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## FOOD SECURITY STATE AND CHALLENGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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**Abstract.** The study assesses the status quo of SDG 2 implementation in South Africa. The study further examines the obstacles to achieving SDG 2 within the nation's framework. The study also looks at and assesses several national programmes related to food security. A few interventions are discussed and considered to enhance and augment the extent of food security in South Africa. The study employed a qualitative approach and used the literature review to compile information related to SDG 2 and food security interventions, which was further analyzed through document and conceptual analysis. The findings show that there are issues with the implementation of policies pertaining to food security initiatives. The study aims to answer the following questions: What obstacles need to be overcome for SDG 2 to be implemented effectively, and what measures are necessary to ensure the success of food security interventions in South Africa? Thus, the study aims to evaluate South Africa's progress toward food security (focus). It also seeks to assess the accomplishments and shortcomings of food security initiatives implemented in South Africa (locus). The sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) is considered a theoretical framework for the study. Suggestions for improving policy are made as a contribution to the public management and governance field.

**Keywords:** food security; qualitative study; South Africa; sustainable livelihoods approach; sustainable development goals (SDGs), SDG 2.

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**JEL Classifications:** O11, O15, Q18

**Additional disciplines:** Public Management, Development Studies.

### 1. Introduction

In 2023, it was recorded that nearly 282 million people globally suffered from high levels of acute hunger, spanning 59 countries and territories. This statistic was explored by the Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC). This represents a 24 million increase over 2022, according to the World Bank Report (2024:1). Given that over 36 million children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition in 32 different countries, children and women are disproportionately affected by these hunger crises. Particularly among those displaced due to conflict and natural disasters, acute malnutrition became more severe in 2023, as per the report of the World Bank (2024:1). Food security is seemingly the most significant challenge the world is facing in 2024. Therefore, the World Bank has acknowledged that inadequate food and nutrition insecurity is a worldwide challenge that requires strategic interventions. To date, it has contributed an amount of \$45 billion, exceeding its initial projected commitment of \$30 billion that it proclaimed two years ago in May 2022, to addressing issues and protecting

livelihoods worldwide (refer to Andree et al., 2024:1). The study investigates the status of SDG 2, exploring the challenges and interventions related to food security in the context of South Africa.

To bring social-economic development, 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) were revised as post-millennium development goals (MDGs), with an expected timeline to be realized by 2030. As observed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2020), these 17 SDGs are interconnected globally because they share a common focus and complement each other in achieving the goals of sustaining the environment and enhancing social and economic development. Furthermore, to consider, member states of the United Nations (UN) approved the 'Agenda 2030' for sustainable development because they perceived it as a chance to increase global prosperity and peace within a broader scope of liberty, as confirmed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA, 2020) and reinforced in the scholarly publications by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022a: 266-267). To eradicate poverty and realize SDGs by 2030, the 'Agenda' aims to promote development in each member country. The 'Agenda' creates a global vision for sustainable development that benefits all, states the European Foreign Institute (EFI) (2019).

SDG 2 aims to achieve no or zero hunger. Note that hunger is linked to food, meaning zero hunger demands strategic and policy interventions related to food security, hence realizing the aims of SDG 2. The term first originated in the mid-1970s, assuring that essential food items are easily available and financially feasible. It also means that there are no significant fluctuations in the prices of food items causing price instability at both the national and international levels. This was the essence of the definition of food security given by the World Food Conference in 1974 (refer to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 2006:1). To maintain a constant growth in the consumption of food items and to counteract variations in price and production, the definition emphasizes the necessity of always having sufficient global food supplies of staple foods available (FAO, 2006:1). The definition of food security that resulted from the FAO (1983) analysis was based on the equilibrium between the demand and supply sides of the equation. The study emphasized the need to make sure that everyone always has access to the essential foods they need, both financially and physically, as further recorded in the documents of FAO (2006:1).

Non-numerical textual, visual, or audio data must be gathered and analyzed to address the questions raised and achieve the study's objectives. This is a qualitative study. The social sciences and humanities are the usual fields that employ qualitative research. It is carried out to understand experiences, ideas, or viewpoints, to acquire a thorough grasp of an issue, or to produce fresh concepts for further investigation, as suggested by Bhandari (2020:1) and adapted by Masibigiri (2023:8), and therefore aims to gain a thorough understanding on social issues, as further indicated by various scholars, such as Nyikadzino and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020:33); Vyas-Doorgapersad (2021:1; and 2023:2061). The data is collected through a literature review. According to May (1997:4), an organized review of the existing literature is essential to research success. The process by which knowledge about what is known and unknown is acquired is through a review of the literature. It is crucial that the researcher plans the literature search around the main ideas that will be examined, and hence also advocated by Jansen (2024:22). The data was analyzed through conceptual analysis. According to Maxwell (2005:66), conceptual analysis is a system of ideas, presumptions, theories, and concepts that guide research. It is typically accepted as a suggested explanation for gaining a clear overview of the socially constructed reality under study, as further validated by Mutandwa (2023:36). On the other hand, a systematic approach called document analysis seeks to obtain a thorough assessment of the material that has been carefully selected to identify any themes, patterns, or biases that may be present within the subject matter under investigation, as opined by Leedy and Ormrod (2001:155) and further augmented in research works by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022:19).

