



13TH MAY 2016

UNITE AGAINST HUNGER

**NATIONAL PEOPLES DROUGHT SPEAK OUT AND BREAD MARCH
MEMORANDUM**

The South African Food Sovereignty Campaign is an alliance of over 50 grassroots organisations, movements and NGOs. We believe South Africa's food system is unjust, unfair, unethical and unsustainable. The current food price shock, El Nino induced drought and carbon emissions due to coal burning are all connected and are revealing the limits of a corporate controlled and government supported food system. We need a transformed food system that gives control of the food system to the people through a food sovereignty pathway and alternative now to realise the right to food.

This was affirmed by our jointly convened peoples Speak Out in Emahlaleni yesterday and at this morning's Drought Speak Out at Constitutional Hill. Hence we demand urgent action from government, food corporations, the Human Rights Commission and the Consumer Commission. In this regard we want the following concerns and demands taken forward.

Bread Price Scam

Bread is eaten by most South Africans as a staple. In a highly unequal society, studies on the survival strategies of poor households reveal how bread and a brew of sugar and water is what keeps many people alive. At the same time, bread is a big money spinner for food corporations, both bread producers and retailers. Bread profiteering was rife in 2007 and 2010 amongst bread producers. Pioneer, Tiger Brands and Foodcorp were found guilty of manipulating wheat and maize milling operations by the Competition Commission and were even rebuked in the Constitutional Court for their abhorrent conduct. Bread prices have also been increasing in the context of the drought. A loaf of brown (700g) increased by 5.73 % and a loaf of white by 5.34%. Blue Ribbon bread prices have gone up 20% over the past 8 months. South Africans mainly eat bread on a daily basis and they are feeling the pressure from increasing prices. This was affirmed by our Peoples Speak Outs hosted over the past day and a half. Food corporations make millions from bread which contributes to profits, bonuses and high salaries for management. At the same time, food industry workers earn low wages and are mainly outsourced.

However, Grain South Africa has confirmed that imported wheat is cheaper than local wheat. Bread prices should not be going up but should be declining. We are experiencing a 'bread price scam'. The Competition Commission has failed to stop this. Some retailers believe that keeping bread price increases below food inflation is acceptable. We reject this profiteering given the crisis facing our society. It's time for peoples power, through non-violent action, to end food profiteering

We Demand:

- **An immediate investigation into the ‘bread price scam’ by the Human Rights Commission and the Consumer Commission;**
- **We demand bread prices must fall to an affordable level of at least R5 per loaf to ensure every household can buy bread;**
- **All bread nutrition levels to be improved. We reject GMO wheat and its use in bread. This to be done in a transparent manner;**
- **A reduction in super profits to food corporations and descent insourced work for all food industry workers.**

Climate Change, Drought and Food Price Increases

The drought in South Africa is actually part of a larger Africa wide drought. In Southern Africa at least 49 million people are threatened with hunger because of this drought. In East Africa the drought has also had a devastating impact with about 10 million people needing food aid in Ethiopia. Such drought patterns are expected to become more frequent and intense in the context of climate change.

South Africa’s El Nino induced drought is exposing serious weaknesses in the states response. While South Africa has experienced El Nino induced droughts before, this particular drought is linked to the worsening climate crisis. Last year the world’s temperature increased by 1 degree Celsius and recorded the hottest temperatures on the planet. This trend is continuing. While the state is responding to commercial farmers it is not doing enough for small scale farmers and poor communities. Our Speak Outs have confirmed the following:

- small scale farmers were struggling before the drought but the drought has worsened things included financial problems;
- there is a lack of effort on governments part to mobilise communities;
- government is failing to assess small scale farmer needs adequately such that food parcels even for livestock are not sufficient;
- there is no clear response on how to bring back cultivation of food crops;
- water management is revealing serious weaknesses with some support for boreholes, pumps but most are not getting adequate support for sustainable water management;
- there is no government policy thinking on how to mitigate impacts beyond the immediate effects of the drought; and
- increasing food prices are hurting even farming households.

