

A National Perspective on Household Food and Nutrition Security

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Food and nutrition security & government priorities

- Government objective to halve unemployment and poverty by 2014
- Food and nutrition security for all is foundational goal.
 - Fundamental building block for human participation
 - Unlike many other poverty reduction interventions, food and water are essential to life
 - Nutrition is key foundation that influence effectiveness of other interventions

Background to our work

- Food and nutrition security are key concern of government, and stated as one of top priorities
- Although food insecurity has fallen dramatically, there is widespread and deep nutrition insecurity.
 - It is much more significant than many realise
 - Its character is not what many think
- HSRC programme of work, Phase 1, explored the character of HH food & nutrition security. The objective is to explore how govt can be supported to dramatically deepen action to more rapidly address this challenge

Recent Agrekon Special Edition

- First set of articles scopes the status of food security
 - Tim Hart - challenges of diverse understandings underpinning the concepts of food insecurity and vulnerability.
 - Michael Aliber – shows what the official data can say about food expenditure and hunger – esp GHS and IES
 - Peter Jacobs - explores what different data sources reveal about the access households have to a nutritionally adequate diet.
- The second set of articles considers the possible role that smallholder production might play in addressing food insecurity in South Africa. This is an unusual question in the context of a middle income country. Small holder and particularly subsistence producers have largely been neglected by South African policy makers. The authors explore whether there might be untapped potential to support livelihoods of low income households.
 - Michael Aliber and Tim Hart - small holder production contribution to food security in South Africa. They raise concerns about weak policy attention to existing small producers and the complexities involved in supporting them. Use national data, plus Limpopo case study
 - Mompoti Baiphethi and Peter Jacobs - links between small holder production, market access and food security.
 - Innocent Matshe - regional experiences in promoting small holder production in sub-Saharan Africa and identifies a number of important lessons.

Characteristics of food and nutrition insecurity in SA

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HH food insecurity has fallen dramatically

- Household food insecurity, or hunger, has fallen dramatically since 2001. According to the GHS:
 - In 2002, 20% of children and 25% adults said that they were hungry 'sometimes', 'often' or 'always'.
 - By 2007, 12.2% of children and 10.6% of adults said they were hungry
- This seems to largely be explained by the expansion of social grants
- Some reversal in these gains is probable in the context of the economic downturn, with the loss of 770,000 jobs

Deeper analysis shows that improvements are not so dramatic

- The National Food Consumption Survey (NFCS, 2005) found that:
 - 52% of the population are hungry
 - 33% are at risk of being hungry
 - only 20% of the SA population are food secure
- Our team has been grappling with why this picture is so different to that of the official GHS
- Challenge = NFCS is much smaller sample (2,980) and is not official data.
- The gap between the GHS and the NFCS may be explained by the difference in the experience of hunger, and of under-nutrition.
 - The GHS asks: are you hungry? (although this has changed)
 - The NFCS asks about food items consumed. Many poor households mainly consume low nutrient starches so they feel full. But there is a high prevalence of under-nutrition. People do not easily link their under-nutrition with their experience of being tired or ill.

Household food and nutrition security

- We brought together economists and nutritionists to work out a common ground
- Our question = what % of the population could access a balanced nutritious diet if they so desired?
 - Step 1 = identify **minimum** nutritious food basket and what it would cost (R262 pp pm at 2005 prices)
 - Step 2 = review IES and other sources to identify household income and total expenditures, the % spent on food vs other items (35% to 70%)
 - Step 3 = peer review
 - We assume people are perfectly rational. That is, they don't waste any money, and have perfect knowledge of what a low cost balanced diet would contain.
- Under these conditions, we found that:
 - 50% to 80% of households could not afford an acceptable nutritional balance, based on current prices and levels of fortification
 - Only 20% of households can afford a minimum nutritionally adequate diet.
- This more closely relates to the NFCS findings

Please see article by Jacobs in Agrekon journal circulated

Nutrition levels have not improved that much....

- Although child hunger has fallen dramatically, indicators of under-nutrition have not noticeably improved
 - Stunting (inadequate growth in height) affects 1 out of 5 children, and improved marginally between 1999 and 2005. This is sign of chronic malnutrition.
 - 1 in 10 children was underweight for height in 2005. There are signs of rising “wasting”, which is indicator of transitory food insecurity.
- Average South African **consumes less than 4 of 9 food groups** – min should be 6
- Although there are fortification programmes, micro-nutrient count not as effective as it needs to be:
 - Nationally **45% of children had an inadequate zinc status** (NFCS, 2005)
 - **One quarter of women, and 2/3 children nationally had poor vitamin A status**
 - About a **third of women and children iron deficient**
 - Under-nutrition is critical issue viz SA women, where approximately 1/3 of young women are HIV+