The study considers the sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) as a theoretical framework for this study. One way to think about developing activities is through the lens of the sustainable livelihoods approach. This covers the goals, priorities, and scope. Formulating development activities is made easier with this method. This

methodology introduces a dynamic perspective on the lives of the impoverished and marginalized, as well as the importance of policies and institutions, as suggested by Morse and McNamara (2013:2) and adapted by Hlongwane (2023:27).

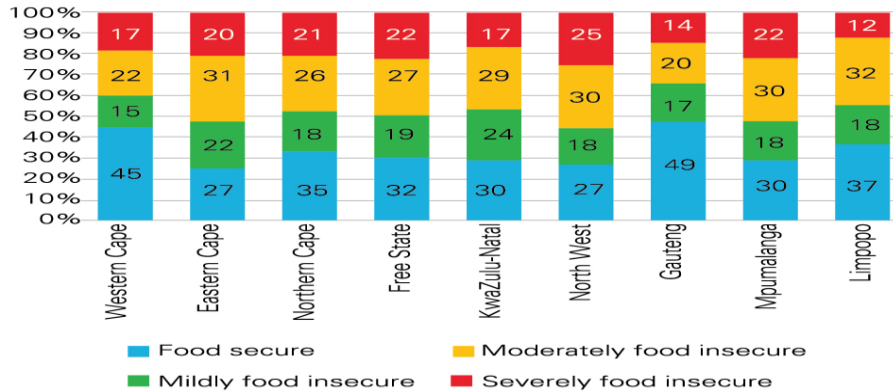
## **2. SDG 2 in the South African Context**

Apartheid South Africa had uneven opportunities related to education and employment that caused segregation of benefits. However, South Africa has faced varied socioeconomic, technological, and political changes since 1994, even after the transition from apartheid to democracy. These inequalities include gender-biasedness in employment, lack of talent management in human resources in organizations, and the digital divide, to state a few. The inequality that forms part of the study is income inequality, which, according to Van Braun (2007:3), is a significant contributing factor to household food insecurity, lack of access to resources, and subsequent difficulty in obtaining enough food. An additional challenge to poverty is linked to the lack of job opportunities, whereby the number of unemployed people and households may increase, hence causing constrained financial resources to access food, as suggested in the works of Adubu-Raheem and Worth (2011:2); and further narrated by Hlongwane (2023:18). According to the statistics published in the official report of the World Bank (2020:1), considering the upper poverty line of ZAR 992 at the national level, it is reported that nearly 55.5% of the populace (that is 30.3 million of South Africans) experienced living as poor, and 13.8 million South Africans (that is 25% of the population) experienced food insecurity. In a similar vein, the international poverty standards estimated that the poverty rate would be 18.9% and 37.6% in 2014–15, respectively, up from 16.6% and 35.9% in 2010–11, based on assessments of \$1.90 and \$3.20 per person per day (2011).

The South African Government has demonstrated commitment towards implementing SDGs. This was done by encouraging organizations, particularly those in the public sector, to align and integrate their strategies, plans, and objectives with SDGs (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Although the general progress towards the achievement of SDGs significantly varies, there is a consensus in the literature that the achievement of SDGs in Africa still needs to be completed. This study seeks to provide an account of the progress towards implementing SDGs in the country, focusing mainly on SDG 2. The goals are to end hunger, reduce food insecurity, enhance nutrition, and advance sustainable agriculture, which are the objectives of SDG 2 (UN, 2024:1).

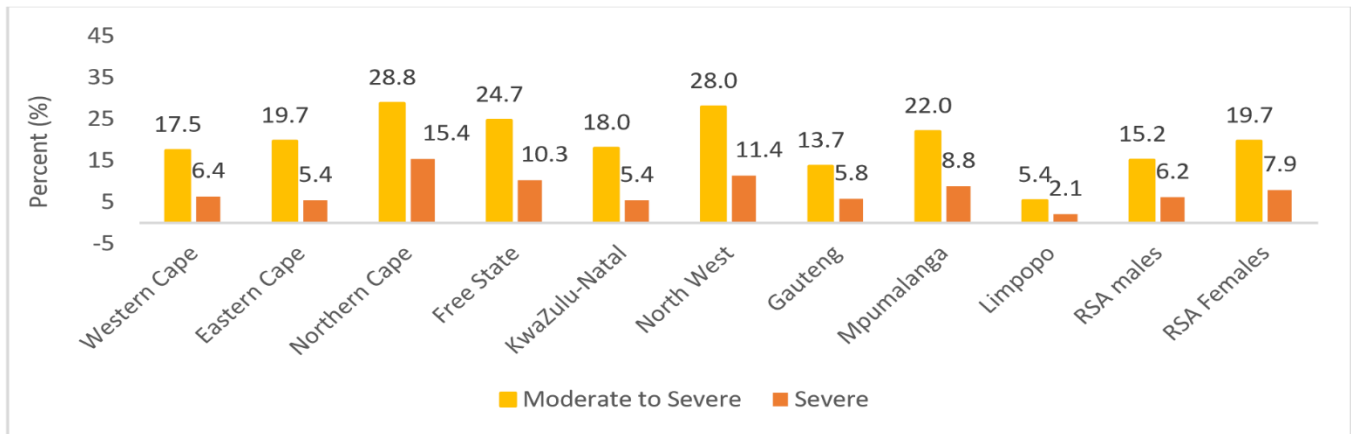
Despite South Africa's concerted efforts to achieve SDG 2 targets, the country still needs to catch up like many other African countries. Literature highlights malnutrition and food insecurity statistics, particularly among rural populations and informal settlements in urban settings (van der Berg, Patel & Bridgman 2022). A survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2024:1) revealed that although South Africa regards food and nutrition security as a constitutional right, some people still only eat once or twice a day or go to bed hungry in some parts of the nation (HSRC, 2024:1). Using data from South Africa's National Food and Nutrition Security Survey (NFNSS) between the years 2021 and 2023, the survey was conducted to obtain advanced statistical information (HSRC, 2024). The survey measured Household Hunger, Food Consumption, Household Dietary Diversity, and Household Food Insecurity Access Scores (HSRC, 2024). The survey revealed that 17.5% of South African households faced severe food insecurity; 26.7% were moderately, 19.3% were mildly, and 36.5% were food insecure (HSRC, 2024).

