the individual level and household food security (see Figure 1 below).

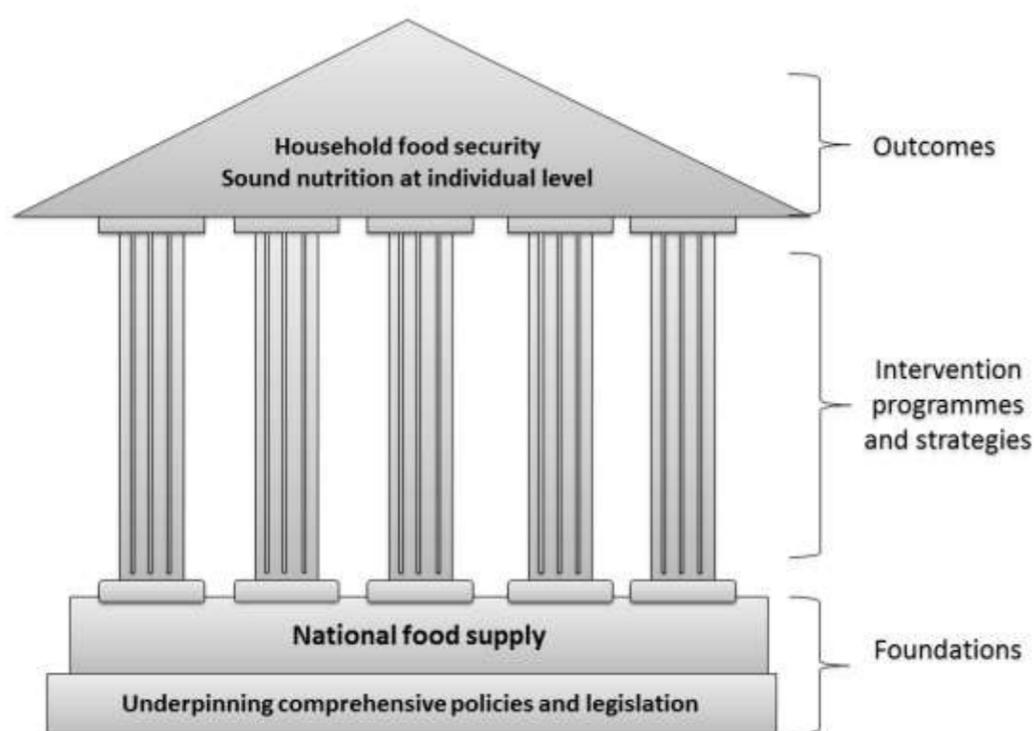


Figure 1: Components of a national food security system

Efforts to develop a national food security policy in South Africa started in 1996 following the gazetting of the White Paper on Agriculture in 1995. A draft policy was completed in 1997 (NDA, 1998), but did not receive Cabinet approval. National Treasury commissioned the drafting of a discussion paper on food security in 2004 (HSRC, 2004). This paper identified 10 key medium-term issues for food security policy in South Africa. In 2006, a renewed effort towards a policy was initiated through food security hearings that presented a number of policy recommendations to the Office of the Presidency (Misselhorn *et al.*, 2007). A report by the United National Special Advisor on the Right to Food (De Schutter, 2012:19) commended the country for the many initiatives that seek to improve food security in the country and recommended that South Africa should

Pursue and accelerate the creation of comprehensive rural development policies, including agricultural policies, which would progressively improve the right to food of vulnerable groups. Priority should go to long-term structural changes supportive of poor households, rather than only to the satisfaction of immediate, short-term needs.

NCOP Land and Environmental Affairs (2013) contextualised the need for a food security policy in terms of the agricultural situation in South Africa as:

- Declining number of commercial farmers;
- Farmers are consolidating enterprises to maximize profits, making it difficult for new farmers to enter the sector;
- An ageing farming population;
- Struggling/distressed emerging farmers;
- Limited support to agriculture; and
- Diminishing agricultural skills.

