Food and Nutrition Policy in South Africa: The National Vision, Policy Space and Policy Alignment

UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Student: Casey Delport ; Supervisor: Professor Nick Vink; Co-supervisor: Dr Scott Drimie

Background

- As part of the United Nations sustainable development agenda, goals two and three of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to end world hunger and to ensure general good health and well-being, respectively.

- However, providing the world's population with a healthy, nutritionally adequate, affordable and environmentally sustainable diet is proving to be one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century

- Globally, there are 795 million undernourished people, and a further 2 billion with micronutrient deficiencies

- Malnutrition (in its multiple forms) affects one in three people across the globe, manifesting in chronic illnesses, stunted growth and micronutrient deficiencies.

- Coupled with food price volatility, increasing obesity, climate change, environmental degradation, persisting food insecurity and numerous food safety crises has led to a rapid increase of calls for more sustainable and integrated food systems and food policies alike

- Within South Africa, the presidency is mandated to coordinate and integrate said policies, in order to create credibility, sustainability, investor confidence and in order to avoid political confusion

- However, food policy offers a substantial challenge to governments across the globe as, amongst many other issues, it spans across multiple policy areas- thereby demanding various responses across these said different policy sectors

- The right to food is a fundamental human right, as recognised within the South African Constitution.

- The right to food is also recognised as a principal economic and social right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

- However, law does not automatically result in the realisation of rights, and legal enforcement is not the only means through which rights can be implemented.

- The ability of individuals and households to access adequately nutritious food depends on a range of social economic conditions.

- The government therefore has an important role to play in establishing the necessary social conditions and arrangements, through the implementation of appropriate and effective food and nutrition security policy measures.

- Hendriks (2013) states that the overall goal of food and nutrition security related policies is to; "achieve household food and nutrition security and support individuals in accessing adequate individual dietary intakes to meet their needs at different stages in the human life cycle."

- However, as evident in this study it is clear that South Africa's current food and nutrition related policies are far from reaching this objective.
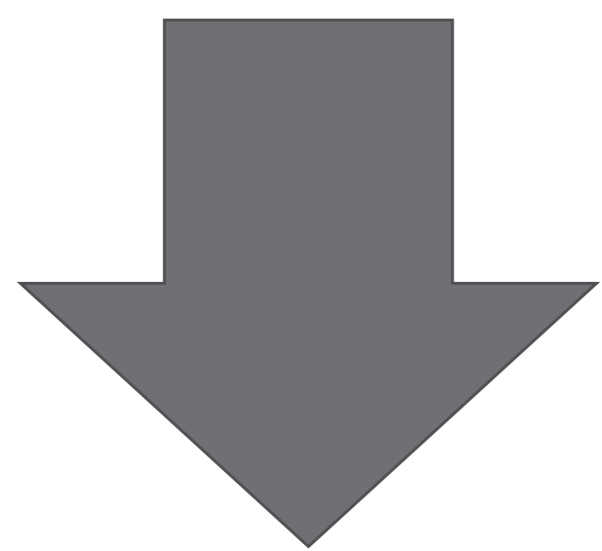
Objectives

1. - Assess the full South African national policy landscape pertaining to the food system in order to understand policy alignment and coherence across and within sectors

2. - Indicate the implications

3. - Provide an alternative way to view the South African food system
   - Provide a framing for more effective alignment and coherence in food policy in order to ensure adequate food and nutrition security.

Methods

- Approach developed by Harris et al (2017) was followed, whereby a policy matrix was constructed to identify key policies falling under different sectoral responsibilities in government.

- The NPFNS was adopted as a starting point to populate the matrix, given that it is the most recent policy framework which recognises the role of different sectors in addressing food and nutrition insecurity.

- Drawing on the approach by Harris et al (2017) and the basis provided by the NPFNS, the key sectors of agriculture, environment, social protection, health, land, education and rural development were determined to be the main areas of policy focus. Based on these sectors, various policies were sourced and placed within the relevant focal groupings.

- Policies that focused on both individual and household food and nutrition security provision in South Africa and that were published from January 2000 to November 2017 were included within the policy matrix and subsequent analysis, with the exception of those under the land domain. This is due to the current rhetoric surrounding land policy in South Africa, and the nature of the land reform programme.

- The selection of this framework for analysis was informed by the observation during data collection that the incoherence evident in the policy content appeared to reflect significant deviations across sector beliefs and policy agendas.

- In essence, the policy incoherence within the South African food policy system appeared to not simply reflect different policy goals and targets across sectors, but also reflected predominately different beliefs about food and nutrition security and nutrition as a policy issue within South Africa.

