

**CIVIL SOCIETY WORKSHOP ON THE
National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (NFNSP)
Johannesburg, 27–28 August 2026**

**Position document:
Key priorities and next steps for engaging with the National Food and
Nutrition Security Plan (NFNSP)**

This document provides a summary of the key priorities and actions agreed on at a national civil society workshop to prepare for engagement in the public consultations on the draft of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (NFNSP). This is to support those who are engaging with the NFNSP consultations in the coming days and weeks. A more comprehensive report of the workshop will be shared separately.

The below graphic briefly summarises the top priorities to collectively push for in public consultations (in addition to other important elements).



Why this workshop

Government is developing a new National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (NFNSP-2, 2027–2037) and has committed to provincial consultations from September 2026, leading to a National Indaba in November 2026. The Union Against Hunger and the Just Transition in the Food System Network, with support from the Institute for Economic Justice and the DSTI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security, convened around 70 civil society organisations, grassroots groups, academics and provincial delegations for two days to build a shared understanding of the draft NFNSP and agree on a common set of priorities and a coordinated approach to the consultations.

Households in South Africa continue to face severe hardship: 26.7% are moderately food insecure and 17.5% severely food insecure, with the burden falling hardest on working-class women. More than 1 in 4 children are stunted due to poor nutrition. Participants were united by an urgency to ensure the new Plan (the NFNSP) responds meaningfully to this crisis, contributes to building a more just, ecologically sustainable and gender equal food system, and avoids the fate of the previous plan, which was under-resourced and not implemented effectively.

The workshop was convened by the Union Against Hunger and the Just Transition in the Food System Network (supported by the Institute for Economic Justice and the DSTI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security), which bring complementary strengths. The Union Against Hunger is a grassroots mobilisation movement (“a movement of movements”) built around organising communities and provinces with the aim of eradicating hunger, malnutrition, and food system injustice in South Africa. The Just Transition Network works across climate policy, the right to food, and decent livelihoods. It seeks to bring together organisations representing or working with smallholder farmers, trade unions, informal workers, farm workers, working-class women, and NGOs to find common ground and collectively shift the food system policy landscape in South Africa towards a just transition, informed by research evidence and lived experience. Organisers were explicit that this workshop is meant to strengthen a dual track: policy advocacy feeding into grassroots organising, and grassroots organising rooting and legitimising the policy demands.

Workshop objectives

1. Prepare civil society and grassroots organisations to engage effectively with the NFNSP provincial consultations.
2. Build a shared framing and a common set of priorities for civil society and grassroots organisations to advance the right to food (including gender and climate justice).
3. Lay the basis for shared advocacy strategies and joint action beyond the NFNSP process itself.

Who was in the room

Around 70 people gathered in Johannesburg, in person and about 20 more joined online. Delegations came from all nine provinces and included trade unions, smallholder-farmer organisations, informal traders, community-based organisations (most women-led), people-with-disabilities organisations (DPSA), HIV/AIDS and health-rights groups (SANAC, Section 27), academics (University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape), and NGOs working on climate, animal welfare, gender and food systems.

What was agreed in the room

Over the two days, participants worked through the draft plan, shared sticky-note reflections on what should be in it, heard technical presentations (including on food affordability), and gave report-backs from provincial and thematic groups. Priorities were identified by participants, which were then synthesised into a set of top priorities, which the room confirmed by consensus as the shared platform to carry into the consultations. Facilitators were explicit that this is not a binding position – organisations remain free to raise other issues in the consultations – but it gives the sector a common, rallying set of priorities to be pushed consistently across every province, so that when government hears the same demands repeatedly, from Gauteng to the Eastern Cape to the Western Cape, they are harder to ignore.

The Scale of the Problem – and the Plan on the Table

Why this is urgent

Presentations drew on recent survey data and a civil society symposium on food affordability held earlier in 2026. The headline figures shared with the room:

- 63.5% of South African households are food insecure to some degree – from moderate to severe – and roughly one in four people do not get enough food on most days.
- 26.7% of households are moderately food insecure and 17.5% severely food insecure; the burden falls hardest on working-class women.
- An estimated 10,000 children die every year from malnutrition-related causes in South Africa – around 30 children a day – either directly from severe acute malnutrition or from other illnesses they could not survive because they were malnourished.
- 27–28% of children are stunted by age five; at age two the figure is even higher, at 43%. By age two, a child's brain has reached about 80% of its adult size, making the first 1,000 days (conception to age two) the critical, largely irreversible window for the full development of the child, which requires good nutrition.
- The core driver of hunger is the affordability problem, not availability: food is produced and is on the shelves and in the streets, but incomes have not kept pace with food prices. The "food affordability gap" is the distance between what households have to spend and what a healthy diet costs.

