



24 May 2020

**Press Release: Inauguration of National Food Crisis Forum**

To:

Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, President, Republic of South Africa

Ms Lindiwe Zulu, Minister of Social Development

Mr Zweli Mkhize, Minister of Health

Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

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

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

On Friday, 22 May, the National Food Crisis Forum (NFCF) was inaugurated 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.

The NFCF was established to build a partnership with government and the Solidarity Fund to address the food crisis in the country. Both government and the Solidarity Fund have not done enough to address the worsening food crisis. The food crisis is not new (about 14 million went to bed hungry before Covid-19) and has been worsening during Covid-19 lock down. With about 30 million South Africans in food stress the country needs a multi-pronged approach that is about immediate relief but also about linking in structural elements of the food sovereignty system that already exists but which is not recognised by government and the Solidarity Fund.

Hence the NFCF will engage government on the need to support community led relief schemes that are 'invisible'; unlock the food commons (community gardening, small scale farmers, subsistence fishers and informal traders) where many South African's source their food from; support food production through food sovereignty pathway building in communities, villages, towns and cities; challenge supermarkets on pricing issues and their role in the national food crisis; and advance the call for a substantive basic income grant.

This [strategy](#) is endorsed by 111 organisations. This includes informal traders, small scale fisher organisations, small scale farmer organisations, unemployed people's movement, NGOs and faith based organisations. This process of endorsement will continue to remain open and we call on all progressive civil society organisations to support and endorse this strategy. The NFCF does not seek to replace what existing organisations are doing but will work on the strategic thrusts endorsed by supporting organisations, will strengthen what others are doing and will find complementarities. The food crisis is a huge crisis and will be with us throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. It threatens to undermine our public health response to Covid-19, weaken our democracy and worsen starvation and malnutrition. It requires us all to work together.

We call on all food relief efforts, that have not been supported by government and the Solidarity Fund to work with us as we roll out a national mapping exercise. Making your relief efforts visible will also

assist with connecting the Solidarity Fund and government support directly to you. A mapping tool will be released soon in this regard.

In a similar vein we call on small scale farmers, community gardeners, informal trader organisations and small scale fisher organisations to work with us to make visible the food commons in South Africa. We urge you to fill in your details in this mapping tool: <https://www.safsc.org.za/food-commons-map/>

In our situational assessment of the food crisis we are concerned about the following:

- Increasing food prices – which are putting a squeeze on poor households. Hence we will be investigating this matter more closely and will be engaging supermarkets and government on our concerns;
- Overregulation of food relief efforts by government – such that acts of generosity, kindness and solidarity are being criminalised by regulations put in place by the national department of Social Development. While there have been engagements with the Gauteng Social Development Department on this issue, we will be escalating our concerns to the national Minister, Lindiwe Zulu.
- Failure by government to utilise capacity at its disposal to reach communities with food – in this regard Expanded Public Works Programs and Community Work Programs are not being repurposed despite such community workers being paid during lockdown.
- Continued lock down of the food commons – for small scale subsistence fishers and for informal traders in many cities across the country.
- Water crisis – continues in many communities in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo enhancing their vulnerability to Covid-19.

The SAFSC has been working closely with the South African Informal Traders Alliance (SAITA) and the Legal Resources Centre to challenge the prohibition of the City of Cape Town of informal trading on the Grand Parade. This matter is now before the courts. Rosheda Muller, President of SAITA, confirmed in her engagement at NCF that ‘solidarity is how we will win this struggle to ensure informal traders are recognised.’ The NCF stands with SAITA and the informal traders of the Grand Parade.

The SAFSC has been working with the Legal Resources Centre to provide support to the KZN Subsistence Fisher Folk Forum. As Riaz Khan shared at the NCF, ‘we have been challenging government but not getting positive responses. Small scale fishers are really suffering, about 30 000 of us. The Minister Barbara Creecy has denied us rights to fish during the sardine run declaring us recreational fishing’. The NCF believes Minister Creecy needs to reconsider her decision given its devastating impacts on the lives and families of subsistence fishers. We will continue giving solidarity to small scale subsistence fishers and working to ensure the food commons is unlocked.

**For further information, contact:**

Rosheda Muller, South African Informal Traders Alliance, 078 765 1737

Riaz Khan, KwaZulu-Natal Subsistence Fisher Folk Forum, 084 253 1157

Dorah Marema, Gender CC, 073 177 1817

Vishwas Satgar, Board Chairperson COPAC, SAFSC activist, 082 775 3420