

National Food Crisis Forum:

# Food Relief Mapping Report

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FOUNDATION FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS

**COPAC**  
CO-OPERATIVE AND POLICY ALTERNATIVE CENTER



**SAFSC**  
SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD  
SOVEREIGNTY CAMPAIGN



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## Introduction

Before the outbreak of Covid-19, South Africa's food system was already not serving many of its people. In 2017, 20% of South African households had inadequate or severely inadequate access to food, and 10% of the population experienced hunger, according to a 2019 report by Statistics South Africa. Hunger has been a major issue for a while in South Africa, and the pandemic has only increased the instance of hunger as reported by many studies conducted by the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR), the Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM 2020) and others. Increased hunger coincides with mass increases of unemployment, as many low income earners, self-employed people and workers in precarious employment are forced to stay at home in adherence to lockdown regulations. With less income, even more continue to go hungry. Climate change is also a key issue which will limit food production as weather and climate patterns become increasingly extreme, this is already happening and will only continue to worsen with increased heating.

While hunger continues to worsen, civil society and non-governmental organisations (CSOs and NGOs) have stepped up in attempts to fill the vacuum in food relief left by the government. Government-issued grants and food parcels have not been as helpful as expected, and these processes have been marred by corruption, uneven implementation and exclusionary distribution practices.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2020, the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) inaugurated the first ever National Food Crisis Forum (NFCF). This forum is part of a strategy endorsed by over 100 organisations, established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which exacerbated existing inequalities and worsened the already devastating hunger crisis in the country.

SAFSC and the NFCF have increased their reach and efforts to find solutions to the food crisis which extend beyond Covid-19. In the long run, the only sustainable solution to food insecurity is food sovereignty: giving communities ownership of the means to produce their own nutritious food. This can be provided through meaningful, productive engagement between CSOs, farms, and the informal food sector. It is paramount to focus on long-term, sustainable solutions to food insecurity and food sovereignty to mitigate the hunger crisis in South Africa.

Through the NFCF, three committees were established, as detailed below. Each committee comprises various individuals and organisations who are linked in their pursuit of the common goal to mitigate poverty and the hunger crisis.

- 1) **Food Commons, Food Sovereignty pathways and Hub Building:** tasked with dealing with opening up the food commons (gardens and small farms). To this end, this committee began mapping food commons and water-stressed communities around the country. This committee also started an education program aimed at strengthening and entrenching food sovereignty pathways in the long term.

- 2) **Food Relief & Engagements:** central to this report, this committee is concerned with mapping food relief efforts across the country.
- 3) **Basic Income Grant (BIG):** focused on continuing the campaign for a universal, basic income grant (#UBIGNOW).

The Food Relief & Engagements committee created a map of food relief initiatives based on data collected through an online survey. This allows for all national food relief initiatives to be represented on one map, to make them visible not only to communities in need and the NCF, but also to the government, the Solidarity Fund, and other potential funders. Increased visibility of food relief initiatives for the government and the Solidarity Fund will strengthen the case for resources to be shifted to these pre-existing initiatives. This will also allow existing initiatives to network with groups in their areas. Finally, food relief mapping enables the identification of gaps in food relief efforts, highlighting communities that do not receive food relief. In the long term, this data could also be used to aid the first committee in their food sovereignty pathway building, which is looking at creating the conditions for communities to not only have the availability of food, or access to that food, but the core of food sovereignty is that these communities are also able to create and own their own food systems, without being subject to the exclusionary corporate owned food system. The second committee members are: Alwyn Esterhuizen and Juanita Pardesi (both from the Seriti Institute); Courtney Morgan (from the SAFSC and the Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC)); Sonia Mountford (EATegrity); and Katherine Brown (from the Foundation for Human Rights).

## Methodology

The food relief mapping committee began by drafting a survey to gather information on food relief nationally. To do this, committee members collectively compiled several questions on a shared Google Form. Once this was finalised by all group members, the survey was shared by each member through their personal and organisational networks to encourage people to participate in the survey.