Presenters argued that South Africa made real gains against food insecurity after 1994, up to around 2008, largely through social grants, but stunting rates among children did not improve to the same degree – a sign that interventions arrive too late (e.g. the child grant only starts after birth) and do not adequately reach pregnant women and infants in the first 1,000 days. The country is now in a new crisis of increasing food insecurity, with stunting rates also rising.

About the NFNSP (2027–2037)

The new plan succeeds the previous National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (2018–2023), which participants repeatedly noted failed largely because it was never resourced or implemented. Further, the important right to food that is contained in the Constitution has not been given effect with enabling legislation. The implementation of the Plan has been left to the discretion of the government that has failed to prioritise it. NFNSP-2's vision is well-coordinated local food systems that are inclusive and promote just, equitable and sustainable food and nutrition security, livelihoods and well-being; its mission is to significantly improve food security and reduce all forms of malnutrition.

The draft plan is structured around three major goals, each with "game changers" (key interventions) and specific activities:

- **Goal 1** – Transform the local agri-food system to be sustainable, diversified and inclusive (local value chains, government procurement from smallholders, urban/peri-urban production, informal traders and spaza shops).
- **Goal 2** – Equitable and dignified access to nutritious, safe, affordable and healthy food (food affordability framework, regulation of the food environment, nutrition behaviour change).
- **Goal 3** – Mitigate risks to the most vulnerable through social, livelihood and nutrition protection (social security, nutrition-specific interventions, maternal support in the first 1,000 days).

These are underpinned by three enablers: (A) integrated, participatory and effective multi-actor governance – including a proposed National Food and Nutrition Security Council and a Food and Nutrition Security Act; (B) adequate financing and resource mobilisation; and (C) adequate institutional capacity, data and information systems. Civil society's structural priorities (budget, participation, legislation – see page 3) map directly onto Enablers A and B, which is precisely why participants see them as the fight most worth having.

A price-stabilisation commitment already sits in the current draft – including a food price regulation framework informed by a feasibility assessment — which presenters flagged as a hard-won gain worth defending in the consultations, since there is a real risk that industry lobbying gets it watered down or removed before the plan is finalised. Mention of the importance of the first thousand days is also in the current draft, but it can be strengthened. Across much of the draft plan, there is a need for more specific commitments with indicators and time frames.

The Priorities Agreed for the NFNSP

Two sets of priorities emerged and were confirmed by the room: priorities for the content/goals of the plan itself, and priorities for the structures and enablers needed to make the plan real. They were presented on Day 2 as a synthesis of the report-backs, presentations and sticky notes from Day 1, and the room was asked directly whether this captured the discussion — there were widespread indications of support, and no one objected.

A. Content priorities — what the plan must deliver

1 Food affordability framework: People's real incomes versus food prices and food price inflation — identified across every group and reported back as the most urgent, cross-cutting issue. This must remain firmly in the plan, with clear commitments from government on the development and implementation of this framework.	2 Land (and water) access It is essential to increase more people's rights and access to land for food production. This land must come with access to water — "land is not land without water." Particular emphasis needs to be placed on securing women's rights and access to land, given that women do most of the work on the land yet are often excluded from ownership and traditional allocation systems.	3 Maternal and child nutrition Interventions focused on the first 1,000 days must be priorities. This is from conception, so we must ensure pregnant women are well nourished, and from birth, including breastfeeding support, through to when the child is two years old. This is currently a key gap, with mothers not getting child support grants until after a child is born and children getting no nutrition assistance until they get into ECD centres or school. Action urgently needs to address these gaps in order to end child stunting — this is a moral priority.
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B. Structural and process priorities — what will make the plan work?

