



Press Release
Second meeting of National Food Crisis Forum

27 May 2020

To:

Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, President, Republic of South Africa

Ms Barbara Creecy, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental Affairs

Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation

The Solidarity Fund

On Tuesday, 26 May, the second meeting of the National Food Crisis Forum (NFCF) was convened by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC), a vibrant alliance partner of the SAFSC and which is currently coordinating its response to Covid-19.

We support the concerns raised by Professor Glenda Gray about child malnutrition in South Africa. Before Covid-19, 1 in 4 children were malnourished. With the lock down and growing awareness of the risks of Covid-19, many South Africans are not willing to go to clinics and hospitals to seek care for children being deprived of food. This means this aspect of the hunger challenge is under reported. The NFCF also notes research produced by the Human Sciences Research Council on worsening hunger. The second study released on 26th April had this to say about the worsening food situation:

“Just under a quarter (24%) of residents had no money to buy food. More than half (55%) of informal settlement residents had no money for food. About two-thirds of residents from townships also had no money for food.”

Starvation is a serious challenge facing the country. It's in this context we reiterate our emphasis on unlocking the food commons: small scale farmers, community gardeners, informal food trading and small scale fishers. About 70% of poor households source their food from such sources. In this regard, we have developed a Covid-19 education tool to assist small scale gardeners and farmers to ensure they operate within public health guidelines. This tool is available in ten national languages at <https://www.safsc.org.za/covid-19-tools/>. At level 3, lockdown regulations permit informal trading in food, under public health guidelines, but this is facing a drag at local government level. In this regard we maintain that the City of Cape Town has to open the Grand Parade to informal traders. This iconic space has been used by traders for decades and is not a flea market but an organised public trading space. The cruelty of excluding informal traders from the grand parade is unacceptable and it has no basis in science. We support the legal challenge by SAITA and local informal trader groups against the City of Cape Town to secure their livelihoods. We stand with them to demand the Grand Parade be opened for trading under public health guidelines.

We also believe that Minister Barbara Creecy has to withdraw statements she has made disqualifying thousands of subsistence fishers from food vouchers. More sharply, we disagree with the Ministers

decision to prohibit small scale subsistence fishers from fishing during the sardine run and more generally during level 3 of lockdown. Her decision is having devastating consequences for small scale fishers and their families. We are considering legal options together with subsistence fisher organisations, to challenge the Minister.

We also note the decision by the Solidarity Fund to support local agriculture and a voucher system to meet food needs. We believe these are important initiatives if linked to supporting the existing food sovereignty commons and strengthening food sovereignty pathway building. The sum effect is not only strengthening local community food relief efforts but also laying the basis for an agroecological food system that can feed communities, villages, towns and cities. In this context we invite the Solidarity Fund to deepen its dialogue and partnership with the NCF. We will also intensify our efforts to invite small scale farmers and others in the food commons to fill in their details into this national mapping tool: <https://www.safsc.org.za/food-commons-map/> . Together we can transform the food system now, so it is democratic, localised and ecological and able to meet the needs of society.

Our development of a mapping tool of community food relief initiatives on a national scale is at an advanced stage. It will be placed online shortly. Making such initiatives visible will also assist in building a partnership with the Solidarity Fund and government and will also assist in ensuring resourcing support goes directly to such initiatives. We also believe such food relief efforts have to go beyond sourcing food from the corporate controlled food system and needs to start sourcing directly from the local food sovereignty commons of small scale producers.

The local food commons is also compromised by the water crisis, which continues to undermine communities efforts to meet their needs and the challenges of Covid-19. In this regard the third water stressed community mapping report has been released by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign to Minister Sisulu and President Ramaphosa. More information is available here: <https://www.safsc.org.za/public-statement-and-press-release-water-stressed-communities-report-3/> In total 79 communities have reported water stress. We support the demand that the Minister provides a response to these reports by Friday 29th May, 2020.

Finally, we have commenced work on building a consensus position amongst movements and community organisations for a substantive and universal basic income grant for South Africa; a #BIGNOW. We are also working on developing the financing options as well as modelling its economic impacts with progressive economists. From now till October we will intensify our demand for a #BIGNOW and will be advancing a rolling program of action with endorsees of this initiative. South Africa has to move away from an inadequate social grant system that leaves the majority trapped in poverty, hunger, inequality, unemployment and a carbon driven system.

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