



# food dialogues

REPORT | 2020





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## From the Sponsors

### DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security

The COVID-19 pandemic presents significant challenges for food systems in Africa over the foreseeable future. Compounded by increasing numbers of undernourished people as well as uncertain political, economic and environmental contexts, measures to control the pandemic have aggravated already strained household incomes leaving those already living from hand-to-mouth unable to feed themselves or their families. At the same time, disruptions to the increasingly global food value chain have exacerbated legacy problems with food security.

The 2020 Food Dialogues come at an opportune time, bringing diverse voices into the conversations about how we bring about the changes we need in our food system to protect livelihoods and eliminate hunger, while at the same time dealing with the health and economic consequences of the virus and their mitigation.

The concept of food democracy tells us that these diverse voices are critical in building a more equitable and just food system because the solutions to ecological, social and economic problems in the food system must be determined through meaningful civic participation and political engagement by informed citizens. To actively participate in decision making about food systems, however, individuals and communities need to be informed about their food systems as well as be able to inform and shape what is considered relevant knowledge for decision making. Efforts to democratise the food system, therefore, bring to the fore questions of whose knowledge is to be recognised, translated and incorporated into action.

Platforms such as the Food Dialogues are critically important because they provide a rare opportunity for citizens and other stakeholders to learn from grassroots activists alongside government officials, university professors, and business people. Only by connecting these different perspectives and knowledges will we be able to foster meaningful change in our food systems.

*Prof. Julian May, Director, DSI-NRF  
Centre of Excellence in Food Security*

*Dr Camilla Adelle, Food Governance  
Programme Project Leader, DSI-NRF  
Centre of Excellence in Food Security*

### DG Murray Trust

South Africa has seen an increase in malnutrition and hunger as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Stemming from our goals to [reduce stunting in children](#), improve maternal health, and promote inclusive mechanisms for delivering food relief to communities, we have dedicated much of 2020 to [respond to the impact of COVID-19](#) on hunger and nutrition.

Our support included building a [food voucher system](#), supporting platforms that connect public sector and civil society organisations to spark innovation in local food systems, and assisting civil society organisations in providing food relief.

The Food Dialogues created a platform for the public, civil society, academia, and government to convene, learn, and engage around various elements of the food system. This was particularly in relation to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on global, local and informal systems, and food security systems. The platform provides a space for all actors in the system to reflect on the impact of the crisis, the complexity of the food system, and their role in ensuring food security and to promote a food system that is just, ethical and accessible.

We hope that the 2020 Food Dialogues Report will lead to increased engagement and innovation to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition.

*Onesisa Mtwa, Innovation Manager,  
DG Murray Trust*







## Foreword

The first Food Dialogues took place in 2014, organised by the SA Urban Food and Farming Trust to begin an exchange of ideas that could sow the seeds of change to challenge 'conventional orthodoxy' relating to the food system.

Six years after we published the 2014 [Food Dialogues Report](#), we have seen many signs of change. We see it in how government is shifting its approaches to food, food and nutrition security, urban agriculture, and land use. We see it in the rise of thoughtful consumerism and ethical retailing. It is visible in the collaborations of farmers and social innovators to bring local foods to market, and in other entrepreneurial ventures. It is even apparent in the shifts among the major retailers and brand owners.

Within this, different groups continue to agitate for a rethink of the food system. This call is coming from citizens, certain farmers, academics, faith-based groups, and civic organisations alike.

We planned to host the second Food Dialogues in 2020, to continue this important ideas-exchange.

And then the coronavirus pandemic began sweeping the globe. It shattered all our plans to host a conventional in-person series of talks, forcing us to host an all-virtual event.

This was new territory for us, as for so many, but we took on the challenge because it seemed more urgent than ever. We saw immediately what the consequences of our broken food system meant as millions of South Africans faced hunger and disease during the lockdown.

The response to the event was exceptional: 28 speakers and moderators delivered 51 recorded sessions comprising over 16 hours of content. We received support from seven sponsors and partners. We had 892 registered attendees, who signed up for a collective 8 100 talks. They rated the overall event 8.5/10, and gave a 9/10 likelihood of attending the next Food Dialogues.

The legacy of the 2020 Food Dialogues is two-fold. All of the recordings of speaker contributions, panel discussions, and public engagements remain online for future use.

Furthermore, we have produced the 2020 Food Dialogues Report, compiled by science writer [Leonie Joubert](#) who served as rapporteur on the 2020 Food Dialogues. The report weaves together common threads from the wide range of speakers, topics, themes, and talks. It elevates the deep insights reached in the dialogues, and consolidates the diverse and varied perspectives and recommendations offered throughout the engagement. It aims to be a resource that others can draw upon for guidance in shaping policies, activism, projects, and programmes to make a difference in our food system.

While not a complete summary of all participants' contributions, or a comprehensive overview of the state of the food system, nevertheless it aims to provide a starting point from which further research, collaboration, and action can begin.

Changes are underway. But the overall scale of the challenge remains vast. The rate and nature of change — as well as the pushback from the beneficiaries of the status quo — signal the daunting reality of the situation. The voices of big agriculture, big food retail, and the major food brand owners remained silent during these Food Dialogues, though they were invited to participate. We have much work still to do to build trust and listen to one another.

The shock of the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the shortcomings in the food system. It has also showed up the level of urgency, resources, opportunities, and risks as never before. There is cause for concern as well as for hope, but even more cause for deeper engagement, greater persistence, and continued dialogue.

The better the understanding we have of our food system, the more each one of us can understand where we have the greatest opportunity to influence change. We hope you will join us in taking the opportunity to make the most of this report and this moment.

*Kurt Ackermann, Executive Manager and Trustee, SA Urban Food and Farming Trust*





## Executive Summary

At midnight on 26 March 2020, the South African government imposed a hard 'lockdown' in an effort to contain the domestic spread of the coronavirus pandemic that was sweeping the globe. Hunger was the first shockwave to hit as millions of citizens could no longer earn an income to buy food, school feeding schemes shut, and informal food trading was banned for a time.

This crisis made visible the lived reality of millions of South Africans, who were burdened with hunger and diseases linked with food poverty, well before the pandemic struck. This hunger is often experienced in the privacy of people's homes, but is systemic in nature. The crisis brought into focus the long and deeply troubled historical roots of an unequal food system.

If South Africa hopes to create a more inclusive, fair, and sustainable food system, experts say that it is time to change the food system, rather than focus on individuals' behaviour within the system.

**‘There can be no right to health without the right to food. There can definitely not be a right to life without the right to food.’**

**- Funmilola Adeniyi**

## Food in a time of crisis

The first response to address the economic fallout of the coronavirus lockdown was an almost war-like rallying effort to get humanitarian aid to the millions of South Africans who were unable to feed themselves. Government, civil society, the private sector, and well-resourced citizens began working together in different ways to find sources of food, identify the communities most in need, and put in place the logistics needed to mobilise food aid.

Food aid at the scale seen during the pandemic is not sustainable though. South Africa must create a more sustainable system to ease the country's historic food poverty.

## Food is political

Citizens don't riot over hunger the way they do when government fails to deliver water, electricity, or jobs. This is because hunger is often seen as a private matter and a personal failure. But food is deeply political. Responding to everyday hunger and the longer-term health effects of food poverty, calls for a re-think of the political and economic forces that have created a food environment that leaves many eking out an existence on cheap, unhealthy foods.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown how South Africa can take back the food system, and create a food environment that is by the people, for the people.

## Food and health

Today's food system makes it easy to make the wrong food choices, and hard to make the right ones. For decades, public health has viewed so-called 'lifestyle-related diseases' as self-inflicted. Efforts to tackle these illnesses have focused on educating people about growing food, eating right, and how to live a healthy life. If people know more, the rationale goes, they will make better choices and achieve health.

But now the world's public health community says it is time to look at the wider food environment, and how it limits people's choices, steering them towards foods that leave them hungry, heavy, and sick. It's time to reshape the food environment, rather than focus exclusively on people's behaviour within that environment.

## Food and culture

Food is at the heart of the human experience, seen most richly in the theatre, ceremony, and ritual surrounding the sharing of food at times of celebration, mourning, or spiritual practice. Its social meaning is ancient in origin. Food is also one of the most sensual ways to experience the richness of South Africa's diverse cultures. But the country's painful colonial history means that many cultures and cuisines have been muted and excluded, while others have come to dominate the collective palate.

## The economics of food

The economics of food refers to more than just the shelf price of an item, or what changes hands when people trade food. It speaks to the many different players in the food system, and how much influence each of them has over how the whole system works.

The economically powerful usually have more say over what food flows through the system, where it flows, and how much it costs. They may also have more influence over the rules of the game, namely the laws and policies that allow for the governance of the system. These forces shape, and often limit, the range of foods people then have to choose from. Who has their hand on the levers of South Africa's food system, and who doesn't?

## Building back better

The call to action is to change the system, rather than focus only on individuals' behaviour within the system. How can South Africa create a more sustainable, inclusive, resilient food system, and one that gives greater power to those who still have little influence over how the system works? Some solutions emerged during the 2020 Food Dialogues.



## CHAPTER

# 1

### Reaping the Whirlwind - Food Poverty Predates the Pandemic

*At midnight on 26 March 2020, the South African government imposed a hard 'lockdown' in an effort to contain the domestic spread of the coronavirus that was sweeping the globe. Hunger was the first shockwave to hit as millions of citizens could no longer earn an income to buy food, school feeding schemes shut, and informal food trading was banned for a time. This crisis showed the historic roots of food poverty that is generations in the making. The urgent call from food systems experts is that it is time to change the system, rather than focus on individuals' behaviour within the system.*



Seeing these existing fault lines shattered open gives the opportunity to find real, meaningful solutions to overhaul this dysfunctional food system and alleviate the burden of hunger in future.

The hunger crisis that hit during the coronavirus lockdown was not a shortage of food, but a lack of access to food.

The pandemic brought into focus the reality that hunger, or the threat of hunger, was a daily reality for millions of South Africans long before the virus arrived. It showed up the problems in a highly unequal food system that are generations in the making, where food poverty remains the daily experience for so many citizens, and that this will continue well into the future unless the entire food system gets an urgent overhaul.

The pandemic also showed the vulnerabilities of a fragile food system: how it favours the formal markets while marginalising and limiting the informal markets; problems with accessing inputs and various markets; the health and safety of workers; what drives price fluctuations; the many visible and invisible forces that determine if people can access food that is in the system, or not; how food processing plants can become coronavirus transmission hotspots. It showed the relationship between the food system and other systems, such as transport, energy, and water.

These all raise questions about sustainability and justice within the food environment.

Seeing these existing fault lines shattered open gives the opportunity to find real, meaningful solutions to overhaul this dysfunctional food system and alleviate the burden of hunger in future. Addressing food poverty requires rebuilding the system itself, rather than merely changing individuals' behaviour within this system.

## Two faces of food poverty: hunger and food-related ill health

Food poverty existed well before the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic. A recent survey by the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town found that before the pandemic, 60 per cent of people living in Cape Town were already unable to afford a diet with adequate nutrition. Nationally, hunger was heightened during the lockdown.

At the same time, the health effects of food poverty — obesity, diabetes, heart diseases, and certain cancers — also left many South Africans at higher risk of contracting more serious, or even fatal COVID-19, the disease brought on by the coronavirus. The root of these so-called 'lifestyle-related diseases' — a problematic term that needs revisiting — lies in a lifetime of dependence on a diet of cheap, ultra-processed food-like products.

These illnesses are the direct outcome of an unequal food system, and the poor carry the greater burden of hunger, as well as the diseases brought on by food poverty.

## What is the 'food system'?

According to the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), appointed by the UN's Committee on World Food Security, the food system 'gathers all the elements (environment, people, input, processes, infrastructure, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes'.

Links to talks: [Jane Battersby](#)







## Three features of SA's food environment

### The exclusionary food system keeps the poor hungry

As far back as the 1600s, when the Cape Peninsula was settled by the Dutch and used as a refreshment station for passing ships, the food system has been exclusionary. It was deliberately made to be exclusionary, and used as a way to perpetuate inequality, since control of food is a way to assert power.

Power within the system has been concentrated in the hands of a few. The first act of enforcing this kind of segregation was when Dutch colonial administrator to the Cape, Jan van Riebeeck, planted a hedge of bitter almonds on the south-eastern slope of Table Mountain to keep the original African populations away from Europeans' livestock and crops.

The industrialisation of the economy in the 1800s further cemented an economic system designed to create a poorly-paid and perpetually under-nourished labour class that was increasingly living in urban slums around industrial hubs. As South Africans were forced to move away from the countryside and into cities with an ever

more industrialised food system, diets became less diverse, and people became dependent on and conditioned to bulk up on refined staples like maize-based foods. [See Chapter 2 - How we got here: the roots of today's food poverty.](#)

Since the end of apartheid, policies have loosened regulations governing the food system, helping to consolidate power in the hands of a few powerful actors. [See Chapter 6 - The dual food system: the big fish versus the small fry.](#) This has limited how much power and choice — referred to as 'agency' — consumers have within the system, has made it harder for new agents to enter the system, and arguably made the whole system more vulnerable.

The recent pandemic has demonstrated how deeply unequal the food system is, as a result of this history. Through the crisis, some parts of the food system became more robust, while other parts became more precarious.

### Going global

After apartheid, South Africa's economic policies became globally oriented, and geared towards trade liberalisation. This resulted in significant export of agricultural products, but also an increase in imports that has accelerated South Africa's dietary shift towards more processed, packaged foods and sugary drinks.

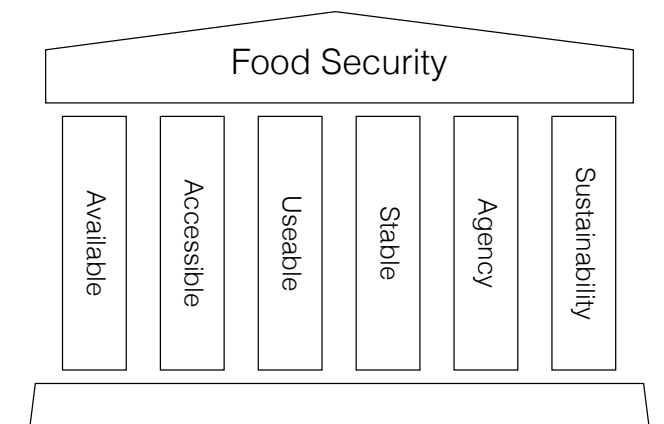
## Where does food flow? Understand the system to build back better

The retail sector in South Africa has changed rapidly in the past 25 years, most notably with the expansion of supermarkets such as the 'Big Five' — Pick n Pay, Shoprite, Woolworths, Spar, and, more recently, Food Lover's Market.

South Africa has also adopted a shopping mall culture, with the fifth highest number of shopping centres in the world. Mall developers often partner up with big supermarket or fast food chains, allowing them to become 'anchor tenants' within a mall. This raises questions about whether it promotes a food system that gives consumers better access to a more diverse and affordable diet.

The powerful formal food retail sector runs parallel to the marginalised, but no less important, informal food sector. Sometimes these two systems have a parasitic relationship, sometimes it is a mutual relationship. These are important dynamics within the food system which, if better understood, can help the country address historic food poverty.

Creating a more resilient food system means fostering and maintaining greater diversity across the entire value chain and includes alternative food flows, so that food can reach every household in the country.



## Six pillars of 'food security'

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines food security as 'a situation that exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life'.

For a person to be food secure, food must be:

- 1) available - there must be enough of the right kinds of foods
- 2) accessible - a person must have the physical, economic, and social means to get that food
- 3) useable - a person must be able to consume and use this food safely
- 4) stable - the system providing this food must be reliable and stable

In addition to this,

- 5) a person must have agency in the food system, meaning they must have power, voice, and choice
- 6) sustainability - food must be economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable



## CHAPTER

# 2

## Food in a Time of Crisis

*The first response to address the economic fallout of the coronavirus lockdown was an almost war-like rallying effort to get humanitarian aid to the millions of South Africans who were unable to feed themselves. Government, civil society, the private sector, and well-resourced citizens began working together in different ways to find sources of food, identify the communities most in need, and put in place the logistics needed to mobilise food aid. Food aid is not sustainable though. What are the lessons learned from pulling together resources, coordination, networking, and relationship-building during the crisis? What insights do they give into how South Africa can create a more sustainable system to ease the country's historic food poverty?*



## The Mother City rallies: lessons from Cape Town's food aid collaboration

During the first four months of the coronavirus lockdown, citizens waited for national government to release emergency aid in the form of extended social grants, and for provincial and local governments to get food aid onto the ground. But it was clear from early on that government alone could not address the hunger emergency.

