



PEOPLE'S COALITION

People's Assembly, 21 April 2020

Food Working Group

Proposals on Food Producers: Small-scale farmers, fishers & farm workers¹

This document provides a summary of challenges and proposals with regards to food access and production, from the experiences of black farm workers, small-scale farmers and small-scale fisheries around the country. Small-scale farmers are those in communal areas, on commonage land and those living on privately owned farms, who produce both for subsistence and sale. Farm workers include both those living on the farms where they work and those living in the nearby informal settlements. Small-scale fisheries who contributed to this document are artisanal fisheries both coastal and in-land.

Please note that the challenges explained here are not uniform, however, there are inconsistencies with both the interpretation and application of the regulations and this differs from place to place.

Challenges

- a. *Farm workers (estimated number of farmworkers in SA: 891 000)*
 - Farm workers living on privately owned farms are denied by farm owners their right to go to the shops to purchase food. They have been told that if they go out to buy food, they are likely to bring the corona virus to the farm. Instead, farm owners have made it compulsory for farm workers to only buy food from the farm shops, while they have increased food prices.
 - With schools closed, children of farm workers do not have access to the meals provided at schools.
 - Farm workers who have food gardens inside private farms where they live have not been able to plant as they are unable to access the shops where they buy seedlings and other necessary inputs.

- b. *Small-scale farmers (estimated number of small-scale farmers in SA: 2 132 309)*

¹ The data presented here was collected by various colleagues working directly with the groups listed above, as NGO/CBO staff and academic researchers. In addition, some information was obtained through social media posts published by various organisations on their official Facebook pages.

- Farmers' produce is going to waste as they have not been allowed to sell at SASSA pay points and in various rural towns where they normally sell.
 - There are difficulties with accessing animal feed due to places that supply feed being closed in some areas, and transport challenges in others. As a result, some farmers have lost their chickens.
 - Livestock is going hungry as farmers are not allowed to take their animals to grazing fields, the police have been issuing fines of up to R5000 for grazing.
- c. *Small-scale fisheries/artisanal fisher folk (estimated number of small-scale fisheries in SA:22 600)*
- Fisher women and men have not been able to transport and sell fish at their strategic sites or spots. Without an income, fishers are not able to continue with fishing activities.
 - On in-land, where small-scale fishing is not regulated for livelihoods purposes, some people are allowed to fish and others not.
 - Since the lockdown, there has been a shortage of nutritious fish in poor coastal communities that's often supplied by small-scale fishers

Proposals to address the challenges

1. Farm workers

- The state's school feeding programme must provide meals to learners on farms and informal settlements at appropriate collection points (e.g. clinics and schools) or home deliveries, ensuring all COVID-19 safety precautions are observed. The involvement of Ward Councillors and community activists will be key.
- The government must deal decisively with white commercial farmers who are taking advantage of the lockdown and are exploiting farm workers and dweller by selling them groceries at an increased prices and preventing them from going to the shops.

2. Small-scale farmers

- The government with the assistance of local CBOs and NGOs must identify local producers with produce that they are not able to sell, buy and distribute it to poor households.
- The government must provide livestock farmers with supplementary feeding.
- There are difficulties with obtaining permits to operate. In a few cases where farmers have obtained the permits, in some areas the police do not recognise them.

3. Small-scale fisheries

- The government must allow small-scale fishers to sell the fish to their communities or in a traditional way (e.g. bakkie trade).
- There is an oversupply of nutrient-rich fish protein off the boats in the Northern Cape with the start of the snoek run, in cold storage, in holding tanks of many big fishing companies due to COVID-19 ban on export trade since January 2020. The government must call on the fishing industry to redirect the fish to millions of poor South Africans during COVID-19 lockdown and beyond.
- Ban all commercial trawlers (offshore and inshore) targeting snoek and other key small-scale line fish species before small-scale fishers can access it and only allow small-scale fishers to catch it with the line (one line one fish). These species are healthy and play an essential food security role in poor coastal communities and for farm workers, etc.

Roles that NGOs and CBOs can play in the current moment to assist the state implement some of the proposals put forward.

- Support small and subsistence producers to register as an essential service and monitor and be on call to ensure that police and retailers are not closing out small and subsistence producers and their suppliers.
- Most NGOs and CBOs have contact with many subsistence farmers that make food available to their communities. They can share lists or organise for funds, inputs and equipment to reach small and subsistence farmers who can quickly increase production.
- Small-Scale Fishers need access to bulk refrigeration facilities and pre-harvesting assistance: NGOs and CSOs can work with government to ensure these measures are supplied where they are most needed and can have the greatest impact on food security.
- Secure a meeting with minister Thoko Didiza to discuss how NGOs/CBOs could work with the department in implementing the measures put forwards such as distribution of funds and resources available for small-scale farmers, fisheries and people living on the farms (we have made a written submission on the provisions for the Small Farmers Relief Fund of R1.2 billion).

Contributors:

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