Responses were received from the 6th of May to the 7th of August 2020 (levels 4 and 3 of the national lockdown). Once responses were received via the Google Form, these were downloaded and managed separately by two data-focused group members. Alwyn Esterhuizen converted the given addresses into points on a map using GIS software. The code for this map was then given to Jane Cherry (COPAC) to publish on the SAFSC website, and is visible here: <https://www.safsc.org.za/food-relief-mapping/>. Katherine Brown re-coded some responses into their correct categories in R, a powerful statistical analysis software. Duplicate responses were detected and removed from the dataset before analysing the findings. Both data sets were combined and overlaid on the map. The collected data was consolidated into a 'dashboard', highlighting key indicators. Katherine and Alwyn updated their respective code periodically as more responses were received. Please note that in some of the tables, responses which did not occur frequently or did not belong to the given categories, are represented as 'Other'.

All personal identifying data are kept only by the contributors to the Google Form (five committee members) and are password-protected. This data will not be shared, to preserve the privacy and security of the individuals who chose to share their personal information on the form. It is important to note that one question on the form asked whether we could share contact information for the purposes of increasing awareness and access to these initiatives. All respondents were allowed to say no to this question, and 22 (5.6%) elected to do so. In this case, contact information is not shown on the food initiative map. The data will not be shared with any other organisations, and it is owned by COPAC as stipulated in an agreement between committee members. This agreement stated that COPAC would be the custodian of the data and it would be used to support the efforts of the NCF.

There are some limitations to this survey. While the survey was completed on a national scale, it should be noted that there may be selection bias in the respondents who were contacted to complete it. This is because the link to the survey was sent through a limited number of organisations and networks. Additionally, as this survey was online, it was not accessible to food relief initiative organisers who did not have internet access or data. Moreover, given the small and localised sample size of respondents, the findings of this survey cannot be generalised.

## Findings

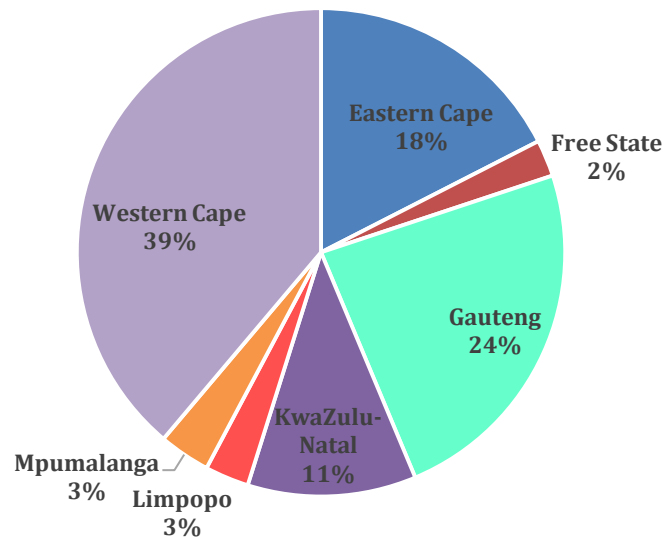
Out of the total 341 respondents, 206 (60%) said they had a food initiative and 135 (40%) said they did not. Statistically, profiling just over 200 food relief efforts does not sound significant or representative of the full extent of national food relief. However, when these initiatives are understood in greater depth, their impact is massive. The conservative estimated reach of these respondents, in total, is 53 100 people per week.<sup>1</sup> Even this is a gross underestimation of the scope of these initiatives, as many responses indicated serving over 500 people, but for the purpose of consolidating the numbers, a conservative estimate of 500 was used in the calculation. Respondents with a food relief initiative provided assistance to 258 people per week on average. The cumulative cost of all these efforts is R67 688.80 per week, with an average of R25 880.18. On average, respondents spent R340.14 per unit (this could be a food parcel, hot meal, seeds, cash or voucher).

This survey was completed nationally through various food relief networks. The largest proportion of respondents with a food relief effort is in the Western Cape, with 80 initiatives recorded. Next is Gauteng, with 49, and the Eastern Cape with the third-highest, at 36. The remaining 41 responses were spread over KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and the Free State. There were no responses recorded in the North West and the Northern Cape.

