

GOVERNMENT URGED NOT TO RUSH THROUGH FOOD SECURITY POLICY

South Africa has about 13.8 million individuals that regularly experience inadequate access to food, according to government's own figures.

But the rush to implement a new National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security for South Africa - which aims to provide for the right of all South Africans to have access to sufficient food as mandated in section 27 and 28 of the Constitution - is unnecessary and unhelpful, civil society organisations maintain.

The policy was gazetted on 22 August last year after being rushed through Cabinet approval. It was not subject to any public consultation and is utterly deficient in its identification of problems with the food system in South Africa and its failure to develop solutions for the majority of people.

In September 2014, a Food and Nutrition Security Draft Policy Implementation Plan was produced. The Implementation Plan is not yet available publicly although it can be requested.

The Department of Agriculture has indicated, in response to questions from civil society organisations, that the consultation process on the Implementation Plan only (it being too late for consultation on the Policy) will consist of just two consultation sessions – one for academics and researchers, and another for civil society. The consultations were originally planned for Tuesday (3 March 2015) and Wednesday (4 March 2015) but have subsequently been postponed. Both will take place in Johannesburg.

No public awareness has been raised about these consultations and no formal invitations have been sent. At the time of writing, it is unclear whether even these consultations will actually take place.

It is understood that the intention is for the Policy and Implementation Plan to operate as from the new financial year in April 2015. With these short timelines, it seems that there is no intention for the consultation process to be wider than two sessions in one province or for the outcomes of the consultation sessions to be meaningfully incorporated into the Policy or Implementation Plan.

In the light of a food system that can only be described as broken, the move by the State to produce a policy on food and nutrition is an important one.

But the obligation on the State to consult on policy and legislation is clear in law as well.

The failure by the State to hold any public consultation on the Policy and to rush the public consultation on the Implementation Plan runs contrary to its democratic and constitutional obligations and risks the passing of an inappropriate and ineffective policy framework.

Food is too important an issue for a hasty, poorly thought through and procedurally

flawed policy-making process. If the State takes its obligations on the right to food and to the many hungry people of South Africa seriously, it is imperative that it enters into a consultation and policy-making process in good faith rather than rushing through yet another sub-standard “deliverable” that is bound for failure.

The SA Human Rights Commission, Oxfam, SECTION27, the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute and Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre is therefore calling on government to:

- Hold multiple consultation sessions across the country;
- Undertake a public awareness campaign to raise awareness of the consultations among communities most affected by food insecurity
- Give adequate notice of consultation sessions to ensure interested parties have the opportunity to participate;
- Issue invitations to a diverse range of properly identified interested parties, including grassroots movements;
- Provide sufficient time between consultations and expected finalisation of the documents for consideration and incorporation of outcomes of the consultation; and
- Consider comments and representations from the consultation with an open mind so that it informs the policy-making process.

The above mentioned organisations will host a joint press conference.

Date: Wednesday March 4 2015

Time: 12 noon – 2pm

Venue: Constitution Hill, Women’s Gaol Lekgotla, 11 Kotze Street, Braamfontein.

For more information contact:

Nokutula Mhene, Oxfam - tel: 011 223 2440 / 076 018 4215 /
NMhene@oxfam.org.uk

Sasha Stevenson, SECTION27 – tel: 011 356 4100 / 082 839 6879 /
stevenson@section27.org.za

Busiso Moyo, Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute – 011 8330161- 2 / 072 966
2744 / busiso@spii.org.za

Andrew Bennie, Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) – tel: 011 447
1013 / 072 278 4315 / copac2@icon.co.za

To RSVP contact: Zanele Sabela, **frayintermedia** – tel: 011 325 5251 /079 287 5788/
zsabela@frayintermedia.com or

Sibongiseni Ngamile, **frayintermedia** – tel: 011 325 5251 / 079 908 2362 /
sibongiseningamile@gmail.com

Thank you.