In response to this, many communities responded by mobilising, organising, educating and networking in what is probably the biggest rallying of civic activism seen in the country since the 1980s, says Andrew Borraine, CEO of the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP), a public benefit organisation that specialises in partnership-building and systems-change thinking.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based groups, not-for-profit organisations (NPOs), citizens, and philanthropists began working together to help mobilise food aid. Community Action Networks (CANs) sprang up around the country, creating grass-roots networks that worked across historical boundaries, allowing better-resourced communities to partner with nearby communities in need, in order to distribute food aid. This was based on building relationships, non-partisan politics, and a commitment to take action, with the aim to 'adapt, adjust, and repeat'.

Food aid took various shapes: food parcels; community kitchens providing hot meals or sandwiches; schemes that allowed recipients to use smartphones to exchange digital vouchers for food hampers from participating retailers; and food aid to school feeding programmes.

Some of the wider coordination was done by the Western Cape NGO-Government Food Relief Coordination Forum, convened by the EDP, under the slogan 'connect, communicate, collaborate'.

By August, the EDP team had a bird's-eye view of the nature of the new relationships built during this food crisis mobilisation. Borraine argues that the momentum gained during this unprecedented collaboration needs to be taken forward as the

country tackles its ongoing food poverty, but that this kind of emergency mobilisation is not sustainable in the long-term.

'As the food crisis under the pandemic continues, we see the increasing needs as well as the declining resources in both the public sector and civil society, as well as volunteer fatigue,' Borraine says. 'Before COVID, government was spending R7 billion a year on feeding programmes at schools and early childhood development centres. Similarly, NPOs have been running food aid schemes for years. This is not sustainable.'

While there always will be some who need support, doing so at scale is not sustainable. There needs to be a transition to a position of long-term food and nutrition security.

## Beyond the crisis: it takes a village to support a village

While government has a constitutional responsibility to enable South Africans' right to food, the public sector can't address food poverty alone. This calls for a whole-of-society approach, including community collaboration and partnerships which take these short-term food relief efforts further, and support them by designing longer-term policies and recovery plans.

The response to the COVID-linked hunger emergency shows how responsive wider society can be — including citizens, civil society, and the private sector — and South Africa now needs to build on the relationships, collaborations, and networks formed during this time, in order to create longer-term, systemic response to the country's ongoing hunger crisis.

'We must not squander the mass mobilisation we started during this crisis,' says Borraine. 'We can build on the new solidarity created during this crisis to mobilise, network, and educate. We must encourage greater connection, communication and collaboration, and sharing information and knowledge between diverse stakeholders. We can do this through building a common, non-partisan agenda for change, working between different sectors through a collaborative approach, and build on emergent partnerships and the relations generated by the crisis.'

**Many communities responded by mobilising, organising, educating and networking in what is probably the biggest rallying of civic activism seen in the country since the 1980s.**

Links to talks: [Andrew Borraine](#)  
[Gray Maguire](#) | [Veronica Baleni](#)





**‘This pandemic has shown us that for small farmers, growing food isn’t just a hobby. It’s something that can save people. We all have to eat.’**

**- Veronica Baleni**

## Bridge-builders

Intermediary organisations are important bridge-builders when it comes to complex systems-level change involving so many different stakeholders.

Partnering works best when it is focused on a common agenda for joint action. Intermediary organisations can identify the necessary joint action, and help all stakeholders ‘see’ the wider system. They can bridge the gap between institutions and national or sub-national levels of government that might be stuck in their silos, and help them work beyond their individual mandates. They can create stronger relationships between those working in top-down authorising environments, and those doing bottom-up mobilising work. Historically, relationships of trust between these two environments have often been weak, according to Boraine.

An intermediary, though, should be non-partisan, and preferably not be situated within government, the private sector, in academic think-tanks, or in community-based organisations. Rather, they should occupy the ‘in-between spaces’.

‘The new relationships built in this time give us a window of opportunity to move from food aid to food security. But there are still many institutional barriers remaining. The window of opportunity is small, though, and closing fast,’ says Boraine.

## The critical role of local government for food security and community-led economic development

To move beyond food aid to create sustained food security, citizens and civil society organisations need access to resources, many of which are locked up at a local municipality level. This includes urban land that could be used for community gardens and small-scale production, under-utilised municipal buildings that could give community organisations a safe hub from which to operate, and libraries that provide internet connectivity. These all fall within the jurisdiction of municipal administrations.

Access to these kinds of facilities is often tied up behind ‘constipated’ public compliance and municipal bureaucratic systems. It is especially difficult for those living in informal neighbourhoods, and for unregistered and newly formed organisations, to access state resources.

Part of effective food system governance needs to be directed towards creating a more enabling environment within municipalities. It also involves finding ways in which formal, registered NGOs with robust administrative systems can partner with informal community organisations and networks to gain access to state resources.

This should include, amongst others, making land available for urban agriculture by building land tenure security into longer-term spatial development framework and housing approaches. Municipal planning and implementation also needs to recognise the importance of informal markets for meeting the needs of lower income communities, including as a source of jobs, livelihoods, and food.

The impact of the lockdown was felt most acutely by smaller businesses and the informal sector. For instance, many in the taxi, hospitality, and domestic cleaning sectors found themselves immediately unemployed. Meanwhile, small-scale farmers were unable to move their produce or earn the income they needed to keep their operations afloat. Informal traders and other independent suppliers, who initially were not regarded as ‘essential services’, could not trade through the early weeks of the lockdown. Even when those policy restrictions were eased, many found it difficult to work through the bureaucratic steps set by municipalities in order to get permits to trade.

During the lockdown, the City of Cape Town did try to support informal traders by distributing [COVID-19 Informal Traders’ Toolkits](#), aimed at helping them continue to trade safely and in line with COVID-19 protocols.

Local municipalities need to recognise the importance of small, independent, and informal traders, and create the policy environment that draws them into the food system and allows them to thrive.

## Small-scale farmers: excluded from the formal food system

The sheer delight of growing things is what makes Veronica Baleni, first and foremost, a farmer. Although this meant she had to become a business person, too.

In 2006, she started by growing vegetables for her family on their 1 m2 stoep in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. Within a few years, these vegetable gardens had spread across 400 m2 around their home, and she had bought another 1 hectare plot nearby.

She loved the farming process and that it kept her family well nourished. But as the operation grew she saw the need for an organised business and so she registered the Bhukula Farming Co-op in 2016.

‘We practise mixed farming, with crops, pigs, free-range chickens, and rabbits. Next, we want to go into broilers,’ she says.

The Bhukula Co-op is more than just a business though; it is a teaching platform, where she works with communities to show them how to plant and grow food.

Baleni was at the coalface of the small-scale farmer experience during the coronavirus economic slow-down, where she saw first-hand how the disruptions to food flows cut off farmers’ access to markets, and with it their income streams.

With government restrictions on trade, mobility, travel, and social distancing, farmers like her were unable to carry out key agricultural activities or get their produce to markets. The lessons these farmers learned through the crisis have shown how vulnerable this community of business people is, but also what innovation and change is necessary beyond the pandemic.

‘The shutdown hit us hard,’ she says on reflection, ‘we lost sales, because of the closure of markets and restaurants, and the restriction of people’s movement. Vendors couldn’t come to the farm to buy vegetables as they had before. Small farming businesses were forced to lay off some of their helpers, so they saw a drop in production.’

Small businesses like these are less able to survive this kind of short-term loss in income.

From the perspective of small-scale farmers, having secure and reliable access to markets is central to their own survival as businesses, as well as to creating a more resilient food system. This means building a food supply chain that includes informal and small-scale producers in a food system that otherwise favours the big, ‘visible’ corporate enterprises that dominate production, manufacture, distribution, marketing, and food retail.

Baleni argues that if farmers like those in her co-operative had guaranteed access to a range of markets — municipal fresh produce markets, informal traders, outlets such as state-run feeding schemes in schools and prisons, organisations that offer food aid, and outlets such as the bigger retailer chains — it would allow them to be more secure and thrive as businesses.

‘This pandemic has shown us that for small farmers, growing food isn’t just a hobby. It’s something that can save people. We all have to eat.’ - Veronica Baleni

Baleni weathered the worst of the lockdown by tending her crops, feeding the unsold produce to the farm animals, and showing people in her community how to plant their own food gardens.

‘But beyond this, it’s all about markets, markets, markets,’ she says.

The relationship with big retailers needs to change, in her view. Smaller farmers find it hard to meet some retailers’ demands to supply larger quantities of produce, or the strict aesthetic standards imposed by many retailers. The rules and red tape governing this need to be eased up.

‘Just give us a chance,’ is her message to the bigger retailers, ‘change your standards, let us sell to you as a group, and let us sign contracts with you so that we have some security.’



## Local food flows, a global system

The pandemic showed how linked the local food system is with a global system of supply, finance, processing, and distribution, says Gray Maguire from the Western Cape government's DEADP.

In the first days of the lockdown, there was a great deal of uncertainty about what foods would be able to move along traditional supply chains, and what would not. Shelves in formal and informal retailers needed to remain stocked, but what would the impact be of the closure of the borders, and on food-related imports and exports?

Early concerns about food shortages, the anticipated bulk-buying by many people, and a spike in food prices were not unfounded. And yet in spite of this, bulk storage facilities such as pack houses and large refrigerated stores did not run empty. During the lockdown there were pockets of plenty, such as export stock in supply houses, or restaurants and hotels sitting with stock that they could not use as tourism closed temporarily. One of the immediate challenges was finding logistical solutions to get this food to families most in need, rather than have it go to waste.

A take-home message from this, for a post-COVID world, is recognising that today's food systems are linked with local, regional, and global supply chains. These can make a system fragile or resilient, for different reasons. As the University of Cape Town's

African Centre for Cities has shown, policy needs to take this into consideration in a government's economic and food security responses.

The food system of tomorrow cannot be completely local, but there are benefits to localising parts of it. This can help reduce the environmental impact of the food system, particularly relating to carbon pollution. It will also help boost local economies. Supporting local food producers, as a part of this solution, has a multiplier effect, says Maguire.

'We don't need to re-invent the wheel,' says Maguire. 'Key elements of the response strategy involve accessing localised, distributed, existing food supply chains in the form of spaza shops and the informal sector.'

Responses going forward will require a value chain approach, which includes promoting home-level production and support across agricultural chains, which creates incomes and livelihoods.

'Critically too, is the need to focus on food waste,' Maguire concludes. 'South Africa produces 12,6 million tons of food waste each year. About 10,5 million tons of this is perfectly edible, with half of that happening at farm level. We need to implement the prescriptions of the Ubuntu Surplus Food Donations Bill.'

Read more on the [Ubuntu Surplus Food Donations Bill](#).



## Johannesburg entrepreneurs bring ground-up solutions during hunger crisis

Miles Kubheka, founder and CEO of [Vuyos Restaurant](#) in Soweto, saw how quickly hunger increased in historically marginalised neighbourhoods such as Alexandria, in Johannesburg, once the pandemic containment measures were put in place. School feeding schemes stopped; restaurants, small food retailers such as spaza shops and informal traders could not operate because they were not regarded as essential services or could not get through the red tape needed to get an essential services license to continue operating.

'On the ground, we saw that the crisis was about access to food and an excess of food,' he explains. 'Some people with access, such as restaurants and hotels, closed down. But they had food and stock in freezers that was sitting there, while some communities had no food. How could we take this excess, and get it to people in need?'

People were hoping for top-down solutions during the immediate crisis, mostly hoping for government-led solutions or from those with access to capital, but Kubheka saw how social entrepreneurship could step into the breach.

He applied for an essential services licences and, together with other local entrepreneurs, began feeding over 200 children a day.

As society begins tackling food poverty in a post-pandemic world, social entrepreneurs may have an opportunity to draw on their knowledge of working business models in order to create bottom-up solutions for a more sustainable and inclusive food system, he says.

**'Social entrepreneurs may have an opportunity to draw on their knowledge of working business models in order to create bottom-up solutions for a more sustainable and inclusive food system.'**

**- Miles Kubheka**



## CHAPTER

# 3

## Food is Political

*Citizens don't riot over hunger the way they do when government fails to deliver water, electricity, or jobs. This is because hunger is often seen as a private matter and a personal failure. But food is deeply political. Responding to everyday hunger and the longer-term health effects of food poverty, calls for a re-think of the political and economic forces that have created a food environment that leaves many eking out an existence on cheap, unhealthy foods. The roots of this unequal and exclusionary food system go back to extractive colonial rule. The coronavirus pandemic has shown how South Africa can take back the food system. This needs to include grassroots solidarity and community action to create a food environment that is by the people, for the people.*





## How we got here: the roots of today's food poverty

To understand why so many South Africans live with daily hunger and the damaging health effects of malnutrition, Dr Gareth Haysom from the University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities (ACC, UCT) says it is important to rethink the historic roots of food poverty, which lie in an economic and political system that goes back generations.

Neo-liberalism has dominated global economics for the past half-century, leading to greater austerity policies in many countries, removal of social safety nets, and widening inequality, including in South Africa. Under apartheid state rule, the government used the legal system to exclude the majority of citizens economically, politically, and socially. This has fed into the systemic reasons for today's food poverty.

But even before apartheid laws and more recent neo-liberal economic policies, colonial structures and laws set in place a system that was designed to create a cheap labour force living on the margins of cities and on the fringe of the economy.

When we broaden the understanding of the causes of food poverty in this way, Haysom argues, it gives insight into the level of political

and economic restructuring necessary to tackle hunger in a meaningful way. To bring about meaningful change, policy and societal attention needs to focus on the system which causes food poverty, rather than the behaviour of individuals within the system and the resulting public health consequences of food poverty.

Haysom argues that the roots of today's pervasive hunger run back to the discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa, which brought on a rapid restructuring of society and the economy. The colonial state created tax and land policies that were designed to free up land for white commercial farming interests, while dispossessing rural black South Africans who until then had farmed successfully either commercially or as subsistence farmers. These policies drove black South Africans into cities where they settled mostly in urban slums and became a ready source of cheap labour for the industrialising economy.

The state deliberately created and retained a low-paid passive industrial labour force, concentrated around urban industrial hubs, says Haysom. This labour force wasn't necessarily starving, but lived in a perpetual state of poor nourishment.

Cheap urban food was a way of reinforcing this. The diet of lower income city dwellers was fuelled by the industrial maize economy which began the so-called 'nutritional transition': a move away from traditional, more diverse diets, to one that was bulked up with refined, mostly maize-based staples. It is a

misnomer to call this kind of food a 'cultural staple' because it is largely an artefact of this changing, industrialised food system.

More recently, this urban nutrition transition has accelerated as South Africa has joined global markets, took on neo-liberal trade policies, and aggressively adopted the modern supermarket model for food retail. The result is that South Africans, like many people living across the developing world, are increasingly dependent on a diet of highly processed food-like products that have too few nutrients, but are high in refined, energy-dense 'dead' foods which bring a cascade of poor health outcomes. [See Chapter 4 - The flood of food-like products, and the forces behind them.](#)

These historical political and economic roots of today's unequal food system are why Haysom has concerns about policy or social responses to hunger which focus on educating people to make better food and lifestyle choices, or which urge people to grow their own food.

'How can we ask people to help themselves when the system has been designed to exclude so many?' asks Haysom. 'Those that are excluded, those that are suffering food poverty now, those that are using their own agency to solve this problem — why are they expected to solve this problem themselves? Who does that let off the hook?'

The two new 'pillars' in the UN's framing of food security ([See Chapter 1, section: Six pillars of 'food security'](#)) call for a food system where individuals and

communities have agency within the system, and where it must be sustainable. In this context, Haysom argues that a sustainable and more localised food system is important for addressing food poverty, but it can't be created if society does not disentangle the food system from its historic roots.

'We need reflective engagement, one that acts on structural racism in the system and the deep injustices and inter-generational disenfranchisement that has happened in this country,' he says. 'The system we have inherited can be undone. It was created, but it must be undone.'

The state has a constitutional responsibility to create an environment that enables jobs, provides important services such as water and electricity, and ensures its citizens' right to food. Why is it then, Haysom asks, that we see political unrest relating to poor service delivery or high unemployment, but citizens don't riot over the exclusionary and often unhealthy food system?

This is because food poverty is regarded as a private matter issue. It is experienced in incremental ways. It is part of an unseen private inequality, but may only explode into rebellion when the suffering of daily hunger boils over.

