

The Right to Food: the role of economic and social policy

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CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

Human Rights and socio-economic policies

- Human rights as a public policy framework, not only law
- Closely connected with capabilities and human development and can be combined as as evaluative frameworks
- Rights and capabilities are both entitlements of human dignity, urgent social and political objectives. Securing rights is a major purpose of the state. (Nussbaum)
- Rights are an articulation of social ethics emphasizing substantive freedoms and capability expansion. Rights not always best enforced through legislation but needs public debate and agitation (Sen).

- *Sharp contrast with dominant economic approaches*
- *challenge to mainstream analyses and prescriptions*

Right to food concept of food security

- The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in the community with others, has the physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.
- South African Constitution: Bill of Rights article 27
- International human rights: fundamental human right – UDHR 25; International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights; General Comment 12

HR/CA as public policy framework

- HR framework reflected in international consensus concept of food security
- Dimensions of policies for effective realization of the right to food:
 - availability: production
 - accessibility: economic and physical
 - adequacy: safety, culturally appropriate, nutritious
 - utilisation: improve nutrition for health

Contrasting public policy frameworks for food security

	Human Rights/ Capabilities/ international consensus food security	Production/Supply	Nutrition
Key objective	Access at all times to adequate food	Aggregate supply to meet aggregate requirements	Meet dietary needs of individuals
Unit of analysis	Individual/ Household	National aggregate	Individual
Causes of hunger	Inadequate access	Inadequate supply/ production	Inadequate diet

THE RIGHT TO FOOD IN SOUTH AFRICA

Paradox of Right to Food in SA

- Strong constitutional commitment: one of the 20 countries with right to food in the constitution, only one of two with judiciable provisions.
- Strong socio-economic rights jurisprudence.
- *Limited civil society mobilization on food* despite strong activism on claiming other socio-economic rights
- *Weak outcomes*
- ***Need more policy effort?***