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<sup>1</sup> This is calculated conservatively by using the average of intervals (e.g. 150 for a response of 101-200) and taking answers of 'over 500' as 500. Similarly, those who said 'less than 50' were represented as '25'.

Respondents with a food relief initiative by province



This survey was sent out to networks of the organisations involved in the mapping committee and through social media, and no official databases were used. As the organisations involved in the committee are based in Gauteng and the Western Cape, it could be that more organisations in these provinces were reached, which explains their relatively large proportion of responses.

Alternatively, it is possible that this is a somewhat accurate representation of the reality of national food relief. This could be because the more urbanised areas of the Western Cape, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape have been the epicentres of the virus at different times, or that these areas house many non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with increased access to the requisite resources and capacity on the ground. This is relevant as the survey was online and thus required all respondents to have internet access and devices on which to complete it. According to the map, it appears that the metropolitan areas of the City of Johannesburg and City of Cape Town have significantly higher numbers of food relief efforts. This could also be because the rate of reporting is higher in urbanised and wealthier areas – these are the two wealthiest urban centres in the country.

It is important to look at some more detailed data around these 206 reported food relief efforts such as where they source their food from, how they are organised and where they are situated. It is also important to note the 135 responses that answered no to this question. This is a significant proportion (40%) of the responses. This indicates that there is a need for food relief far beyond what is already being delivered. The reasons why there are no food relief initiatives in these areas are currently unknown, but there are several possibilities. These range from the lack of organising capacity to lack of resources, but the exact reasons can only be ascertained once there is a second survey shared with these respondents. This committee intends to conduct a second survey to gain more information and insight into what these 135 respondents are providing to communities, and what is needed.

The overwhelming majority (60%) of respondents' food initiatives began only during the lockdown. This is testament to the immediate response from civil society to the food crisis which they may have experienced first-hand in their own communities. This quick response to alleviate hunger should not go unnoticed, and could be better leveraged to benefit communities in the long-term, through cultivating their own food in gardens and small farms.

Province	How long has your food relief initiative been operating?				TOTAL
	A year or less	During the lockdown	For more than a year	Over 5 years	
Eastern Cape	1	17	7	10	35
Free State	0	2	1	2	5
Gauteng	0	29	10	9	48
KwaZulu-Natal	0	15	2	6	23
Limpopo	0	6	0	0	6
Mpumalanga	0	4	1	2	7
Western Cape	2	48	13	16	79
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>203</b>
	<b>1%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Only five, or 2%, of food relief initiatives were providing long-term solutions to hunger such as seeds or seedlings to start a garden. Almost all (93%) initiatives provided food parcels, hot meals or both. Another 5% (10) of respondents gave people cash or vouchers for food, or other support. This illustrates the erroneous focus on short-term solutions at the expense of more sustainable options. While short-term food relief is surely beneficial in the context of the pandemic (and the inherent hunger and unemployment crises), this is a problem-solution as it relies on donors to sustain communities. A better solution in this context could include a mix of short- and long-term food relief options, with a less-heavily weighted focus on food parcels and hot meals and a greater proportion of sustainable solution assistance.

	What does your initiative provide?						TOTAL
	Food parcels	Food parcels & hot meals	Hot meals	Seeds/seedlings to start gardens	Vouchers/cash	Other	
Eastern Cape	17	12	7	0	0	0	36
Free State	3	0	1	0	0	1	5
Gauteng	23	12	5	2	5	2	49
KwaZulu-Natal	12	9	1	1	0	0	23
Limpopo	5	0	0	0	0	1	6
Mpumalanga	4	3	0	0	0	0	7
Western Cape	15	25	37	2	1	0	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>206</b>
	<b>38%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The organisation of food relief efforts is evenly spread. Most respondents (around 80 out of 206) stated that their food relief was organised by a community organisation, while a similar proportion cited an NGO,

and the next most common answer referenced volunteers. Just one respondent noted that their initiative was organised by a private company. It is clear from this data that communities and civil society are stepping up to fill the gap in food relief support. Evidently, the appeal made to the private sector to assist with food relief was not answered, but many communities are relying on their fellow community members and local organisations to meet their food needs. This is a clear sign of a failed national food system (which was in crisis before the lockdown), and a failed food relief effort from the government and the Solidarity Fund.