The first National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security was approved by Cabinet on 18 September 2013 (DSD and DAFF, 2013) along with the Household Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (DSD, 2013) and the Fetsa Tlala (End Hunger) Food Production Intervention (DAFF, 2013). However, the policy was developed and approved without public consultation. The document is embargoed until gazetted. It is, however, unlikely that the new policy will provide a comprehensive policy framework for food security in the country, given the diverse interpretation of food security and the murky understanding of what a policy is. While White papers and strategies articulate ideologies and are used to justify strategic directions, the necessary legislative frameworks are lacking and the institutional architecture to coordinate and create accountability is missing.

Understanding the policy process is essential to creating the necessary platforms for dialogue, analysis and a shared vision before finalising policies and translating these into legislation as well as strategies, programmes and projects to achieve the vision set out in the policy (Figure 2).

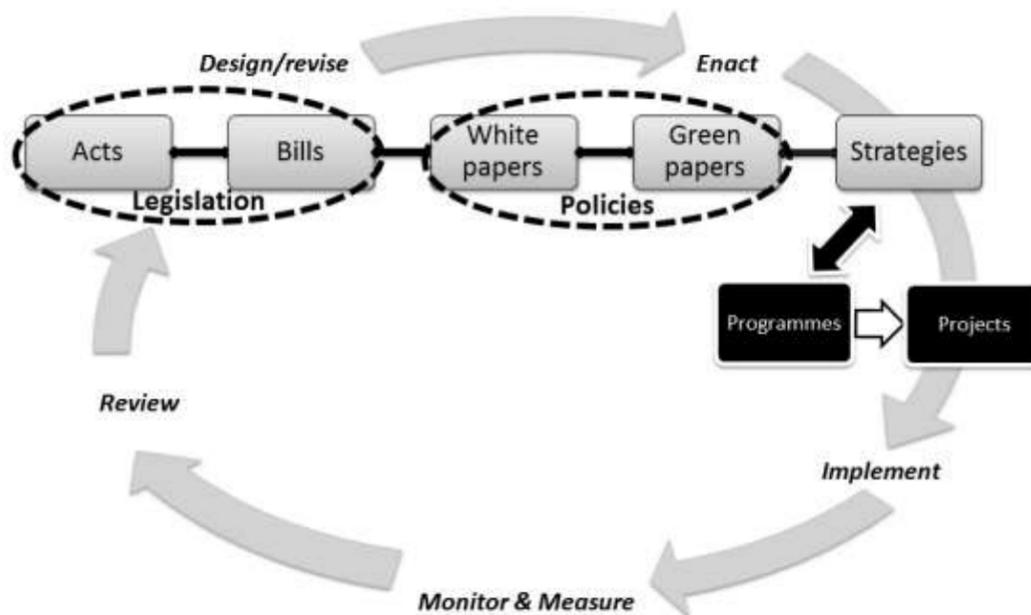


Figure 2: The policy cycle

Public policy is a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities promulgated by the government. They generally guide the allocation of resources to ensure efficiency, equity and social stability. To be effective, food security policies need to have a prioritised agenda of critical policy actions, an institutional architecture and a system of mutual accountability to ensure that policy changes are effective and have real impact through transparency (USAID, 2013).

USAID (2013) sets out the requirements for a comprehensive food security policy as including:

- Institutional architecture for improved policy making;
- Enabling environment for the private sector;
- Agricultural trade policy;
- Agricultural inputs policy;
- Land and natural resources rights, tenure and policy;
- Resilience and agricultural risk management policy; and
- Nutrition policy.

No formal review of the IFSS or IFSNP has been conducted. Yet, such a review is essential before the adoption of new policies, strategies and programmes. A plethora of programmes is being delivered through various national, provincial and municipal programmes. These do not all formally fall under the IFSS but can be roughly categorised as programmes focused

on agricultural production and mechanization, food assistance, care and support, nutrition, marketing and enterprise support and infrastructure provision programmes.