1 Budget A dedicated, adequate budget to implement the plan, including to enable meaningful, ongoing civil society participation — the previous NFNSP failed largely because no resources were allocated to it. The current plan indicates that Departments will provide budgets from existing programmes to implement their commitments, but there needs to be proper costing and new allocated budget to ensure the full implementation of the plan.	2 Real participation Civil society and affected communities as protagonists, not invitees — genuine ownership and a leading role in shaping and monitoring the plan, not a once-off consultation.	3 A Food and Nutrition Security Act Legislation to give effect to the Constitutional Right to Food. This is essential to secure accountability and ensure the implementation of the NFNSP is not optional at the discretion of the government, but is a legal obligation.
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Why these six, and not others

Facilitators were careful to frame this list as a floor, not a ceiling: a shared, minimum platform the sector can push consistently everywhere, precisely because the draft plan runs to over 120 pages and civil society cannot fight for everything at once. The reasoning given in the room was explicitly strategic—these are key issues that need to be argued and struggled for. If we can get these right, we can see real moves towards ending hunger. Most of these are also winnable in this specific consultation window. Some of them are already in the draft NFNSP-2 and need to be defended, such as the focus on the first thousand days, affordability and the commitment to reviewing legislation. These main priorities were chosen because they came up strongly and independently across almost every group in the workshop, on the sticky notes and in provincial report-backs. Other cross-cutting real concerns raised include the need to strengthen a gender lens and disability inclusion (flagged as currently missing from the draft) across the priorities described above, the importance of considering deep-rural realities, integrating nutrition support with chronic-disease treatment (HIV, TB, hypertension), and stronger climate-resilience measures. These and other points were not dropped; they remain open for anyone to raise directly in the consultations, and several are threaded through the priorities above (for example, gender within the land-access priority and maternal nutrition support). These and other points raised in the workshop are listed on the pages below.

Resources for engagement and strengthening civil society coordination for the right to food

Presentations from the workshop and the draft NFNSP-2 are available on this shared drive:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12fd2ooMjGq0EpPvD_wtGk4snWCn3dkl

The participants in the workshop committed to engaging with the consultations and sharing information from them. A WhatsApp group is being set up to support information sharing. Provincial groups also committed to organising in their provinces.

Beyond the consultations and the hoped-for adoption by the government of a strong NFNSP-2, the workshop was in agreement that continued organising and mobilisation is needed to ensure that the NFNSP-2 is implemented.

What People Felt Should Be In the Plan

The sticky-note exercise captured, in participants' own words, what they most want to see addressed. Below is a thematic synthesis of that input – the raw material behind the three content priorities above, and the wider set of concerns civil society will carry into the consultations.

Food affordability and pricing

- Affordable basic groceries; lower prices for bread and staples for poor communities.
- Break up oligopolies; give the Competition Commission a wider mandate and powers.
- Regulate export tariffs, food reserves and procurement to keep prices down.
- Government economy-wide action so food is not too expensive; food parcels for low-income households in the interim.

Land, water, sustainable production

- Equal redistribution of land to the most vulnerable, and specifically to women – with recognition of the country's land history.
- Access to land for household and community food gardens, including on municipal/communal land.
- Support for small-scale and subsistence farmers; indigenous, climate-smart crops and agroforestry.
- Secure water and infrastructure alongside any land access.

Nutrition for vulnerable groups

- First 1,000 days programme for maternal and child nutrition, including breastfeeding support.
- Strengthen and properly manage School Nutrition Programmes; soup kitchens in schools.
- Protection for orphans, child-headed households, people living with disabilities, the elderly and single mothers.
- Nutrition and rights education so communities understand food security as a constitutional right.

Informal traders in local markets

- By-laws and designated trading spaces, permits and infrastructure (water, storage, energy, security) for informal traders and spaza shops.
- Protection from being pushed out by big retail; "a right to exist for proper livelihood."
- Support for local produce markets and local, healthy food sales.

Governance, accountability and resourcing

- A meaningful, ring-fenced budget for the plan.
- Legislate the plan; establish a functional council/governance structure.
- Government accountability and monitoring, done together with civil society.
- Better access to information about the plan and its programmes – participants said government must proactively share this so people can plan and participate.

Cross-cutting: gender, disability and climate

- Explicit gender lens and disability inclusion – flagged as currently missing from the draft.
- Climate-resilience measures for agriculture; long-term planning and adaptation.
- Community-based, democratic participation in priority-setting, planning, implementation and monitoring.