Links to talks: [Henriette Abrahams](#)  
[Gareth Haysom](#) | [Chuma Mgcoyi](#)  
[Rirhandzu Marivate](#) | [Funmilola Adeniyi](#)



## The constitutional right to food

Most South Africans understand that the constitution upholds their right to health, education, freedom of movement, and the right to life. But what about the right to food, and how does the country conceptualise food as a right?

Funmilola Adeniyi, researcher at the Dullah Omar Institute, explains that a citizen's right to food is enshrined in the South African Constitution, which states that everyone has a right to access sufficient food, that every child has the right to basic nutrition, and that every detained person and prisoner has a right to nutrition. The law places the responsibility on the government to ensure that there is enough food nationally, but also that the food is safe and meets dietary requirements.

While government has taken steps to realise food security in the country, more than half of South Africans still don't have adequate access to food, even though the legal obligation is there, and the food is there.

'The right to food is a fundamental human right. It is indivisible and inter-dependent with all other rights. There can be no right to health or life, without the right to food. And other rights, such as to education and work, will be impaired when there is not right to food,' explains Adeniyi.

The notion of the right to food also creates an environment of accountability, where the state must take responsibly when the right to food isn't fulfilled. The state has to realise this right in three ways: it must respect the right to food; it must protect the right to food; and it must fulfil the right to food.

This obligation is also inseparable from social justice, and part of the social compact between the state and its citizens. The law also recognises that there needs to be special protection when it comes to fulfilling this right among vulnerable groups, such as women and children.

### Using the courts to further the right to food

Realising the right to food takes time, and the state must show that it is building towards this incrementally through progressive actions, which includes through creating and implementing the necessary laws and policies. When the state fails in this regard, the

country's legislature gives a deprived person the avenue to assert this right through the courts.

However, there is no dedicated legislation in South Africa that specifically addresses the right to food. According to Adeniyi, the country has legislation that covers different aspects that may relate to the right to food — such as legislation relating to social security, land, and health care, and certain policies — and yet poor implementation of these policies remains an issue.

Citizens can use the courts to demand the realisation of their various rights, and this has been done successfully with some causes, but there is as yet no specific instance in South Africa where such claims have been positioned through the framework of the right to food.

### Civil society must champion the right to food

Civil society has been vibrant on many rights-based issues over the years, says Adeniyi, such as housing, health, water, and jobs. But it has largely been silent on the right to food.

'The coronavirus pandemic has shown up the disjuncture between policy and implementation, and the lack of coordination across different national departments,' she says.

There has been a gap between which departments are responsible for ensuring the right to food during the crisis, especially for the vulnerable, and the courts are an avenue to redress this.

One positive development during this time was the heightened role of Chapter 9 institutions, especially the SA Human Rights Commission, which intervened in the case of the Cape Town refugees, championed the cause of access to open spaces for informal traders so that they could keep their businesses operating, and intervened in the school nutrition programme.

The biggest win for the right to food campaign since the pandemic started, was where civil society and school governing bodies in Limpopo Province took the matter before the Pretoria High Court to compel the Department of Basic Education to extend the school nutrition program to all learners, irrespective of whether or not they were to resume school during the lockdown.

This is an example of how civil society should leverage the courts in order to further the cause of realising South Africans' right to food.

## Solidarity: building a regenerative culture from the ground up

The notion of 'food sovereignty' speaks to the fifth pillar in the UN's framing of food security: that individuals and communities have agency within the food system, and how food is farmed, exchanged, and used. ([See Chapter 1 - Six pillars of 'food security'.](#))

When the Tyisa Nabanye initiative started in 2013 on the old military site of ERF 81 in Tamboerskloof, a plush neighbourhood in the heart of Cape Town's gentrifying city centre, its founders began by turning soil to plant food gardens. Since then, it has become part of a network of like-minded activists, such as the [Surplus People Project](#), [La Via Campesina](#), and the Food Sovereignty Campaign (FSC). Globally, these networks share knowledge relating to sustainable growing, such as agro-ecological methods and permaculture. Locally, Tyisa Nabanye shares things like seeds and other resources with like-minded growers and activists.

But the commune at ERF 81 is about more than just sustainable and inclusive food growing. It's about creating a place of safety, shelter, nourishment, and dignity for people with limited resources living in an expensive and unequal city.

Speaking on what can be learned from the community, following its own response to the COVID-19 pandemic, founding member Chuma Mgcoyi says the movement is about communities doing it for themselves, rather than waiting for government to give them solutions to issues of homelessness, food poverty, and a healthy environment.

People are self-organising and working together to grow food. This is relevant to how the community got through the pandemic, but has implications for what communities face in future with the climate crisis.

'I did panic at the beginning of the pandemic,' Mgcoyi says, 'for myself as a grower, but also for others who were not prepared and were about to face poverty and hunger.'

By teaming up with some of the Community Action Networks (CANs) that sprang up in Cape Town to rally immediate food aid, Mgcoyi and others began organising and sharing food, as well as exchanging food growing skills and resources.

'This created connectedness in the community in Tamboerskloof and nearby Bo Kaap where we met women who are doing community gardens, and sharing things like compost and seeds.'

Creating a community that is centred around food growing in a way that mimics nature and restores biodiversity aims to build a regenerative culture. This kind of culture is one that will help the next generation by restoring nature, and addressing hunger and inequality, as the climate becomes ever more unstable, says Mgcoyi.



**'Food sovereignty is about creating platforms where locally we share as growers, knowledge or seeds or resources.'**

**- Chuma Mgcoyi**





## From the ganglands: a story of community activism, crisis response, and empowerment

A wave of violence, crime, and gangsterism has swept through Bonteheuwel on the Cape Flats in recent years. In 2018, women in the community set up the Bonteheuwel Community Forum (BCF) to lobby for police and government intervention.

‘Women and children were shot in the gangsters’ crossfire, and this is still happening,’ says Henriette Abrahams of the BCF, which has set up street and block committees to safeguard their community.

‘We look after each other. If there is shooting, our women go to schools, fetch the children, and see that they have safe passage home. If a child’s parents aren’t at home, we will keep them with us until their parents are back from work. We monitor areas where people get robbed, mugged, or assaulted, or where shootings happen, and then we warn one another.’

### Repurposing the BCF to tackle the public health crisis during lockdown

The BCF’s starting point was community safety, but during the coronavirus pandemic the forum repurposed its social infrastructure to address the public health needs in the community.

They started running a health programme. Once a month, volunteers took healthcare workers to particular houses in each block. If someone needed to get to a day hospital or clinic, they found the right facility. This allowed the forum to help with family planning, HIV/AIDS testing and treatment, and TB treatment.

‘We created our own databases to find out who has co-morbidities, and who is in need of assistance or food. We make food parcels to carry people until their grant payments come through. We also started block gardens, and have women’s kitchen assemblies where we speak about building women’s power.’

The sharing and planning is personal and collective.

### The impact on women

The coronavirus pandemic has been devastating for women in the Bonteheuwel community. Many of the issues they face are difficult to overcome. People here live hand-to-mouth, says Abrahams. There is a sense of hopelessness, made worse by the pandemic.

‘Women have lost so much. They have lost family members. They have lost jobs, be it their own, or that of a breadwinner, or a son who is the only earner in the house. But a lot of our women also suffer abuse, which has escalated during the lockdown. Many women find themselves trapped in their houses.’

Some women have found a way out of the domestic hardship and abuse by volunteering with BCF.

‘We are a holding and empowering sisterhood. We are a safety net for one another, we look after one another, psychologically and physically,’ she says.

### ‘We can’t grow electricity or clothes, but we can build our local economy’

Although the BCF volunteers have rallied during the lockdown, they are not a humanitarian relief organisation, and don’t have the resources to buy food for people in need in their community.

Instead, they have started initiatives that can boost the economy within the community.

‘We can’t grow electricity, we can’t grow clothes. So we are looking at job creation, and to build a local resource economy that is going to provide for our community and bring an income for our people. Each block in our community has a food garden that provides fresh vegetables to a feeding scheme in that block.’

The next project is to set up block bakeries which can employ women in the neighbourhood. Then they would like to start textile production hubs, since many women in Bonteheuwel come from a textile industry background and could make children’s school uniforms, matric ball dresses, suits for hire, and so on.

This will keep money circulating within the community.

‘For years, government and businesses have failed us. The pandemic has shown us that we need to do things for ourselves. We cannot wait for strangers outside our communities any longer. We are taking our power back, we are taking our community back.’





CHAPTER

# 4

Food and  
Health

*Oxfam's 2014 Hidden Hunger report sums up a central problem with today's food system: it is easy to make the wrong food choices, and hard to make the right ones. For decades, public health has viewed so-called 'lifestyle-related diseases' as self-inflicted. Efforts to tackle these illnesses have focused on educating people about growing food, eating right, and how to live a healthy life. If people know more, the rationale goes, they will make better choices and achieve health. But now the world's public health community says it is time to look at the wider food environment, and how it limits people's choices, steering them towards foods that leave them hungry, heavy, and sick. It's time to reshape the food environment, rather than focus exclusively on people's behaviour within that environment.*



## A lifetime of real food: the ideal diet

Food is a basic need to sustain life. The body needs a healthy diet for day-to-day function, across a person's full lifetime.

Food is the source of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre, protein, carbohydrates, and anti-oxidants that allow the body to perform essential functions such as replace worn tissue, grow hair and nails, keep the immune system strong to fight off infection, and allow the brain to work optimally.

A healthy diet is one that is rich and diverse, with foods that are as close to their natural state as possible: the right balance of fresh vegetables and fruit, seeds, nuts, healthy fats, and protein from plants or animals.

Fruits, vegetables, and natural foods that are high in fibre are also critical for keeping a rich and diverse community of bacteria alive in the gut. This not only helps with better nutrient absorption and digestion, but boosts the immune system and contributes to improved mental health.

Many of these real foods are beyond the reach of most South Africans. They are often too expensive, or they aren't sold within walking distance of people's homes. Some real foods are financially risky to buy, because they perish easily, get damaged through handling, or people may not have refrigeration at home. Cooking these foods may also take more time or electricity than people have to spare. People may also have lost a taste for them, after years' of exposure to highly flavoured processed foods, and aggressive marketing that has created a cultural norm that branded and packaged foods are aspirational.

## The flood of food-like products, and the forces behind them

South Africa's high rate of diseases that relate to long-term food habits — obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers — shows how few citizens are able to eat healthy foods on a regular basis.

Much of people's daily diet is made up of ultra-processed food-like products, or bulked up with starchy, highly refined staples such as maize-based products and bread. Ultra-processed foods are often packed with energy but nutritionally empty, and are high in fats, with added salt, sugar, and flavouring. They are usually cheap, convenient, and available almost

everywhere. They are often positioned as being high-status through aggressive marketing, particularly targeting children: cold drinks, fast food burgers, chips, chocolate bars, breakfast cereals, baked goods, processed meats, and so forth.

'The amount of shelf-space these processed foods take up in a supermarket shows how accessible and pervasive they are,' says Thandi Puoane Emeritus Professor at the University of the Western Cape's (UWC) School of Public Health (SoPH).

Long-term exposure to a diet made up mostly of these foods results in a host of health complications, the burden of which is largely felt by the poor, whose food choices are often limited to these products.

Adding to this, UWC Associate Professor Zandile Mchiza points out that non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are closely linked with age, poverty, and less-healthy eating behaviours. And while post-apartheid policies should have addressed inequality in South Africa, there has been an increase in NCD risk factors with the population.

'It is our food environment that promotes unhealthy eating because these ultra-processed foods are rife,' she says.

Just as processed foods put people at risk of overweight, obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and certain types of cancer, these are also conditions that put people at higher risk of contracting more serious or even fatal COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, reminds Puoane.

Once again, it is the poor who carry the greater burden of risk as a result of inequality and food poverty.

NCDs should not be called 'lifestyle-related diseases' anymore, argues Associate Professor Jane Battersby from the University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities (ACC, UCT). Framing it in this way blames the

individual for their ill-health, and takes the focus away from a critique of the system that shapes people's choices which, over a lifetime, result in these painful and life-threatening illnesses.

Industrial foods are associated with what is often called the 'Western diet', but this suggests that the diet is a cultural export from countries like the United States. Some analysts, such as Canadian sociologist Professor Gerardo Otero, reframe it as the 'neo-liberal diet'. In doing so, this draws attention to the fact that these foods are the product of a global industrialised food system that is controlled by multinational food corporations and enabled by government policies that allow private corporations to have more power in the food system than the people whose lives are impacted so heavily by the health consequences of long-term use of these foods.

The question is: why are these food-like products so cheap and available, while healthy foods aren't? The answer lies in the economics of the industrial food system that is dominated by big, often international producers, and enabled by government policies.

UCT Associate Professor Jane Battersby points out that people's food choices are intricately linked with how much discretionary income they have.

'When times are hard, the one area that people cut back on is food,' she says. When a packet of chips or a take-away burger is cheaper than cooking a diverse meal of vegetables and fish, and someone's weekly budget has to be split between food and other essential household costs, it's easy to see where people might cut corners.

This is why public health experts argue that society should look beyond the food choices that people make, and focus on changing the food system that shapes those choices.

Links to talks:

[Thandi Puoane](#) | [Lisanne du Plessis](#)  
[Monwabisi Lubabalo Dyantyi](#)  
[Zandile Mchiza](#) | [Beatrice Rabkin](#)





## It starts in the womb: building a powerhouse brain and body

The seeds of many of the health impacts linked with food poverty are planted in the womb. This is why public health efforts to address these impacts need to prioritise nutrition for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, and their infants.

The nutrition that a person gets in the first 1 000 days of life, from the moment of conception until their second birthday, is critical. It shapes a person's health, metabolic blue-print, and brain function for the rest of their life, explains nutrition professor Lianne du Plessis from Stellenbosch University.

Most of a person's brain development — the brain tissue itself, and how well the brain works — happens during this 1 000-day window. Not getting the right nutrients during this time results in a child not reaching their full cognitive potential. This impacts on their schooling achievement and later education potential, which impacts on their employment opportunities later in life. A 2006 [World Bank](#) report estimated that cognitive impairment resulting from undernutrition like this can cost a person about 10 per cent of their earning potential as an adult, which shows how the cycle of poverty perpetuates through poor nutrition.

Other important physical development happens during this time, too, such as growing to the right height, and how fat stores develop in the body.

Poor nutrition during this time can leave a person facing lifelong cognitive and physical deficits, and chronic health problems. Much of this damage is hard to reverse, and in some instances impossible to reverse, even with good nutrition later in life.

'Improving nutrition during this critical first 1 000 days is one of the best investments we can make to achieve lasting progress in global health and development,' says Du Plessis.

'Research shows that for every dollar spent on nutrition during this time, there is a \$16 return. There are very few investments that can boast this kind of return.'

Supporting good nutrition for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and young infants can save more than a million lives every year. It can also reduce the risk of people developing diet-related diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, improve a person's educational achievement and their earning potential later in life. Measured in economic terms, this kind of nutrition-based investment can boost a country's gross domestic product by at least 2 to 3 per cent annually, says Du Plessis.

### Hungry babies; heavy mothers

Statistics show that mothers in families with under-nourished and stunted children are often themselves battling with the illnesses that come with carrying too much weight. This is the hunger-obesity poverty-paradox, and a sign that the whole family is unable to eat a healthy diet.

Across the country, 25 per cent of women are overweight, and 40 per cent are obese, which increases their risk of developing high blood pressure, diabetes, and other diet-related NCDs. Mothers who are overweight or obese can have several maternal and foetal complications during pregnancy, delivery, and immediately after birth. Obese pregnant women are four times more likely to develop type-two diabetes during the pregnancy, and two times more likely to develop very high blood pressure compared with women of normal weight.

Similar national statistics for infants and children show that 5,6 per cent are underweight, 3 per cent are wasted, 27 per cent are stunted, and 13 per cent are overweight.

'When we look at the diet of infants and young children, only 23 per cent of children aged between six and 23 months meet the criteria for a minimum acceptable diet,' says Du Plessis. 'Meanwhile 32 per cent of babies under six months receive exclusively breastmilk, and complementary liquids and foods are introduced very early on.'

These liquids include plain water, non-milk liquids, and others. About 18 per cent get complementary food in addition to breastmilk, while a quarter of infants under six months do not get breast fed

at all, says Du Plessis. Over 70 per cent of infants receive solid foods before six months of age.

South Africa generally has poor figures for exclusive breast-feeding, and infants are introduced to solid foods early on, which can pose significant threats to their health and nutrition.

