



**Joint SAFSC and Inala Memorandum to Wits University
Towards Zero Hunger and Zero Carbon Emissions
13 May 2016**

Wits is not a business but rather a public university that needs to ensure every student enjoys all the privileges and learning experiences equally. Hunger and poor quality food choices undermines this and entrenches class, race and gender inequalities. The university does not keep transparent data on hunger and some estimates suggest 400 students a month are hungry and another suggesting 2000 students are hungry. Hunger is forcing students into desperation, learning becomes difficult and the way university food aid is given, like behind the Matrix in a loading bay for trucks, is unacceptable. It entrenches indignity, stigmatization and a managerialist approach. Hungry students are treated as clients requiring corporate social responsibility or food aid. The mentality of a 'handout should suffice' is unacceptable and we reject this.

Currently South Africa's drought and deepening food crisis are connected to climate change. Last year planetary temperatures exceeded a 1 degree Celsius increase in temperatures since pre-industrial levels, the world experienced the hottest year on record and serious feedback loops threaten to destabilize the Earth's climate. The COP21 Climate Summit failed humanity. Actually the UN process failed us for 20 years when it tried to treat corporate induced climate change as a market problem. We are running out of time to prevent a 1.5 degree Celsius increase in planetary temperature. Current commitments in the COP21 'ratchet up framework' will result in a 3-4 degree temperature increase. We have to act now through building citizens power and institutional transformation from below to ensure de-carbonisation. WITS as a University should be leading society, through its own pro-active efforts and example, to help South African's appreciate how serious the climate crisis is and how we can ensure transformative solutions can be achieved now for a deep just transition.

SAFSC and Inala demand zero hunger at WITS and an end to dangerous greenhouse gas contributions from WITS. In this regard we believe WITS needs to champion systemic change through Food Sovereignty and Climate Justice transformative solutions. In this regard we believe the University has to take forward the following transformative demands as urgent and necessary:

- Measure and **make transparent** its data from all campuses about the state of student hunger.
- Establish a **pilot Food Sovereignty Centre**, at the Sanctuary Building, in which there is a communal kitchen, cultural space, a seedbank, a full time agro-ecology gardener is employed and a demonstration agro-ecology garden (including an orchard) is located from which food is produced and sourced for students enduring food stress and hunger. Such a space to be used by students to meet their food needs through dignity. This food centre to be supplied its healthy, fresh and nutritious produce from agro-ecological garden spaces on campus, campus orchards and through small scale farmers in the city. This centre may be reproduced on other campuses where applicable;
- The **creation of a food commons** through the extension and replication of agro-ecological gardening spaces and fruit tree orchards (note our fruit tree petition), integrated into general gardening services and maintenance. Such jobs will in effect become climate jobs. The agro-ecology gardener at the food center to support this process by training Wits staff.;
- The linking of a food commons to a **zero waste approach**. A zero waste management approach must be instituted with immediate effect which ensures re-use of amongst other materials paper, bottles, plastics but also the re-direction of organic waste into campus wide composting sites that feeds into agro-ecology gardening.
- A **study on the nutritional status** of food supplied in hostels and through food vendors, through the WITs School of Public Health, and from which recommendations are made to improve the quality of food, including sourcing from campus and non-campus agro-ecological and food sovereignty food producers;
- We welcome the insourcing efforts made by the University but believe all workers at the University must have **decent work**, including those involved in food services at the University.
- An **audit of University investments** to ensure it is not investing in fossil fuels and if it does, to ensure it withdraws such investment with immediate effect. This to be announced publicly;
- The University to actively **reduce its carbon footprint** and transform from a fossil fuel energy user to a beacon of renewable energy use. All energy at the University to be transitioned to solar and other renewable energy sources. A socially owned renewable energy power pool to be the center of energy generation which should include smart wind turbine technology, roof top solar, ground based solar (including a concentrated solar park, if necessary) and a common battery bank.
- The University to ensure **sustainable water management use** by developing a bottom up water management plan, which should include rethinking lawns, water harvesting from every building, grey waste water re-use and so on.
- The University transitions into a **car free space** in which there is a bicycle infrastructure, clean energy bus system linking campuses and connections are made to public transport transit points that links seamlessly with the wider public transport system (Rea Via, Gautrain, Park Station etc) developing in the City, such that car use becomes unnecessary while ensuring the needs of the physically challenged are also taken seriously.

- **Curriculum transformation** to bring in just transition, climate justice and food sovereignty ideas into teaching and research.

Moreover, the proposals we are championing are also an invitation to all Universities to begin considering systemic change through Food Sovereignty and Climate Justice transformative solutions.

We encourage Wits to engage other universities, at the highest levels, around these issues.

We request a meeting between SAFSC, the Inala Forum and WITS Management at its most senior levels to address these issues.

Contact:

Thomas Fraser, Chairperson, Inala, WITS: 074 628 3198

Davine Cloete, National Coordinating Committee, SAFSC: 071 5922361

Vishwas Satgar, National Coordinating Committee, SAFSC: 082 775 3420

Xolisa Bangani, National Coordinating Committee, SAFSC: 081 414 8411