Regarding the Household Hunger Score, the survey found that 79.2% of households said they were rarely or never hungry, 15.3% said they were moderately hungry, and 5.6% said they were severely hungry (HSRC, 2024). Although the Household Food Insecurity Access and the Household Hunger scores indicate that South Africa's nationals food insecurity levels are not severe, there were acute situations in some provinces and districts. Graph 1 below, obtained from the HSRC (2024), reflects the disaggregated food security situation by provinces in the country, with the North West having 25% of the households experiencing severe food insecurity, 30% facing moderate food insecurity, and 10% experiencing severe hunger.



**Graph 1.** Disaggregated food security situation by provinces in South Africa  
 Source: Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2024)

A country report on SDGs released by Statistics South Africa (2023) provides additional information highlighting the percentage of the population facing a lack of food availability. The statistics range from moderate to severe levels of food insecurity, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) in South Africa (see Graph 2).

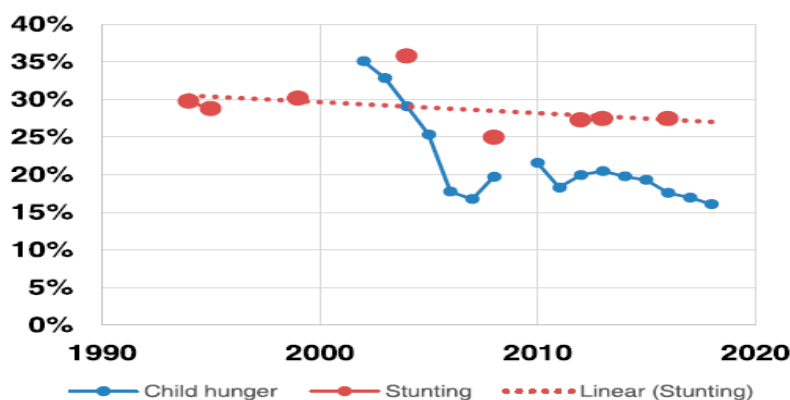


**Graph 2.** Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) in 2019, by province and sex  
 Source: Statistics South Africa 2023b:33.

Based on Statistics South Africa 2021 data, the provinces (North West and Northern Cape) seemed to have the highest rates of food insecurity, ranging from moderate to severe levels in 2019 (above 28.0%). Particularly the Northern Cape, which experiences drought frequently, hence making it more susceptible to starvation (Statistics South Africa 2023:33). According to van der Berg et al. (2022:722), although there were initiatives regarding investing in social protection programmes; there was still a high level of food insecurity witnessed, along with child hunger. For instance, the Global Nutrition Report (2019) reported that about one-quarter of South African households lacked adequate finances to buy basic food in the past year. Shortages of money to purchase basic food negatively affected nutrition, particularly for children.

Consequently, in 2016, the percentage of children under five that were stunted and wasted was recorded as 27% and 2.5%, respectively (Global Nutrition Report, 2019). Malnutrition among children below five years of age has been identified, albeit directly, as a contributor to child mortality in South Africa. According to Bamford, Mckerrow, Barron and Aung (2018:27), although malnutrition was not the leading cause of death, a third of children who died in South Africa were severely malnourished. These statistics underscore the importance of government nutrition support programmes for children.

A trend analysis of hunger and stunting (van der Berg et al., 2022:724) shows that although South Africa experienced a drastic decline in hunger between 2000 and 2020, it remains high, ranging between 30 and 25% (also referred to as Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, 2021). The reduction in hunger among children was attributed to the Child Support Programme, see Graph 3. The programme, however, failed to reduce stunting.