On the occasion of the commemoration of the 1913 Natives Land Act, this article takes stock of the food security situation in South Africa and makes recommendations for the establishment of a sustainable food security system in South Africa. National food security is achieved when two conditions are met, namely, there is enough food in the country to feed the population and beyond this, that every citizen has realised the right to adequate food to meet his or her individual needs. Given the framework in Figure 1 above, this article presents a reflection on the current food supply situation in the country and discusses household food security and the nutritional status of individuals before setting out policy recommendations.

4 NATIONAL FOOD SUPPLY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The commemoration of the centenary of the Natives Land Act in 2013 was significant for a number of reasons and offered an opportunity to reflect on the impact of current transformation-orientated programmes. While the ideals of land reform in the post-1994 era have focused on the transfer of land to formerly disadvantaged communities and seek to address the inequalities created by pre-1994 policies, there is currently little due recognition of the small cohort of commercial farmers who provide the bulk of the food to ensure an adequate and sustainable supply of food.

In 1996 there were 60 000 commercial farming units. By 2007 this number had declined to 40 000 (Van der Merwe, 2011, citing Vink and Van Rooyen, 2009). As the last Agricultural Census was conducted in 2007, the current position is not known. Twenty per cent of the country’s commercial farmers contribute 80 per cent of total food production (Van der Merwe, 2011, citing Reos Partners, 2010). Uncertainty, political stability and land reform have led to a decline in commercial production. The vast majority of farms bought by the South African government for restitution or redistribution to black farmers after 1994 are unproductive and not functional (Van der Merwe, 2011). Figures show that the production gap between commercial and smallholder producers in South Africa is significant – with commercial maize farmers producing 4.4 t/ha compared with 1.1 t/ha on average for smallholders in the 2012/2013 harvest. Small farm sizes are a significant constraint to smallholders (USDA, 2012).

Consequently, the area under cultivation for maize and wheat, the main cereals for South African households, has declined significantly over the last decade (Fig. 1), putting the capacity of the country to maintain food self-sufficiency under question. BFAP (2013) reports that rice imports have steadily increased between 2009 and 2013, showing increasing demand for rice, while demand for maize for human consumption has remained almost static since 2008. In the same period, the country shifted from a net exporter to a net importer of food (BFAP, 2013). This puts future national food security at risk. The growing population will put further pressure on the food system to provide food while competing for land, water and other resources.

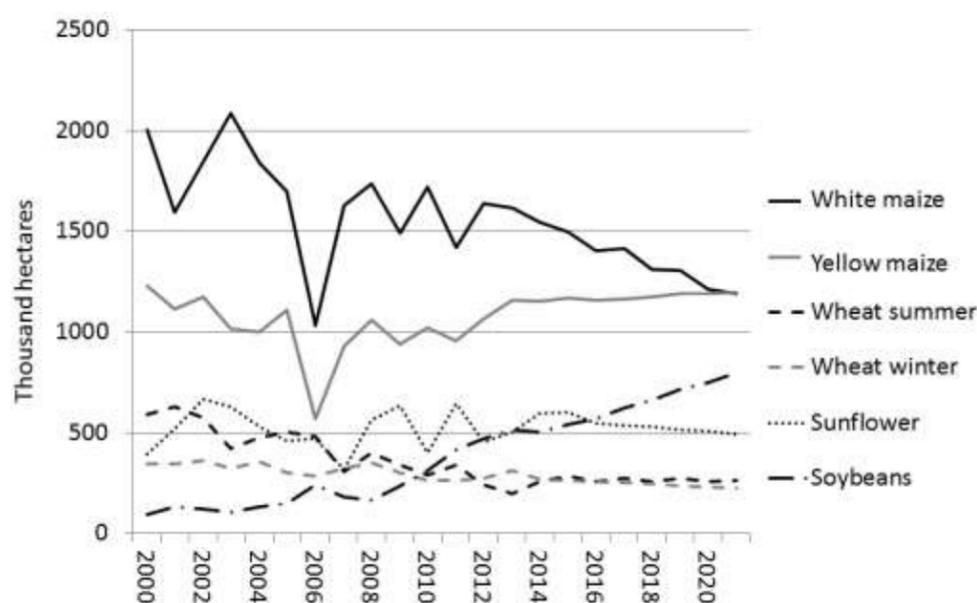


Figure 3: Cropping area trends in South Africa (BFAP, 2013)