Food insecurity – chronic & transitory

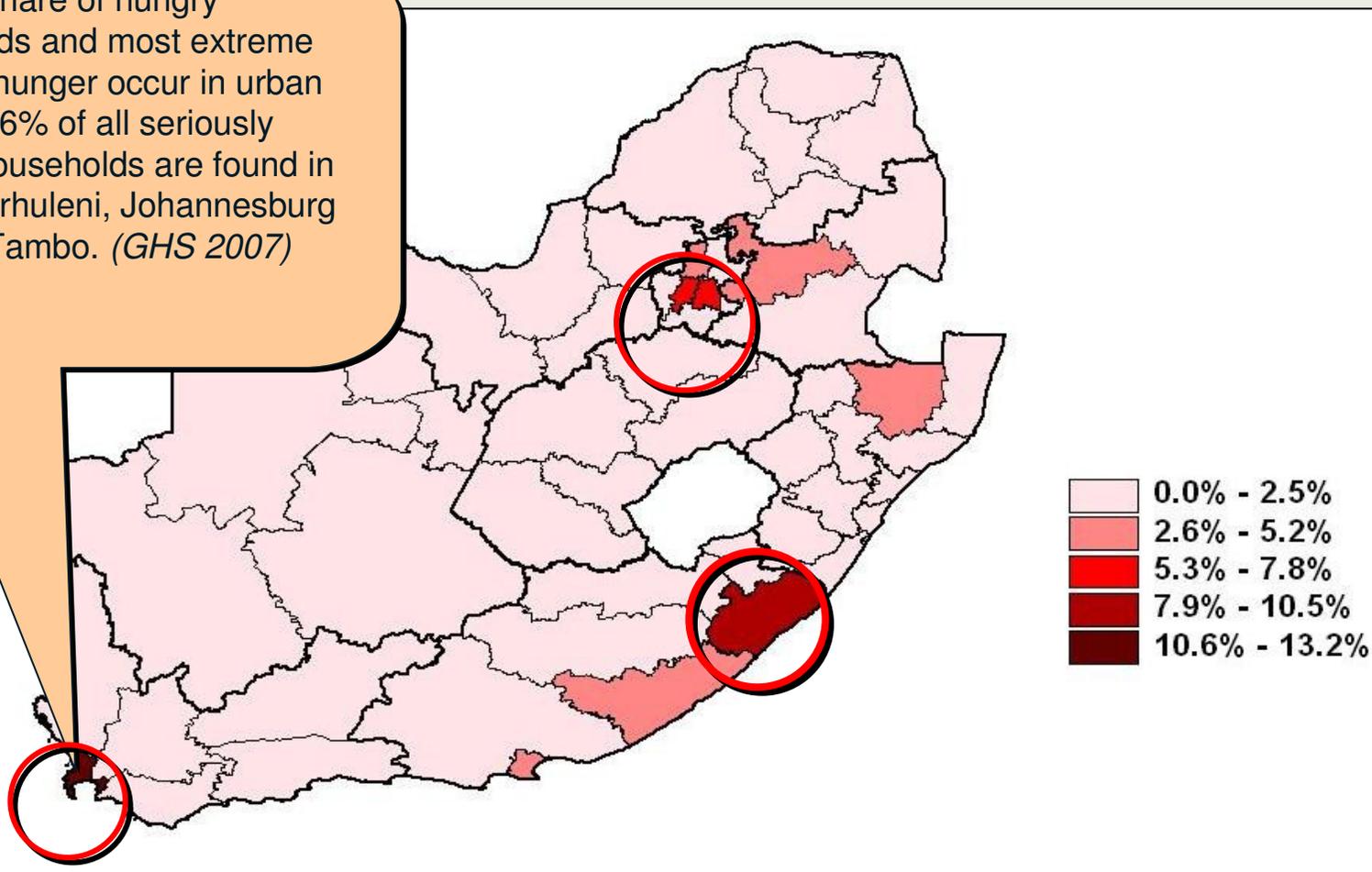
- Food insecurity can be experienced as chronic and/or transitory
- Either can be very serious
- Many households move in and out of hunger and nutrition security
 - Often depends on changes in number of dependents, access to grants, presence of wage earner
 - But also market pricing (such as food price shocks)

Food and nutritional insecurity is a *national* challenge, not only rural

- Food security is currently located in the M&E outcome #7 focusing on rural livelihoods
- Although there are health and education sector programmes aimed at improving nutrition, there is no mention in their M&E targets
 - Exception =
 - Rural dev target = food & nutrition surveillance unit in Nutrition Directorate
 - “1 meal per day in primary schools”
- Food & nutrition security is objective for the population
- Strong evidence of deep hunger in urban areas, not only rural ones. The reasons and dynamics might differ

Hunger in the metros

Highest share of hungry households and most extreme levels of hunger occur in urban metros. 36% of all seriously hungry households are found in CT, Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and OR Tambo. (GHS 2007)



Special rural dimensions

- Among the poorest half of households (i.e. those for whom monthly household income is less than R2000), rural households spend about 15% less on food per capita than urban households (esp less on meat).
- This might be explained by own food production but there is no reliable evidence available to show this.
- Rural households pay *10%-20%* more for a basket of basic foodstuffs than urban ones (NAMC).

