



## Western Cape Food Forum Report Thursday, 23 March 2023, 2pm

- Full session recording available [here](#)
- Ruth's presentation available [here](#)
- Tamsin's presentation available [here](#)
- Carl's presentation available [here](#)

The EDP hosted the third WC Food Forum of 2023 on Thursday, 23 March. The session was chaired by the Programme Lead for EDP's Food Security Focus Area, Anna du Plessis. All attendees were welcomed to the session and apologies tendered on behalf of those who could not attend due to disruptions caused by loadshedding. She also introduced EDP Programme Lead Nobungwele Mbem, who will be supporting work on Food Security going forward.

Anna shared that the session would cover a range of topics and introduced the speakers. She also expressed appreciation of the commitment from the people in the food sector who continue to show up in such important platforms. The first speaker was Ruth Capon from the Western Cape Government Nourish to Flourish Programme who gave an update on engagements that took place in the previous week in Touwsrivier. This was followed by Tamsin Faragher from the City of Cape Town who spoke about the initiatives undertaken in the Future Planning and Resilience Directorate. The third speaker was Karen Cain from the Service Dining Rooms who shared her experiences and lessons from working with vulnerable people in Cape Town. Nazeer Sunday, an organic farmer from the Philippi Horticultural Area, then shared the developments in the area and its role in the agricultural space. Finally, we were joined by Carl van Blerk from the Garden Root Pantry who provided information on their product called the Food Sock.

### Ruth Capon, Nourish to Flourish, Touwsrivier Learning Journey Update

Ruth works for the Department of the Premier in the Policy and Strategy Unit, alongside Tristan Gorgens and others. Ruth began by providing a brief background to the Nourish to Flourish (N2F) programme, and acknowledged Tristan for the vision that built this work over the years. The objective of N2F's work in food systems change follows two parallel streams: on the one hand there is the approach of **capacity building of stakeholders** and on the other a **reflection and learning space**. The aim is to build capacity for systems thinking and grounding the theory through learning journeys for government officials and other stakeholders, and use this work in complex spaces, for example:

1. Capacity building – Use area-based ECD nutrition hubs to strengthen nutrition in early childhood.
2. Reflection and learning – Facilitate collaboration across province and through working groups reflecting on food security and food systems.

Ruth reported on the Learning Journey hosted in partnership between the EDP, Southern Africa Food Lab, and Centre of Excellence in Food Security in the town of Touwsrivier on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2023. The Learning Journey allowed different stakeholders from academia, NGOs, government and some from the private sector to join the engagements, where they had an opportunity to listen and learn from the everyday experiences of people in the Touwsrivier food system.

The first and main day of the Learning Journey (13 March) began with an orientation process and an opportunity for attending stakeholders to meet everybody in the room.

Participants were then divided into small groups, each of which visited different locations across the town to discuss key issues facing the food system in the area. She reflected on the activities of her group which included a visit to the community kitchen run by a local NGO called Compassionate Hearts. The people serviced by the NGOs are cut off from governmental services. Therefore, this Learning Journey highlighted the gap in the referral pathways for support, which are interrupted because the area is located at the periphery where services do not extend to. Despite the challenges, different and interesting ideas were shared on how to raise awareness of the issues facing the area and draw more attention to the space so that it can attract greater interventions from various stakeholders. Some interesting ideas included:

- Establishing the town as a stopping point for pigeon racers in the Western Cape
- Using railway history and infrastructure to attract wider audience through education,
- Facilitating an increase of small-scale trading in food, both formal and informal
- Harnessing the potential of technology and investment, as shown by the small-scale hydroponics farm in the town.

Touwsrivier as a case study is a reminder that food systems in the Western Cape include small towns that are located at the periphery of urban cities and are likely to be forgotten despite the desperate need for food security. A place like Touwsrivier, which has a 80% unemployment rate and is affected by climate change, adds nuance to the complexity of the Western Cape food systems and the importance of partnering and pooling of resources to achieve impact.

### **Tamsin Faragher, City of Cape Town Plans to address Food Insecurity**

Tamsin started by going over a timeline tracking the City's approach to food systems, which is tied to the Resilience Strategy adopted in 2019. The Food Systems Programme was launched in 2021, and aims to 'Strengthen the Cape Town Food System by focusing on improving access to affordable and nutritious food for Capetonians, particularly those living in vulnerable communities, using high quality data and focused interventions'. This objective is underpinned by the City's new five-year Integrated Development Plan which was adopted in May 2022. Tamsin mentioned that two Food Systems Reports have been produced through this project, one in 2020 and the other in 2022.