Household engagement in agriculture is relatively low (Stats SA, 2012; 2013a). On average, only 23 per cent of the population engages in any form of agriculture – from leisure gardening to commercial production. A higher proportion of households engage in gardening in the more rural provinces, but this is still no more than half of all households (52.7% in Limpopo province). The 2011 Census figures (Stats SA, 2013a) present a slightly different picture, reporting that 2.9 million households engage in agriculture (19.9 per cent of households nationally). The Eastern Cape had the highest number of agricultural households (34.5% of the population).

Kirsten and Vink (2002) make the point that both commercial and small-scale farmers in South Africa receive less support than any other industrialised country in the world – except for New Zealand – due to market deregulation. The deregulation policy produced “winners” and “losers” (low-income earners in urban and semi-urban areas, small-scale farmers in rural areas and unskilled farm workers). However, the measures effectively removed support from all sectors.

While growth in the agricultural sector is a priority in both the National Development Plan (NDP, 2012) and the New Growth Plan (DED, 2010), the agricultural sector has shed, rather than created jobs (from 1.09 million in 2006 to 661 000 in 2012) (Africa Research Institute, 2013). The NDP estimates that 10 jobs will be created for every R1 million invested in agriculture (NPC, 2012). Evidence of this is lacking even though multiple programmes are being delivered. Two cases where estimations of the number of jobs created have been presented are through the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP) and the Ilima/Letsema Programme. However, it is not known if these jobs have been sustained over time.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP) was to provide agricultural support and streamline the provision of services to targeted beneficiaries of land reform restitution and redistribution and other black producers who had acquired land through private means and were engaged in value-adding enterprises both domestically and for export. Between 2004 and 2013, 7 012 projects had been implemented, reaching 387 311 beneficiaries. At the end of the fourth quarter of 2012/13 only 364 of the 536 CASP projects had been completed. A total of 5 376 jobs were created – 1699 permanent and 3677 temporary jobs (NCOP Land and Environmental Affairs, 2013). The Ilima/Letsema Programme, which focused the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes and other value-adding projects, supported 12 633 subsistence farmers, 18 948 smallholder farmers and 2 071 black commercial farmers in the 2012/13 budget year. A total of 61 407 hectares were planted and 5 370 jobs created of which 1 421 were temporary (NCOP Land and Environmental Affairs, 2013).

While the focus of agricultural production and marketing programmes in South Africa has shifted to smallholder production, legislative and policy measures for creating an enabling environment for smallholders to establish sustainable and competitive production and marketing systems have not been provided. Many of the elements that helped establish commercial farmers (input subsidies, infrastructure, security of tenure, market protection, credit and public research, development and extension) and ensure national food security are no longer available (or non-functioning) to both the commercial and smallholder sectors.

What is not known is the impact of the numerous projects on household food security and their potential to contribute sustainably to national food security. Many projects offer once-off assistance and lack comprehensive capacity building to equip farmers with the skills necessary to operate in commercial markets. Household food security depends on year-round access to quality food in sufficient quantities or the generation of enough income to purchase foods that are not produced at home and other essential foods, goods and services.

5 HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY

There is no agreed on measure of food insecurity, both internationally (Headey and Ecker, 2013) and nationally (Hendriks, 2005; 2013a). A few nationally representative samples have included food security indicators but the indicator sets are not consistent between surveys in South Africa. In the case of Statistics South Africa’s (Stats SA, 2012) General Household Survey (GHS), indicators have not always been consistent over time. Data from the GHS (Table 1) show that generally, the experience of hunger has declined between 2002 and 2011 (Stats SA, 2012). If the Stats SA’s survey questions regarding the frequency of experiencing hunger are taken as indicators of the depth and severity of food insecurity, the incidence of starvation and acute hunger (“always”) has dropped from 2.3 per cent of the population in 2002 to 0.7 per cent in 2011. The proportion of household experiencing chronic hunger (“often”) dropped from 4.4 per cent in 2002 to 1.9 per cent in 2011.

