



Report: Western Cape Food Forum

25 March 2021

1. Introduction

The Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) convened a Zoom call on 25 March 2021, the anniversary week of the first hard lockdown. The chairperson noted that the future is still uncertain between the impending third and fourth waves of the virus and the vaccine rollout, and that the social, economic and emotional impact of pandemic is more apparent than ever before. He thanked all members for their continued dedication to food relief in poor and vulnerable areas, and for their interest in transitioning to a more sustainable food system with better nutritional outcomes.

2. IPC Acute Food Insecurity Report and food needs on the ground

This [report](#) provides a classification for understanding food insecurity as an input for decision-making, shows that it's not a one-size-fits-all intervention to deal with food insecurity and poor nutritional outcomes, and that there can be differing approaches over a continuum.

The report shows trends towards increasing food insecurity in South Africa, including Western Cape (increase from 16% to 18% in "crisis" category between Q4 in 2020 and Q1 in 2021) but if you add in people in the "stressed" category, the figure for Western Cape goes up to **59%**. This raises the question - how do we intervene to stop people in the "stressed" category from tipping over into "crisis" or "emergency"? Especially in urban areas where the risk is higher? Dealing with food insecurity therefore calls for economic interventions to defend jobs, incomes, small businesses and informal livelihoods, and not just social interventions around food relief.

The report's recommendations for action are similar to the actions of the Food Forum, with a strong emphasis on building community circular economies beyond food aid, cross-cutting and integrated approaches to building resilience, agricultural production at all scales at all areas, enhancing nutritional outcomes, as well as improving the data.

Feedback:

- EDP put out a call for referrals for 60 kitchens not getting funding from government to receive DGMT funding and received 500+ nominations in the metro area alone, which is an indication of the level of need and crisis.
- Matilda Tsitsi Fazaki (Masiphumelele Kitchen) – have been struggling since beginning of new year, most donors and CANs are struggling to get funding, vouchers have really helped to keep kitchens going, but still struggling with getting gas for cooking. The need has increased this year from last year, this year it's more difficult for everyone. Last year the kitchen was focused on supporting children, this year it's adults coming which shows high rate of unemployment.
- Pamela Silwana (Gugulethu CAN)– January to now, there has been an increase of people coming to the lines. VPUU co-care vouchers have let the kitchens breath a bit, only problem is that people come in the evening asking for leftovers but kitchens can't stretch that far to spread to dinner. There's more people in SASSA lines as well, from 4am until evening, asked if they were eating and brought soup/bread to them.
- Kurt Ackermann (SA Urban Food & Farming Trust) – one site in Langa has been running a community kitchen for 20 years, insights from the AGM last week – the toll that civil society organisations have suffered during pandemic has eroded capacity to continue emergency food relief, it will continue to grind down over time, e.g., lost the co-founder and director to COVID, the chair lost her twin daughters, the struggle and trauma of keeping going is hard enough, much less than the personal losses and loss of knowledge and relationships. The DSD rep was at the AGM as a show of solidarity but was warning about letting compliance slip, e.g., paying EPWP with disruptions from DSD payments, need to think about capacity, interventions, support that are required to keep communities from going under.
- Erica Inches (CTT Food Growers Initiative) – did quick survey of CANs before the Food Forum meeting to obtain general message from the ground, 'it's not pretty':
 - Collapse of donors have made this quarter worse than projections, as far as jobs go – employers are taking advantage and offering below breadline wages.
 - Helderberg has had two weeks with no donors and kitchens, numbers back at August 2020 level.
 - Khayelitsha is forming a collective to try find and share resources.
 - Observatory CAN kitchens are running out of funds.
 - Muizenberg CAN has had no activity for last two months, starting again by selling vegetable boxes.
 - Vrygrond has half the kitchens and days with more people and more adults joining the queues.
 - Lavender Hill has half the kitchen and days, more people, and people fighting in the queues.
 - Heideveld has half the days, more people.
 - Tafelsig is down to 12 kitchens with more people, garden in a box making a difference.
 - Durbanville CAN reports regarding soup kitchens in Fisantekraal: We had 24 soup kitchens operating in the area during last year. We are down to 10 that I am aware of excluding ECDs. Of those 80% of the soup kitchens report an increase in their lines since January. 20% say they have stayed the same. This is all around Fisantekraal and not just in 1 area.

