



National Economic  
Development and  
Labour Council

## BRIEFING NOTE: NEDLAC 30 YEAR OF DEMOCRACY PROJECT

*Nedlac social partners reflecting on 30 years of democracy and planning for the future*

**Theme: Labour market, social protection and the just transition**

**Sub-theme: Food security and the cost of living**

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Welcome to the discussion on health and food security, which will cover:

- household food security;
- increases in the cost of living; and
- child malnutrition.

This briefing note will assist you in your discussion by:

- Highlighting key issues<sup>1</sup>
- Setting out questions for you to consider.

You are free to add additional issues and questions to your discussion.

### A. Key issues and changes over 30 years of democracy

#### 1. Variables and driving forces

*The Indlulamithi project has identified the following variables and driving forces to consider when planning for future scenarios:*

- 27% of children are stunted due to inadequate early childhood nutrition. Stunted children perform more poorly at school and are at greater risk of non-communicable diseases.

*A DPME evaluation in 2023 indicated that:*

- Only 11 (or 17%) of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan's 65 Performance Indicators fully met the 2023 targets. The importance of food and nutrition security requires all sectors to play a role. Coordination challenges, funding uncertainty and slow execution are among the factors hampering NFNSP's progress (DPME Evaluation, 2023).
- South Africa has many strategies and policies aimed at addressing child malnutrition, food loss and waste, and food security. However, despite these efforts, persistent issues of child malnutrition, food waste, and inefficient distribution of donated food continue to pose significant challenges. These challenges not only perpetuate food insecurity and malnutrition but also exacerbate the environmental impact of food loss and waste.

*The latest Essential Food Price Monitoring Report of the Competition Commission says that*

- Food prices are still rising at a rate that may threaten food security. Further, cost pressures stemming from load shedding and transport costs have not abated, and the impact of drought conditions is likely to add to pressures throughout the value chain.

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<sup>11</sup> These issues have been sourced from various documents including the DPME 30 year review, Indlulamithi scenarios, AFDG dialogues held in 2022/23 and work in Nedlac.



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## 2. Achievements and changes

- In 2019, 17,3% of South Africans were estimated to be suffering from moderate to severe **food insecurity**, while 7% were estimated to be affected by severe food insecurity. Africans, followed by coloureds, are still more prone to be affected by moderate to severe and severe food insecurity than Indians/Asians and whites (Stats SA)
- On average, 40,6% of **female-headed households** were without an employed household member. One out of ten female-headed households reported suffering from hunger (2020 Marginalised Groups Indicator Report).
- The latest inflation figures show that **food inflation** reached 5.1% in March 2024, the lowest rate since September 2020.
- Russia and Ukraine are prominent players in the **global trade of food** and agricultural products. The conflict between the two countries sparked a sharp increase in staple foods, resulting in annual consumer inflation of 7.5% in September 2022 (NDP:24).
- 13.8% of the country's households engage in **agricultural activity**, with over 80% producing solely for their own consumption (Stats SA, 2023). 1.2% of the total amount of agricultural land has been redistributed (Summary:38)
- The **National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP)** feeds over 9.6 million learners daily (school days) in over 21,000 public primary, secondary, and identified special schools. The government currently spends over R18 billion in nominal terms to feed learners. The Auditor General's assessment (2021/22) suggests there is room for efficiency gains regarding deliveries and using funds for related purposes, especially in the context of rising food prices (Review:78).

### B. Questions to be addressed

- a) What are the **achievements and lessons concerning food security and cost of living increase**? Consider:
  - Food production by small-scale farmers and households
  - Solutions to address the lack of food and nutrition security – including the relative success and importance of grants, food parcels, school and other feeding schemes, and support to NGOs.
- b) What could be done to address **food insecurity and child malnutrition** in particular? Consider the role of social grants, schemes, food donations, the agricultural sector and the roles of the state, private sector, communities and NGOs. Should there be tailor-made interventions for districts with a high disease burden and acute malnutrition (Review: 217)
- c) What **role should Nedlac and social partners** play in addressing food security, including in implementing the next phase of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (2024-2029)?