The state is also not using the Disaster Management Act in a way that mobilises society to learn about the climate crisis, strengthen water management plans and draw out lessons for the future. South Africa’s drought is affecting millions of people and increasing starvation. Coal burning and extraction is killing us. Our Speak Outs confirmed:

- Coal mining is devastating communities. Acid mine drainage, air pollution, water pollution and mine dumps are causing serious illness;
- Coal and other types of mining is leading to land grabs;
- Water resources are captured by coal mining corporations or white farmers making it extremely difficult for small scale farmers and communities to survive;
- Coal and other types of mining is not creating jobs, it is not benefitting communities and instead promotes prostitution and poverty.

- Mining corporations are not complying with regulations and neither are they rehabilitating land that has been mined.

Climate change is further exposing the problems with a corporate controlled food system. Before the drought 14 million people went to bed hungry and about 46% were food insecure. Many more are suffering now as food prices have been increasing. All measurements of food prices are showing a dramatic increase in food inflation, with year-on-year increase of particularly staples. The year-on-year increase for Jan 2015 to Jan 2016 was 14.6%. The biggest increases have been in mealie meal, samp, cooking oil and potatoes. Food profiteering denies us the right to food under the constitution.

Moreover, food inflation has eroded the value of social grants. According to PACSA the total of old age pension (R1510 in April/October 2016) comes short in terms of the current cost of a food basket (R1879.24 in February 2016). Moreover, a minimum food basket (household of 4) costs R2420.77 in February 2016. In South Africa 27 million people earn less than R3000 per month and with food price increases, particularly of staples, hunger is going to worsen. Already 1 in 5 children suffer from malnutrition and learning disabilities. Food profiteering undermines the future of our children

We Demand:

- **We demand that the price of all staples fall to affordable levels;**
- **The government declare the drought a national disaster with special measures taken to ensure food and livestock production for subsistence and small scale farmers is recovered. We reject GMO seeds, including drought tolerant maize, and these should not be part of government support.**
- **We invite government into a peoples climate justice movement led process to learn lessons from this drought including the importance of independent and permanent community based food sovereignty forums and a serious review of the Disaster Management Act;**
- **An immediate transition out of coal mining and a lifting of the ceiling on renewable energy in the Integrated Resource Plan, the development of a national renewable energy parastatal and the development of a domestic renewables industry as part of creating climate jobs;**
- **An increase in the social grant in the short term to ameliorate the impacts of food inflation, as opposed to spending on nuclear power, and the social grant to be replaced by the development of a basic income grant policy for South Africa;**
- **The democratisation of water management plans in municipalities and for these to become people driven and owned;**
- **A review of all water licenses given to mining corporations to ensure compliance and where necessary to revoke such licenses if sustainable water use standards are not met.**
- **Farming land must be protected from mining.**

Towards Food Sovereignty Alternatives and Pathways

South Africa needs to diversify its food system and ensure the people can control the food system to survive the climate crisis and feed themselves in sustainable ways. In this regard we want to announce four further actions to advance a food sovereignty pathway for South Africa:

- **Local Bread Marches** - In coming weeks the SAFSC will be rolling out at least 12 localised and non-violent bread marches to bread corporations and food retailers. We will use these marches to create a platform to communicate the demands from the National Drought Speak Out and Bread March.
- **The development and advocacy for a food sovereignty law** – to secure a space for agro-ecology, fast track land reform, seed saving, community bakeries, community food markets and cooperative restaurants, solidarity economy worker cooperatives etc.
- **Local Food Sovereignty Forums** – in communities to develop capacities to build resilience, food sovereignty pathways and cultures.
- **Building food sovereignty movement links in Southern Africa** – through learning exchanges, food sovereignty festivals and information sharing

**Unite against Hunger and Food Profiteering!
Turn Down the Heat Through Food Sovereignty
Forward to a Peoples Movement for Food Sovereignty and
Climate Justice Now!**

Contact:

Davine Cloete: 071 5922 361

Vishwas Satgar: 082 775 3420

Xolisa Bangani: 081 414 8411