



THE FOOD INDEX

Better understanding food
security in South Africa

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FOREWORD

1 in 5

South African households don't know where their next meal will come from.

Fix that and our prospects for socioeconomic development will improve dramatically, but it will require a collaborative effort.

World Hunger Day is marked annually on 16 October to commemorate the founding of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1945. Nearly 80 years later, it seems almost inconceivable that hunger remains a direct threat to humanity and a barrier to socioeconomic development, and particularly in Southern Africa.

The World Food Programme has found that conflict – including Russia's invasion of Ukraine – as well as economic pressures, extreme weather driven by climate change, and soaring fertilizer prices are combining to create a food crisis of unprecedented proportions.

And South Africa, regarded as the world's most unequal country, hasn't been spared. A walk among the desperate, in our cities, townships and dorps should jolt us into action. Failing that, a glance at the statistics: the **Food Index projects that by 2025 49% of South Africans will be food insecure.**

In SA, 70% of children are born into poverty and by age five, one in four suffers from stunted cognitive and physical development due to malnutrition.

This, in turn, leads to stunted early childhood development, poor cognition and learning and, ultimately, impaired self-sufficiency. Apart from children, a study in the Journal of Health Policy last October found that the **most vulnerable were females, those living in rural areas, those without high school certificates, and those over the age of 45.**

The plight of the most vulnerable will have been worsened by Postbank's recent social grant payment mishaps. Grants provide relief to food insecure people, and it is often all that stands between beneficiaries and hunger. To be effective, it is imperative that social grants are distributed timeously and efficiently.

The social grant system's recent challenges are deeply concerning, but it's not the main reason we need a collective national effort on improving food security. The reason is that we must see hunger as a crisis and a threat as great as we did the Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS pandemics, and the social unrest in 2021.

Because we cannot expect social cohesion and development in the face of hunger. In fact, the FAO contends that it is easier to solve hunger than it is to solve the problems hunger creates.

Reduce food insecurity and poverty, and South Africa's prospects for socioeconomic development will improve dramatically.

FOREWORD

As South Africa's low-cost retailer, the Shoprite Group is intensely aware of the scale of SA's hunger crisis, and the scale of the intervention needed. It fuels our obsession with affordability and accessibility to ensure our most price-sensitive customers can put food on the table.

While many have come to disregard the R5 coin's purchasing power, we subsidise one million R5 loaves of bread every week, and offer a range of R5 deli meals, including a protein-rich liver burger.

Through the Act For Change programme, we actively invest in and support the communities in which our business trades, most notably by enhancing food security at a community and household level through our **garden programme which benefits 61 834 people, and providing 1.1 million nutritionally balanced meals to children in the ECDs** that we support.

We will continue to intensify our efforts to reduce hunger, a crisis which requires a collaborative effort across all stakeholders: agriculture, manufacturers, retailers, government and non-governmental organisations.

Two immediate, tangible steps the government can take to reduce food insecurity: One, exempt food retailers from the Road Accident Fund levy on diesel used for generators, and two, consider zero VAT on certain key commodities to further prioritise relief for the people of South Africa.

If we truly wish to eradicate hunger, every feasible option must be explored.



METHODOLOGY SOUTH AFRICA 2025

World Data Lab creates actionable, forward-looking data on consumer class and Sustainable Development Goals to promote a sustainable, inclusive and growing world.

It has leveraged machine-learning techniques to:

1 Bridge the existing **data gaps** that prevent the complete and comparable measurement of food scarcity.

2 Provide **additional geographic precision** when measuring food scarcity.

3 Develop forecasts that provide a **dynamic understanding of the challenge.**



SOUTH AFRICA 2025

World Data Lab modelling predicts nearly

49%

of the **South African population** will be food insecure by

2025



21.18%

of children in **South Africa** will be stunted in

2025



WESTERN CAPE 2025



41%

of the **Western Cape population** will be food insecure by 2025



of which

13%



form part of the **rural population**

87%



form part of the **urban population**

LIMPOPO 2025



54%

of the **Limpopo population** will be food insecure by 2025



of which

48%



form part of the **rural population**

52%



form part of the **urban population**

MPUMALANGA 2025



50%

of the **Mpumalanga population** will be food insecure by 2025



of which

27%



form part of the **rural population**

73%



form part of the **urban population**

GAUTENG 2025



47%

of the **Gauteng population** will be food insecure by 2025



of which

1%



form part of the **rural population**

99%



form part of the **urban population**

KWAZULU-NATAL 2025



53%

of the **Kwazulu-Natal population** will be food insecure by 2025



of which

41%



form part of the **rural population**

59%



form part of the **urban population**

NORTHERN CAPE 2025



52%

of the **Northern Cape population** will be food insecure by 2025



of which

48%



form part of the **rural population**

52%



form part of the **urban population**

EASTERN CAPE 2025



48%

of the **Eastern Cape population** will be food insecure by 2025



of which

59%



form part of the **rural population**

41%



form part of the **urban population**

FREE STATE 2025



48%

of the **Free State population** will be food insecure by 2025



of which

21%



form part of the **rural population**

79%



form part of the **urban population**

NORTH WEST 2025



53%

of the **North West population** will be food insecure by 2025



of which

36%



form part of the **rural population**

64%



form part of the **urban population**

How we

ACT FOR CHANGE

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THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Food Index Insights

The Food Index provides a better understanding of the extent of food insecurity and trends.

It will inform our existing and future food-security programmes, an integral part of sustainability and community contributions.

In 2020 52% of South Africa was food insecure. According to the projections by 2025 this will have declined to 49%.

Despite our challenges the numbers are heading in the right direction. Something must be working. We must capitalise on this.

An urgent, collaborative effort is required amongst all stakeholders.

We also need to keep the issue in the public eye and encourage efforts to escalate the decline in food insecurity.



OUR CONTRIBUTION

Delivering food security

The Shoprite Group's 2023 Sustainability Report shows what can be achieved.

The last financial year's investment in community programmes, including ECD centres, soup kitchens, community food gardens and food donations totalled R404 million.

R1 billion has been invested over the past five years. It has funded:



The creation of **220 food gardens** indirectly **impacting 61 694 hungry people.**



114 ECD centres where **7 287 children** receive one **nutritious meal a day** amounting to **1.1 million meals** a year.



27 soup kitchens which have served **61.1 million meals** since 2007.



In 2016, we introduced 600g **bread loaves priced at R5**, and they continue to be sold at the same price, with **one million subsidised weekly.**



Since 2017, we have offered a **selection of R5 deli meals** while expanding our product offerings.



IN SUMMARY

Aim is to start a national conversation increasing awareness of hunger and its attendant issues.

Support collaborative efforts to address food insecurity.

Encourage South Africans to intervene and build on or support existing programmes and organisations that are already successfully rolling back hunger and poverty.

Escalate the rate of people escaping food insecurity.

Drive awareness through

ACT!
FOR
CHANGE





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