Turning Priorities Into Campaigns – and the Wider Conversation

Day 2 deliberately created space, after the priorities were agreed, for a wider conversation about mobilisation and organising beyond the NFNSP itself – because, as one organiser put it, "the plan will come and go," but the people affected will still be here. Several threads ran through this part of the discussion:

Food affordability as a campaign, not only a policy ask

The clearest, most concrete proposal was to link the food affordability priority to consumer-facing action targeting major retailers – Shoprite was named specifically, as South Africa's largest supermarket chain and the leader of the "Big Five" by scale and sales. The idea floated was a coordinated national action (for example, a boycott day) to impose a visible economic cost, alongside the political cost of the policy engagement, on the basis that corporate actors will only push government toward solutions once ignoring civil society becomes costly to them too.

Power, not just policy

A recurring theme was that the underlying fight is about power – power to govern the food system, power to shape it, and power to imagine an alternative. Facilitators framed the three content priorities through this lens: food affordability as the point of departure and area of broadest consensus; land and water access as the entry point into the harder, unresolved conversation about agrarian and land reform; and maternal and child nutrition as the clearest moral "low-hanging fruit" – an issue the room was urged to be unambiguous and "militant" about.

Building a movement that outlasts the plan

Multiple participants – independently, in their opening remarks and again in the closing session – stressed that the NFNSP consultation is a moment, not the goal. Concerns raised included: the risk of this being a "tick-box exercise" if civil society doesn't show up in numbers with impacted communities; the need to organise the many community-based organisations and community kitchens (described as "an army of CBOs, mostly led by women") already responding to hunger on the ground into a connected movement; and the suggestion of a practical campaign that grassroots communities can rally behind beyond the policy text itself.

Practical suggestions raised for follow-up

- Western Cape delegates proposed a provincial caucus/meeting on return, to prepare specifically for the provincial hearings – suggested as a model other provinces should replicate.
- A suggestion to approach donors specifically for long-term organising and mobilisation funding, since funders are said to more readily fund policy work than sustained grassroots campaigning.
- A proposal to record key inputs (on camera) so the history, arguments and framing developed here can be shared into provincial workshops that core organisers can't attend in person.
- A call for small, focused working groups/"commissions" on specific workstreams, so the coordination load doesn't fall on a small administrative team alone.
- A caution, raised directly in the room, that once the sector agrees a common position, delegates should try to carry it consistently into every province – since a fragmented, contradictory message in different consultations dilutes civil society's collective power.

The Game Plan for the Government Consultations

Government is running provincial consultations from September 2026 through to a National Indaba in November 2026. The room agreed a practical, four-part plan to engage these consultations in a coordinated way – while being clear that no organisation is bound to raise only these points.

1. Show up in numbers

- Everyone in the room – and their networks – is encouraged to attend the provincial consultations and bring affected community members, not just organisational representatives.
- Gauteng dates shared in the workshop: Sedibeng (Vereeniging City Hall) — Wed 2 Sept; City of Johannesburg (JPC Auditorium, Braamfontein) — 8am–4pm; Tshwane (Sammy Marks Square, Council Chambers) — Tue 1 Sept, all day.
- Support is available for those who can't self-fund travel: contact Andrew (IEJ) at andrew.bennie@iej.org.za or the workshop organisers (Union Against Hunger / Just Transition Network) to discuss possible support where needed or if RSVP details are still needed.

2. Share information and mobilise

- A shared WhatsApp group and a shared document folder were set up on the day so information, dates, RSVP contacts and materials reach everyone immediately – not "after the fact."
- Provincial WhatsApp groups to be set up so members not in the room can be reached and organised locally.
- Simple, shareable materials (posters, social media content) are being produced so organisations can mobilise their own members and communities.

3. Go in resourced and aligned

- Slide decks and briefing material on the plan's goals, food affordability, land, informal trading and other themes will be shared so delegates can speak to any topic raised on the day.
- A position document is being finalised, distilling the priorities agreed at this workshop plus the fuller list of issues raised, so there is a common written reference for the sector.
- The room agreed to rally around the three content priorities and three structural priorities as a consistent, shared message across every province – while remaining free to raise other, locally important issues too.

4. Keep organising beyond the plan

- Facilitators were clear that the plan "will come and go" – the deeper task is building a durable movement around the right to food that outlasts the policy process.
 - Immediate next steps proposed: provincial caucuses/working groups to prepare for hearings, follow-up sessions on wider mobilisation and campaigning, and exploring funding from donors for longer-term organising (not only policy work).
 - Turning priorities into campaigns: participants specifically raised linking the food affordability priority to consumer-facing action targeting major retailers such as Shoprite, to build public pressure alongside the policy engagement.
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