These statistics indicate that when it is time to start eating solids, many children are not getting enough milk and dairy, grains, roots and tubers, fruit and vegetables, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, other organ meats, or legumes and nuts.

### A whole-of-society approach to support mothers

The coronavirus pandemic has shown just how vulnerable women, mothers, infants, and young children are. They carry the burden of the health crisis relating to lack of access to good food, leaving the whole of society hobbled by poverty.

'We need urgent public health initiatives that focus on those first 1 000 days,' says Du Plessis. 'This includes maternal nutrition, supplementation during pregnancy, breastfeeding support and promotion, and complementary feeding with a diverse diet so that children can flourish.'

'There are different rings of responsibility surrounding mothers. It was never supposed to be a one-woman job to raise, feed, nourish, and nurture a child. This is a whole of society job.'

### How safe is food?

Mpumelelo Ncwadi describes himself an environmental engineer, and works with small-scale farmers in the Eastern Cape to encourage regenerative farming.

He questions how safe today's food is, particularly the staple grains which may be from genetically modified crops that are often sprayed with herbicides in the field.

Many of these crops have been adapted to be herbicide resistant, he says, allowing farmers to spray crops to kill off competing weeds, while

leaving the crop unharmed. The most noteworthy of these herbicides is one containing the cancer-causing chemical known as glyphosate. Recent law suits against the German multinational pharmaceutical Bayer, which also produces agricultural products including glyphosate-containing herbicides, have resulted in pay-outs for damages relating to its cancer-causing product.

'We are told that our food is safe, but how much choice do we have in the supermarket if many of the staples are treated with glyphosate?'

### Health statistics for South African mothers and children

**25%** of women are overweight

**40%** of women are obese

**5.6%** of children are underweight

**3%** of children are wasted

**27%** of children are stunted

**13%** of children are overweight

**23%** of children aged between six and 23 months meet the criteria for a minimum acceptable diet



## From food to food-like: how one staple goes through the industrial mill

Industrial food formulations go through three distinct processing stages to make them edible, palatable, have a longer shelf-life, and look attractive, explains UWC Associate Professor Zandile Mchiza.

Take maize, for instance, on its journey from mealie cob to the breakfast bowl:

1. Harvested
2. Preparation to make it more or less nutritious by adding ingredients (e.g. with fortifying nutrients) or removing important components such as fibre. Unrefined whole maize kernels, for instance, have 12 g of fibre and 15 g of protein, but the same cup of branded breakfast cereal only has 0,8 g fibre and 1,7 g protein.
3. Refining (or 'over-processing') then removes many of the nutritious elements. With industrial food formulations, various additives are then mixed in, usually to imitate the sensorial quality of unprocessed or minimally-processed foods, or to disguise undesirable qualities of the final product. These additives include salt, sugars, and various types of fats. Some of the additives are substances not commonly used in culinary preparations, including colourants, flavourings, non-sugar sweeteners, emulsifiers, and anti-caking and glazing agents.

The end-product goes into colourful packaging, and may have misleading labels about the health benefits of the product.

People tend to overeat when they eat the refined versions of these foods: typically someone will eat two or more cups of refined breakfast cereal before they feel full, compared with whole maize where they usually eat just one cup which is more satisfying.







## CHAPTER

# 5

## Food and Culture

*Food is at the heart of the human experience, seen most richly in the theatre, ceremony, and ritual surrounding the sharing of food at times of celebration, mourning, or spiritual practice. Its social meaning is ancient in origin. Food is also one of the most sensual ways to experience the richness of South Africa's diverse cultures. But the country's painful colonial history means that many cultures and cuisines have been muted and excluded, while others have come to dominate the collective palate.*



## Ritual, celebration, connection: shared meaning-making through food

Food is more than just a source of nutrients to drive the ‘machine’ of the body, or a way to ease the physical gnaw of hunger. People gather around food to get a deeper sense of well-being and human connection. People eat for pleasure, to honour their culture, to celebrate, for succour and comfort, and to affirm their connections with one another and with things greater than themselves. Food is a social mediator, allowing connection with self, family, community, and the divine.

‘Food is part of our dwelling,’ says Monwabisi Lubabalo Dyantyi with the Warehouse Trust and faith organisation Izenzo. ‘It is an important part of our being. It is a sacred part of a person’s life and home, and it is part of our culture.’

The pandemic has shown that food’s role in people’s lives — as something that goes beyond its utilitarian function — has not changed. It is still central to our existence as humans, Dyantyi says.

Not being able to gather in community during the pandemic, particularly for funerals where sharing food is deeply ceremonial and comforting, is a reminder of the bigger nourishing role of food in people’s lives.

The pandemic lockdown has limited most of the communal and binding practices that are deeply

rooted in people’s psychological needs, and which have evolved over thousands of years to be part of humanity’s habits of being.

There is something universal in how people have reached out to one another during the pandemic, either to help others who don’t have food, or to meet these inherent psychological needs, says Angelo Fick, director of research at the public policy think-tank Auwal Socio-Economic Research Institute ([ASRI](#)). However, this crisis is not unique, in terms of what it means for ritual and food exchange.

‘Many of the rituals we observe today emerged out of crises in the past, whether crises of scarcity, insecurity, or migration because of political instability,’ he says. ‘In terms of ritual and food, new rituals have emerged through the pandemic, such as virtual dinner parties or observing traditional wedding or funeral practices using social media.’

The sacredness of sharing food, through religious or non-religious rituals, is a way of creating equality, both between people who know each other, and between strangers.

## Helping the hungry: a longer pattern of human sharing

There was a risk that during the pandemic, that those who had food would cling to their resources and adopt a survival-of-the-fittest mentality, reflects Dyantyi.

‘Would people just look after themselves? It is also easy to forget about people who live with a perpetual lack of food, until our own comfort is threatened,’ he says. ‘We must take care of one another.’

And yet while the usual flow of food through society was disrupted during the pandemic, and the chasm between people with plenty and those without became more visible, people’s need to care for others surfaced.

This kind of exchange of food through humanitarian aid and sharing between strangers reminds us that there are bonds of connection established in those moments of exchange that are often ignored, says Fick.

This sharing of food — particularly where middle-class people are giving food to those living in penury — may seem like ordinary exchanges based on poverty and deprivation, and could be seen as reinstating the global class inequalities. But sharing in this way is a sign of a larger humanity.

‘This sharing is a part of humanity that is not about amassing resources for oneself. There is a longer pattern of sharing in human history,’ says Fick. ‘In religious traditions, for instance, sharing food goes back into a deep history of constructing communality and equality, not just for people within a certain group, but for people who are not members of that faith or religion or society.’

The collective rallying to share food and get emergency relief to the most hungry was not just a utilitarian job. It also involved the invention of new rituals and creating new chains of exchange that may not have come into being if the country had not faced a crisis like this.

‘The food supply chains that were in place before the pandemic were not created just because of capitalist efficiency. They came into being because they also met other needs that go beyond the utilitarian function of nutrition or food security. They came into being because they are part of meeting deeper additional emotional and spiritual bonds that are constructed when food becomes the centre of human exchanges.’

Urban food geographer, Associate Professor Jane Battersby from the University of Cape Town’s African Centre for Cities (ACC, UCT), agrees that the coronavirus pandemic has shown that food is more than just food.

‘The explosion of baking with sour dough during the lockdown — why is it that so many people turned to baking?’ she asks. ‘There is something about the process of cooking, the alchemy of bread-making, that grounds us and sustains us and connects us to the environment.’

She argues that there is also something about producing food for others that is an expression of nurturing and care, showing that food is more than just its commodity value, or the nutritional outcome of eating it. Food became an expression of values during the crisis, with many trying not to shop at big retailers but rather supporting local food outlets. It also became an expression of ‘safe’ solidarity, where there was a sense of paternalism that came through with many middle-class philanthropic gestures. Donors seemed to prefer to support with food, rather than money. Beneficiaries of this aid most likely will eat the food they’re given, but a donor has no control over how someone spends a cash donation.



Links to talks: [Xolisa Bangani](#)  
[Jane Battersby](#) | [Angelo Fick](#)  
[Mpumelelo Ncwadi](#) | [Zayaan Khan](#)



**‘Culturally, Cape Town societies are descendent from many thousands of slaves brought here by the Dutch from Madagascar, Guinea, Ghana, Indonesia, and the Indian subcontinent, specifically Sri Lanka.’**

**- Zayaan Khan**

## Cape Town cuisine: echoes of Colonial trauma and cultural exclusion

The wild and diverse fynbos surrounding Cape Town is a reminder of the rich cultural heritage that predates the colonisation of the region which led to the building of the city itself. Today, ‘Malay’ cuisine is one of the unique expressions the city’s cosmopolitan roots, where different flavours, styles, and techniques have been fused over time to create this distinctive fare.

‘Culturally, Cape Town societies are descendent from many thousands of slaves brought here by the Dutch from Madagascar, Guinea, Ghana, Indonesia, and the Indian subcontinent, specifically Sri Lanka,’ says food activist and seed librarian Zayaan Khan.

Even before colonisation, there was a long history of interaction between the original Khoi communities and other visiting cultures, such as

Arab travellers and other traders from across the continent, and shipwreck survivors.

But much of the history of cultural interactions here are deeply tragic, particularly during colonial and apartheid rule. Families were ripped apart, identities reassigned, and many of these cultural elements have embedded themselves in the landscape.

‘Knowledge around fishing and the ocean, the use of a myriad veld plants for medicine... some of this knowledge still exists today, including in recipes, and in rituals associated with food,’ says Khan.

Cape Malay cuisine is infused with the cultural and political history of the city. Food and ritual were integral to the District Six neighbourhood, for instance, which was an integrated, multi-cultural community before the apartheid state declared it a ‘whites only’ area and forcibly removal people of colour.

‘There was always enough to eat,’ Khan says, remembering her own family roots here. ‘My grandmother would wake for morning prayers and start the oven. She would put a big pot on the stove and cooked for whoever needed food. If someone passed by and asked for something to eat, there would always be food.’

Similar stories from other multi-cultural neighbourhoods suggest that South Africans understood each other’s food ways, even if people were from different cultural roots.

‘Take tripe, for instance. There were different ways to make the same food, that ended up tasting similar. But with the forced removals, when people were separated and had to live within their racial groups, that integration didn’t happen anymore. Once we were separated culturally we were no longer privy to other races’ or cultures’ food types. This is a great tragedy.’

Today’s Cape Town has inherited the fruit of this separation.

Food cultures can bring communities together, but they can also segregate and divide people further in an already divided city, argues Khan. While people can share across cultures, there is also the potential for cultural appropriation, which can further reinforce structural inequities.

## Captured cuisine: appropriation versus commodification

A new ready-to-eat product has hit the South Africa market, which taps into the notion of convenience food, and which also draws on a cultural favourite: *pap en sous*, a stiff maize meal porridge served with spicy relish.

The product is a roll of cooked *pap* with a savoury filling, wrapped in plastic packaging that allows it to be heated quickly in a microwave or a pot of water on the stove.

What constitutes South Africa’s food heritage? When does one group’s taking on of another’s food style amount to cultural appropriation?

Cultural appropriation is what happens when a person or group — usually from a more dominant group in society — takes on another’s customs, ideas and practices in a way that doesn’t acknowledge the origins, or uses those in a way that is inappropriate. A popular South African steak house franchise, for instance, is regarded as having appropriated the Native American cultural aesthetic in its branding.

‘(This new maize-based product) is not a black-owned company, but it serves a black population and it’s getting traction,’ notes Khan.

There are many similar convenience foods entering the market, including flavoured or sweetened instant *pap* that is made by big corporations, according to Battersby.

These corporations are tapping into cultural preferences and beliefs, through food.

Culture is dynamic and changes over time, as are the foods attached to those cultures. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, people don’t regard a meal as complete unless it comes with a handsome serving of some form of cooked maize meal. And yet maize was introduced here from the Americas following European imperial expansion. Maize only became a staple food in

sub-Saharan Africa much more recently, largely as a result of political and economic forces relating to industrialisation of food, and, more recently, with trade and agricultural policies in the age of globalisation.

To what extent does the case of this ready-made *pap* product show who has control over the food system, and who doesn’t? Who is selling what, to whom?

There is a difference, though, between cultural appropriation and commodification of a culture’s food, explains Fick.

‘When someone takes on another’s cultural ideas and markets them for profit, that’s commodification.’

While the steak house franchise has appropriated Native American culture, that may not be the same as a company profiting from commodifying a culture’s food.

Throughout the history of maize becoming an adopted staple food here in Africa, there may be many forms of ‘appropriation’ taking place. In this context, though, the concern relates to the power imbalance, specifically where a business is taking something that is signalled as ‘traditional’ and exploiting others’ historic use of the food for their benefit, without concern of the outcome for those to whom the product is being marketed.

**Cultural appropriation is what happens when a person or group — usually from a more dominant group in society — takes on another’s customs, ideas and practices in a way that doesn’t acknowledge the origins, or uses those in a way that is inappropriate.**





## Chicken or the egg: consumer demand or big business supply?

On a drizzly day in the UK, convenience food companies know they will need to produce an extra 181 000 kg of ready meals, because people will want to order comfort food. But if the weather is worse — if it's rainy and miserable — companies will produce many fewer ready meals, because people will stay home and raid the fridge.

Many of us will not be able to say why we ate the last thing that we did, argues Battersby, but businesses often understand our choices better than we do.

This is just one example of the many different forces within the urban food-scape that shape people's decisions relating to food.

'There is a direct relationship between the food-scape, and the consumer,' says Battersby. 'They shape each other.'

But what comes first — consumer demand, or businesses' willingness and ability to create demand?

Research by Battersby and colleagues at the ACC, UCT has picked up a recent increase in the number and variety of sweetened and flavoured *pap* in spaza shops in lower income communities in the city.

'Why are these suddenly on shop shelves, but weren't there ten years ago?' she asks. 'Is it consumer demand, or is it because the food system is now making it available?'

There are many often invisible forces that influence people's food choices: how far someone lives from a grocery store and whether they must get there by car or on foot; if they have good food storage at home, such as refrigeration; how much spare cash they have to spend on electricity to cook food; how much discretionary income they have, and what other budget demands they have to juggle, such as school fees or cell phone airtime or servicing debt; how much time they have to shop and cook at the end of a long workday; how city planning and regulation determines which food retailers operate in their neighbourhood or not.

Within this context, the food system is uniquely designed to respond to people's needs and situations, further shaping their choices.

'A *vetkoek* seller opens at 5 am to meet consumers' needs on their way to work. Or the live chicken seller will set up their stall at the weekend, knowing that there is a cultural demand for live chicken meat, which is a taste preference,' explains Battersby. 'There is a concentration of food retailers at train stations because people commuting home from work have limited time at end of day to cook.'

What does the current situation render visible, in terms of people's relationship with food and each other, and the place in the food system that they occupy? What hidden forces are shaping their choices and how much agency do they have within this complex system? These are questions that need answering if South Africa is to better understand the complex nature of the food system, and build a new one that addresses food poverty.

## Home growing, and the food commons

Millions of South African's don't have eco-friendly spaces near their homes, and the resulting disconnection from nature is a big social ill, says Xolisa Bangani, founder of the Ikhaya Garden community project in Khayelitsha, Cape Town.

'At Ikhaya Garden, we use urban gardening to give people a glimpse into how they can use gardening to elevate themselves,' he says. 'This is a slow process, because many fail to understand the importance of growing their own food, of having eco-friendly spaces around them, and of self reliance. Gardening can teach someone these things.'

Being self-sufficient is important, as demonstrated so clearly during the coronavirus lockdown, particularly

for those living on the margins of the economy. But for Bangani, the benefit isn't just about someone being able to produce their own food, or not having to rely on the state for social support.

It's about the greater sense of well-being that comes from the 'therapy' of gardening.

'Gardening gives me energy, it makes me stronger when times are tough, like they are now,' he says, during the pandemic. 'In Africa, we often define ourselves as "turners of the soil". Now people are hungry, there is a growing awareness of this.'

Through the lockdown, Bangani saw a change in attitude towards urban gardening as people have been thrown into crisis, while at the same time having the opportunity to reflect on their lives.

'People are getting into gardening now. It's cool again. It isn't associated with your being in the lower caste anymore.'

He sees a brighter future for food gardens in his neighbourhood.

'There are vast opportunities. I am seeing more young people getting involved and taking it to the next level, and that doesn't just end there. It is like a chain of things from gardening to agriculture processing to product to entrepreneurship being born.'

'If you could fly a drone over Khayelitsha, one day all you may see is green. From concrete to green, my brother!'



