



7 April 2021

Press Statement

Hunger Worsens in South Africa

On the 31st of March 2021, the Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) and the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) convened the National Food Crisis Forum to discuss the worsening food crisis in South Africa and transformative strategies from below. The NCF calls for a Universal Basic Income Grant (#UBIGNOW see our [policy document](#)) to avoid widespread hunger; and calls on the City of Cape Town to abandon its reckless enclosure of the peoples' commons, to protect the unique Philippi Horticultural Area and support the small scale farmers who feed the city. The worsening food crisis is directly affected by growing water insecurity. All levels of government have allowed water, a basic human right, to be polluted and destroyed. There is a need for a national emergency to protect our water resources.

The food Crisis

South Africa is facing a hunger crisis. The crisis is due to the failed neoliberal policies of the ANC government with expanded unemployment now at 42%. Of the 59 million South Africans only 15 million are employed and most of them in precarious jobs threatened by an economy that has shrunk by over 7%. Approximately 9.3 million people face acute food insecurity in South Africa.¹ The failed austerity measures of the finance minister will be a nail in the coffin for many of these people. The food crisis is further aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic which left 2.2 million people unemployed in 2020. Skyrocketing food prices are revealing how ineffective the government's social grant system really is. In six months - from September 2020 to March 2021, there has been a 13% (R 28,25) increase in the price of 30kg maize meal and a 2% increase in 10 kg rice. Meanwhile the prices of a 6kg bag of tomatoes has gone up by 28% in the period. The average cost of the household food basket increased by R38,39; and over the past seven months the average cost of the household food basket increased by R183,22 (4,8%) from R3,856,34 in September 2020 to R4,039,56 in March 2021². These steep increases in basic food items are leaving millions of people hungry. The NCF calls on the government to implement a Basic Income Grant as a matter of urgency (#UBIGNOW).

Solidarity with the Philippi Horticultural Area (PHA)

The NCF reaffirms its solidarity with the Philippi Horticultural Area Food and Farming Campaign. The PHA has continued to be the breadbasket of Cape Town as it has been since 1885. Despite the droughts and imminent threats of day zero due to water stress, this unique horticultural area is fed by an aquifer and continues to produce more than 200 000 tons of vegetables while directly employing around 6000 workers and indirectly supporting 30 000 jobs. The proposed Oakland City Development of the PHA by the city of Cape Town threatens to destroy the PHA adding to the water stress of the city while worsening the hunger crisis by decimating small scale farmers and putting thousands of farm workers out of work in a country with 42% expanded unemployment.

¹ The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) (2021)

² The Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity Group (PEJDG)

Water Crisis

The high levels of corruption in the local and provincial government have led to a deteriorating water infrastructure which has made it extremely difficult to capture, separate and recycle water in South Africa. Many communities which have been [mapped](#) by SAFSC still live in water stressed areas without access to clean and adequate water supply. The Kouga dam remains below 10% and average dam levels in the Nelson Mandela Bay remain at around 16%. This is just a microcosm of the water stress of the Eastern Cape Province. Southern Africa is heating up twice as fast as the global average and the continued drought is making matters worse. This water crisis is part of the climate shocks that South Africa is already experiencing. We demand the disaster management approach to the drought in the Eastern Cape be democratised so community organisations have a say in how the problem is tackled both in the short term and long term.

World Earth Day

On earth day (22 April) the NCF calls on all affiliated groups and activists to call on the government to adopt the [Climate Justice Charter](#) and the [People's food Sovereignty Act](#). The NCF calls for a climate conscious local government free of corruption and eco-cidal policies. The NCF together with the Climate Justice Charter Movement also calls on activists to take the climate justice charter to their local councillor, mayors and all other government officials but in a manner consistent with the covid-19 regulations.

We say on #EarthDay:

- Take climate science seriously, we are running out of time – #ClimateJusticeNow;
- Adopt the Climate Justice Charter in local and provincial government – #AdoptCJC;
- Adopt the Peoples Food Sovereignty Act to end hunger;
- Take forward community needs and demands for deep just transitions;
- Take active steps to end corruption.

Log your local earth day event here: <https://forms.gle/MJBdHriVo58pSRLw7>

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