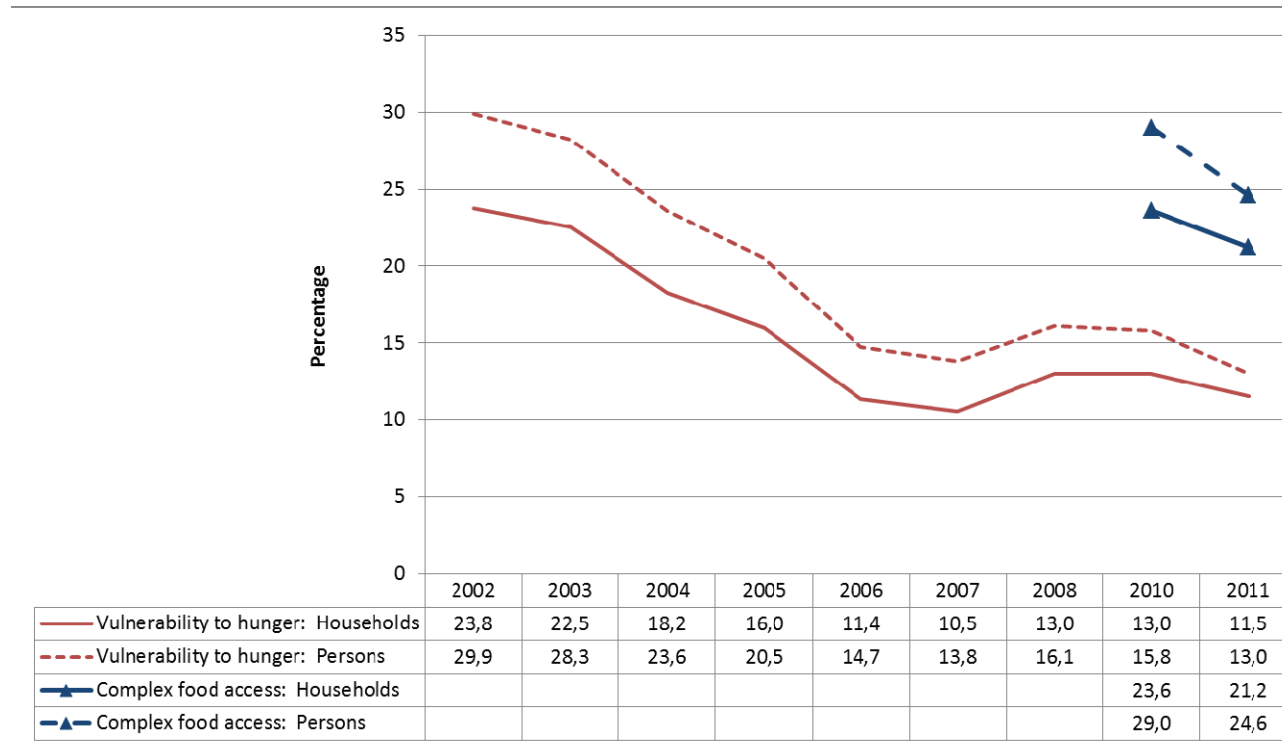
Food security situation: main points

- Levels of insecurity measured by multiple surveys, using diverse definitions. All show significant level of vulnerability.
- Improvement since the mid 1990s, more or less significant depending on measurement approach and source.
- State performance lags in international comparison.

Food security situation: self reporting

General Household Survey 2011

Figure 38: Vulnerability to hunger and access to food, 2002-2009; 2010-2011



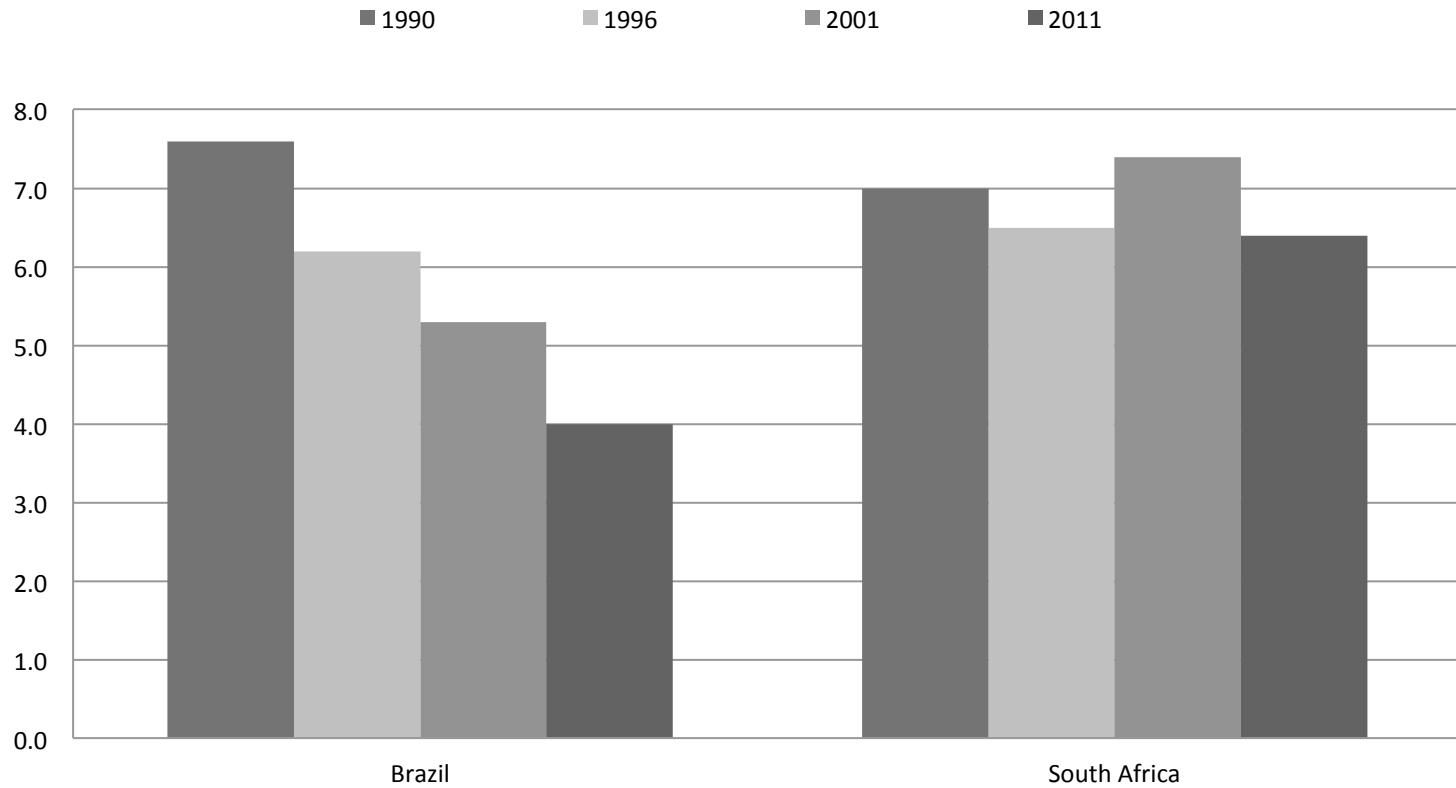
Food security situation: anthropomorphic data