# CHAPTER

# 6

## Food and Economics

*The economics of food refers to more than just the shelf price of an item, or what changes hands when people trade food. It speaks to the many different players in the food system, and how much influence each of them has over how the whole system works. The economically powerful usually have more say over what food flows through the system, where it flows, and how much it costs. They may also have more influence over the rules of the game, namely the laws and policies that allow for the governance of the system. These forces shape, and often limit, the range of foods people then have to choose from. Who has their hand on the levers of South Africa's food system, and who doesn't?*



## Markets are doing what markets do

Critics often say that the broken food system — the hunger and food inequality experienced so widely in this country — is the result of a failure of the market. But Dr Tracy Ledger, researcher at the Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI) argues that this not accurate.

The market is working perfectly, she says. This is a profit-driven system where food is the commodity. It is a vertically integrated, retail-dominated supply chain which is designed to extract the value of other participants in the chain to benefit the shareholders and the company. And it is doing just that.

‘To date, South Africa has framed hunger and unequal access to food as an individual problem,’ explains Ledger. ‘Our analysis hasn’t looked closely enough at the system itself. The only way to have a more equitable system is to make a conscious effort to redesign one. How we understand the problem determines where we look for a solution.’

Should profit be the reason determining whether someone has access to food or not? Is this the kind of food system South Africa needs?

The pandemic has demonstrated the historic problems of the unequal power relations in the food system, and the negative implications of it. But the pandemic hasn’t changed these power dynamics themselves, argues Ledger. While there may have been an outpouring of charity and corporate giving to respond to the immediate amplification of the hunger crisis during this time, this does not change the nature of the food system that will continue to shape the face of food poverty in the country, well beyond the immediacy of the pandemic.

The problem is systemic, and the solutions lie in building a new system that is more inclusive. This will create a more diverse system, and one that is more resilient as a result. ‘Building back better’ calls for creating a system that allows greater agency, particularly for the formerly marginalised smaller and informal businesses, and the largely voiceless lower-income consumers.

## The dual food system: the big fish versus the small fry

Large corporates in concentrated markets hold significant power across the food value chain, particularly in production, processing, and retail.

In the retail sector, for instance, the top five supermarket chains now account for 64 per cent of the national market, according to the Competition Commission’s Grocery Retail Market Inquiry findings in 2019. In the food and beverage sector, the 10 largest enterprises handle almost 40 per cent of income from sales in this area. Within the food sector, for example, the 10 largest dairy producers account for about 72 per cent of all dairy product sales.

The big retail chains often have substantial control over suppliers, as well as their own category managers who buy directly, bypassing the fresh produce markets, according to Ledger.

This concentration of power leads to a buyer-led value chain, which has implications throughout the system:

1) Farmers get a smaller share of the final retail price of food. Why is it that food prices are so high, and yet profit margins of some stakeholders are so low? There is little data to say exactly who is profiting most within the system, and who is not. But the evidence suggests that the gap between the farm-gate price of food and the retail price has widened extensively in past 25 years. Typically the farm will get about 30 per cent of the price of a litre of milk, for instance. The terms of trade for farmers have declined over time, small-scale farms have gone under, but many processors and retailers are making good profit out of the sector, says Ledger.

2) Small and medium businesses (SMEs) are marginalised in this corporate-dominated system. They also face many barriers to entering the market, from difficulties in securing contracts with bigger businesses and having to bend to the strict terms and conditions set out by powerful buyers, through to accessing finance. Without the economies of scale that bigger businesses enjoy, smaller operations also have greater difficulties that relate to expensive inputs or the cost of utilities such as electricity and water. Excluded from the big formal value chains, they must often find alternative routes to market.

3) This profoundly shapes the consumer food environment, in terms of the range, quality, and price of what people find on the shelves at their nearest grocery store. These are the often invisible forces which shape an individual’s more visible behaviours and choices around food, and the consequent health implications of those choices. Consumers are losers in the system, with about 80 per cent of households unable to afford a nutritionally balanced basket of food. At the retail level, the prevalence of a small number of large supermarket chains operating mainly in wealthier suburbs indicates this.

Links to talks:

[Sheryl Ozinsky](#) | [Miles Kubheka](#)  
[Reena Das Nair](#) | [Tracy Ledger](#)  
[Lindelani Errol Sibisi](#)





## On the fringe: the importance of small and informal food businesses

Small businesses and the informal food sector's role in the food system is significant, beyond just bringing food to people's plates, both in cities and in the countryside. They are also a source of jobs or livelihoods that allow people to earn the money they need to access food within the system.

A more resilient food system is one that is more diverse, argues Dr Reena das Nair, a senior researcher at the Centre for Competition, Regulation and Economic Development (CCRED) at the University of Johannesburg.

At the retail level, smaller businesses serve their customers well in a number of ways, especially in lower-income communities who don't have their own transport and easy access to a supermarket. Independent retailers and spaza shops, for instance, are more convenient and accessible; their food is usually packaged in smaller, more suitably priced unit sizes; they operate within walking distance of people's homes, reducing the cost of transporting food; they have longer and more flexible operating hours; they may offer credit; the shopkeeper–customer relationship is more personal.

'The informal food economy helps ensure customer self-sufficiency.' - Lindelani Errol Sibisi of the United Khayelitsha Informal Traders Association.

Government response during the pandemic indicated how under-valued and often invisible these smaller businesses and independent traders are in the food system. When the economic shut-down happened, large and formal supply chains and retailers were allowed to operate. Meanwhile many other parts of the food system were shut down temporarily because they were not seen as essential services or were unable to access the bureaucracy necessary to get an essential services licence.

Supermarkets were able to sell almost their full range of foods, but many small-scale independent markets

and informal traders were unable to get essential services licences and were barred from trading any food stuffs for a time.

The informal sector in cities was hit hardest by the lockdown, and since cities are where the greatest concentration of hunger occurs, it shows how essential a city's informal food sector is for addressing household food poverty.

There are strong links between small-scale farmers and informal traders, too. More than half of the fresh produce sold at the Johannesburg fresh produce market goes to the informal sector.

## Waste not, want not: the business of food waste

Food waste happens along the entire value chain, from production, post-harvest, handling, storing, processing, and packaging, all the way through to consumption.

While there are efforts to reduce waste — mostly technological 'fixes', such as with post-harvest losses — there are also economic incentives to maintain waste. The food system would rather have too much than too little. Supermarkets don't want their shelves to appear empty. And waste is seen as the cost of doing business. This must be addressed, particularly if the food system is to be more sustainable.

Questions remain about cities' rapidly filling landfills, and how food from agricultural processing, supermarkets, and other sources are contributing to this. How can this waste be diverted elsewhere? And what is the role of food waste philanthropy, such as food banking, or food redistribution from supermarkets and processors?

Resolving these aspects of the business model of food is central to creating a more sustainable food system. But one of the other remaining problems in tackling this is that the country does not have good data on food waste.



**'The informal food economy helps ensure customer self-sufficiency.'**

**- Lindelani Errol Sibisi  
United Khayelitsha Informal Traders Association**





## Some silver bullets: finding solutions to the economics of the broken food system

### Policies must create an inclusive, equitable food environment allowing the informal sector to step forward

Food systems analysts have documented the significant role that the informal food sector plays in allowing South Africans to find work or other sources of livelihoods, which allows people to buy food. Analysts have also noted, though, the government's often hostile view of informal trading. Governments often make and enforce policies that exclude informal businesses and traders in various ways. (See Chapter 3 Cinderella Markets in [Tomatoes & Taxi Ranks](#), by the University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities.)

Speaking from his experience in engaging with the City of Cape Town in order to secure trading licenses for informal businesses, Lindelani Errol Sibisi of the United Khayelitsha Informal Traders' Association says this has not been successful. The association is still battling to get recognition from the city for informal food traders.

'There is the notion that informal traders are operating in areas where they are not designated to work,' he says. 'Informal traders feel victimised, and not heard or seen.'

'Traders feel powerless. It is necessary for the City of Cape Town to hear their stories, so that local government can understand what the needs and gaps are, and address those,' he says. 'The city needs to offer informal traders the power to trade. Traders themselves also need to contribute to take the informal food sector to the next level.'

Sibisi and the traders' association are advocating for 'self-managed' markets in which informal traders run their own market in their own way.

## Nurturing alternative routes to market

Outside of supermarkets as retail hubs within the formal supply chain, there are many alternative market opportunities across the value chain that SMEs could tap into, and these alternatives need to be strengthened and supported. This must be through supporting infrastructure, building networks and relationships, giving contractual security to suppliers, and through enabling policies, according to Das Nair.

Some of these alternative markets include independent or specialist stores such as butcheries, bakeries, spaza shops, feeding scheme markets, the catering and restaurant industries, hospitals, and prisons.

Municipalities in particular have a role to play in creating spaces for smaller and informal operators to do business, and reducing barriers to accessing certain spaces.

The Competition Commission has made progress in this respect as part of its Grocery Retail Market Inquiry, which in 2019 recommended ending the practice of exclusive leases by anchor tenants in shopping malls, which are typically large and powerful supermarket chains. This opens up the space for independent food retailers to locate in malls, and also calls for proactive planning and zoning for spaza shops and informal food retail.

**Alternative  
markets include  
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## Supply development programmes: boosting SMEs and drawing them into the value chain

Supply development programmes are a good way to nurture smaller businesses, says CCRED's Das Nair, and will allow them to enter formal value chains. Supermarkets have the biggest role to play in this, but governments, development finance institutions and non-governmental institutions should also get involved in supporting these kinds of programmes.

'Some chains are already doing this with agri-processors, by supporting them with finance, preferential procurement and shelf space, training and technical assistance, and help with meeting minimum food safety standards,' she says. 'Now they need to scale this up and extend it into where supermarkets have a big footprint.'

Supermarkets, suppliers, and the wider food system will benefit from this, according to Das Nair:

- A closer supply base and shorter value chain reduces logistics and transport costs for supermarkets, and reduces their carbon footprint. Climate breakdown will also put greater pressure on the food systems, and localising or regionalising supply chains will address some of these threats.
- A diverse local supply base offsets the costs and risks of relying on import markets, such as exchange rate risks, disruptions in imports as seen during the pandemic with port and airport closures, and other disruptions to transportation routes.
- Supermarkets are best placed to gather and share information on consumer purchasing patterns, trends, and consumer demands, which can help suppliers with planning and running their businesses, and therefore building supplier capabilities.



## Tech can open the door for SMEs

Food technology is a wide-ranging term referring to technology to improve agriculture production, processing, supply chain efficiency, distribution, and retail.

Digitalisation has advanced things like food e-commerce, logistics, food management, and nutrition. More and more retailers are selling online, particularly in the larger retail sector, and new models of sales and delivery are emerging, such as e-vouchers, and click-and-collect options.

‘The problem is that e-commerce doesn’t serve rural and peri-urban and poor urban communities,’ says Das Nair. ‘Many of these technologies and platforms are too expensive for SMEs. For instance, membership fees can be up to 30 per cent of the cost, which is too high for businesses who are already making slim margins.’

But these platforms can be valuable for small players in processing and retail, and can help improve their participation in the value chain. Some of the opportunities lie in improved business-to-business operations, such as collating orders,

building credit profiles, lowering transport costs, and connecting SMEs directly with consumers.

‘We need to support start-ups and scale them up. SMEs also need access to capital and finance on more favourable terms,’ says Das Nair.

She also recommends skills training and capacity building in food technology industries, and investment in warehouses to support these platforms through providing storage space for goods.

While this new aspect of the food environment takes shape, role-players will need to be deliberate about fostering a competitive digital space, which will address concerns that certain platforms may come to dominate this part of the market. A code of fair practice could help keep the space competitive, including capping platform fees so that they are not prohibitive for SMEs.

Digital platforms also need to be built in a way that facilitates payments, for instance through mobile money and other small-scale payments. In South Africa, mobile money currently needs a banking license, and this may be a regulatory barrier to those wanting to get into the food tech space.

## Upending traditional business models: solutions from around the world

Farmers markets are an alternative way to keep food flowing, without the system being dependent on the buying power, infrastructure, or geographical reach of big corporate businesses.

They can offer smarter and healthier alternatives to the traditional supermarket model, connecting consumers directly with small farms and reinstating small farmers as the food source for the community, maintains Sheryl Ozinsky, managing director of Oranjezicht City Farm Market, which operates out of Granger Bay in Cape Town. These markets also offer shorter supply chains between farmers and consumers.

‘In Barcelona, Spain, residents ranked their public food markets as the second most valuable public service after public libraries,’ she says. Barcelona has 40 food markets which support about 8 000 farmers and vendors, and are accessible for people from diverse income groups.

Community-supported agriculture is another grass-roots approach that connects producers with consumers through consumer subscriptions. Consumers sign up directly with a specific farm or collective of farmers, to get their harvest directly.

Participatory guarantee systems (PGSs) are quality-assurance systems that are local in scale, allowing producers to be certified based on stakeholders in the local food system actively participating in how quality is assessed and monitored. They depend on social capital such as trust, networks, and sharing of knowledge.

These are ways to make the food system more ‘democratic’, says Ozinsky, so that more people can occupy the system and create one that sustains farmers, protects the natural environment, and nourishes families.





## CHAPTER

# 7

## Building Back Better

*The hunger crisis experienced so viscerally and visibly during the coronavirus pandemic, and which hit poorer families hardest, brought into focus the long and deeply troubled historical roots of an unequal food system. This system has left millions of South Africans living with daily hunger, or with the diseases resulting from long-term dependence on a poor diet based on readily available cheap, processed foods. The call to action is to change the system, rather than focus only on individuals' behaviour within the system. How can South Africa create a more sustainable, inclusive, resilient food system, and one which gives greater power to those who still have little influence over how the system works? Some solutions emerged during the 2020 Food Dialogues. The following recommendations are by no means a comprehensive list, but serve as a starting point from which further action, research, and collaboration can begin.*





## Systems change, before behaviour change: the state's responsibly

Reframing the question of hunger and malnutrition as the consequence of a dysfunctional system, rather than focusing on the behaviour of individuals within the system, draws attention to the state's responsibly to realise citizens' right to adequate food and nutrition.

There are leverage points at national, provincial, and municipal levels of government.

## Realising citizens' constitutional right to food

All responsible tiers of government have opportunities to create and implement the appropriate laws, policies, and regulations that allow for a more inclusive, diverse, fair, and resilient food system. This is an incremental process that over time realises the right to food and adequate nutrition.

The state should adopt framework legislation that protects this right, and develops a national food and nutrition security strategy that achieves a progressive realisation of the right to food incrementally.

## Cities: sites of struggle, sites of change

Food security is explicitly the mandate of national and provincial government. However, food poverty is increasingly concentrated in cities, where over half of all South Africans now live. Analysis of existing municipal mandates shows that local government fundamentally shapes the food system and the urban conditions that enhance or erode food security.

City-scale governance therefore has a key role to play in creating enabling environments for diverse and inclusive food flows within their jurisdictions.

According to food geographers at the University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities, local government needs to recognise this, and should consider how local government can 'work with other food system stakeholders to enhance urban food security through coherent food system interventions within existing mandates. This could include, for example, integrated planning of the food retail environment, especially along transport corridors and nodes, support for informal food retailers, restrictions on advertising of unhealthy foods in public spaces, or deferment of supermarket waste from landfill.'

**'We do not want  
freedom without bread,  
nor do we want bread  
without freedom.'**

**Nelson Mandela,  
May 1991**





# The dual food system: bringing the two together

Power in the South African food system lies with big businesses at different points in the value chain. Smaller businesses are under-represented. The informal sector is largely unrecognised in its importance for food security, as well as for providing jobs and livelihoods that allow people to earn the money needed to access food.

Various approaches can smooth out the power imbalance within a profit-driven food system, address the dominance of large corporations, and allow smaller businesses and the informal sector to participate.

## Urban agriculture: part of the solution, not the total solution

- Greater security for urban food farmers, including secure access to land, infrastructure, and markets.

## Sharing the retail space

- Government and regulatory bodies must ensure a level playing field, with equal and fair access to lucrative retail spaces and improved infrastructure for traders.
- Support and provision of infrastructure that allows for better utilisation of food, such as water, electricity, and even improved street lighting which helps with street safety.
- Address the dominance of supermarkets in the retail space, particularly in cities, by creating zoning conditions that allow SMEs and informal traders to operate in and around retail hubs, transport hubs, etc.
- Address the trading conditions that allow retail chains to operate as anchor tenants in malls.
- Creating secure and well-supported places within the city for informal traders to operate, including providing market spaces with services such as electricity, secure storage, refrigeration, and good sanitation.

