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Presentation Food and Security  
roundtable

22 Feb 2010

# Household Food and Nutrition Security

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HSRC-CPEG

# Food and nutrition security & government priorities

- Government objective to halve unemployment and poverty by 2014
- Food and nutrition security for all is foundational goal.
  - Fundamental building block for human participation
  - Unlike many other poverty reduction interventions, food and water are essential to life
  - Nutrition is key foundation that influence effectiveness of other interventions

# Purpose of this session

- Food and nutrition security are key concern of government, and stated as one of top priorities
- Although food insecurity has fallen dramatically, there is widespread and deep nutrition insecurity.
  - It is much more significant than many realise
  - Its character is not what many think
- We would like to explore how govt can be supported to dramatically deepen action to more rapidly address this challenge

# Characteristics of food and nutrition insecurity in SA

## HH food insecurity has fallen dramatically

- Household food insecurity, or hunger, has fallen dramatically since 2001. According to the GHS:
  - In 2002, 20% of children and 25% adults said that they were hungry 'sometimes', 'often' or 'always'.
  - By 2007, 12.2% of children and 10.6% of adults said they were hungry
- This seems to largely be explained by the expansion of social grants
- Some reversal in these gains is probable in the context of the economic downturn, with the loss of 770,000 jobs

# Deeper analysis shows that improvements are not so dramatic

- The National Food Consumption Survey (NFCS, 2005) found that:
  - 52% of the population are hungry
  - 33% are at risk of being hungry
  - only 20% of the SA population are food secure
- Our team has been grappling with why this picture is so different to that of the official GHS
- Challenge = NFCS is much smaller sample (2,980) and is not official data.
- The gap between the GHS and the NFCS may be explained by the difference in the experience of hunger, and of under-nutrition.
  - The GHS asks: are you hungry? (although this has changed)
  - The NFCS asks about food items consumed. Many poor households mainly consume low nutrient starches so they feel full. But there is a high prevalence of under-nutrition. People do not easily link their under-nutrition with their experience of being tired or ill.

## Household food and nutrition security

- We brought together economists and nutritionists to work out a common ground
- Our question = what % of the population could access a balanced nutritious diet if they so desired?
  - Step 1 = identify *minimum* nutritious food basket and what it would cost (R262 pp pm at 2005 prices)
  - Step 2 = review IES and other sources to identify household income and total expenditures, the % spent on food vs other items (35% to 70%)
  - Step 3 = peer review
    - We assume people are perfectly rational. That is, they don't waste any money, and have perfect knowledge of what a low cost balanced diet would contain.
- Under these conditions, we found that:
  - 50% to 80% of households could not afford an acceptable nutritional balance, based on current prices and levels of fortification
  - Only 20% of households can afford a minimum nutritionally adequate diet.
- This more closely relates to the NFCFS findings

*Please see article by Jacobs in Agrekon journal circulated*



## Nutrition levels have not improved that much.....

- Although child hunger has fallen dramatically, indicators of under-nutrition have not noticeably improved
  - Stunting (inadequate growth in height) affects 1 out of 5 children, and improved marginally between 1999 and 2005. This is sign of chronic malnutrition.
  - 1 in 10 children was underweight for height in 2005. There are signs of rising “wasting”, which is indicator of transitory food insecurity.
- Average South African consumes less than 4 of 9 food groups – min should be 6
- Although there are fortification programmes, micro-nutrient count not as effective as it needs to be:
  - Nationally 45% of children had an inadequate zinc status (NFCS, 2005)
  - One quarter of women, and 2/3 children nationally had poor vitamin A status
  - About a third of women and children iron deficient
  - Under-nutrition is critical issue viz SA women, where approximately 1/3 of young women are HIV+