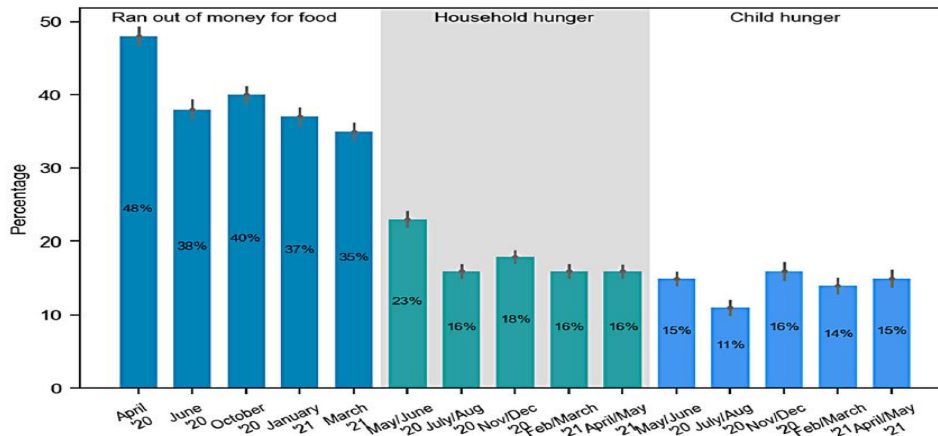


**Graph 3.** Long-term trends in child hunger and stunting

*Source:* van der Berg et al. (2022:724)

A recent survey by the HSRC (2024), which measured rates of stunting, underweight, and wasting in children between 0-5 years of age, found that 29% faced stunting, 5.3% faced wasting, and 7.8% faced underweight, respectively. However, results for some provinces showed high levels of stunting. For instance, the Northern Cape recorded an overall rate of stunting (48.3%), of which 16% were severely stunted (HSRC, 2024). The Northern Cape province also experienced severe wasting (21.8%) and severe underweight (22.4%). The status quo of hunger in the country experienced a drastic shift during COVID-19. The level of hunger before and during COVID-19 is also worth mentioning in this study. Before the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, 5.5% of people reported having 'extremely inadequate access' to sufficient food, and about 16% of households reported having 'inadequate access' to food. Roughly 11% of households stated they were at risk of going hungry, as investigated by Kerr, Ardington and Burger 2020) and further explored in the works of Alaba, Hongoro, Thulare and Lukwa (2022:2). The era experienced the existence of COVID-19 had also witnessed a reversal of the national gains towards the achievement of SDG 2 as there was a sharp rise in food insecurity and hunger. The level of hunger during COVID-19 was also studied by another researcher who highlighted that, under strict lockdowns brought on by COVID-19, household hunger skyrocketed, with 47% of households experiencing a shortage of funds for groceries in May/June 2020 (the first wave) (Spaull et al., 2020a) and Alaba et al. (2022:2). The percentage of hungry households fell to 37%. However, there was still a significant increase in hunger and food insecurity compared to before COVID-19, as researched by scholars such as Spaull et al. (2020b) and Alaba et al. (2022:2). Additionally, it had been speculated that by the time the year 2020 ends, the pandemic called COVID-19 may have caused 49 million people to live and experience extreme levels of poverty (Hunger Map, 2020). Hunger is

primarily determined by socioeconomic status, so the likelihood of no hunger by 2030 decreases with increased numbers of hungry people (FAO, 2019) due to poverty and unemployment. Graph 4 below shows a trend analysis of child hunger, hunger and food security in South Africa due to COVID-19 from 2020 to 2021 as per the NIDS-CRMS.



**Graph 4.** Trend analysis of food security, hunger and child hunger in South Africa

Source: van der Berg et al. (2022:726)

The statistics are supported by the Borgen Project (2021:1) and further affirmed by Hlongwane (2023:3) and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2024:250), stating that South Africa is a home and shelter to 6.5 million. However, 11% of them are considered food insecure and experience hunger. Considering this situation for South African households, approximately 11,6% of families, that is 2.1 million households in the country, experienced hunger in 2021, as explored in the reports of the Statistics SA (2023:1) and further narrated by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2024:250). The latest update is a Household Affordability Index (HAI) that is a report published by the Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity Group (PMBEJD) on 24 January 2024 highlighted that a child's primary, nutritious diet would have cost R953,75 on average in January 2024. Providing a child with a diet with primary nutritional value costs R14,02, or 1.5% more on average this month than last. A child's essential nutritious diet costs R100,72 (11.8%) more annually. In January 2024, the Child Support Grant was only R510 (33%), which is less than the R760 Food Poverty Line and 47% less than the average amount of R953,75 that is required to provide a child with an essential nutritious diet (PMBEJD 2024). As highlighted by various scholars, such as Chakona and Shackleton (2019), Mlambo and Khuzwayo (2021:9-10), Vyas-Doorgapersad, Shava and Olowu (2023:65), there are a few significant issues related to food security and nutritional value-driven food items, their availability, and affordability in South African context. Firstly, in some households, a few people earn wages but have many households living as dependents. This situation may cause households to live an impoverished life. Secondly, the country is required to have appropriate disaster risk management strategies and systems to deal with calamities, such as drought and floods. These natural disasters may cause food insecurity for households who live in disaster-prone areas. Thirdly, households require an adequate supply of food items to survive. Lack of such availability may cause hunger and malnutrition among households. Fourthly, households also need more financial support to have purchasing power. Lastly, lack of nutritional value in food items may lead to children facing malnutrition, which in the long run may cause chronic malnutrition that is dangerous to health and may cost the lives of children.