## Localising parts of the food system

- Infrastructure that supports local production, processing, and marketing, as well as shorter supply chains.

## Diverse food flows: alternative routes to market

- Strengthen and diversify alternative routes to market that allow SMEs greater access to the food system, so that the system remains competitive in the face of growing and spreading supermarket chain dominance.
- State procurement processes that allow SMEs to access state feeding programmes and kitchens in schools, hospitals, and prisons. This is largely the responsibility of provincial government.

## Build the capabilities of SME food processors

- Public-private partnerships through supermarket supplier development programmes which assist SMEs to get products onto supermarket shelves by ensuring that they can produce the quality and meet the other requirements of supermarket chains. Supermarkets can thus provide SMEs with preferential access to shelf space and trading terms.
- Complementary public sector support is a critical factor for the success of these programmes, and can include development finance and infrastructure investment.
- Protect SMEs from the buyer power of large buyers at different levels of the value chain. The newly released Buyer Power Guidelines by the Competition Commission aim to address this.

## Food technology start-ups

- Incentivise and support food technology start-ups, and remove barriers that prevent digital platforms and other technology from entering the food industry.

- Designing industrial policy instruments that support such companies, particularly those that service peri-urban, township, and rural areas, which support them to scale up and replicate their models.
- Appropriate policies and regulations that curb abuses of power by dominant players in e-commerce markets or platforms.

## Food waste

Nationally, South Africa produces 12,6 million tons of food waste each year. About 10,5 million tons of this waste is edible, and half of it occurs at the farm level. This raises questions of:

- How to salvage this food and prevent it from rotting or going into landfills? The [Ubuntu Surplus Food Donations Bill](#) may help provide for this.
- Municipalities are central to resolving food waste at a city scale, where a large amount of this waste occurs.

## Changing the system needs a strong theoretical approach

Food systems governance calls for a strong theoretical framework, of which there are several that can be drawn upon.

## A ‘theory of change’ approach to redress systemic food poverty should ask:

- Do interventions enhance or undermine availability, accessibility, utilisation capacity, stability, agency and sustainability of the food system for all?
- What are the social, economic, political and cultural forces driving or limiting food system change in South Africa?

- Where are the ‘sites of struggle’ in the food system which can best be used to leverage and mobilise change? These include urban agriculture, community collaborations such as the Community Action Networks (CANs), informal traders associations, and many more.
- Which are the key institutions and networks driving food systems change, and to what extent are they working together? Is there a common food systems change agenda that is leading to joint action?
- How best to navigate and engage the public sector ‘authorising environment’ at multiple levels, and to what end?
- What is the engagement strategy towards food corporations, agri-business, and large retailers?
- What role should collaborative intermediary organisations play in the process of change?
- What food systems governance models are needed to enable a more just and equitable food system, and how can these governance actors be better supported?
- How does one develop context-specific approaches to contextual needs? One region’s or city’s needs may not be reflected in another’s, therefore solutions may need to be tailored to each context and need.

## The role of independent bridge-building intermediaries

System change will require organising the necessary transversal, inter-governmental, cross-boundary and whole-of-society approach on the basis of a common agenda to achieve joint action.

This calls for building change into political and institutional agendas. Non-partisan ‘bridge-building’ intermediaries can help build relationships of trust between the ‘top down’ authorising environment and the ‘bottom up’ mobilising environment.

Academics working on food security issues can also be effective intermediary agencies in this context, and provide institutional memory, as well as ‘institutional conscience’ that can help nudge other parties when they fall into inaction or negative action.



## Creating a more competitive, transparent food system

### Flexing the muscle of the Competition Commission

The Competition Commission's comprehensive Grocery Retail Market Inquiry, published in 2019, demonstrated the potential of this body to bring greater transparency to parts of the food retail sector. The Department of Trade Industry and Competition (DTIC) needs to instruct the Competition Commission to convene a food sector inquiry that expands on this, to explore what happens to basic foods between the farm gate and retail shelf.

### SA's 'opaque' food system: more data, greater transparency

There is no single institution that is tasked with monitoring the food system. This leaves large gaps in the data, which makes it difficult for evidence-based and democratic governance of the food system. For instance, there is good data on agricultural production, but little tracking of how food flows around the country.

The concentration and consolidation of the local food system, coupled with the global nature of the system, means that the private sector controls substantial components of the food system. While they may monitor parts of it, they often do not do it uniformly, and may be reluctant to make this information available to other stakeholders.

Very little is known about the extent of smaller, independent operators and the informal sector, from production, through to processing and distributing, and retail. This calls for better aggregation of existing data, tweaks to existing data collection to make it more useful in terms of food system governance, and an appreciation of why the gaps exist and what they reveal about power in the system.

## Good nutrition for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and infants

This gives one of the best returns on public-health investment, and is an opportunity to break the cycle of society-wide poverty. It calls for:

- A willingness to act at scale, which must reflect in budget support and consolidated action from all stakeholders, including government, NGOs, community organisations, and the private sector. This includes having the right type of people positioned at the right place:, having adequate numbers with people trained in the field of nutrition, enough health workers to ensure quality nutrition services, and evidence-informed stakeholders across the 'rings of responsibilities' landscape.
- Accountability and good nutrition governance.
- Legal protection of women and children, framed through improved access to nutrition in the first 1 000 days.
- Increasing child support grants at least up to the level of the food poverty line, and ensuring that all eligible children benefit from the grant. This requires expediting the adoption of the Social Assistance Bill of 2018 to increase the level of child support grants for orphaned and abandoned children living with relatives.

## Essential reading: re-making the food system

### Global

- World Hunger Day 2020 Challenging False Narratives in a Global Crisis: Reflections on Human Rights, Inequality and Securing Food Systems' community chest [report](#).
- [Global Nutrition Report 2020](#)

### National

- People's Assembly [Proposals on the Right to Food](#).
- Food Security SA Working Paper Series: [Food security and nutrition: Impure, complex and wicked?](#)

### The dual food system: bringing formal and informal together

- People's Assembly [Proposals on Informal Food System: Traders, Street Vendors & Spazas](#).
- [Formal and informal retailers - Making space for both](#).
- [Retail planning as a means to support food security: A role for urban planning](#).

### Through the city lens

- [Tomatoes & Taxi Ranks](#)
- [Urban Food Systems Governance and Poverty in African Cities](#)
- [Towards democratic urban food systems governance: Re-interpreting the urban food security mandate](#).
- [A study on current and future realities for urban food security in South Africa](#).
- [Food System and Food Security Study for the City of Cape Town](#) (see Chapters 10 and 11).
- [Looking beyond urban agriculture Extending urban food policy responses](#).
- [Understanding food poverty in African cities](#).
- [How local is the food system?](#)
- [Municipalities are not off the hook for food security](#).

### On the farm

- People's Assembly [Proposals on Food Producers: Small-scale farmers, fishers & farm workers](#).

### Addressing the data gaps

- [Data gaps and the politics of data](#) — generating appropriate data for food system assessment in Cape Town, South Africa





## Afterword

A small group of us met in a small room in early February 2020 to think big about food. I don't recall if we even mentioned the new coronavirus and that it had started to spread outside of China. Our conversation was about how to build on the 2014 Food Dialogues, how the themes and speakers could be expanded, where to locate the physical dialogues so they would be more inclusionary and acknowledge the geographic fault lines of the city and how they impacted the food system and food security. What new ideas could we bring to the table this time around?

And then COVID-19 arrived in South Africa.

The arrival of the virus and its associated lockdown conditions forced food onto the public and political agenda. The reality was, however, that food and nutrition insecurity had been a crisis in South Africa for years. Before COVID-19 at least 60 per cent of Cape Town's population could not afford a nutritious diet and over a quarter of the country's children were stunted.

The high levels of diabetes, hypertension and obesity — deadly in the context of COVID-19 — were not 'diseases of lifestyle' as they are framed in policy documents, but the outworking of unjust and inequitable food systems intersecting with multidimensional poverty. COVID-19 caused an amplification of existing food insecurity and revealed more of the structural problems within our food systems, but these problems are deeply rooted in our economic, political, social and spatial fabric.

In May the Food Dialogues decided therefore 'to focus on the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it has had and will have on Cape Town's food system, unpacking what has been revealed about our food system; what the state of our food system is at present; what changes have been made, are underway, and are planned that impact our food system; and what futures our food system might develop into. It is an opportunity after the initial

shock of the pandemic and lockdown to assess the situation, the response, and the way forward regarding our food system.'

In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic public discussions about food were wide ranging and often focused on systemic issues and the politics of the food system. However, my sense is that conversations have narrowed and that the unrelenting awfulness and immediacy of the crisis has led to civil society activity focusing on food relief and on very local actions. These are, of course, vital, but can dull the call for systemic change and risk re-masking the structural inequities in the food system. I am concerned that we are reverting to silos — where entrenched thinking is reinforced and where possibilities of working across sectors are shut down.

The Food Dialogues, in their diversity of topics and voices, provided a space to engage deeply in the complexity of the Cape Town food system. They engaged issues of rights, of land, of identity, of economics, of diets and health, of community mobilisation and many others. They refused to have a single story. They refused to amplify a single set of voices. The live airing and archiving of the sessions and the creation of this report The Food Dialogues 2020 serve as a record of a food system and a people in crisis.

But, I hope it will do more than that. I am hoping that these dialogues and this report will put a stake in the ground, holding and insisting on that complexity. And I hope it will issue a rallying call for ongoing collective action drawing on state, civil society, academic, and private sector actors. It is my hope that the dialogues will provide the starting point, and not the end point, for many sets of complex, difficult and messy conversations about food.

*Assoc. Prof. Jane Battersby, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town*







# Moderators and Speakers





## Yolanda Busbee Methvin

CEO and host, Prosperity Food Company,  
LithaFlora African Botanicals & Sourcing,  
“Bee There. Do That” podcast  
Theme: Food and Health

● [Listen to the Food and Health  
Panel Discussion](#)

Yolanda Busbee Methvin is host of “Bee There. Do That”, a cultural food, travel and lifestyle podcast sharing everyday conversations about Food, Race and Social Impact in Africa. She is also Founder and CEO of LithaFlora African Botanicals & Sourcing, a boutique brand & business which produces indigenous African products for health and wellness, manufactures products and sources bespoke artefacts, garments and jewellery and creates educational experiences. She further founded Prosperity Food Company to deploy conscious, economically viable and socially innovative solutions in accordance with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, toward achieving local Food Security and Poverty Reduction, Nature, Nurture and Nutrition.



## Ellen Fischat

Managing Director, Oribi Village  
Theme: Food and Economics

● [Listen to the Food and Economics  
Panel Discussion](#)

Ellen Fischat is the Managing director of Oribi Village, a non-profit organisation that brings together social entrepreneurs and supports sustainable business development through our incubation program. She has extensive experience in small business development, with a focus on social enterprises and technology. She mentors technology start-ups and designs community outreach programs that focus on personal development, digital literacy and increasing employability of marginalised young women through STEM initiatives.





# Ishay Govender

Journalist and founder,  
SA POC at the Table  
Theme: Food and Culture

● [Listen to the Food and Culture  
Panel Discussion](#)

Ishay Govender is an award-winning freelance food, culture and travel journalist and cookbook author. A former lawyer, with an interest in food anthropology, she centres narratives on women and the marginalised and works on expanding the space offered to historically disadvantaged members of society by inviting dialogue to challenge the status quo. Ishay is the founder of SA POC at the Table (SAPOC) – a group working to expand the network and opportunities for South African and African chefs, cooks, sommeliers and folks of colour in the creative industry such as writers and photographers.



# Leonie Joubert

Independent science writer and author  
Theme: Food and Crisis

● [Listen to the Food and Crisis  
Panel Discussion](#)

Leonie Joubert is a South African science writer who uses different ways of storytelling to grapple with many of today's tough issues: climate and ecosystem collapse, energy policy, cities as development hubs, and why today's food system leaves many of us hungry, heavy, and sick (the hunger-obesity poverty-paradox). More recently, her work delves into the realm of psychedelic medicine. She has spent the better part of 20 years exploring these topics through award-winning books, journalism, non-fiction creative writing, and podcasting.





## Florian Kroll

Researcher, DSI-NRF Centre  
of Excellence in Food Security

Theme: Food Politics

● [Listen to the Food Politics  
Panel Discussion](#)

Florian Kroll is a food systems researcher with an interest in the biopolitics of urban food systems governance in African cities. He has worked with the Wits Health Promotion Unit to promote agro-ecology and nutrition and has conducted urban food security and policy evaluations in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Gauteng. His collaboration with the Southern Africa Food Lab has inculcated an interest in social innovation and dialogues. He is an alumnus of the IVLP programme on food security and foreign policy in 2014. He currently works with the University of the Western Cape School of Public Health and the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence on Food Security, convening and facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues with the Western Cape and Gauteng Communities of Practice in Food Governance to promote democratic and sustainable food governance. He is currently enrolled as a PhD candidate with the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS).



## Henriette Abrahams

Chairperson, Bonteheuwel  
Community Development Forum

Theme: Food Politics

● [Listen to the talk](#)

Henriette has been an activist for the past 30 years and has worked in various NGOs including farm worker communities. She shifted her focus and is working in her poverty stricken and crime ravaged community for the past three years building street and block committees in an attempt to build people's power where communities take ownership of their area and build safe, healthy and prosperous communities. Her organisation is working around issues of safety, health and food security.

### Women, food and power

Women are often described as the hidden faces of hunger. The role of women is further compounded by the fact that women have comparatively limited access to resources and services as a result of cultural, social, political and structural factors. This suggests that they are disproportionately disadvantaged when it comes to food security in relation to their male counterparts. How then do women navigate these restrictive spaces in order to realise the right to food? How do the overcome structural inequalities that perpetuate discriminatory gender roles in order to claim their power back? How has this played out during the pandemic, and what have we learned?





# Funmilola Adeniyi

Researcher, Dullah Omar Institute  
Theme: Food Politics

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Funmilola is a lawyer with cross sectoral experience and holds an LLM (Cum Laude) from the University of the Western Cape. She is currently a doctoral researcher with the Socio-Economic Rights Project (SERP) at the Dullah Omar Institute. Her research interests are socio-economic rights with particular interest in the right to food, women's rights and access to justice. She coordinates the Access to Food for Students Project at the Dullah Omar Institute, a national project probing food insecurity in South African tertiary institutions. The Access to Food for Students project receives funding from the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security.

## The constitutional right to food

The right to food is enshrined in the South African Constitution, specifically sections 27(1)(b) and 28(1). The Right to Food protects the right for all people to have access to safe and nutritious foods at all times. This places the responsibility on the government to ensure that there is enough food nationally but also that the food is safe and meets dietary requirements. Throughout the years, the government has introduced several initiatives in order to contribute towards the realisation of food security in the country. Despite these measures, more than half of the South African population has inadequate access to food even though the nation as a whole is deemed food secure. The legal obligation is there. The food is there. Why so much persistent hunger in South Africa?



# Xolisa Bangani

Founder, Ikhaya Garden  
Theme: Food and Culture

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Xolisa considers himself a soil artist using the soil as the canvas and plants as paint to create a beautiful image of his community. He grew in Site C, a community in Khayelitsha. He sees lack of opportunities and access to resources and information with regards to food and environmental practices as a major social ill we are faced with. In 2013 Xolisa founded a community project called Ikhaya Garden to encourage young people to enjoy the adventure of gardening, with a motto of making gardening cool.

## Urban agriculture and the food commons

Urban agriculture is an opportunity to develop resilience of communities, particularly vulnerable communities, which becomes especially important in times of crises. A primary challenge to the growth of community- and household-scale urban agriculture has been access to land. Even public land is regulated by notions of ownership, leasehold and use that constrain the kind of public benefits of urban agriculture from being realised. How has the pandemic and the response to it by communities highlighted this conflict between the creative responses of people threatened by crisis who want to grow food for themselves and their communities, and the responsibilities of government to comply with legal and regulatory requirements? Are there other ways to imagine a food commons that would resolve this tension and re-landscape the city to mutual benefit?





## Veronica Baleni

Managing Director,  
Bhukula Farming Co-Operative Limited  
Theme: Food and Crisis

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Veronica has been farming for the past fifteen years and registered her business, Bhukula Farming Co-Operative Limited, officially in 2016 and has not looked back since. Farming in COVID-19 and the introduction of the lockdown has not been easy for Veronica or any smallholder farmers. Production has slowed down tremendously because people have to adhere to social distancing and lockdown regulations thus leaving less labour force on the farm.