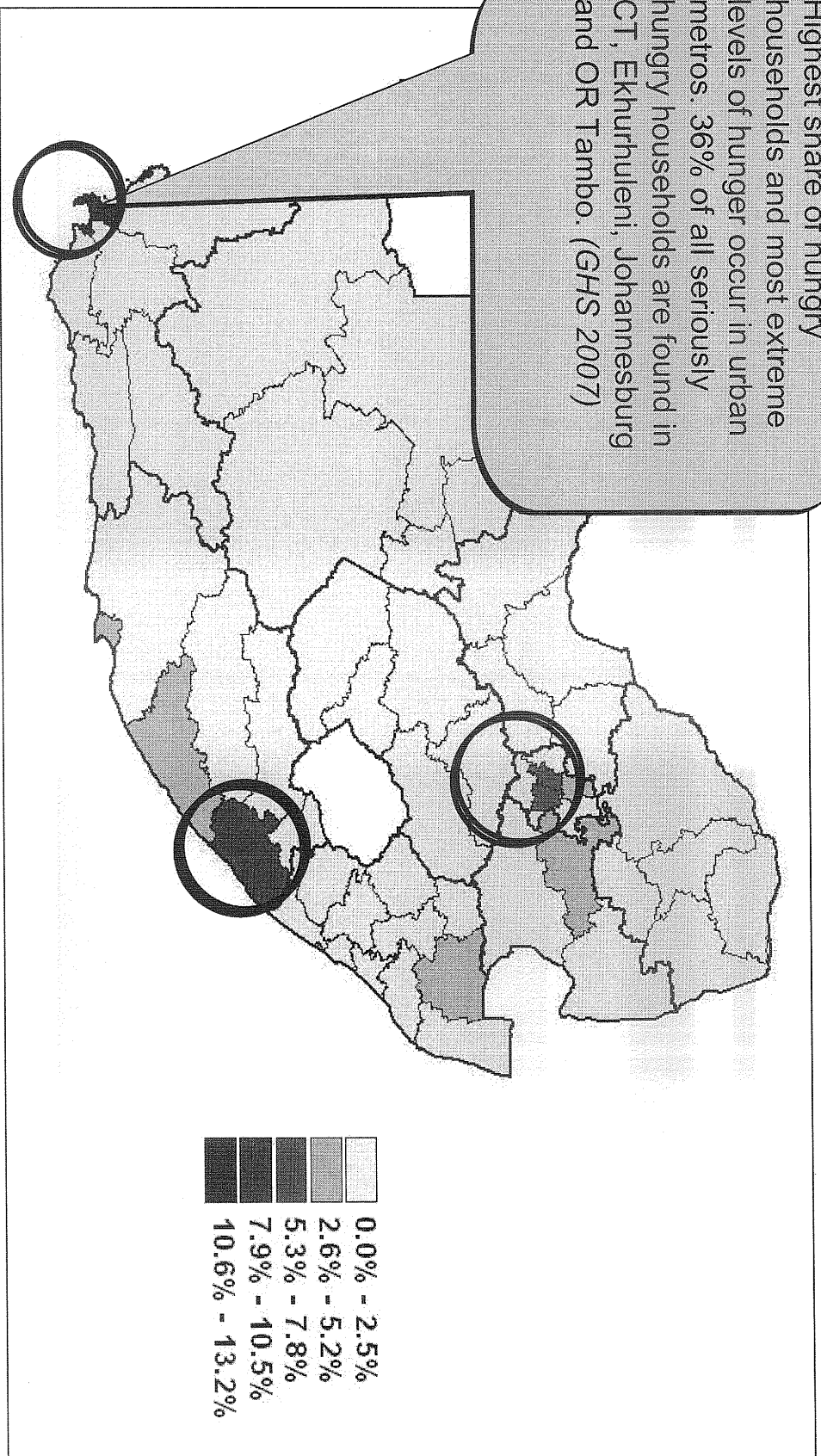
# Food and nutritional insecurity is a national challenge, not only rural

- Food security is currently located in the M&E outcome #7 focusing on rural livelihoods
- Although there are health and education sector programmes aimed at improving nutrition, there is no mention in their M&E targets
  - Exception =
    - Rural dev target = food & nutrition surveillance unit in Nutrition Directorate
    - “1 meal per day in primary schools”
- Food & nutrition security is objective for the population
- Strong evidence of deep hunger in urban areas, not only rural ones. The reasons and dynamics might differ

*Pls see handout viz. programmes + budgets that impact on FS*

# Hunger in the metros

Highest share of hungry households and most extreme levels of hunger occur in urban metros. 36% of all seriously hungry households are found in CT, Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and OR Tambo. (GHS 2007)



# Special rural dimensions

- Among the poorest half of households (i.e. those for whom monthly household income is less than R2000), rural households spend about 15% less on food per capita than urban households (esp less on meat).
- This might be explained by own food production but there is no reliable evidence available to show this.
- Rural households pay 10%-20% more for a basket of basic foodstuffs than urban ones (NAMC).

