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

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Human Rights/Capabilities/international consensus food security</th>
<th>Production/Supply</th>
<th>Nutrition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key objective</td>
<td>Access at all times to adequate food</td>
<td>Aggregate supply to meet aggregate requirements</td>
<td>Meet dietary needs of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit of analysis</td>
<td>Individual/ Household</td>
<td>National aggregate</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes of hunger</td>
<td>Inadequate access</td>
<td>Inadequate supply/production</td>
<td>Inadequate diet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.
Between 2002 and 2008, the GHS has asked households to indicate whether and how often adults and children went hungry because there was not enough food in the household. The question was discontinued in 2009 but reinstated in the 2010 questionnaire. Figure 38 shows that the percentage of households that experienced hunger decreased from 23.8% in 2002 to 10.5% in 2007, before rebounding slightly to 13% in 2008. The percentage dropped to 11.5% in 2011. The percentage of persons who were vulnerable to hunger reflects the pattern of households. The percentage of households that were vulnerable to hunger declined from 29.9% in 2002 to 13% in 2011, including a spell during which the percentage increased to 16.1% in 2008 before continuing its decline.

Since 2009, the GHS questionnaire has also included a set of questions based on the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) to determine households' access to food. These questions aim to measure household food access by asking households about modifications they made in their diet or eating patterns during the previous month because of limited sources to obtain food. The index provides a slightly more sensitive measure of food access than the question on hunger. The question used in 2009 was expanded in 2010 with the addition of a question on possible decreases the variety of foods consumed, making it incompatible with the index used for 2010 and 2011. The index seems to reflect a similar pattern, though it is slightly higher. Figure 38 shows that the percentage of households that had limited access to food decreased from 23.6% in 2010 to 21.2% in 2011. Simultaneously, the percentage of persons with more limited access to food declined from 29.0% in 2010 to 24.6% in 2011.

Figure 39 shows that food access problems were the most serious in North West where 32.9% of households had inadequate or severely inadequate food access. They were followed by Northern Cape (29.7%), Mpumalanga (26.1%), Eastern Cape (25.0%), Free State (22.6%) and Western Cape (22.4%).
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)

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

Figure 39: Percentage of households experiencing food adequacy/inadequacy by province, 2011

Figure 40 shows that almost a quarter of South African households (23%) were involved in agricultural production. Of these, 9.1% cultivated farm land while 89.5% created backyard gardens.

Nationally, 84.1% of households that were involved in agriculture were involved in an attempt to secure an additional source of food. It is also clear that 94.6% of households in Limpopo and 90.6% of households in Eastern Cape wanted to augment their existing sources of food. According to Figure 41, 31.3% of households in Western Cape used it as a leisure activity. In Northern Cape, 28.9% of households attempted to create an additional source of income through agriculture.
Production for food security

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

- Of the households that were engaged in agricultural production, 41.9% cultivated food and grains, while 40.6% grew fruit and vegetables. Poultry was produced by 45.8% while 43.9% also produced livestock. Only 12.3% of the households involved in agriculture reported getting agricultural-related support from the government during the year preceding the survey. The only provinces where significant support was provided were Eastern Cape (26.9%), KwaZulu-Natal (17.6%) and Western Cape (12.7%). Nationally, three per cent of the households reported receiving training and 6.4% received dipping services. The most frequently used services in Eastern Cape and North West were dipping services, whilst visits by the agricultural extension officer were the most commonly mentioned services in Eastern Cape and Gauteng.

Table 12: Nature of agricultural production activities per province, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production activity</th>
<th>Western Cape</th>
<th>Eastern Cape</th>
<th>Northern Cape</th>
<th>Free State</th>
<th>KwaZulu-Natal</th>
<th>North West</th>
<th>Gauteng</th>
<th>Mpumalanga</th>
<th>Limpopo</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livestock production</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>56,421</td>
<td>37,483</td>
<td>40,8</td>
<td>10,4</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>1,479</td>
<td>26,1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poultry production</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>10,470</td>
<td>20,490</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>1,542</td>
<td>45.8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>45.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grains and food crops</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>1,371</td>
<td>2,210</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>41.9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>48.1</td>
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<td>Industrial crops</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0.0</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit and vegetable crops</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>54,278</td>
<td>11,111</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>1,367</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>40.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fodder grazing/pasture grass of animals</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>2,5</td>
<td>1,1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fish farming/aquaculture</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game farming</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Percentage</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>18,220</td>
<td>14,111</td>
<td>4,700</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers below 10,000 are too small to provide accurate estimates. Sensitive cells are indicated by an asterisk. A particular household can be involved in more than one activity and percentages therefore do not add up to 100%.
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’