- Under 5 low height for age 2003 DHS: 27.4%
- Under 9 low height for age 1999 FCS: 21.6%
- Multiple sources of data and definitions (FSC, DHS, LSMS, NIDS, plus several local surveys), some contested.
- Nonetheless show evidence of:
 - significant levels of stunting – long term malnutrition, structural condition
 - Improvement over the last 2 decades according to some sources but not others
 - Problems most severe in Free State and Northern Cape

International comparison: State performance in fulfilling economic and social rights – SERF Index (scores for 99 countries)

Rank	Country	Composite	Food	Health	Education	Housing	Work	Income (\$PPP 2008)
13	Brazil	87.4	91.1	90.1	94.8	75.8	83.6	9,559
40	China	79.7	90.4	94.8	83.6	65.8	64	5,712
38	Ghana	72	85.6	60.0	78.7	52.3	82.2	1,351
67	South Africa	61.5	61.7	57.6	71.4	70.2	46.6	9,604
87	India	56.1	32.7	74.7	82.8	62.6	27.9	2,796
96	Nigeria	42.5	47.7	33.4	66.7	43.3	21.5	1,939

International comparison: IFPRI Global Hunger Index



Drivers of hunger

- Not a problem of *production* and supply shortages but of household/individual *access*.
- Chronic insecurity driven by structural conditions related to poverty and inequality, not supply failures.

Understanding drivers of hunger: Sen's entitlement framework

Inability to *access* food due to loss of 'entitlements', the legal means for obtaining food. Entitlements depend on endowments, related to structures of ownership, opportunities.....

- Own production
- Exchange (labour, wage income)
- Social transfer

Current debates on entitlement failures and policy responses

- Exchange – Consensus as principal cause
 - Lack of income and high unemployment. Job creation initiatives.
 - High and rising retail market prices. Encourage market competition.
- Transfer - consensus on social grants as effective safety net.
- Own production – diverse views about role of potential. Initiatives focus on smallholder agriculture, land reform, urban gardens..... Neglect subsistence traditional production and livelihoods.

Policy issues and questions: gaps and alternatives

- Job creation initiatives:
 - not designed to address food security.
 - What are distributional impacts? *Would food insecure households benefit?*
 - Experience of Expanded Public Works Programs?
 - Household income and food security – not automatic, depends on intra-household allocation of resources
 - Potential of traditional agriculture for increasing incomes??
- Encouraging market competition:
 - Focus on public procurement, local markets and policing anti-competitive behaviour.
 - No response to global drivers: volatility of international prices

Policy issues and questions (continued)

- Social transfers:
 - social grants widely acknowledged as important safety net and some studies show evidence on positive food security impact.
 - Broad instrument not targeted at food insecurity. Do we know enough about links between social grants and hunger?
 - Would more food-specific interventions play a role e.g. school feeding, food stamps, etc?
 - Complementarities to build with other social interventions specific to nutrition, education, health?
 - Broader social consequences of food insecurity?