Spatial focus?

- Policies that focus on poverty nodes might not reach the largest numbers of food insecure (who often live in metros)
- The location of food insecure may change over time.
- Over 50% of seriously hungry people could be reached by focusing on 3 densely populated areas + 5 other district municipalities (mostly in same vicinity)
- But under-nutrition requires national “floor”

Potential contribution of home production

- Approximately 2.5 million households (4 million people) produce extra food for own consumption – primarily in the former homelands
- Although 1/5 of all black households are involved in some home production, a large % are located in former homelands. 1/4 of all black subsistence farmers located in Vhembe, OR Tambo and Amathole municipalities
- About 1.9m subsistence producers are aged 15 – 29.
- Contribution of home production to HH food security varies considerably. Not all households that home produce are food secure.

Ensuring affordable food at stable prices

- The poorest 40% of households allocate at least 35% of their spending to food, and some estimate this might be as high as 70%. These households need protection from rapid food inflation
- Since 2007, food prices started increasing very steeply, explained by various factors:
 - Competition along the agro-food value chains (Competition Commission investigations: Tiger Brands (bread), dairy prices, supermarkets, etc)
 - Exchange rate depreciation: Small economies reliant on food imports are vulnerable to exchange rate depreciation (this makes imported foods more expensive)
 - Input costs: fertilizer costs, packaging, wage costs
- Why is it difficult for the poor to access a nutritious basket?
 - Healthier foods could cost 9%-12% more than similar less healthy foods
 - Poor buy in smaller quantities, and therefore higher unit prices
 - Retail is often local monopoly
 - Food prices not falling as they should
- Why are prices higher in rural areas? This is not known for certain, but we can guess that partly explained by:
 - structure of distribution and retail
 - grown in rural areas, processed in urban areas, and transported back
 - transportation costs generally and poor rural infrastructure

Policy Implications

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Institutional home

- National or provincial?
- Which national depts have budgeted mandates for key aspects of FS solution?
- Orientation of M&E targets in relation to desired result

Intervention options

- Social grants
- Food grants
- Reduce cost of food that people buy (market interventions, retail, competition policy)
- Improve the quality of food that people buy, often through industry regulation or product development that enhances current foods
- Alter household demand toward more nutritious combinations; develop new nutritious products; offer supplements
- Promote home production
- Monitoring and evaluation of programmes (eg do companies fortify when regulated?) and outcomes (eg did nutrition levels rise?)

Given scale of the challenge, identify interventions that are low cost, high impact ideally with short to medium term horizon

Social grants support food security & stability

- Approx 13 million people benefit from various social welfare grants- including 8.7 million children (2009)
- Social grant incomes protect the recipients against hunger: it helps households to afford a basic and stable level of nutrition
- 51% of all *hungry* households in 2007 were eligible for grants but did not receive it
 - Of this, 2/3 receive some grants but qualify for additional money
 - 1/3 receive zero grant although they qualify for it
- Grants will/can have more impact:
 - Improve reach (eg through birth registrations)
 - eligibility age of child grant recipients rises to age 18

Food fortification & supplements

- Food fortification can enhance the nutrient content and reduce the overall cost to the consumer of procuring a nutritious diet.
- Potentially, an immediate, high-impact and fairly low-cost intervention
- The following foods are fortified by law:
 - Bread White bread; Wheat flour; Maize fortified with *vitamin A*
- All children under 6 and mothers are meant to receive vit A tablets at cost of 3c each, but reaching only 20%
- Uneven impact to date:
 - Success with folic acid
 - No improvement in vitamin A or zinc – reasons need to be established

Product development

- New products can support aim to improve nutrients in food purchased.
- These can be stand-alone (eg Pro Nutro)
- ...or products that can be added (eg 'sprinkles')
- Govt can play role in simulating private or public R&D, product development and marketing

Food prices

- Reducing and stabilising food prices for poor households will be essential in the long run
- Competition commission has made inroads to anti-competitive behaviour
- However, a strategic set of interventions required

Monitoring and evaluation

- Regularised monitoring and evaluation systems are essential
- These need to monitor:
 - Programme implementation
 - Market dynamics
 - Nutrition outcomes
- High cost implies that creative approaches are needed
- Coordinated budget needed

Way Forward

- Food and nutrition security needs to be a higher priority
- National approach and institutional home needed to meeting food security targets as laid out in M&E framework
- Clear link in budget and programmes made in relation to meeting targets
- Review of division of competencies across spheres of govt to ensure minimum delivery
- Need more forceful immediate interventions (egs)
 - Grants to those who qualify
 - Modification to fortification & supplements programme
 - Market interventions where appropriate to fortify and ensure stable affordable prices
 - Monitoring and evaluation of implementation and outcomes
- More forceful approach to longer term interventions
- Food and nutrition security roadmap