- Bellville South: We had 9 kitchens and struggling to maintain 3 now who cook twice a week. Lines have increased tremendously and not only with children but also adults.
- Overall, community gardens are the least productive now - winter cropping is happening so it's bad timing with winter and third wave coming.
- Leigh Brown (SEED) – want to echo feedback and share a small spark of what's working; have government stipends for youth to learn resilience skills, being fed and stabilized for 6 months while they learn valuable skills (only R2500 a month but with meals and training) need to instil hope and pay people to get into this work. Wish there was more support for the CTT-FGI gardens with resources (like water tanks) so they don't drop off at the point when they're most needed.

Data partnership agreement

To date, it hasn't been sufficient transparency with regard to food relief data. Why is this data important? There needs to be a way to see whether the most vulnerable areas are getting access to food aid and to inform decision making e.g. how long can the current food aid be sustained? How do we plan for the future when public sector funding potentially dries up or is reduced, due to the fiscal crisis of the state?

The chairperson reported that there had been productive conversations the past few weeks with WCG and CoCT to get agreement on a food data partnership to start getting better food relief allocation and distribution data. The WCG Department of Social Development has already made their data available, and there is an agreement with CoCT to do the same. This becomes especially relevant given that private contributions from communities, CANs and businesses are way down.

Discussion:

- Kurt Ackermann - That ought to be a fundamental priority to get clarity on what government plans are for sustaining food aid.
- Leigh Brown- 100% agree with Kurt, we urgently need to plan our way to sustainable food resilience.
- Erica Inches- Civic society is tapped out and we heading into third wave with big numbers of need.
- The chairperson proposed the Food Forum support the WCG DSD with facts, data, and needs from the ground in order to be able to make the case for continued funding.
- Jawaya Shea (Dept. of Paediatrics at UCT) -in terms of child wellbeing at a community level, what is the role of FoodForward? NGOs have to pay FoodForward a monthly admin fee – was under the impression that in the pandemic DSD had engaged FoodForward to pay those fees. The chairperson stated that he would follow up this question with FoodForward bilaterally.

3. Consolidated report from Western Cape Food Forum Working Groups

The EDP has been working on a way for Forum and Working Group members to easily see who is in each working group and what the groups are working on, share a database of upcoming events, and share other relevant information within/across groups. The Working Group Google Drive is accessible here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CXKyluMH0-uzLUNxNbn3vCsZCNut6DI6?usp=sharing>

The “[events to share](#)” document is especially relevant to the broader Forum to share events and see what’s happening in different communities.

Once a month before the regular Food Forum meeting, the EDP will gather what's happening in the working groups to coordinate inputs/requests for the broader Forum. Once every three months, EDP will convene each working group separately to help the group to think through what their next activities will be and what relationships the group wants to build, and who they would like to engage with in carrying out identified activities, especially with the public sector. The next series of these meetings will happen around June.

4. Presentation: Western Cape Government ‘Nourish to Flourish’ Mobilisation Strategy (Tristen Gorgens, Department of the Premier)

Nourish to Flourish originated out of an effort in 2016 including a long process of consultation and mobilization of awareness to improving food access in Western Cape. After 2016, the group tried to understand different approaches to food and understand partnership-based approaches to food change. In 2018, the political cycle came to an end and the elections in early 2019 interrupted the momentum.

Now, the new WCG Nourish to Flourish working group continues to build on this previous work with a cross-government approach. The group includes 10 different WCG departments and has extended a formal invitation to CoCT and Districts to join to ensure a whole-of-government approach. With so much going on in the food system, trying to tackle it at a system level would potentially be overwhelming. The Nourish to Flourish working group is exploring how to intervene in and organize themselves to shift key patterns. The group has agreed on three priorities from April 2021 to March 2022:

- Improving nutrition in children under five in the Western Cape, first 1000 days and early childhood development
- Using food access initiatives to drive community recovery, linking initiatives
- Integrating and improving data sources to enable transversal, evidence-led decision-making, asking better questions about what data can tell us

The working group is in the process of identifying three focus areas for coordination of local action across the three focus themes. There is a need to build a close relationship between government, civil society, business and research/ academia through groups like the Food Forum.

Feedback:

- Erica Inches- the approach must be regenerative, when stretching out aid over time it is critical that it hits across spring and winter planting so that gardens can set themselves out because it takes time to grow the crops
- Leigh Brown- We can help with seasonal production info for community gardens
- Kurt Ackermann- Many other systems in South Africa are a combination of complementary public and private sector systems (e.g. health, education,

transport, etc.). Will Nourish to Flourish work to design process to make a complementary public food system? Government is already supporting aspects of the food system, so is there an understanding that there's a systems issue that government is already operating in?