- As a consequence, the various policies within each focal grouping were reviewed with the following six research questions/ criteria in mind: 1. policy goals; 2. mission; 3. recognition of interdependencies; 4. co-ordination mechanisms; 5. targets/indicators and 6. possible learning culture/ethos.

- The over-arching objective of the policy matrix and subsequent analysis is to identify policy content that fostered positive incentives for food and nutrition security and nutrition within the South African food system, or subsequence points of incoherence or misalignment.

Agriculture	Environment	Social Protection	Health	Land	Rural Development	Education	
SDG's (Sustainable Development Goals)							International
NDP Vision 2030							
New Growth Path							
NDP Chapter 6 & IPAP	NDP Chapter 5	NDP Chapter 11	NDP Chapter 10	NDP Chapter 6 & IPAP	NDP Chapter 6 & IPAP	NDP Chapter 9	↓
AgriBEE Fund, 2004	Drought Management Plan, 2005	Social Grants	National Vitamin A Supplementation Guidelines for South Africa, 2012	SPLAG Grants, 1995	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS), 2000	National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), 2004	
MAFISA, 2005	The National Biodiversity Framework (NBF), 2008	War on Poverty Programme , 2008	National Environmental Health Policy, 2013	White Paper on Land Reform, 1995	Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), 2009		National
Ilima/ Letsema	Ground Water Strategy, 2010	Household Food & Nutrition Security Strategy for SA (2014)	Roadmap for Nutrition in South Africa, 2013	Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD), 2001	Adoption Strategy for Rural Human Settlements, 2013		
National Agricultural Research & Development Strategy, 2008	National Climate Change Response White Paper, 2011.	Social Relief of Distress (food parcels), 2013	Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, 2013-2017	Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP), 2004			↓
Integrated Growth & Development Policy for Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries (IGDP), 2012	Ocean Economy Strategy (Operation Phakisa), 2013		Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Obesity in SA, 2015	Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS), 2006			Sectoral
Festa Tlala Food Production Initiative, 2013	National Water Resource Strategy, 2013			Settlement and Implementation Support Strategy (SIS), 2008			
Agricultural Policy Action Plan (APAP), 2015-2019				Green Paper on Land Reform, 2011			↓
				Land Tenure Security Policy of Commercial Farming Areas, 2013			
				State Land Lease and Disposal Policy (SLLDP), 2013			Agencies
				Recapitalization and Development Policy Programme ('Recap'), 2014			
Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019							
DAFF-Strategic Plan 2015- 2020	Department of Environmental Affairs Strategic Plan 2014-2019	National Strategic Plan 2015/2020	Department of Health Strategic Plan 2014/15 – 2018/9	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform Strategic Plan 2015 - 2020.		Department of Education Strategic Plan 2015-2020	

Results

- Food insecurity within South Africa is not a short term phenomena, but rather a long-term, chronic threat that is grounded within various economic, political, social and institutional aspects of society.

- The causes and what to do about it remain highly contested.

- Therefore on the part of policy makers, there is a need for a thorough understanding surrounding the dynamic, intricate nature of the system, in order to fully tackle the 'wicked' problem of food and nutrition insecurity in South Africa.

- Due to the food system being a convergent point for the many socio-economic and environmental issues facing society today, the development of the transdisciplinary approach within the policy environment is vital in the creation of sustainable and effective policy.

- Together with the failure of understanding and appreciating the rapid transformations within the food system, many polices have largely failed to address the system's structural underpinnings.

- Through use of the policy matrix in clear evidence emerges of misalignment, incoherence and redundancy in South Africa's food and nutrition policy.

- Limited engagement with all of the relevant stakeholders has led to a narrow and inadequate understanding of the vast array of complex issues that affect the food system.

- Despite some degree of alignment and acknowledgement of the need for transformation, existing food polices by large have failed to establish and implement the mechanisms required to underpin real policy alignment and ultimately contribute to good governance of the food system.

- one of the greatest challenges facing the implementation of food policies in South Africa is the absence of an effective coordination mechanism that can effectively align the different responses across various sectors and government departments, and even within departments.

- In order to address these challenges, new and expanded conceptual frameworks and approaches that fully encompass the dynamics at play are required. Such frameworks should be based upon understanding the complex nature of these systems, the interactions between the various components and the environment in which it is found, as illustrated through systems-based approaches.