The inseparable relationship and nexus between poverty and food security highlights the need for the Government to focus more on strategies towards reducing poverty and inequalities in the country. Reducing poverty and inequalities may help the country achieve many SDGs. There is a need for a collaborative multistakeholder

approach to control poverty levels in South Africa. With high poverty rates, addressing hunger and malnutrition remains a daunting task.

### **3. Challenges and Interventions to Achieve SDG 2 in South African Context**

The spread of COVID-19 has been highlighted as an unwanted but unavoidable variable hampering government efforts towards achieving SDG 2. The COVID-19 spread in South Africa, and the subsequent lockdown measures resulted in economic disruptions and uncertainties that hounded many South Africans. Therefore, it was unsurprising that poverty and associated hunger and food insecurity worsened. Van der Berg et al. (2022:722) illustrate that the strict lockdown measures introduced by the South African Government to curb the coronavirus spread significantly compromised employment levels and incomes, especially for those in the informal sectors whose income solely depends on daily activities and sales. The negatively recorded financial implications from the COVID-19 pandemic have permanently impacted the nation's efforts and interventions towards SDG2, particularly for a country already struggling with rising unemployment and inequality. The COVID-19 pandemic brought food insecurity, malnutrition and hunger as vital and prominent policy problems between 2019 and 2022 (Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, 2021).

Natural calamities caused by climate change- such as floods and drought- are also significant contributors to food insecurity in Africa, and South Africa is no exception. Ngcamu & Chari (2020:2) hold that drought hampers agricultural productivity and has cost South African farmers vast sums of money. A study by Bahta, Jordaan and Muyambo (2016) and further validated by Bareki and Anitwi (2017:589) found that one of the worst droughts in a century has recently struck South Africa. Agricultural productivity is expected to be compromised in areas that receive summer rainfall. Droughts have severely damaged South Africa's agriculture industry, primarily harming the country's vast farming regions. A report was prepared by Statistics South Africa (2019), based on the percentage of households in each province engaged in agricultural production activities between 2011 and 2016, utilizing information gathered from the Community Survey (CS) 2016 and the Census 2011 (Statistics SA 2019). The report stated that South Africa saw a decrease in the percentage of households engaged in agricultural tasks and undertakings between 2011 and 2016. Approximately 2,9 million households (19,9%) reported engaging in activities related to agriculture in 2011, but by 2016, only 2,3 million households (13,8%) still reported doing so. A decline of 6.1% in the percentage point was noted (Statistics SA 2019:7). Such a trend compromises food security, especially for households in rural areas. The effects and impacts of drought on food security have been worsened by the lack of advanced technologies for providing accurate data to local farmers. Bareki and Anitwi (2017:595) revealed that 98% of the farmers reported needing early warning information to mitigate drought proactively.

The increasing levels of unemployment coupled with high poverty levels among black South Africans are also among the significant variables for lack of food security and inadequate food availability to remain prevalent in the country. Several studies have shown a significant relationship between poverty, food insecurity and hunger (Statistics SA 2019:4; van der Berg et al. 2022:723). As van der Berg et al. (2022:723) put succinctly, hunger and inadequate nutrition, such as an unbalanced carbohydrate diet, are common signs of poverty. Studies have shown high levels of absolute poverty in South Africa (Adetoro, Ngidi & Danso-Abbeam, 2023; Becker & Becker, 2022). Statistics South Africa (2020) revealed that 88.4% of the children living in rural areas experienced multidimensional poverty, with Limpopo Province and Eastern Cape Province being the most poverty-stricken provinces (Adetoro et al. 2023:147). This underscores the need for focused and localized poverty eradication programmes to fight poverty and food insecurity from the grassroots.

Increasing unemployment levels that have characterized South Africa for the past two decades also have a bearing on food security. Unemployment rates in South Africa rose from 38.7% in Q4 of 2019 (Statistics SA 2020) to 41% in Q4 of 2023 (Statistics SA 2024). Unemployment has not only contributed to poverty but also affects food

security. This makes it the linchpin of South Africa's dilemma to achieve SDGs 2030. Although, in some instances, South Africa has managed to produce enough food for the country, due to unemployment and lack of disposable income, [many] South Africans still needed access to food (Statistics SA 2019). Thus, achieving SDG2 in South Africa calls for comprehensive and multifaceted strategies that confront the root causes of poverty, unemployment and inequalities in the country.

