

JUST TRANSITION IN THE FOOD SYSTEM NETWORK



Media Statement on the SA Human Rights Commission National Investigative Inquiry into the Food Systems of South Africa

13 March 2026

The Just Transition in the Food System network commends the SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) for launching an inquiry into the South African food system and the right to food. Oral testimony began yesterday, 12 March, and will continue until Thursday 19 March. The Just Transition in the Food System network made a wide-ranging [submission](#) to the SAHRC that covers all seven themes of the inquiry¹ plus an additional three (climate impacts, gender and child nutrition) that are critical to the right to food. Representatives of the network will be giving testimony from 8 AM to 9 AM on Tuesday, 17 March (please see the inquiry [programme](#) for further details).

The inquiry is motivated by (1) the contradiction that an abundance of food in South Africa sits alongside the prevalence of hunger, (2) the need to confront the structural causes of hunger, and (3) the vital importance of examining the role of law, policy, corporate power, and communities in shaping food systems. It is crucial that the inquiry results in strong directives to duty bearers that will propel immediate and longer-term action to end the crisis of hunger in South Africa. This ultimately rests on the assertion that food systems should be oriented around more than simply profit and economic growth; they must be organised to achieve the right to food.

One of the reasons for the formation of the Just Transition in the Food System network was to increase the prioritisation of the needs of small-scale farmers, food traders, workers, working-class women, and civil society in food system policy making, in the context of the disproportionate influence of large corporate actors and agribusiness in shaping food system policy.

¹ The seven themes of the SAHRC inquiry are: 1) structural dynamics and economic factors; 2) concentration of power in the food value chain; 3) land access, tenure security and food insecurity; 4) the intersection between the right to food and other rights; 5) indigenous knowledge systems, traditional seed practices and agroecology; 6) institutional coordination, policy coherence and legislative adequacy and 7) civic participation, public accountability and social movements.

Corporate and private market actors play a disproportionately powerful role in shaping the nature and practices of our food systems. The SAHRC's concept note for the inquiry also acknowledges this. We therefore note with concern - as has the [Union Against Hunger](#) - that not a single corporate actor appears on the programme to provide testimony.

Another concern we raised in our submission is that all food-related policies, processes, and inquiries should ensure maximum public participation from those affected by hunger and food insecurity. We note that no provincial or local hearings are envisaged. In addition, a written submission process remains specialised and inaccessible to many in South Africa. With the inquiry being held in Johannesburg, we doubt that those living in some of the most marginalised locations, who directly experience hunger and food insecurity, will have their voices meaningfully heard. Civil society representatives from the network will give oral testimony, noting that we do so in solidarity with the hungry and based on our observations in our work. Our observations should not be elevated above the voices of those individuals, households, and communities who directly experience hunger.

We look forward to engaging the media and other stakeholders regarding our submission. The media is also encouraged to attend and report on the inquiry, which is taking place at the Nelson Mandela Foundation Centre of Memory.

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