- This study provided such an alternative systems based conceptual framework::
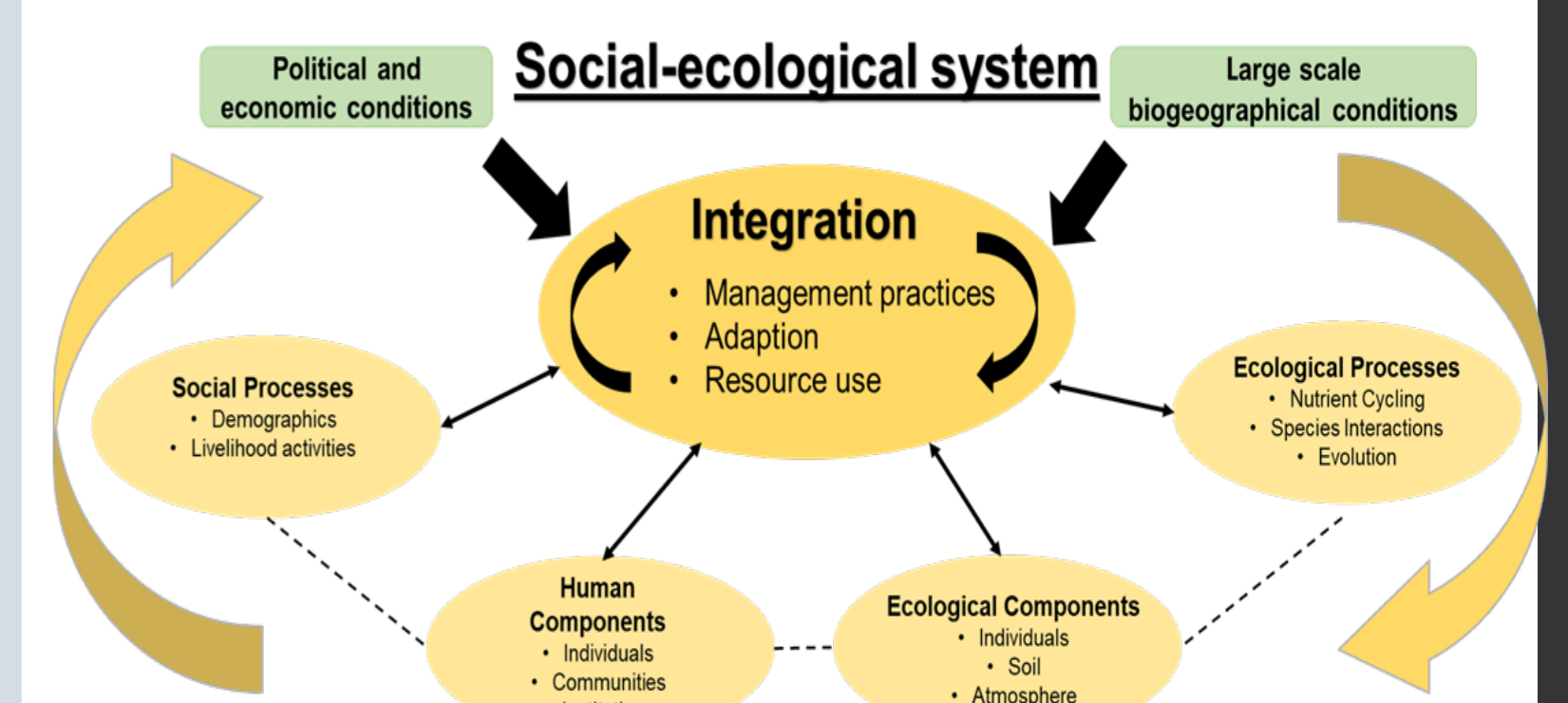
- By viewing the food system through the social-ecological system approach, many of the traditional challenges (and subsequent policy implications) surrounding food provision systems and the greater issue of food and nutrition security become secondary, and new, often overlooked challenges come to the forefront.

Conclusions

- The study revealed three key dimensions that are evidently overlooked in South African food policy:

  1) the complexity of the food system, as revealed when taking a social-ecological system lens, which subsequently highlights the challenges, assumptions, and expectations of governing this complex system through policy;
  2) what appropriate policy responses to the food system would be;
  3) the (mis)alignment of policy (across sectors).

- Upon inspection of the policy matrix and through use of the social-ecological system approach, results clearly demonstrate significant levels of redundancy, contradiction and internal and external sector misalignment.

- This in turn has highlighted issues surrounding departmental vision and the necessary mechanisms required to ensure the coordination of sectors and internal directorates mandated to provide the overall policy guidance at provincial and local government.

- Furthermore, this study has shown that applying a social-ecological systems approach to food systems has many advantages, particularly with regards to understanding the interconnected dynamics of environmental and societal issues within the food system as a whole.

- This in turn, has important implications for policy makers.