Table 1: South Africa’s food security situation in 2012 (authors own calculation based on data from Stats SA, 2012, 2013b).

Severity	Food security levels	Household experience of hunger (previous year)	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2010	2011	Increasing or decreasing
↑ Severe/Extreme	Starvation	Always	2.3	2.2	2.4	1.8	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	↓
	Acute hunger											
	Chronic hunger	Often	4.4	3.7	2.8	2.4	1.6	1.2	1.5	2.3	1.9	↓
	Hidden hunger	Sometimes	16.4	16.0	12.9	11.7	8.8	8.3	10.5	8.9	8.7	↓
	Vulnerable to food insecurity	Seldom	6.4	5.0	4.3	4.3	2.9	2.8	3.2	5.8	5.0	↓
	Food secure	Never	70.5	73.1	77.6	79.9	85.9	86.9	84.0	81.4	83.7	↑

The proportion of households experiencing hunger “sometimes” halved (16.4 to 8.7 per cent) between 2002 and 2012. These households are likely to experience what is referred to as “hidden hunger” or micronutrient deficiencies from diets that lack the quality and variety of foods necessary to ensure that all nutritional requirements are met. Roughly 5 and 84 per cent of the households surveyed in 2011 indicated that they “seldom” and “never” experienced hunger in the year preceding the survey (Stats SA, 2012).

There was a break in the GHS data for this indicator set in 2009. While the overall trend was one of declining levels and incidence of food insecurity, the data for 2008 for those reporting experiencing hunger “always” and “sometimes” increased over the 2007 rates and for “often” and “seldom” in 2010 over the 2008 rates. This period coincides with changes in the questionnaire, but also covers the period of the 2008/2009 global high food price crisis in which the price of food increased sharply.

Data from the 1999 and 2005 National Food Consumption Surveys (Labadarios, 2000; Labadarios *et al.*, 2008), the South African Social SASAS (HSRC, 2011) and the recent SANHANES (Shisana *et al.*, 2013) surveys confirm that in general, the experience of hunger has been declining since 1999 (Table 2). The SANHANES 2012 survey (Shisana *et al.*, 2013), reports that 45.6% of the South African population were “food secure”, 28.3% were at “risk of hunger” and 26.0% experienced hunger in 2012. The largest proportion of participants who experienced hunger was in urban informal (32.4%) and rural formal (37.0%) areas (Shisana *et al.*, 2013). The highest prevalence of being at risk of hunger was in the urban informal (36.1%) and rural informal (32.8%) areas. The lowest prevalence of hunger was reported in urban formal areas (19.0%) (Shisana *et al.*, 2013).

The number of people living in extreme poverty has also dropped post 1994 (Table 2). Although figures show a slight increase in 2009 figures, this could be attributed to the global high food price crisis. More recent data show a continued reduction in poverty rates, largely attributed to social grants. The numbers of households receiving social grants (Table 2) over the same period has increased significantly (Stats SA, 2013). In 1998, 2.5 million people received social grants (roughly 6 per cent of the population) (Welfare And

Population Development Portfolio Committee, 1999). By 1999, this was 3.1 million people, costing the state R16.8 billion per annum (Welfare And Population Development Portfolio Committee, 1999). In 2012, 29.6 percent of the population were receiving social grants, consuming close to 30% of the national budget (Stats SA, 2013b; National Treasury, 2014). By 2013, 16.1 million people were receiving social grants. This amounts to 3.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Production (National Treasury, 2014). For 22 per cent of the country's population, these grants are their main source of income (National Treasury, 2014).

