



CONCEPT NOTE

National Policy Dialogue on a Just Transition and Adaptation in the South African Food System

Dates: 20-22 September 2023

Venue: Airport Gardens Boutique Hotel, Johannesburg

Co-hosted by



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Problem Statement and Concept

The food system in South Africa (SA) is a significant contributor to the country's emissions that cause climate change, and agriculture in particular is also deeply vulnerable to climate change impacts. This will have far-reaching implications for nutrition, food prices, the livelihoods of workers in existing food value chains, land tenure security for farm dwellers and those living on communal land, and for smallholder farmers.

- This necessitates a just transition in the food system that:
- lowers emissions (mitigation),
- ensures resilience to climate impacts (adaptation),
- achieves the right to food, and protects, expands and improves equitable employment and livelihood opportunities and secure tenure for workers, smallholder farmers, and communities.

Just transition discussions have so far largely been limited to the energy system, given the outsized contribution that the coal-powered system makes to SA's emissions. However, the ecological and social significance of the food system, especially in the context of climate change, calls for a concerted policy focus on deep shifts necessary in the food system to ensure it achieves ecological harmony, the right to food, tenure security and equitable livelihoods.

Land inequality is increasing and, in general, large farms are becoming bigger – marking a clear trend of the increasing concentration of land and natural resources as well as economic ownership by the corporate sector throughout the food system. Important progress has been made in the recognition of land rights and tenure security as solutions to the climate change and food systems emergencies, and international climate instruments are increasingly recognising the role of rural people and tenure security in adapting to and mitigating climate change. There has been growing momentum for a more holistic understanding of and approach to food systems at various levels, including land, in order to promote more sustainable farm practices such as agroecology.

Currently, government policy on the food system remains fragmented, both within the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), and across policy sectors that intersect significantly with the food system, such as environment and labour. This includes a disjuncture between food system governance, agricultural policy, and





land and agrarian reform. Policy also generally does not reflect the deeper changes needed in the food system to ensure a just transition, through an integrated food system lens. For example, the Presidential Climate Commission's (PCC's) Just Transition Framework lacks depth and breadth in its vision for building adaptation in the food system, including a more transformative vision of land reform. Policy and implementation tends to reinforce the existing commercial structure of the food and agrarian system, which also reflects the power of the commercial agriculture and agro-industrial lobby to work closely with government to influence policy in their favour. This is further reflected in the policy marginalisation of the role of smallholder farmers, and farm and food workers in a sustainable food system, such as in the 2015 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan for Agriculture (CCAMP).

In this context, there is an urgent need for a more comprehensive policy orientation that is informed by an integrated approach towards a just food system transition, including the connections between land reform, climate change adaptation, water, decent employment and sustainable livelihoods, and the right to food. A progressive social force is required to advocate for this. The aim of the National Dialogue on a Just Transition and Adaptation in the South African Agri-Food System is therefore to build a more coordinated voice between civil society, workers, smallholder farmers, and communities on key policy priorities for a just food system transition and to build and strengthen adaptation and resilience in the context of climate change.

Objectives of the National Dialogue

- Strengthen the voice of constituencies of civil society, workers, smallholder farmers, and communities by contributing to building a shared agenda on key criteria and principles for a just food system transition that mitigates food system emissions and builds adaptive capacity and resilience;
- Facilitate a dialogue space for multiple stakeholders to share their understandings of and approaches to relevant national policy-making processes;
- Develop a shared understanding of the contents, gaps and opportunities in the Climate Change Bill, CCAMP, and other relevant sector policies to inform policy positions and create ongoing policy coordination on this and other related policy engagements;
- Establish an ongoing space/platform for strategic sharing between civil society, workers, smallholder farmers, and communities, to shape ongoing engagement with government policy.





Structuring the Dialogue to Create Spaces for Engagement and Consensus

Programming and Structure

A key purpose of the Dialogue is to create spaces for engagement between members of different constituencies and between related sectors of the food system, which will require careful consideration of how to create opportunities for information sharing, creative discussion and identification of areas of shared perspective and divergence.

The dialogue structure will therefore aim to provide space for:

- Academics, researchers and practitioners – to help frame key issues and topics;
- Various constituency voices – to be heard; and
- Government – to provide information and updates on current and planned processes, as well as opportunities for constituencies to engage in these processes.