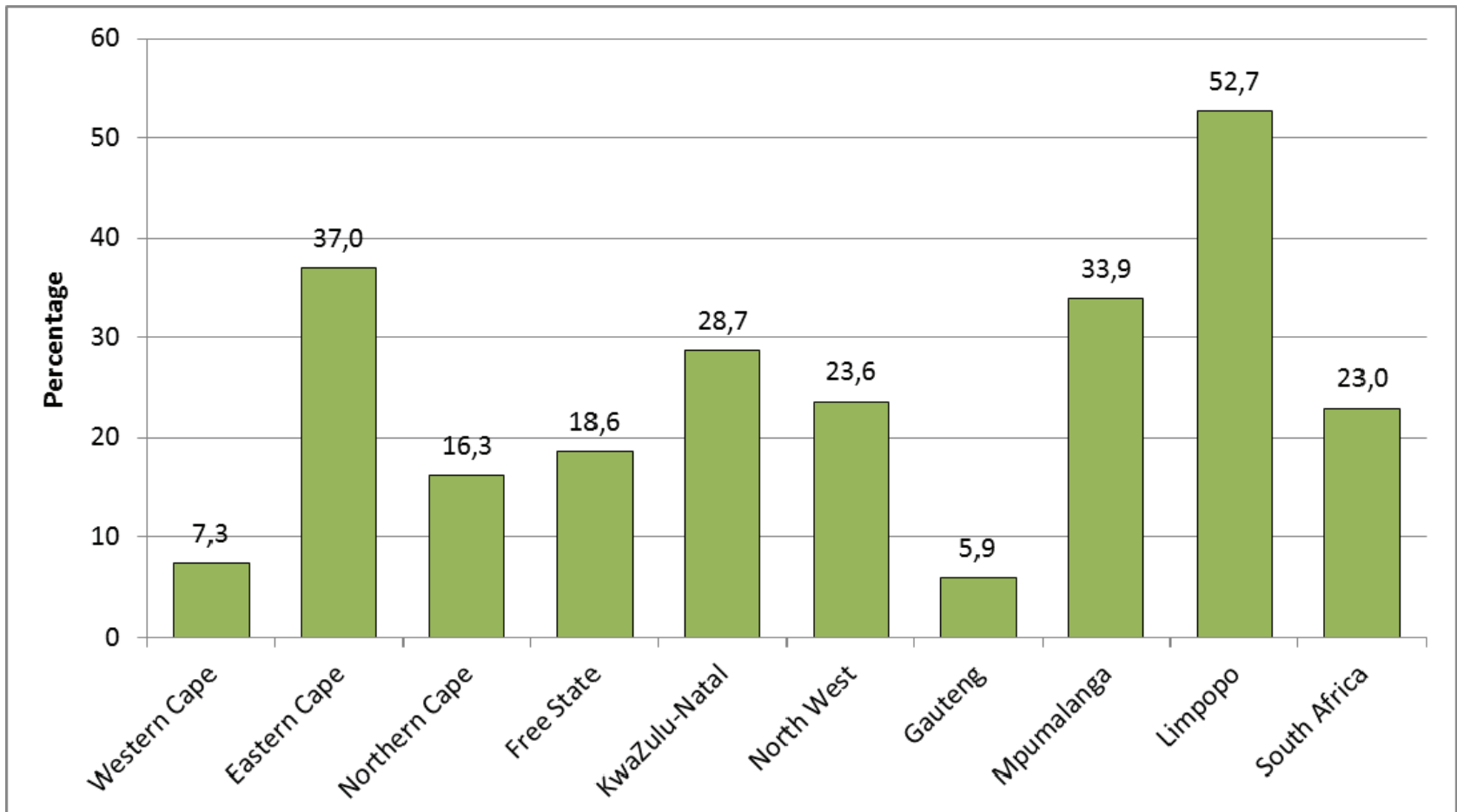
Policy issues and questions (cont'd)

- Own production
 - Major policy initiatives (land reform, small-holder support) not designed for food security but broader social justice and 'transformation' agendas. Impact on food security and poorest of the poor unclear.
 - Policy focus on new gardens, new small scale modern farms. Neglect of traditional farming and potential for improvement.
 - Controversies over subsistence/own production as strategies for: ag sector development; poverty reduction; enhancing dignity and freedom.