Table 2: Summary of survey evidence regarding the experience of hunger, child under nutrition, social grants and poverty

Indicator	1994	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Food Secure households (% of sample) ¹		25						19.8			48				45.6
At risk of hunger (% of sample) ¹		23						27.9			25				28.3
Experiencing hunger (% of sample) ¹		52.3						52			25.9				26
Inadequate access to food (% of sample) ²													13.8	14.6	15
Severely inadequate food access (% of sample) ²													8.1	6.5	6.5
Households experiencing hunger (% of sample) ^{2,3}					29.3	27.6	23	20.1	14.4	13.7	15.9		15.9	12.8	12.6
Individuals experiencing hunger (% of sample) ^{2,3}					23.8	22.6	18.4	16.3	11.7	10.8	13.3		13.1	11.4	10.8
Proportion of households receiving social grants (%) ²						29.9	34.6	37.4	37.6	39.4	42.5	45.3	44.3	44.1	43.6

Proportion of individuals receiving social grants (% of sample) ²	6	7.2 1				12. 7	16. 7	19. 8	21. 3	23. 1	24. 3	27. 5	27. 6	28. 7	29. 6
Poverty – proportion of population living on less than R416 per month in 2009 prices per day (% of sample) ⁵	42. 2													32. 2	
Poverty Headcount (\$1.25 per person per day) (% of sample) ⁵			17. 0						9.7 1			10. 7		7.4	
Poverty Headcount (\$2 per person per day) (% of sample) ⁵			33. 5						25. 3			27. 3		20. 8	

1. Using data from NFCS, 1999 (Labadarios and Nel, 2000) and 2005 (Labadarios et al., 2008) and SASAS 2008 (HSRC, 2011) and SAHANES, 2012 (Shisana et al., 2013).
2. Using data from GHS 2002 – 2011 (Stats SA, 2012)
3. Using data from GHS 2012 (Stats SA, 2013b)
4. Shisana et al., 2013
5. Stats SA, 2013c using data from the Income and Expenditure Survey, 2000 & 2005/2006 & 2010/2011; Living Condition Survey, 2008/2009

Only 2.956 million of these grants go to pensioners, while 11.007 million (of a population total of 18 million children) were child grants in the second quarter of 2013 (DSD, 2014). Children who qualify for the grant live with parents who earn less than R34 800 per annum for single parents and less than R69 600 per annum if married (SAGS, 2014). An impact study conducted between October 2010 and March 2011 found that child grants promoted early childhood development, improved educational outcomes, and contributed to a higher participation in nutrition and health monitoring programmes, but not on child anthropometry (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF, 2012).

While income grants have had a significant impact on poverty, Goko (2013), cites the South African Institute for Race Relations' Deputy CEO, Frans Cronje as stating that:

South Africa is already the largest welfare state in the developing world. Consider that there are more people in South Africa on welfare than people who work. In 1994, there were three times as many people working as there were on welfare.

In March 2013, there were 15.4 million registered individual tax payers (National Treasury and the South African Revenue Services, 2013). High unemployment is one of the most pressing challenges facing the country. In 2013, there were 4.5 million jobless South Africans and another 2.3 million people categorised as “discouraged” who are no longer actively seeking work, raising the broad unemployment rate to 33.2 per cent (National Treasury, 2014).

5 NUTRITIONAL STATUS

Contrary to the strides made in reducing poverty and hunger in the country post 1994, the average nutritional status of children is deteriorating. Although the number of nationally representative surveys is low, evidence from three national surveys (Table 3) shows a concerning increase in malnourishment. Stunting (-2 SD), severe stunting (-3 SD), and severe wasting (-3 SD) among children have increased post 1994. With regard to the incidence of severe underweight (-3SD), the rates initially dropped between 1999 and 2005, but have increased above the 1999 level in 2013.

At the same time, Shisana *et al.* (2013) report that the SANHANES found that 16.5% and 7.1% of girls were overweight and obese, and 11.5% and 4.7% of boys were overweight and obese, respectively. Moreover, the average South African diet is energy dense but micronutrient poor (Shisana *et al.*, 2013), putting individuals at risk of ‘hidden hunger’.