### Farming in a crisis: the case of smallholder farms

The disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown have reduced income streams for smallholder farms. With government restrictions on trade, mobility, travel and social distancing, farmers are unable to carry out fundamental agricultural activities or to access markets. The struggles of smallholder farmers to adapt has given rise to suffering as well as innovation from necessity, resulting in changes that may last into the future beyond the pandemic.



## Jane Battersby

Associate Professor,  
African Centre for Cities,  
University of Cape Town  
Theme: Food and Culture

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Theme: Food System Overview

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Jane Battersby is an Associate Professor at the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town, where she heads up the food security and food systems cluster. A geographer by training she is currently the PI of the IDRC-Funded Nourishing Spaces project and of the ESRC/DfID-funded Consuming Urban Poverty Impact Generation Project and works as a Co-I on a number of other multi-country urban food and nutrition security and food system projects. Jane serves on the Independent Expert Group of the Global Nutrition Report and regularly consults and advises local, provincial and national governments, NGOs and civil society groups on food issues in the African context.

### Urban Foodscapes - how food changes people's social behaviour

COVID-19 has resulted in widespread changes to what was considered 'normal' food shopping and eating routines. The pandemic has influenced how food is bought, how we feel about food, what food is available to us, and what food we eat. With the crisis disruptions, much has been revealed about the ways that our urban foodscapes – what food is available where, when and to whom – shapes our lives, and the ways that we shape our lives around the realities of our foodscape. Understanding this intimate interconnection, what post-pandemic food futures are possible? And what must we change in order to improve them?

### Understanding Cape Town's Food System: Facts, figures, flows

What is Cape Town's food system like? How much food of what kind is there? Where do people get their food? How does it enter the system, where does it go and who eats what? How much waste is there? Are people getting the nutrition they need? How are things changing, and what impact has the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown had? These and other questions will be addressed to provide a broad introductory overview of Cape Town's food system, up-to-date with the latest research findings.





## Andrew Boraine

CEO, Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP)

Theme: Food and Crisis

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Andrew Boraine is the CEO of the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP). Since lockdown, the EDP has convened the Western Cape NGO - Government Food Relief Coordination Forum, established to promote a collaborative whole-of-society approach to food aid during the Covid-19 crisis. He has been involved in South Africa's local government, urban and economic development and transition processes for the past 35 years, as activist, advisor, negotiator, government planner, city manager, chief executive, facilitator, communicator, writer and photographer.

### A window of opportunity: Connecting immediate responses around the Covid-19 food crisis to long-term food systems change

Food insecurity in Cape Town and the Western Cape existed before Covid-19, but the pandemic has made things far worse. There was a 'failure to feed' by national government during the past months, but civil society and the Western Cape Government, amongst others, mobilised a massive effort to provide the necessary short-term food relief in poor and vulnerable communities. This effort was in part coordinated by the Western Cape NGO-Government Food Relief Coordination Forum, convened by the EDP. New relationships have been built, and a number of partnering lessons can be shared. The current food crisis under the Covid pandemic continues, with increasing needs and declining resources in both the public sector and civil society. At the same time emergency food aid is not sustainable, and we need to transition to a position of long-term food and nutrition security. Can we build on innovative civil society mobilisation during the crisis to advance a food and nutrition system change agenda? Who needs to work together to make this happen?



## Reena das Nair

Senior Researcher, Centre for Competition, Regulation and Economic Development

Theme: Food and Economics

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Reena is a Senior Researcher at the Centre for Competition, Regulation and Economic Development (CCRED) and Programme Coordinator and Senior Lecturer in the Master of Commerce in Competition and Economic Regulation programme at the University of Johannesburg. Prior to joining CCRED, Reena was Programme Manager: Industrial Policy at Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS), before which she worked as Principal Economist at the Competition Commission of South Africa. Reena holds a PhD (Economics) from the University of Johannesburg and a MCom (Economics) from the University of the Witwatersrand. Her current research interests include competition dynamics in the grocery retail sector and food value chains, with a focus on barriers to entry for small and medium-sized enterprises in food systems in Southern Africa.

### Food, investment and innovation: failures and futures

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed numerous limits and constraints within our food system, and what the consequences can be for ordinary people as well as the businesses active in the food economy. What opportunities are there to overcome these through innovations in technology, operations, business models and approaches? How do legal and regulatory requirements encourage or constrain these innovations? Are there new ways of thinking and new models emerging because of the pandemic that give us a sense of what the future might bring?





## Lisanne du Plessis

Associate Professor,  
Department of Global Health,  
Stellenbosch University

Theme: Food and Health

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Lisanne is an Associate Professor in Community Nutrition in the Division of Human Nutrition, Department of Global Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University. She is dually registered as dietitian and nutritionist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. Her field of experience and research focus is in Public Health Nutrition with a special interest in the environment that affects Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN). This includes policy, governance, advocacy and leadership issues as well as health and nutrition promotion, with a focus on the first 1 000 days of life. She is active in various committees and working groups with a link to social impact, among others, the Western Cape Government, Department of Health: Nutrition Sub-Directorate - Infant and Young Child Feeding Technical Working Group.

### Health impacts of our food system: first 1 000 days + non-communicable diseases

The first 1 000 days of life, the time from conception to a child's second birthday, is a critical period for ensuring optimal nutrition. The diets of the mother and baby during this time have huge influence over both the short-term and lifelong health and well-being of the child. We understand the nourishment necessary to provide children with a healthy start to life, but we must also understand the reality faced by many food insecure households as they attempt to meet the needs of a growing child, and why malnutrition and infant stunting are so pervasive in Cape Town, even before the pandemic hit. What will the consequences be for mothers, infants and toddlers during and after this time of crisis?



## Monwabisi Lubabalo Dyantyi

Food Security and Operations Manager,  
The Warehouse Trust, IZenzo

Theme: Food and Health

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Monwabisi is part of the food security team of the Warehouse Trust where he administers food relief initiatives with church leaders. He is also the Operations Manager of Izenzo where he helps create job clubs, including initiating sustainable agriculture projects as a survivalist strategy during COVID-19.

### Nourishing our humanity: Health beyond our selves and our bodies

As humans, we are more than our bodies; we are thoughtful, creative, social and spiritual beings. We also live connected to families, communities, cultures and societies. And it is food that we have in common across these various aspects of our lives. We eat for pleasure, to honour our culture, to celebrate, to affirm our connections with one another and with things greater than our own existence. How does the breakdown of nourishment during the COVID-19 pandemic illuminate the role of food, and how has the way we have come to eat shaped the way we connect – or don't – with the fullness of our humanity?





## Angelo Fick

Director of Research,  
Auwal Socio-Economic Research Institute  
Theme: Food and Culture

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Angelo Fick is the Director of Research at the Auwal Socio-Economic Research Institute. Before joining ASRI, he was a resident current affairs and news analyst in the broadcast sector in South Africa. For two decades he taught across a variety of disciplines in the Humanities and Applied Sciences in universities in South Africa and Europe. His research is informed by critical 'race' theory, feminism, colonial discourse theory, and post-structuralism. Most recently he taught courses on colonial discourse theory and postcolonial culture in the Department of Visual Culture at the University of Pretoria. His work has appeared in the Mail & Guardian, the Journal of Commonwealth Literature, and English in Africa.



## Gareth Haysom

Researcher, African Centre for Cities,  
University of Cape Town  
Theme: Food Politics

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Gareth Haysom is a researcher at the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town. Gareth obtained his PhD from the University of Cape Town and a MPhil from Stellenbosch University. Gareth spent 15 years working in the private sector, holding various leadership and board positions before returning to academia in 2004 where he has held various teaching and research positions at Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town. Gareth's work focuses on urban food. This approach uses food as a lens to better understand urbanisation in cities of the global South with a specific interest in African cities, working in a variety of countries and across city types.

### Rethinking the roots of food poverty: Broken history, broken food system

Food insecurity today is not only a consequence of relatively recent post-apartheid legal and regulatory approaches, nor of a neo-liberal economic order. Deeper roots of this persistent problem can be traced back through pre-apartheid and colonial structures, laws and conflicts. This highlights the need to engage with deeper societal issues and to broaden our understanding of the causes of food poverty, as well as what is required to address it in a meaningful way.





# Zayaan Khan

Food Activist  
Theme: Food and Culture

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Zayaan Khan is a food activist, seed librarian and a community-driven leader. She holds a NDip landscape, a BTech horticulture and is working towards a Master's in environmental humanities at the University of Cape Town. Zayaan has been working within food, land and seed for over a decade, from cultivation, socio-political contexts, environmental consciousness, systemic natures, spiritual, political, to indigenous knowledge as inherent markers for transformative systems.

## Cape Town's food culture/s

Often regarded as a veritable food haven, Cape Town is known for a strong 'Malay' influence that is unique to the city, but also a rich multi-cultural heritage that heavily influences its cuisines where flavours, styles and techniques are fused. The unique biodiversity in and around Cape Town also provides food plants and flavours found nowhere else. But food cultures can also segregate and divide people further in an already divided city, while efforts to share across cultures can become appropriation and further reinforce structural inequities. Is it possible – or desirable – to have a shared food culture in Cape Town? How has the pandemic revealed the contours of food culture/s in Cape Town, and what must we understand and do differently as we return to a post-pandemic food experience in our lives?



# Miles Kubheka

Founder and CEO, Vuyos Restaurant,  
Wakanda Food Accelerator  
Theme: Food and Economics

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Miles is an entrepreneur, keynote speaker and author, and the poster child for the audacity of hope. Having once been employed by a leading multinational, he went out on a limb and ingeniously created a restaurant with the same name and branding as a fictional restaurant portrayed in a famous Vuyo 'beeg beeg dreamer' TV ad campaign. In doing so, he catapulted into media stardom, and soon translated his innovative thinking into entrepreneurial success. He went on to found a food Accelerator called Wakanda.

## The food business model as a force for good

Amidst the many benefits derived from the South African food system, it still has negative social and environmental implications, and has revealed itself to be badly positioned to adapt to crisis. But what if the food system could change to be more sustainable and beneficial for everyone? Some social entrepreneurs are already perceiving how the food system can ensure the supply of safe, healthy food with valuable social benefits and low environmental impacts. Is this the future of our food system?





## Tracy Ledger

Researcher, Public Affairs Research Institute,  
University of the Witwatersrand

Theme: Food and Economics

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Tracy has degrees in economics and agricultural economics from the University of the Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch University, and a PhD in Anthropology from the University of the Witwatersrand. She is currently a senior researcher at the Public Affairs Research Institute, which is affiliated with Wits. She has undertaken extensive research around local government, focusing on the drivers of institutional performance and, mostly, on the drivers of poor institutional performance.

### Who controls what? The political economy of our food system

It is said that if you really want to understand something, you must follow the money. Who owns what in our food system, and where does the money go? If we can understand the power relations among different food system actors we can start to make sense of the implications. How has the pandemic revealed the links between ownership, profit, hunger and disease? What have those with power and money done in response to the pandemic, and how might this change their relationships with society beyond consumerism into the future?



## Gray Maguire

Green Economy Coordinator,  
Department of Environmental Affairs  
& Development Planning,  
Western Cape Government

Theme: Food and Crisis

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Gray has a post-graduate diploma in Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies from the University of the Western Cape and was a team member on the Western Cape Provincial Disaster Management response food security task team for the Covid-19 crises. He was the originator of the food waste diversion programme as well as the CoCare Voucher – Food Voucher system.

### How crisis impacts our food system

Our food system is based on effective links to a global system of supply, finance, processing and distribution. When disrupted by a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, the system starts to break down in numerous ways. It also morphs over the duration of the pandemic and lockdown, as various role-players respond in their own ways. Unanticipated problems lead to unexpected consequences, which are even more challenging in cities like Cape Town, where the informal parts of our food system play such an essential role.





## Rirhandzu Marivate

Project Manager, Living Soils  
Community Learning Farm

Theme: Food Politics

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Rirhandzu Marivate is the project manager for the Living Soils Community Learning Farm, that is situated in the Lynedoch Valley, Stellenbosch. The learning farm is a collaborative pilot project between partners Woolworths, Spier and the Sustainability Institute (SI) launched in March 2019 that grows vegetables using ecologically-regenerative farming methods. The project helps address issues of local food insecurity by contributing to feeding 200 vulnerable children that attend various SI educational programmes, through their feeding scheme, as well as at-risk families in the Lynedoch Valley while providing a training platform for young farmers of colour from the local Stellenbosch community.

### Food, farming and nutrition in the curriculum

The existence of malnutrition in South Africa, where obesity and stunting co-exist in the same spaces, is a result of multiple factors, one of which is the lack of meaningful education around nutrition and healthy eating habits. People are also not taught the basics of food cultivation and so remain cut off from food production and dependent on commercial retailers and traders to supply them with whatever is profitable and convenient to sell. How can individuals engage with their communities and have agency in facing these real-world problems? What is the role of schools, and how can food be incorporated in the curriculum in such a way that it encourages a holistic understanding of food systems, as well as a hands-on approach to issues in communities?



## Zandile Mchiza

Associate Professor, School of Public Health,  
University of the Western Cape

Theme: Food and Health

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Zandile is Associate Professor at the School of Public Health (SOPH) at the University of the Western Cape. Her research area sketches the scope, extent and determinants of metabolic diseases in South Africa. Her specific areas of focus are obesity, hypertension and diabetes, and the unmet need for response to these health conditions in the country. At SOPH she convenes the Descriptive Epidemiology, and the Epidemiology of Non-Communicable Disease Modules.

### Risk, non-communicable diseases and ultra-processed food

Ultra-processed foods are pervasive in Cape Town diets: cold drinks, fast food burgers, chips, chocolate bars, breakfast cereals and more. These are known to increase the risk of chronic non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. But they are also highly profitable, marketed aggressively and distributed – and eaten – widely. How might reducing the dietary share of ultra-processed foods improve the nutritional quality of diets, health and well-being? What will it take to make this happen? What has the pandemic revealed about our food choices during crisis and what can this tell us about a way forward?





## Chuma Mgcoyi

Food Activist,  
Erf 81 "The Farm" / Tyisa Nabanye  
Theme: Food Politics

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Chuma is a food activist who wants to build sustainable livelihoods within the community that she currently resides in. She currently hopes to contribute to building food sovereignty within the city, through actively being part of local movements such as the SA Food Sovereignty Campaign which is part of alliances like La Via Campesina globally and with other partners. In response to the COVID19 pandemic, Chuma helped to initiate a Community Action Network (CAN) group in her community.

### Find, make, use: Food, shelter and safety in the city

Access to affordable living space is a challenge in many cities, and very hard in Cape Town where levels of inequality are among the worst in the world. Where marginal spaces are found, the legal and practical realities make any living arrangement risky and insecure. Using space to grow food becomes untenable, even where healthy soil and access to sunlight can be found. How do the under-resourced residents find their way to healthy food, secure shelter and safe spaces in such a city? And what resources can they draw on in the face of a crisis like COVID-19? What creative solutions and innovations have we overlooked that might point the way to a different post-crisis future?



## Mpumelelo Ncwadi

Managing Director,  
Foregone Conclusions NPC  
Theme: Food and Culture

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Mpumelelo is a professional adaptive grazing instructor as well as founder and managing director of Foregone Conclusions NPC. He is an advocate for regenerative farming and meat from grass / veld raised livestock.

### Decolonising food

Like all aspects of South African society, our food has been strongly shaped by our colonial history, the effects of which persist strongly in the present. How do we understand these influences and the forces that sustain them so we can make more conscious choices about our food that does not reinforce the inequalities within our society, and to highlight business, brands and institutions that sustain the status quo? How do we make sense of colonial staples that now characterise our food, like mealies and madumbes? What happens when predominantly Western-shaped food cultures adopt traditionally local ingredients and food practices? What might a decolonised food system look like?





# Sheryl Ozinsky

Proprietor and Trustee,  
Oranjezicht City Farm Market and  
the SA Urban Food & Farming Trust  
Theme: Food and Economics

 [Listen to the talk](#)

A born and bred Capetonian, Sheryl Ozinsky was the Manager of Cape Town Tourism but never took a holiday. A true local, she swears like a bergie and thinks the southeaster a mere breeze. Sheryl is passionate about the choices that support a more just and resilient food system and is one of the founders of the Oranjezicht City Farm and Market Day. She is also a founding Trustee of the SA Urban Food & Farming Trust.