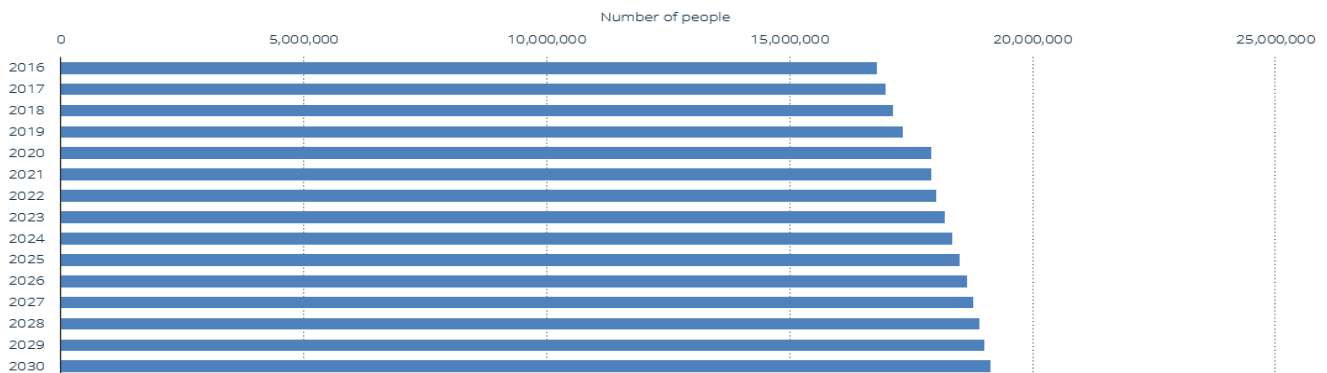
Inflationary pressures have worsened food insecurity. Inflation has also significantly eroded the spending power of many South Africans, particularly low-income people. Since 2009, South Africa has been experiencing rising inflation levels (Statistics SA, 2023a; Staff Writer, 2023). Table 1 below shows ever-rising levels of inflation-adjusted poverty lines.

**Table 1.** Inflation-adjusted national poverty lines, 2006 to 2023 (per person per month in rands)

Year*	Food Poverty Line	Lower-bound ty Line (LBPL)	Upper-bound Poverty Line (UBPL)
2006	219	370	575
2007	237	396	613
2008	274	447	682
2009	318	456	709
2010	320	466	733
2011	335	501	779
2012	366	541	834
2013	386	572	883
2014	417	613	942
2015 (April)	441	647	992
2016 (April)	498	714	1077
2017 (April)	531	758	1138
2018 (April)	547	785	1183
2019 (April)	561	810	1227
2020 (April)	585	840	1268
2021 (April)	624	890	1335
2022 (April)	663	945	1417
2023 (May)	760	1058	1558

Source: Statistics South Africa 2023:4.

The number of poor people and the extent of poverty is only increasing, as provided by Statista 2024 (see Graph 5).



**Graph 5.** Number of people living in extreme poverty in South Africa from 2016 to 2030

Source: World Data Lab 2023, provided by Statista 2024.

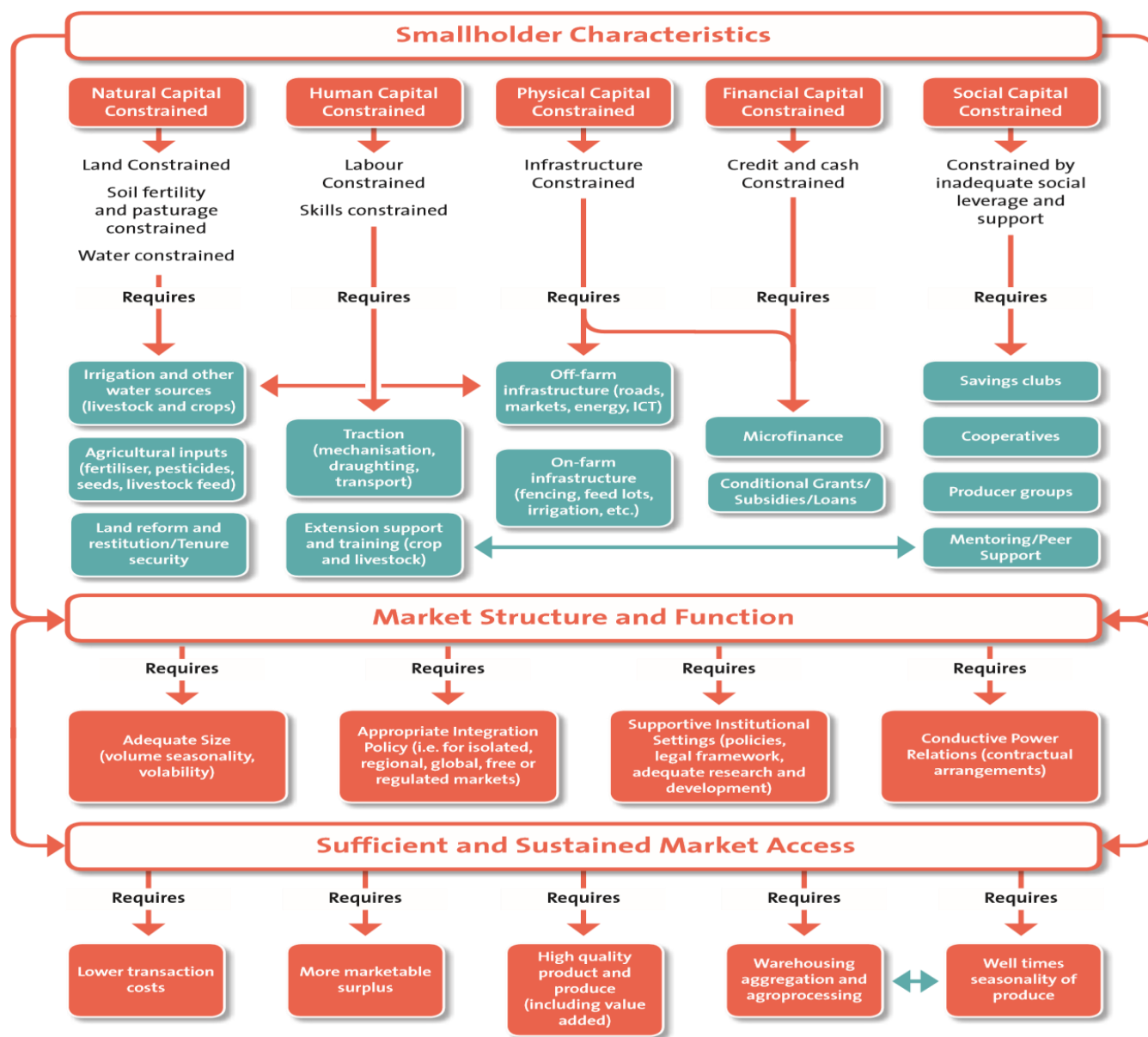
The data shows that 18.2 million people in South Africa are reportedly experiencing extreme levels of poverty as of 2023, with the daily poverty threshold being USD 1.90. A comparison of this data to 2022 indicates that an