The frequency of food relief initiatives varies and is evenly spread. A quarter of those who responded that they had food relief efforts in their community deliver food relief daily. Close to a quarter of these respondents deliver food relief more than once a week, weekly and monthly. Other answers include seasonal food distribution, dependent on harvests, and once-off food relief. Ten percent of responses include a significant portion of ad hoc food relief, as funds or food are available. This means that a significant proportion of food relief efforts are resource-dependent. With guaranteed funding, these initiatives would be able to provide food to more people more often, thereby mitigating the hunger crisis. This simple solution to the complex issue of hunger indicates the importance of advocacy for resources to be channeled directly to local efforts who need them.

How often does your initiative provide food relief?							
	Ad hoc, dependent on funds/food	Daily	Monthly	More than once a week	Once a week	Other	TOTAL
Eastern Cape	2	8	5	4	2	15	36
Free State	0	0	3	0	0	2	5
Gauteng	12	14	10	1	0	12	49
KwaZulu-Natal	1	6	4	0	0	12	23
Limpopo	1	0	1	0	2	2	6
Mpumalanga	1	1	2	0	0	3	7
Western Cape	4	27	8	4	2	35	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>206</b>
	<b>10%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most common answer for who respondents' served through their food initiatives are 'Everyone in need' and 'Vulnerable families in the community' (63% combined). This indicates the extent of the hunger crisis which these respondents have collectively attempted to mitigate. In the context of rising unemployment and increasing hunger, these groups in need of food relief will only grow. Eventually the growth in these groups will outstrip the growth in initiatives which attempt to serve them, which will leave many without any assistance. This is an illustration of the unsustainability of short-term food relief as opposed to long-term food sovereignty. Other answers to this question include the homeless, refugees and asylum seekers, students, and those who are ill or have disabilities.



## Who does your food relief initiative serve?

	Children (0-18 years old)	Everyone in need	The elderly	Vulnerable families in the community	Other	TOTAL
Eastern Cape	8	12	5	9	2	36
Free State	0	1	1	2	1	5
Gauteng	9	12	3	16	9	49
KwaZulu-Natal	0	8	3	5	7	23
Limpopo	1	1	0	2	2	6
Mpumalanga	0	5	1	0	1	7
Western Cape	6	26	7	30	11	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>206</b>
	<b>12%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Nearly a fifth (17%) of respondents use big retailers to sustain their efforts, which is not as positive, as communities do not produce their own food. As many as 42% rely entirely on community donations of money or food to run their initiative. As the lockdown is currently indefinite, given the rising threat of Covid-19, it is highly likely that donor fatigue will take root. This could mean that the community donations which support food relief efforts will decline, and eventually cease. This is another reason why guaranteed and consistent funding for food relief efforts is needed.

## Where do you source the ingredients for your food relief?

	Big retailers	Community donations	Local Producers	All of the above	Other	TOTAL
Eastern Cape	7	16	5	7	1	36
Free State	1	1	2	1	0	5
Gauteng	7	19	10	9	4	49
KwaZulu-Natal	5	10	4	3	1	23
Limpopo	2	1	1	1	1	6
Mpumalanga	2	2	0	3	0	7
Western Cape	10	38	11	17	4	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>206</b>
	<b>17%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is important to note that the smallest proportion (16%), only 33 respondents, stated that they sourced their food from local producers. This outlines the disconnection between food relief and sustainability, and even food sovereignty. If these efforts are to continue, it is paramount to foster and build local food-producing capacity through local food growth, and hubs and pathways for food knowledge.

## Conclusion

This survey's findings have valuable insights about the failings of the current food production, distribution and relief systems. It is imperative that resources be channelled directly to efforts that are already on the ground, as they are embedded in communities and thus are attuned to their communities' needs. With the necessary resources, many communities would be able to solve the hunger crisis on their own. Of course, food relief, which entails distributing food parcels and warm meals, can sustain a community only in the short term. Communities must be allowed to create their own long-term solutions to food poverty, including the right and ability to create their own food production system. This means that there must be a push for production, distribution, and consumption of food at the local level. The means for this must be community-owned and must serve the needs of the community, as decided by the community itself and not by a higher authority. Food sovereignty is essential to avoid another breakdown of the national food system in the future.