Importance of subsistence production

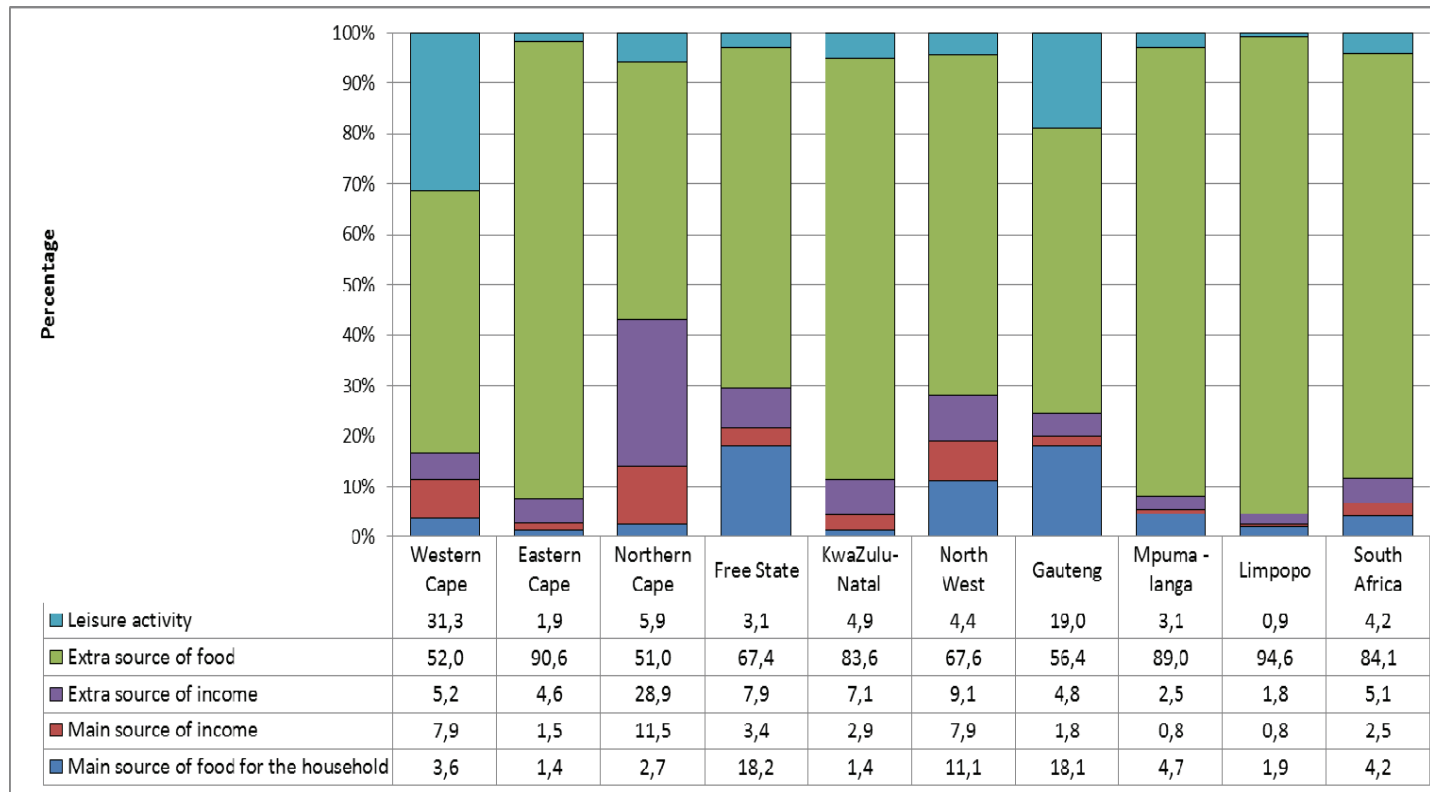
- Almost a quarter of SA households engaged in production, 84% as source of household food consumption.
- Important source of income: 29% in Northern Cape. NIDS survey (wave 2) finds selling surplus food a pathway out of poverty.
- Analysis of this sector to inform food security strategy?

Proportion of households engaging in agricultural production



Production for food security

Figure 41: Main reason for agricultural involvement by province, 2011



Core questions

- Objective of many and focus of none - Major policy instruments not designed for improving food security but for multiple other objectives
- Broad concept and narrow institutional mandates with traditional epistemic communities?
- Inadequate analytical basis for food security policy - who and where the food insecure are within households, communities, country?
- Social transfers most effective instrument but a short term remedy, does not address long term structural causes.

Example: Policy support for production?

- Subsistence production
- Production for local markets to enhance economic and physical access
- Policy environment for pro-poor agricultural growth? (R/D, credit, extension, infrastructure) to enhance own production and market access for food insecure?
- International policy environment for farmers - positions on export subsidies, SPS, IP and indigenous knowledge.....
- Ag policy in South Africa – history of liberalisation and dismantling of state intervention without introduction of support to traditional (non-commercial) sector, driven by unique political economy.

Core questions (cont'd)

- What is the role of the state in fulfilling the right to food in a market economy?
 - Not limited to emergency distribution
 - Important interventions for legal guarantees and support for consumption and safety nets; minimalist in support to own production for consumption and income, job creating growth.

Overlaps and trade offs?

- Growth
- Poverty
- Inequality
- Social Justice
- 'Transformation'