The dialogue will aim to identify areas of consensus – and key divergences – between different constituencies, in order to start building a set of common principles and criteria required for the transition to a just food system. One of the specific intended outcomes of the dialogue process is to develop a shared basis for policy positions within civil society on the CCAMP, to be taken forward to a formal policy engagement process with the government through The Adaptation Network. The process will aim to identify areas of consensus that can form the basis of shared positions on key aspects of a just transition in the food system that can shape wider ongoing policy engagements.

The Dialogue will be structured to allow for the hosting of parallel sessions, including creative sessions to think through key topics. Key stakeholders with expertise and experience in different areas will be invited to host these sessions, with a cross-section of dialogue participants – both on the key topics identified below, as well as introducing cross-cutting themes, such as youth and gender and how they intersect with climate change and food systems.





Key Topics for Engagement

The following is an indicative list of topics to be engaged on during the dialogue, to guide invitations for participation, but the process will be further refined through stakeholder contributions, as the programme is finalised. These topics may be the basis for discrete sessions, or may be woven through the various activities:

- Unpacking a “just transition” and what this means in terms of climate justice, adaptation and impacts on the food system.
- What does taking a food systems approach mean?
 - Seeing the links from production to consumption/food security (and so interrogating Food Security and Nutrition Policy).
 - Unpacking the concept of Agroecology for food sovereignty – how does this intersect or diverge from other approaches such as Climate Smart Agriculture, Conservation Agriculture, etc.
 - Recognising the role of small-scale farmers, land reform and the food system, and the voices and of young smallholder farmers.
 - Identifying threats and opportunities for workers throughout the food system.
 - Taking into account gender justice and the food system.
- Unpacking climate impacts on key sectors involved in food production and sectoral policies:
 - Agriculture and the CCAMP
 - Land reform and rural development (e.g. the impact of lack of land tenure security impact on the food system)
 - Water
 - Waste in the value chain
 - Food production and trade (e.g. the impacts of imports and agricultural dumping and food sovereignty versus an export approach)
 - Employment and livelihoods
 - Agro-processing and value addition in the context of climate change (e.g. in relation to workers, young farmers etc.)
 - Adaptation by farmers, workers and communities to projected impacts on the food system
 - Cross-cutting themes (to be considered through separate sessions and within each theme): youth, women, land, water, agroecology, and right to food, employment and livelihoods.





Preparatory Process

To ensure that the Dialogue is a space of robust, informed and constructive engagement, preparatory processes will be developed to ensure that constituency representatives attend the Dialogue, with some level of engagement on issues of the food system and climate change, and how these relate to their experiences and priorities. The lead-up phase to the dialogue will involve three key activities.

1. Constituency Consultation Workshops

Prior to the national dialogue, consultations will be held with key constituencies, including smallholder farmers, farm and food workers, and civil society organisations working on agroecology, food systems, land, water and environment. Participants to the national dialogue will be drawn in part from these consultations, which will allow the participants to deliberate on key concepts on just transition, food systems, and adaptation to projected changes, and to reflect on experiences and priorities. The national dialogue will build on these discussions, deepening them and carrying them further. The dialogue host organisations will facilitate these consultations together with key constituencies.

2. Fact sheets summarising key information for workshops and for prep for the Dialogue

Short fact sheets on selected topics will be developed, with translations into local languages, for sharing at the consultations and the dialogue. Topics will include: Just transition

- What is the food system?
- Food system emissions
- Projected impacts of climate change on the food system
- Differentiated impacts on women and youth
- Land and climate change
- Overview of the agriculture sector Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan (CCAMP)
- Food system and adaptation
- Agroecology as potential alternative

Synthesis reports from the consultations will be also be produced and shared.





Organisations participating in the consultations and national Dialogue will be invited to bring materials (e.g. reports, pamphlets, and seeds), which they may wish to share with others.

3. Key Stakeholder Groups to Invite to Dialogue Process

- Smallholder farmers, agroecology practitioners, and movements working in the space
- Labour (farm workers, food sector workers, retail workers)
- Informal economy workers (traders)
- Civil society organisations working on climate change and other environmental issues, agroecology, land, water, food, and other related areas
- Academia – to provide context and engage
- Government: Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), key national departments, provincial government (e.g. DALRRD, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Labour, Water and Sanitation, Health)
- Actors who influence government, e.g. the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

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