## Potential contribution of home production

- Approximately 2.5 million households (4 million people) produce extra food for own consumption – primarily in the former homelands
- Although 1/5 of all black households are involved in some home production, a large % are located in former homelands. 1/4 of all black subsistence farmers located in Vhembe, OR Tambo and Amathole municipalities
- About 1.9m subsistence producers are aged 15 – 29.
- Contribution of home production to HH food security varies considerably. Not all households that home produce are food secure.

# Ensuring affordable food at stable prices

- The poorest 40% of households allocate at least 35% of their spending to food, and some estimate this might be as high as 70%. These households need protection from rapid food inflation
- Since 2007, food prices started increasing very steeply, explained by various factors:
  - Competition along the agro-food value chains (Competition Commission investigations: Tiger Brands (bread), dairy prices, supermarkets, etc)
  - Exchange rate depreciation: Small economies reliant on food imports are vulnerable to exchange rate depreciation (this makes imported foods more expensive)
  - Input costs: fertilizer costs, packaging, wage costs
- Why is it difficult for the poor to access a nutritious basket?
  - Healthier foods could cost 9%-12% more than similar less healthy foods
  - Poor buy in smaller quantities, and therefore higher unit prices
  - Retail is often local monopoly
  - Food prices not falling as they should
- Why are prices higher in rural areas? This is not known for certain, but we can guess that partly explained by:
  - structure of distribution and retail
  - grown in rural areas, processed in urban areas, and transported back
  - transportation costs generally and poor rural infrastructure

**Way forward.....**

# Institutional home

- National or provincial?
- Which national depts have budgeted mandates for key aspects of FS solution?
- Orientation of M&E targets in relation to desired result



## Intervention options

- Social grants
- Food grants
- Reduce cost of food that people buy (market interventions, retail, competition policy)
- Improve the quality of food that people buy, often through industry regulation or product development that enhances current foods
- Alter household demand toward more nutritious combinations; develop new nutritious products; offer supplements
- Promote home production
- Monitoring and evaluation of programmes (eg do companies fortify when regulated?) and outcomes (eg did nutrition levels rise?)

*Given scale of the challenge, identify interventions that are low cost, high impact ideally with short to medium term horizon*

## Social grants support food security & stability

- Approx 13 million people benefit from various social welfare grants- including 8.7 million children (2009)
- Social grant incomes protect the recipients against hunger: it helps households to afford a basic and stable level of nutrition
- 51% of all *hungry* households in 2007 were eligible for grants but did not receive it
  - Of this, 2/3 receive some grants but qualify for additional money
  - 1/3 receive zero grant although they qualify for it
- Grants will/can have more impact:
  - Improve reach (eg through birth registrations)
  - eligibility age of child grant recipients rises to age 18

# Food fortification & supplements

- Food fortification can enhance the nutrient content and reduce the overall cost to the consumer of procuring a nutritious diet.
- Potentially, an immediate, high-impact and fairly low-cost intervention
- The following foods are fortified by law:
  - Bread White bread; Wheat flour; Maize fortified with *vitamin A*
- All children under 6 and mothers are meant to receive *vitamin A* tablets at cost of 3c each, but reaching only 20%
- Uneven impact to date:
  - Success with folic acid
  - No improvement in *vitamin A* or zinc – reasons need to be established

# Product development

- New products can support aim to improve nutrients in food purchased.
- These can be stand-alone (eg Pro Nutro)
- ...or products that can be added (eg 'sprinkles')
- Govt can play role in simulating private or public R&D, product development and marketing

# Monitoring and evaluation

- Regularised monitoring and evaluation systems are essential
- These need to monitor:
  - Programme implementation
  - Market dynamics
  - Nutrition outcomes
- High cost implies that creative approaches are needed
- Coordinated budget needed

# Recommendations

- Food and nutrition security needs to be a higher priority
- National approach and institutional home needed to meeting food security targets as laid out in M&E framework
- Clear link in budget and programmes made in relation to meeting targets
- Review of division of competencies across spheres of govt to ensure minimum delivery
- Need more forceful immediate interventions (eggs)
  - Grants to those who qualify
  - Modification to fortification & supplements programme
  - Market interventions where appropriate to fortify and ensure stable affordable prices
  - Monitoring and evaluation of implementation and outcomes
- More forceful approach to longer term interventions
- Follow on processes needed to elevate and generate profile = ?