- Tristan (WCG) – there are elements of that, especially in thinking about blended systems and thinking through overall outcomes that are desirable for everyone. A full system under government control is less likely, more likely to seek to work with existing players and maximize value that each sector can add. The group wants to learn through interacting with existing practices to learn how to maximize what government is trying to do but not achieving right now because the dots aren't connecting (e.g. urban gardens, support for small scale farmers, support for soup kitchens all separate now).
- Julian May- in early stages of Nourish to Flourish, the idea was that food is provided privately but food security is a public good – this is a widely held view internationally. This requires government intervention on issues that threaten food security, e.g. shortages of food, sustainability of food system.

5. Quick updates and knowledge sharing

- Recommended reading: [iKhaya eLitsha Hub — pathways to food security and dignity](#)
- Feedback: *The Link Between Access to Safe and Nutritious Food and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in South Africa*, 18 March, Dullah Omar Institute, University of the Western Cape. Jane Battersby– policy fails to acknowledge huge burden of NCDs, particularly diet-related NCDs. Tried to raise awareness of this and raise questions about why there isn't policy activism today. Input was focused on urban spaces and the food systems that have been allowed to develop, as well as the fact that many things shaping food system can be dealt with at local and provincial levels (e.g. planning commissions for shopping malls, informal sector trade policies that consider food, infrastructure needed for households to better access and utilize food, etc.) How to move agenda forward – need formal governance and thinking about how to bring together voices from local, provincial, and national govt. with civil society, NGOs, etc. Additional feedback from Julien May– there is funding for a postdoctoral researcher at the Dullah Omar Institute, as well as a student in Breede River Valley to observe decisions on food systems at a secondary city level.
- *Upcoming Webinar: Conservation Agriculture*, 12-2pm, 30 March (City of Cape Town), with Henk Stander (Aquaponics), Rirhandzu Marivate (Regenerative agriculture, including urbanscapes) and Rhoda Malgas (Living mulch research in Mitchells Plain and Khayelitsha). [Zoom link](#) (Meeting ID: 894 3806 8283; Passcode: 70145).
- *Upcoming Webinar: Key Drivers of Organic Waste Diversion from Cape Town's Landfills: An Update of Key Policy Instruments and Initiatives*, 10-12.30, 13 April (GreenCape). Agenda is [here](#). Please [RSVP](#). Please also complete the [optional survey](#)
- *Upcoming Local food system Langa site visit*, 16 April, 9-12 (by members of Strengthening Local Food Economies WG). Will share lessons at the next Food Forum.

- *Upcoming Co-learning webinar (tbc): Circular economy waste solutions*, 19 April (Enabling Urban Agriculture/ Food Gardens WG)
- *Upcoming Multi-Stakeholder Urban Food System exchanges in 16 African cities* (ICLEI-Africa). Input from cities to Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) for the UN Food Security summit in Sept. The idea is to use the Cape Town event to mobilise political and stakeholder support at city and regional level for food and nutrition systems change. Will share details on events as they become available.
- *'Real reform for Early Childhood Development campaign'* - will share on a future Forum meeting.
- Join the open global [food systems game changers lab](#)
- *Upcoming training program around gardens and food* in Dunoon on Friday (shared by Jawaya Shea).
- *Rotary District 9350 Food Garden Committee* is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting on Saturday 27 March 2021 at 10:00 am, [Zoom link](#) (Meeting ID: 869 5792 6200, Passcode: 387294).
- Anyone interested in *connecting gardens and soup kitchens* (the Durbanville CAN model) should contact Debby Shapiro: debbyshapiro@gmail.com.

6. Next steps

The next meeting of this forum will take place on **Thursday 22 April 2021 at 2:00 p.m.** Invitations will be sent out; participants are encouraged to nominate other role-players in this area who would benefit from, or contribute to, the discussion. If any attendees were participating for the first time, are not on the contact data base, and would like to receive regular invitations and reports, they should provide their name, organisation and contact details to Rhonda Snyders of the EDP at rhonda@wcedp.co.za.

For further information or questions about this report, contact Andrew Boraine of the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) at Andrew@wcedp.co.za.

Attachment 1: Food Forum attendance 25 March 2021