Table 3: Trends in nutritional status of children in South Africa (Shisana *et al.*, 2013; Labadarios *et al.*, 2011; Labadarios *et al.*, 2008; Labadarios and Nel, 2000)

Survey	NFCS	NFCS	SANHANES
Date of survey	1999	2005	2012
Sample size	2894	2469	2123
Age of respondents	1-9 years	1-9 years	2 – 14 years
Stunting	21.6	23.4	26.5
Severe stunting	6.5	6.4	9.5
Wasting	3.7	5.1	2.2
Severe wasting	0.8	0.9	1.1
Underweight	10.3	11	6.1
Severe underweight	1.4	1.2	1.7

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Food security has been a key consideration in the design of agriculture-related policies throughout South Africa’s history. However, analysis of the impact of these policies on national and household food security and the nutritional status of individuals through representative national surveys has not been conducted beyond evaluation of compulsory national micronutrient fortification of salt and wheat and maize flours. Although four nationally representative surveys of nutritional status have been conducted post 1994, the sample sizes are small. The GHS surveys approximately 32 000 households annually since 2002 but does not include nutrition indicators, focussing on the experience of hunger and access to food only. No evaluation of the multiple food security programmes has been carried out in terms of their impact on food security.

Such evidence must inform any new policies, programmes and strategies. While many publicly funded programmes have increased the ownership of productive assets and increased the participation in the economy by food insecure smallholders, employment levels and engagement in the agricultural sector have not realised the expected results. These programmes have not significantly increased the competitiveness and profitability of farming operations and rural enterprises that are owned and managed by food insecure rural populations as was the ambition of the IFSS.

The current plethora of public programmes has not improved the levels of nutrition among the food insecure. On the contrary, aggregate levels of children’s

nutrition have deteriorated, despite significant increases in the participation of the food insecure in the social security system and better prevention and mitigation of food emergencies through the social relief of distress programmes and others. Various public programmes reach a range of beneficiaries, but are uncoordinated and duplicated, and evidence of their impact is absent. Numerous programmes and high levels of public investment will not necessarily lead to improvements in the lives of food insecure people and households.

The country still does not have a reliable, accurate and timely analysis, information and communication system on the conditions of the food insecure and no monitoring and evaluation framework to determine the impact of food security improvement interventions. The Presidential Outcomes (RSA, 2010) relegate food security to Outcome 7, rather than making it an overall goal of all government programmes. While the IFSS and IFSNP set out to improve the levels of governance, integration, coordination, financial and administration management of food security improvement interventions in all spheres of government, between government and the private sector and civil society, this has not happened.

Long-term national food security is under threat due to reduced areas under production by the commercial sector amid uncertainties with regard to land tenure and wage labour demands, exacerbated by the absence of supportive agricultural policies and legislation to protect domestic production and ensure farm profitability. A weak global economy and pressure on the Rand drives food, fuel and input price increases. Increasing consumer demand for imported foods drives import demand over demand for locally produced foods. Relatively high levels of poverty (despite an overall reduction in poverty) and concerning levels of unemployment constrain consumer purchasing power.

While social grants have played a significant role in reducing poverty and the experience of hunger among a large proportion of South Africa's households, social grants will not alleviate poverty. Significantly more needs to be done to create an environment that stimulates economic growth for job and enterprise creation, providing jobs for those who want to work as well as for the burgeoning younger population – the majority of whom are currently sustained by social grants. The ratio of tax payers to unemployed persons and grant recipients is not healthy. While current national programmes and plans, including the National Development Plan (NDP), put economic growth as a priority and recognise that economic growth is absolutely essential for moving the country forward, the urgency for ensuring future national food supply and household income to ensure food security in the future is paramount.

Unless the new policy provides a comprehensive and enforceable legal framework for implementation of food security and nutrition programmes, it will fail to address the current crisis. A careful review and stock taking of the plethora of national programmes is important, followed by re-alignment of these programmes into a coherent and well coordinated programme with clear targets, beneficiary criteria, exit criteria, monitoring

and evaluation frameworks and institutional structures for coordination and accountability. A review of related legislation will need to be carried out to ensure that legislation in all sectors supports and reinforces the policy and creates the enabling environment. Strong leadership with statutory coordination and reporting are essential.

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