additional 162,859 people reported experiencing poverty. Based on this increased number of people, the headcount is expected to rise in the years to come. Survival may be challenging, as by 2023, it is expected that approximately 19.1 million people in South Africa will have to live a life earning at most USD 1.90 a day (Cowling, 2024). This poverty level directly impacts food, as many households cannot buy and consume food.

Additionally, food prices rise yearly in the country due to inflation and other economic factors. According to the Staff Writer (2023), South Africa witnessed a significant shot up in food prices by 13.5% in December 2022 compared to the previous year. It is no surprise that the Staff Writer (2023) reported that a quarter of South Africans (13.8 million) live in extreme poverty that falls below the food poverty line. Consequently, most households in South Africa need help to afford the elevated prices, compromising food security. This statement is justified by the report of the PMBEJD (2024) highlighting the following:

- Month-after-month: The household food basket's zero-rated items went from R2 769,64 in December 2023 to R2 815,93 in January 2024, with an increase of R46,30 (1,7%).
- Year-on-year: The household food basket's zero-rated items went from R2 559,26 in January 2023 to R2 815,93 in January 2024, a rise of R256,67 (10,0%).
- Monthly: The household food basket's items subject to VAT went from R2 468,57 in December 2023 to R2 508,93 in January 2024, an increase of R40,36 (1,6%).
- Annually: The household food basket's items subject to VAT went from R2 358,16 in January 2023 to R2 508,93 in January 2024, a rise of R150,76 (6,4%).

Annually, the household food basket's VAT-exempt items went from R2 358,16 in January 2023 to R2 508,93 in January 2024, a rise of R150,76 (6,4%). The South African Government has introduced and put into implementation a few policies and programmes to enhance the achievement of SDG2. First and foremost, the National Development Plan (NDP) introduced in 2011 is a crucial document seeking to transform South Africa's agriculture. Chapter 6 of the NDP provides a framework for a rural economy that is inclusive and integrated and targets the creation of one million jobs in the farming sector by 2030 (African Centre for Biodiversity 2018:11). The NDP proposes 300,000 opportunities for smallholder and subsistence farmers. It seeks to bring underutilized land and farms into commercial production, thereby creating more jobs (National Planning Commission (NPC) 2011:199). Following the NDP, complementary programmes and policies have been introduced to enhance agricultural productivity and food security and support smallholder farmers across South Africa. Some of the notable programmes include the Agricultural Policy Action Plan (APAP) and the Revitalising Agriculture and the Agro-processing Value Chain (African Centre for Biodiversity 2018:11). The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) (2014) report states that priority commodities covered by the APAP 2014–2019 included the integrated value chain of poultry, soybeans, and maize; red meat; wine; vegetables and fruits; biofuels; forestry wheat; and aquaculture and fishing. The South African Government has further introduced comprehensive farmer support programmes to bolster agricultural productivity. The programmes seek to address fundamental factors undermining agricultural productivity, namely, constrained land, labour constraints, infrastructural constraints, financial constraints and poor networks and social support systems (refer to African Centre for Biodiversity 2018:13). Figure 1 below, provided by the Khulisa Management Services (2016:6) summarises the nature and scope of the integrated farmer support programme.



**Figure 1.** Nature and Scope of the Integrated Farmer Support Programme  
 Source: Khulisa 2016, cited in African Centre for Biodiversity (2018:13)

The programme targets Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise (SMME) farmers and is informed by the Government's strategy to improve sustainable food security among disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. The Government of South Africa calls on vulnerable and historically underprivileged groups, including youth, women, and individuals with challenges, to apply for the farmer support grant and join our unrelenting campaign against food insecurity through the comprehensive farmer support programme (SA News, 2024).