Following that, the City arrived at the conclusion that an implementation plan is needed to track the convening, governance and policy work within food systems. A two-year implementation programme with demonstrable activities is taking shape. These activities build on the themes identified in the Food Systems Report of 2022, which are

1. Food Governance - Value, coordinate and leverage the roles of different food systems actors
2. Food Resilience - Build Food Resilience ,
3. Food Production – Promote sustainable production,
4. Food Environments – Food 'scapes for spatial and economic access,
5. Food & Health – Healthy food, healthy people,
6. Food Economy - Build and advance competitive food enterprise.

COVID was an unfortunate time, but it provided some useful insights and lessons on our food systems and the importance of the informal sector and trade, hence the building of close relations between the Resilience Unit and colleagues in urban management and economic development. An informal trade sector summit will take place later this year, where the Resilience Unit and Enterprise and Investment will present new Market Management Framework.

Another lesson gathered from the City's engagements around food systems was the importance for the City to operationalize humanitarian relief in times of crisis. This will inform and in turn be informed by the developing Vulnerability Viewer, which allows City officials to target areas of highest vulnerability to certain shocks across the City. Of course, the tool is only as good as the data available. This year the City would like to explore the

possibility of inputting other knowledge from the NGO space and hopes to conduct surveys later this year.

Other upcoming pieces of work pertain to the City's involvement with AfriFOODLinks, which gathers 26 partners across the globe to improve food security and urban sustainability in cities in Africa and Europe. This includes a partnership of 5 African Cities. This project is coordinated by ICLEI, and the City of Cape Town's focus for this project is around informal trading. Tamsin noted the importance of communication and data in all these workstreams.

Finally, Tamsin discussed work done on scenario planning for different shocks to the food system. Most recently, this included work done on loadshedding that considered the impact of a potential "stage 8" on food security in the City, and possible mitigation measures for this. She noted that the session on loadshedding showed that viewing "stage 8" as the point at which we enter emergency is misleading, given that stage 4, 5, and 6 loadshedding are already having substantial impacts on our food production, storage, and logistics. As such, we are already seeing impacts on food security.

### **Karen Cain, Service Dining Rooms**

The Service Dining Rooms (SDR) has been around for 87 years and was born during the times of the Great Depression, whose socioeconomic challenges mimic the present. A midday meal is served which is nutritious and is not just soup. The meals tend to include some form of staple such as rice and pasta, in addition SDR hands out four slices of bread and where possible fruit is given. People usually come for the evening meal. Since the 2018 drought, the City removed the tap heads for public taps to limit water use, which had a substantial impact on access to clean drinking water for those living on the street and other vulnerable communities. As such the SDR also gives out kiloliters of drinking water. There are big 25 liter containers placed outside which are opened from 07:30am until SDR staff goes home.

Karen noted some of the challenges faced by the SDR. These include their dependence on take-away containers which are both expensive and bad for the environment. Although most people who come dine in, others request for take-away containers. She also noted a challenge around the disposal of organic waste – while they send some of this to be composted at the Streetscapes garden up the road, not all of their waste can be accommodated.

Karen described a shift in demographic of those accessing food through the SDR. While the SDR used to mainly cater for those living on the street, many of the current clients have shelter but cannot afford the cost of electricity or food at the shops, so they collect the food and eat in their homes. Others do not have homes and are instead living in their cars. In addition, more people have started to arrive with their pets. This indicates the impact of food and electricity price increases are having on vulnerable populations.

Other work done by the SDR is to provide uncooked food to organisations based in struggling towns like Ladismith. There are currently 14 beneficiaries who either come to collect the food or to whom they deliver. In the event whereby resources are stretched, beneficiaries with a high number of children are prioritized.

Some of the Food Forum members in attendance shared suggestions for addressing the challenges faced by the SDR in terms of take-away containers and organic waste, such as PolyOak to assist with ice-cream containers and VPUU on organic waste. A suggestion was also made to contact SA Harvest around access to food.

Karen invited those interested in supporting the SDR to volunteer, especially around the 12pm noon meal. They can visit [www.sdr.org.za](http://www.sdr.org.za) for more details.

### **Nazeer Sunday, Organic Farmer, Phillipi Horticultural Area**

Nazeer is a farmer at the Philippi Horticulture Area (PHA) and shared the work that has been done and the future plans for the PHA. He gave an update on the Save The PHA campaign, where he touched on the history, present challenges and the activity which took place over the past two years.

