



**WESTERN CAPE
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
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Western Cape Food Forum Report Thursday, 4 March 2023, 2pm

- Full session recording available [here](#)
- Eilifs's presentation available [here](#)
- Rina and Henry's presentations will be uploaded [here](#) when made available

The fourth WC Food Forum of 2023 took place on Thursday the 4 May. This session was originally scheduled for the 27th of April, but rescheduled due to the Freedom Day public holiday.

EDP Programme Lead Anna du Plessis began by welcoming all participants and providing a brief introduction to the Food Forum for those who were attending for the first time. She then introduced the session's key speakers, who were as follows:

- Professor Rina Swart from the University of the Western Cape, discussing the findings of recent research on nutrition.
- COSATU Parliamentary Co-Ordinator Matthew Parks, discussing the union's advocacy efforts to counter food price increases.
- V&A Waterfront Social Impact and Food Ecosystems Head Henry Mathys, discussing the Waterfront's efforts to create a more sustainable food ecosystem and the role of the private sector in pursuing food security.

Professor Rina Swart, University of the Western Cape (UWC)

Rina is a Professor in the UWC Department of Dietetics and Nutrition, working closely with the UWC School of Public Health. Her work currently receives funding from the National Department of Health, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security.

She shared findings from three recent research projects on nutrition. The first of these focused on the National Dietary Intake Survey. While the final report stemming from this survey has not yet been completed, she shared a brief overview the kind of information gathered. The survey collected information from 446 areas across South Africa, with 10 households, one ECD, and one school surveyed in each area. The survey gathered data on adult dietary intake, adolescent dietary intake, mental health, alcohol intake, and oral health. It also gathered information about the food environment in the surveyed schools, looking at the kinds of foods being provided in feeding schemes, sold in tuck shops, and marketed to children. A report summarising this data will be made available in September this year and will be able to inform food and nutrition policy and interventions with data that has not been available in the past.

Rina then presented the findings of research regarding food consumption patterns in South Africa. She noted that while South Africa does produce enough food for its population in terms of calories/energy, the country does not produce enough fruit and vegetables to meet the basic food based dietary guidelines for its population. This resulted in several interesting findings, including the following:

- In terms of dietary diversity, half the South African population are not getting enough variety in their diets.
- Currently, South Africans are on average consuming:

- 60g of fruit per day and 106g of vegetables per day (this is 166g of fruit and vegetables per day. The World Health Organisation's recommendation is that people should eat around 400g of fruit and veg per day)
- +- 3g of beans per day
- +- 6g of pulses per day
- 8g of cheese per day
- 80ml of cow's milk per day
- 10 ml of yogurt or amasi per day
- 190 ml of sugar sweetened beverages per day
- 140 g of meat per day (50% of this is poultry)
- 30g of potato chips/tortilla chips/crisps/puffs/snacks per day

It is important to note that these quantities are calculated **per capita** (i.e: the amount consumed divided by the number of people in South Africa.) As such, they **do not account for differences in consumption across income groups**. For example, it may be that the lowest income group consumes even less meat, vegetables and other more expensive goods than the quantities reflected here.

Rina pointed out the high rate of consumption of food with little to no nutritional value. She went on to discuss current work being done on labelling regulations in order to help reduce the consumption of these goods. Regulations have been drafted to enforce warning labels on food products that are highly processed or have high levels of sugar, fat, salt, and artificial sweeteners. If passed, these regulations will also place marketing restrictions on such goods and allow healthy goods to use health and nutrition labels to promote themselves. As a fellow Forum member pointed out, these regulations would be welcomed but enforcing them properly and universally will be important. Read more about these regulations [here](#).

Matthew Parks, COSATU

Matthew Parks discussed COSATU's efforts to address food-related challenges in South Africa. He expressed concern about the impact of inflation on workers' buying power, especially with the increase in food prices due to the war in Ukraine and the rise in international oil prices.

Increases in petrol costs have had a cascading effect on the economy, including agriculture, food production, retail, transport, and manufacturing. It also made it more expensive for workers to get to work, which was particularly significant in the wake of the collapse of Metro rail during Covid. Often workers will spend about 1/4 of their salary paying for transport to get to work, leaving less money to be spent on adequate food. COSATU worked on and achieved some fuel price relief last year, but are pushing for more relief in the fuel prices. This will have an immediate impact on the food value chain and on Eskom, which is using a lot of Diesel in electricity production. Given how much the electricity crisis effects the food system, he also pointed out their advocacy around debt relief for Eskom.

Matthew explained COSATU's work on increasing and extending the Social Development Grant, which has not been adjusted for inflation since its inception in 2020. They want to ensure that all eligible people receive the grant, and offer them skills and job placement programs where possible. COSATU is also investigating the potential to transform this into a Basic Income Grant and to upscale the Presidential Employment Stimulus to increase the number of people who can access work experience, salaries, and food.

Finally, Matthew spoke about COSATU's efforts directly concerning food prices. They have been in discussions around exempting additional food products from VAT to make them cheaper for consumers. However, there is a concern about implementing this fairly -

ensuring retailers comply with VAT exemptions and don't pocket them as profit. Enforcement is crucial.