Social support and food relief programmes were also introduced to enhance food security, particularly among disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. For instance, the Government of South Africa introduced the School Nutritional Programme (SNP), which is part of the school feeding programme aimed at reducing hunger and nutritional deficiencies among children in poor communities (Mafugo, 2021:1). The programme was based on the

government realization that SNPs for low-income households, can help in addressing poverty and historical inter-generational hunger. Mostert (2021:1) found that the School Feeding Programme, in addition to reducing hunger and food insecurity among children, reduced health spending among parents who benefited from the programme compared to those who did not.

The Government introduced a financial support initiative called the Child Support Grant (CSG) to address child hunger and poverty further. According to Oyenubi & Kollamparambil (2022:713), the CSG is one of the largest welfare support schemes in the country. It is reported that the Government has prioritized expenditure on the Child Support Grant that has increased over the years; for example, it has increased from 31.4% in 2007/08 to 37.2% in 2018/19 (Oyenubi & Kollamparambil, 2022:713). South Africa also has other social assistance schemes that significantly impact SDG 2. Some of the notable ones include disability, care dependency, foster care, grant-in-aid, war veterans, and old age grants (cited in Neethling, 2024), who further highlighted that (Neethling, 2024), in 2023/2024, 27.78 people in South Africa received social assistance grants.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The findings explore that the Government of South Africa has initiated varied policies and programmes to deal with food insecurity. However, the level of food insecurity is clearly and visibly recorded in official documents. This concern relates to the understanding that although significant policy documents are formulated to deal with the challenges of food insecurity, implementing such policies remains a challenge. This statement is substantiated by the published records, stating that, at present, the child support stipend is approximately R164 below the minimum amount required for survival or about 25% below the poverty line (Yende, 2021:1).

The lack of compliance with legislative frameworks, inadequate monitoring and evaluation practices and control measures may also affect the implementation of programmes. One such cause leading to the lack of implementation is related to corruption, heightened during COVID-19 when people were desperate to have financial support to buy and access food. This statement is supported by the study stating that most of the cases related to misconduct and corruption in government departments were reported on the National Anti-Corruption Hotline (NACH) between April and June 2021. These cases were related to the social relief grant, R350, released from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), indicating that the corruption that surfaced during COVID-19 persisted in 2021. During the first quarter, several reported cases of corruption (337) were received on the NACH; 66% of these cases were transferred to the SASSA for investigation purposes. The reason is that these cases were involved in social grant fraud, as highlighted by Bhengu (2021:2) and further affirmed by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022:16).

The study recommends holding appropriate consultation meetings when developing the agenda for food security-related policies. Extending invitations to academics, practitioners, entrepreneurs, farmers, horticulturists, agriculturists, nutritionists, and any other interested parties who can contribute to the discussion is necessary. It is imperative to incorporate viewpoints and constructive criticism to guarantee that every facet of food and nutrition receives appropriate consideration. When the policies are prepared for execution, careful evaluation of sufficient financial, human, technical, and technological resources is essential to guarantee effective implementation. The implementation of policies must be evaluated to determine their effectiveness. It is necessary to monitor and assess the entire process to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that policies produce the desired positive results.

The Government should also consider holding workshops and inviting professionals to advise farmers on different farming techniques, improving crop production, and the advantages of growing seasonal foods. This knowledge and awareness are essential for advancing more sustainably farmed agriculture.

The Government must also support entrepreneurship initiatives that educate young people about ventures related to agriculture, including, but not limited to, greenhouses, dairy farms, export farming, and plant-based food products. Youth who know their options may be inspired to start their farms and use platforms focused on agriculture to generate a living.

To encourage young people to pursue advanced agricultural studies, tertiary and vocational institutions may provide internships or bursaries. Graduates from this programme may become agricultural economists and analysts who can subsequently impart their knowledge to their families and communities to improve agricultural options, practices, and interventions.

The recommendations above can be implemented on several institutional, educational, and community levels. By taking these steps, individuals, families, and communities can maintain their standard of living, escape poverty, and achieve food security.

The study, therefore, contributes towards public administration, management, governance, and economics and forms part of development studies. However, the study has limitations as well. Interviews with pertinent national authorities could not be conducted due to the topic's comprehensiveness. Future research will also consider the desktop analysis examining country-specific interventions for food security and how they affect the implementation and realization of SDG 2. The disciplines of agriculture and development studies will benefit more from the findings of the comparative and longitudinal studies.

The findings demonstrate how SDG2 (zero hunger) and SDG1 (zero poverty) are related. It implies that there are issues with hunger for those who are poor. The findings additionally validate the relationship between the development goal SDG 3—which pertains to health and well-being—and SDG 2, which mandates food security. This implies that wholesome food is essential for well-being. Future publications may examine connections between SDGs 1, 2, and 3 in a context-specific to a given nation, based on the interconnectedness of these goals, to expand the body of knowledge regarding development objectives.

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