The PHA comprises of 3,000 hectares of farming land in the city, surrounded by urban developments. Although located in an urban area, the farmers of the area consider their farming style to be closely linked to rural farming as opposed to urban farming. Historically, the PHA has been the food basket of the Western Cape supplying the city with vegetables and other fresh produce. At present, the area produces 200,000 tonnes of vegetables per year (produces up to 40% of the vegetables and 80% of carrots consumed in the city), employing 3,000 workers and impacting the livelihoods of 30,000 people.

The PHA is located in the Cape Flats and is sandwiched by Mitchells Plain, Stratford Village, Pelican Park and Hanover Park in Mannville. Farmers in the area are in a struggle to protect the area for agricultural use and away from the encroachment of the urban sprawl. The area has lost 1,000 hectares of land which has been held by developers and others who are not using it for farming. These lost hectares could contribute towards increased productivity and if managed well could play a role in the vision of city's climate resilience. The Save The PHA campaign recently won a court case which held 500 hectares of land which was going to be used for things other than agricultural activities. By reinvesting the "lost" land back to farming more people will be employed and greater impact on food security through targeting the informal economy/trade.

The formal economy receives 80% of the food produced in the PHA, however, there is a big gap in pricing from when the produce leaves the gate to the shelves of the stores. Consumers buy at inflated prices which means both the farmers and consumers lose while big companies win. There is ambition to create their own market where consumers can buy directly from farmers. This allows farmers to sell at a higher price (which is still less than the pricing in supermarkets) and consumers to buy at a lower price.

Nazeer then spoke about the importance of the PHA as a key location for recharge of the Cape Flats Aquifer. The City has been investigating the implementation of a managed aquifer recharge programme in order to diversify the city's water supply. The protection of the area for agriculture also protects biodiversity through flood mitigation from storm water. Furthermore, it can restore the nutrient cycle by diverting organic waste away from the landfills and used as compost instead. The PHA has potential to serve as a huge sink for the city's organic waste. Through training, there is opportunity to sink 30 tons of organic waste into our soil as compost.

Another opportunity for the area is to tap into agri-tourism. Since COVID-19 there has been interest from students and other groups to learn from and about the PHA. These developments are both exciting and feasible through the efforts of a range of stakeholders. A "re-imagining" process looking at finding a joint vision for the future of the PHA is being facilitated by the EDP. This ensures that there are synergies and collaborations between the farmers and the various departments in government responsible for protecting the area.

Nazeer mentioned that the farm offers food gardeners and small farmers training in making good compost. If interested, contact him on 0727243465 or email [nasonday@gmail.com](mailto:nasonday@gmail.com)

### **Carl van Blerk, Garden Route Food Pantry**

The slogan of the Garden Route Food Pantry is "*from food aid to food security*" which responds to the World Food Summit 1996 statement that "*food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life*". The Garden Route Food Pantry is the only food security organisation operating in the Garden Route. Like many organisations not located in the metros, there are challenges with accessing funding.

Despite the challenges of existing on the periphery, the Garden Route Food Pantry has come up with a solution that covers food security and nutritional living. The Food Sock prioritises micro- and macro-nutrients in a single meal, which people just need to add water and heat to. The versatility of the Food Sock means that it is targeted at vulnerable communities, elderly people, students, school children, ECD centres and middle-class families.

## THE PAST



## THE PRESENT



**FOOD SOCK**  
CHANGING THE FACE OF FOOD PARCELS

Food parcels are given to those who can't afford the rising cost of food, yet, they traditionally contain more than 50% peripheral items such as sugar, coffee, salt, oil and more – At the Garden Route Food Pantry, we have designed an all-in-one FOOD SOCK that already contains all the necessary flavouring, spices and nutrients required & needs only water to prepare. This is what a food parcel should look like.

**Food Pantry**  
garden Route

*Pictured above: the Food Sock*

To learn more about the Garden Route Food Pantry and the Food Sock you can visit [www.echo.org.za](http://www.echo.org.za), or email [pantry@echo.org.za](mailto:pantry@echo.org.za).

### Closing

Anna thanked all the speakers and participants for their engagement.

It was announced that the next Food Forum session will take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2023 to accommodate the public holiday on April 27. People who are interested in becoming speakers or sharing the work that they are doing can contact Anna at [anna@wcedp.co.za](mailto:anna@wcedp.co.za).