In addition to this, they are supporting the DG Murray Trust's proposal to remove the markup on a basic basket of 10 essential food goods in exchange for government removing taxes on these items. The products included in this basket are eggs, speckled beans, pilchards, fortified maize, milk powder, soy mince, peanut butter, rice or sweet potatoes, soup mix, amasi. This will reduce the costs for essential food items by about 25%. The proposal needs to be applied universally to ensure fairness to retailers, but it would have a positive impact on people's health, long-term development, and productivity. COSATU has had some initial positive discussions with retailers, but they need support from the state to sign off and implement this.

Henry Mathys, V&A Waterfront

Henry highlighted that the Waterfront is home to a host of food-related activities. Traditionally, shopping centres dedicate around 10-12% of the retail area to food-related products. At the Waterfront, they have dedicated just under 23% of their shopping centre to food-related products, including retail food, restaurants, and small eateries. A recent economic impact assessment showed that the turnover in this category was just over R1.4 billion, and that food activities at the Waterfront contributed to 880 direct jobs.

The Waterfront has developed a strategy to drive a more sustainable, locally biased, and culturally diverse food ecosystem. One of the main problems they were looking to address was that the food offering on the property wasn't representative of South Africa's food culture or ownership. They wanted to understand why more local, diverse businesses weren't accessing this market opportunity and what the barriers were.

Henry and his team are working to get more small businesses the equipment, infrastructure, and support required to access market opportunities. The Maker's Landing was designed as a Food Business Incubator to support small food businesses, particularly those owned by women and people of colour. Maker's Landing provides a fully equipped kitchen space for small businesses to use at a very low rate, as well as business development and mentorship support. So far, 22 businesses have graduated from the Incubator program.

Henry went on to describe the V&A's efforts to promote sustainability in their food ecosystem. This includes assisting stores and restaurants to source produce from smaller local service providers like the Philippi Horticultural Area. In addition to this, they have been conducting research on zero waste sustainability in restaurants in terms of sourcing, plastic usage, and waste disposal. They've been working with Ocean Pledge towards eradicating single use plastics in all of the restaurants and eateries in the Waterfront and will be making it a lease requirement that tenants cannot use plastic cutlery or straws. This will extend to all single-use plastics by 2030. In terms of waste, they have a waste management facility which diverts around 50% of the Waterfront's waste from landfills, but they hope to increase this number by adding a waste-to-energy pyrolysis plant to the mix. They will also set up a blackwater treatment plant and a desalination plant run by solar energy. This is all part of efforts to bring the property to net carbon zero by 2030.

In wrapping up, Henry noted that while they have tried to use incentive-based approaches to encourage retailers and vendors at the Waterfront to employ more sustainable strategies in their operations, their team has realised that sometimes the "stick" is more effective than the "carrot". By writing specific conditions into their lease agreements, the Waterfront can have a far greater impact on the food system in their neighbourhood. Doing so could allow the Waterfront and other private landowners to enforce the labelling regulations on food discussed by Professor Rina Swart or reducing prices on VAT free goods

or the basic basket of food products discussed by Matthew Parks. This is a useful way in which the private sector can influence food systems change.

Update: Eilif Ronning, Food Systems Foresight – Exploratory Scenario Planning for Food Systems Workshop, Feb 15 2023

Eilif from Food Systems Foresight provided an update on workshops held on Exploratory Scenario Planning for food systems in Cape Town, the Hudson Valley in New York, and in the Black Sea Region earlier this year. These workshops brought together diverse stakeholder to examine critical uncertainties for the future and how the food system and actors in it would be impacted by these. The Cape Town session was held on the 15th of February 2023, and was attended by some members of the Food Forum. In this session, participants workshopped what South Africa would look like if different scenarios played out in terms of the health of our infrastructure and economy and the stability of politics and governance. For example, they were asked to think about what food systems would look like if our future had excellent infrastructure but no stability of politics and governance, and vice versa. Participants were asked to think about how their organisation's current strategies would respond in a future world where any of these scenarios existed. Finally, Eilif noted that a LinkedIn Group was set up for participants from all sites to join to share tools and techniques about navigating these uncertainties. Forum members are welcome to join this group – accessible [here](#).

Update: Sanelisiwe (Mimi) Nyaba, Food Agency Cape Town – Food Imbizo on Democratising Food Governance, 26 April 2023

Mimi from Food Agency Cape Town (FACT) gave a brief overview of the recent Food Imbizo on Democratising Food Governance. This event aimed to address questions pertaining to whose voices are heard and prioritised when we discuss food insecurity, who should participate in and guide local food system governance, and how to break down the barriers that prevent those most impacted by food insecurity participating in food systems governance. Panel speakers discussed the need to destigmatise hunger; climate change; rethinking community kitchens as community hubs that prioritise dignity and build agency; the need for accessible, inclusive, and locally appropriate language; and the role of art in communicating the need for food systems change, amongst other issues.