## Food Retail: Realities, futures and fictions

Food retail is evolving dramatically and is one of the fastest growing segments in retail in South Africa. The accelerating changes have been influenced by the changing character and preferences of consumers, but greater forces of pandemic, lockdown, fear and uncertainty have taken hold. Business models are being upended, disrupted, reimagined. Home deliveries. Online purchasing. Outdoor markets. Local sourcing. Hygiene protocols. Change has been profound and unprecedented in speed. What is the state of food retail? What should retailers do? How can they contribute towards ensuring a sustainable food system while staying in business themselves? What can consumers do during and after the pandemic?



# Thandi Puoane

Emeritus Professor, School of Public Health,  
University of the Western Cape  
Theme: Food and Health

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Thandi Puoane is a Professor Emeritus at the School of Public Health, University of the Western Cape. Her research areas include nutrition, obesity and risk factors for chronic non-communicable diseases, including consumer behaviours in response to the food environment. She has experience in working with Community Health Workers in development and implementing community-based interventions for prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

## Food, health and co-morbidity with infectious disease

Cape Town's population is heavily burdened with communicable diseases, especially TB and HIV/AIDS. Most people living with these diseases are at high risk of co-morbidity of non-communicable diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer. The COVID-19 pandemic amplified and highlighted the risks of such co-morbidity. In what ways can a nutritious balanced diet affect the quality of life of people living with non-communicable diseases, with infectious diseases and with both, as well as contribute to the general well-being of any individual? How might changes in our food system to improve access to more healthy food by more people change our public health profile in Cape Town?





# Beatrice Rabkin

Nutritionist and Reproductive Health Educator,  
Hormonal Harmony

Theme: Food and Health

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Beatrice Rabkin has a BSc in Nutritional Medicine and Dip Pharmacy and is a Fertility Awareness and Reproductive Health Educator. Beatrice educates couples in the use of natural birth control methods and preparing for pregnancy – the all-important task of creating healthy babies naturally. Beatrice is passionate about promoting the eating of real, uncontaminated, whole and nutritionally dense foods.

## Healing through food: Growing, cooking, eating

The health benefits from eating well are only one part of the way we impact our health and well-being through food. How we source our food can be stressful, empowering, or nurturing. How we cook and prepare food can be affirming, alienating or dangerous. And how we eat can be harmful, calming or inspiring. During the pandemic and lockdown our ways of sourcing, cooking and eating food have been disrupted, in addition to what the food itself might be that we are eating, and whether it is enough to ward off hunger. What does crisis tell us about our approach to food that can help us be healthy in a more holistic way both during and after the pandemic?



# Lindelani Errol Sibisi

General Secretary, United Khayelitsha  
Informal Traders' Association

Theme: Food and Economics

 [Listen to the talk](#)

Lindelani Errol Sibisi is presently the General Secretary of the United Khayelitsha Informal Traders' Association. Lindelani is also a Certified Supply Chain Management (SCM) Management Professional, and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries South Africa with SCM management experience. Lindelani has consultancy expertise in Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) through a company that he co-founded in 2005 – Kbonga BEE Verifications Agency, where he occupied the position of Operations Director.

## In/Formal food economy

The South African food system is made up of both the formal and the informal food sector, with established linkages between them. What is the scope and scale of these two sectors? And what is the nature of their relationship or interdependencies? How has this been revealed by the pandemic, and what will the future bring to these interlinked and often misunderstood parts of our food system?



# Event Schedule

## Pre-recorded talks:

**Food System Overview** - Monday 20 July 13h00

- **Understanding Cape Town's Food System: Facts, figures, flows.**  
*Prof Jane Battersby, African Centre for Cities (UCT)*

**Food and Crisis** - Monday 27 July 09h00

- **How crisis impacts our food system.**  
*Gray Maguire, Western Cape Government*
- **Farming in a crisis: the case of smallholder farms.**  
*Veronica Baleni, Bhukula Farming Cooperative*
- **A window of opportunity: Connecting immediate responses around the Covid-19 food crisis to long-term food systems change.**  
*Andrew Borraine, Western Cape Economic Development Partnership*

**Food Politics** - Tuesday 28 July 09h00

- **The constitutional right to food.**  
*Funmilola Adeniyi, Dullah Omar Institute - UWC*
- **Rethinking the roots of food poverty: Broken history, broken food system.**  
*Dr Gareth Haysom, African Centre for Cities (UCT)*
- **Women, food and power.**  
*Henriette Abrahams, Bonteheuvel Community Forum*
- **Food, farming and nutrition in the curriculum.**  
*Rirhandzu Marivate, Sustainability Institute*
- **Find, make, use. Food, shelter and safety in the city.**  
*Chuma Mgcoyi, Tyisa Nabanye*

**Food and Health** - Wednesday 29 July 09h00

- **Food, health and co-morbidity with infectious disease.**  
*Prof Thandi Puoane, UWC (ret.)*
- **Health impacts of our food system: first 1000 days.**  
*Prof Lisanne du Plessis, Stellenbosch University*
- **Risk, non-communicable diseases and ultra-processed food.**  
*Dr Zandile Mchiza, School of Public Health UWC*
- **Nourishing our humanity: health beyond our selves and our bodies.**  
*Monwabisi Dyantyi, The Warehouse*
- **Healing through food: growing, cooking, eating.**  
*Beatrice Rabkin, Nutritionist*

**Food and Culture** - Thursday 30 July 09h00

- **Cape Town's food culture/s.**  
*Zayaan Khan, Food Activist*
- **Decolonising food.**  
*Mpumelelo Ncwadi, Foregone Conclusions NPC*
- **Urban Foodscapes - how food changes people's social behaviour.**  
*Prof Jane Battersby, African Centre for Cities (UCT)*
- **Urban agriculture and the food commons.**  
*Xolisa Bangani, Slow Food Youth Network and Ikhyaya Gardens*
- **Hungry souls: From feeding to sacramental dining.**  
*Angelo Fick, Auwal Socio-Economic Research Institute*

**Food and Economics** - Friday 31 July 09h00

- **Food Retail: Realities, futures and fictions.**  
*Sheryl Ozinsky, OZCF Market*
- **Making food, making money, doing good.**  
*Miles Kubheka, Vuyo's*
- **In/Formal food economy**  
*Thozama Gwente, Cape Town Informal Traders Association*
- **Who owns/controls what? The political economy of our food system.**  
*Dr Tracey Ledger, Public Affairs Research Institute; author "An Empty Plate"*
- **Food, investment and innovation: failures and futures.**  
*Dr Reena das Nair, University of Johannesburg*

## Panel Discussions: Moderated, live-streamed and interactive

**Food and Crisis** - Monday 10 August 15h00

Theme Moderator: *Leonie Joubert, Science Writer and Journalist*

**Food Politics** - Tuesday 11 August 15h00

Theme Moderator: *Florian Kroll, DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security*

**Food and Health** - Wednesday 12 August 15h00

Theme Moderator: *Yolanda Busbee, Prosperity Food/Bee There Do That Podcast*

**Food and Culture** - Thursday 13 August 15h00

Theme Moderator: *Ishay Govender-Ypma, Food Journalist/ People of Colour at the Table*

**Food and Economics** - Friday 14 August 15h00

Theme Moderator: *Ellen Fischat, Oribi Village*

“Food Dialogues is a way to share our stories, to discuss our hopes and fears, and to imagine better ways to not just feed, but to nourish ourselves, our families and our communities.”

Kurt Ackermann, Executive Manager,  
SA Urban Food & Farming Trust



# Glossary

Co-morbidity	The presence of two or more diseases in one patient, pathogenetically related to each other or coexisting independent of each disease's activity in the patient.	Food sovereignty	The right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. Food sovereignty promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production.
Coronavirus	A coronavirus is a kind of common virus, many of which cause an infection in the nose, sinuses, or upper throat of people. In 2019, SARS-CoV-2 was identified as a new type of coronavirus. The outbreak of this virus, which causes the disease COVID-19, quickly spread around the world.	Food security	A situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.
COVID-19 pandemic	The sudden and rapid global outbreak of the newly discovered coronavirus disease, COVID-19, causing widespread health and socio-economic crises.	Food system	A food system encompasses all the elements and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, as well as the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes.
Dead food	Highly processed, refined foods with little to no nutritional value but significant amounts of calories, and usually contain artificial / synthetic preservatives, colourants and flavour.	Fynbos	A highly biodiverse region of natural shrubland endemic to the Western Cape and Eastern Cape in South Africa
Digitalisation	Incorporating digital technologies and digitisation into business and society.	Genetically modified	Describes an organism with DNA that has been altered in a way that does not happen naturally through reproduction. Genes are selected and transferred via human technology from one organism to another to confer favourable traits, such as resistance to herbicides or higher yield of produce.
Essential service	Services, which, if interrupted, would endanger the life, health or personal safety of the whole or part of the population. In the context of the COVID-19 response, essential service providers were permitted by the government to operate during lockdown.	Inter-generational disenfranchisement	The deprivation of the rights of citizenship and the effects of the unresolved harm caused by such deprivation that have been transmitted from one generation to the next.
Foetal complications	An unfavourable medical condition or event experienced by a foetus during pregnancy or after birth as a result of the mother's environment and state of health.	Lifestyle-related diseases	A way of characterising non-communicable and chronic diseases that links them to risk factors associated with sedentary lifestyles (e.g., smoking, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity), thereby shifting responsibility for the illness away from structural, societal or systemic causes to the actions and choices of the individual.
Food democracy	A system of food governance that emphasises the fulfilment of the right to safe, nutritious and justly-produced food, in which decision-making power and authority vests in the ordinary people who produce, distribute and consume food rather than in the profit-driven marketplace.		



# Glossary

Malnutrition	Deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients. This includes undernutrition (wasting, stunting, underweight), inadequate vitamins or minerals, overweight, obesity, and resulting diet-related noncommunicable diseases.	Stunting	A form of malnutrition where height is low for age and is related to an underdeveloped brain, leading to diminished learning capacity and cognitive ability. Stunting is caused by chronic or recurrent undernutrition in early life and is usually associated with poor socioeconomic conditions.
Non-communicable disease	Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), also known as chronic diseases, are of long duration and are caused by a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behaviours factors. Cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are the most common NCDs.	Subsistence farmer	A person who grows crops or raises livestock with relatively little labour, yielding produce sufficient only for their own use, without any surplus for trade.
Platform fee	The money paid to use digital platforms which facilitate connections and interactions across a large number of participants for long- or short-term consumer-to-consumer and business-to-business sales.	Supply chain	A series of activities and networks between suppliers and businesses for the production and distribution of products to consumers.
Silo	In a business or departmental context, siloing occurs when departments or sectors operating in the same institution are isolated from one another and do not share information or resources as they should.	Transmission hotspots	Geographical areas with high rates of infection, where efficiency of transmission of disease is elevated and risk of contracting an infectious disease is noticeably higher than in other areas.
Social capital	The benefits derived from participating in social relationships and networks of relationships with others who share social norms and structures.	Urban agriculture	Food cultivation, usually occurring on a small scale within the urban (and sometimes peri-urban) regions of cities.
Social compact	A social order which brings labour, government and businesses into agreement and aligned action for effective and legitimate functioning of the state.	Urban food-scape	A social metaphor relating to the geographical spaces within cities where food is produced, consumed and assigned cultural meaning.
Structural racism	Structural racism normalises white dominance and superiority, by perpetuating social norms, standards and rules which favour and privilege white Western ways of being in the world and perpetuate inequalities in power, access, opportunities, and treatment against all black people regardless of their class, educational background or social status.	Value chain	The chain of activities which add value to create a product or deliver a service in order to generate profit by exceeding the cost of the materials and the cost of the activities.
		Wasted	A form of malnutrition: low weight-for-height. It usually indicates rapid and severe weight loss, because a child has not had enough food to eat. A child who is moderately or severely wasted has an increased chance of death.



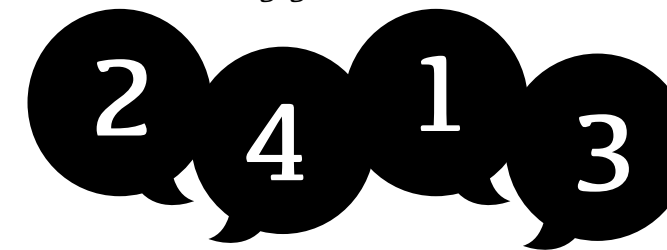


## Food Dialogues: Cape Town 2020

### The Event by the Numbers

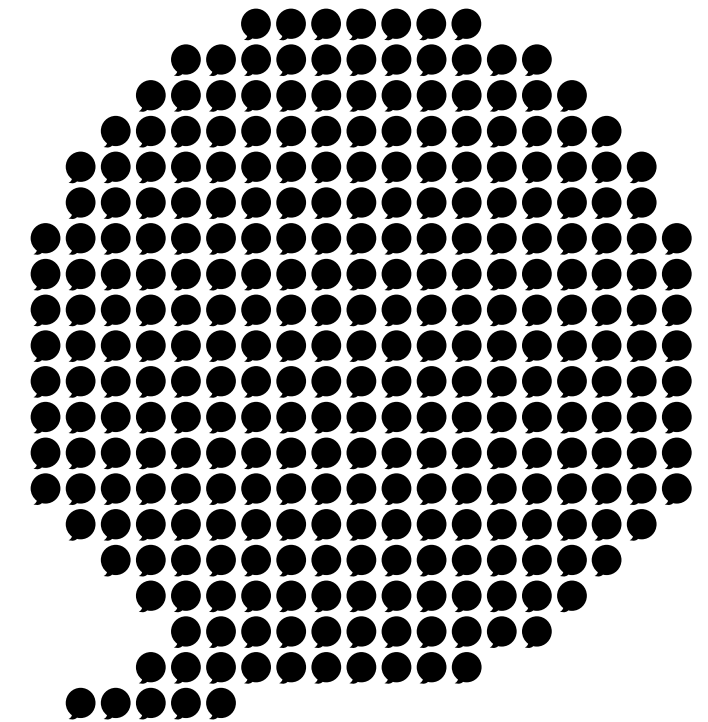
The Food Dialogues Report captures and weaves together essential elements of the Food Dialogues event itself, which took place over three weeks from 20 July - 14 August 2020. Here are some of the numbers that help tell the story of that event as it happened from start to finish.

Total Engagement:

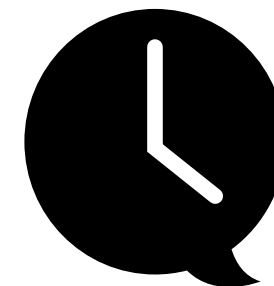


Total registered attendees:

892



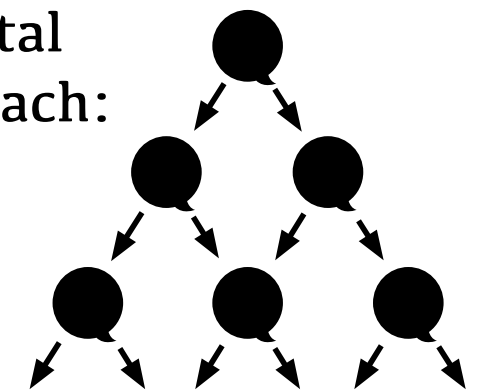
Content recorded:  
16 hrs, 08mins



Talks and panels  
recorded:



Total  
Reach:



▶ Total talks  
registered for: 8100

79 915



# Acknowledgements

The Food Dialogues Cape Town 2020 Event and the production of the Food Dialogues Report could not have been possible without the support of a great many people and organisations. While funding is, of course, essential, the many other contributions of ideas, resources and time are equally important. For example, without the more than 1 300 hours donated by our speakers, moderators, event support team and others, the Food Dialogues simply would not have happened. We also are grateful for the 892 registered attendees of the Food Dialogues from 60 countries who signed up to watch and engage in dialogue with a cumulative 8 100 talks and panel discussions.

The South African Urban Food and Farming Trust would like to acknowledge the following for their contributions:

## Speakers and Moderators

Henriette Abrahams, Funmilola Adeniyi, Veronica Baleni, Xolisa Bangani, Jane Battersby, Andrew Boraïne, Reena das Nair, Lianne du Plessis, Monwabisi Dyantyi, Angelo Fick, Ellen Fischat, Ishay Govender-Ypma, Gareth Haysom, Leonie Joubert, Zayaan Khan, Florian Kroll, Miles Kubheka, Tracy Ledger, Gray Maguire, Rirhandzu Marivate, Zandile Mchiza, Yolanda Busbee Methvin, Chuma Mgcayi, Mpumelelo Ncwadi, Sheryl Ozinsky, Thandi Puoane, Beatrice Rabkin, and Lindelani Errol Sibisi.

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Sincere apologies for any oversight or omission of contributors who helped to make Food Dialogues Cape Town 2020 and the Food Dialogues Report possible.