Non-food related initiatives will also augment efforts to end hunger in South Africa. As the unemployment crisis continues to worsen during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa, so does the hunger crisis. A universal basic income grant circumvents this issue by ensuring a bare minimum of financial and food security. Recipients of this grant will no longer be living hand-to-mouth, which will then allow them to cultivate their own gardens, growing food and supplementing it where necessary. This will ensure not only food security, but food sovereignty.

Given the high instance of food insecurity before the pandemic and lockdown, it is clear that the existing food system in South Africa is not providing sufficient food especially for those who need it most. While food relief is a good short-term solution to this and the participants in this survey have made a hugely positive impact, this is not sustainable. Radical transformation of the food system into one which ensures food sovereignty for all has the potential to end this hunger crisis.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this survey and the ethos of SAFSC and NCF, there are several recommendations which apply to various stakeholders in South Africa's current food system:

- The government, along with the Solidarity Fund and other food funding schemes must support organisations on the ground, who are embedded and experienced in organising food relief in their communities.
- These and other donors should use the findings from this and other studies to inform their financial support of initiatives.
- To address the food crisis in a more sustainable way, the government should support grassroots efforts to establish agro-ecological food gardens and small-scale farms that can be used to feed communities at a local level. This will decrease communities' reliance on the national food system, and decrease instances of national hunger.

- The government should also support the SAFSC national strategy and efforts to establish food hubs, including gardens, food kitchens and training centres. This will enable local food systems, knowledge and skills for self-sustainability. This infrastructure is crucial to address the worsening climate crisis, as well.
- The government must ensure communities have access to the water commons to grow food and contribute to the food commons.
- Food relief providers should consider including more long-term solutions to hunger in their initiatives, such as seeds, and training or information on starting a garden. Training tools are available for download at: [www.safsc.org.za](http://www.safsc.org.za)
- Individuals and small organisations should use the map generated by this survey to network and grow their impact on communities across the country.
- Community-led food relief efforts in this mapping exercise must reach out to Disaster Management Centres in their districts for support and share the responses with the SAFSC at [copac2@icon.co.za](mailto:copac2@icon.co.za). See the attached Annexure 1 of contact information for these centres.
- We should all stand together on October 16th, a national day of action, to address hunger, as well as, Covid 19 and Climate injustices. Our rallying slogan: “End Hunger - Covid 19 Justice, is Climate Justice!” This is also the day the SAFSC will be handing over the Climate Justice Charter to parliament to demand it be adopted as per section 206 of the South African constitution. The Climate Justice Charter is available at: <https://www.safsc.org.za/climate-justice-charter/>
- The government must implement a universal basic income grant for South Africa. This will decrease national hunger, and consequently increase the standard of living for all.
- Finally, if the government and the Solidarity Fund are unresponsive to the requests for support to address the worsening hunger crisis, SAFSC will report the worsening humanitarian crisis to relevant human rights agencies in the United Nations system. We will confirm this step with all involved in this study before action is taken.

## Annexure 1

Centre	Head	Phone number	E-mail
Western Cape	Mr C Deiner	0219376301	<a href="mailto:Colin.Deiner@westerncape.gov.za">Colin.Deiner@westerncape.gov.za</a>
City of Cape Town	Mr G Pillay	0215975009	<a href="mailto:Greg.Pillay@capetown.gov.za">Greg.Pillay@capetown.gov.za</a>
Cape Winelands	Mr S Minnies	0218885847	<a href="mailto:shaun@capewinelands.gov.za">shaun@capewinelands.gov.za</a>
Central karoo	Mr H Rust	0234144467	<a href="mailto:hein@skdm.co.za">hein@skdm.co.za</a>
Garden Route	Mr G Otto	0448031435	<a href="mailto:gotto@gardenroute.gov.za">gotto@gardenroute.gov.za</a>
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