



Implementation Evaluation of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan

Summary Report

19 October 2023



planning, monitoring
and evaluation

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This report has been independently prepared by Genesis Analytics, with support from the Evaluation Steering Committee. The Steering Committee oversaw the operation of the evaluation, commented and approved the reports.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ATI	Agricultural Training Institutes
BMI	Body Mass Index
CNDC	Community Nutrition and Development Centres
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DALRRD	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHE	Department of Higher Education
DHIS	District Health Information System
DOH	Department of Health
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
DSBD	Department of Small Business Development
DSD	Department of Social Development
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
DTIC	Department of Trade, Industry and Competition
DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FNS	Food and Nutrition Security
GHS	General Household Survey
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDP	Integrated Development Plans
ISHP	Integrated School Health Policy
ISPIS	Integrated Social Protection Information System
KMC	Kangaroo Mother Care
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
MUAC	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference
NCD	Non-Communicable Diseases
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NFNS	National Food and Nutrition Security
NFNSP	National Food and Nutrition Security Plan
NFNSS	National Food and Nutrition Security Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIDS-CRAM	National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
PCPD	Policy on Comprehensive Producer and Development
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
PVM	Poor, Vulnerable and Marginalised
SADHS	South Africa Demographic and Health Survey
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SANHANES	South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SDF	Spatial Development Frameworks
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small-Medium Enterprise
SO	Strategic Objective
SPCHD	Social Protection, Community and Human Development
SPLUMA	Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act
TB	Tuberculosis
TBD	To Be Determined
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WC	Western Cape
WFP	World Food Programme
WRA	Women of Reproductive Age

POLICY SUMMARY

South Africa faces a complex food and nutrition security (FNS) challenge due to historical, socioeconomic and environmental factors. Many lack access to nutritious food, resulting in high levels of malnutrition. To address this, the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan (NFNSP) 2018-2023 aims to address malnutrition through seven objectives, including aligning policies and implementing programmes, expanding social protection measures, and encouraging informed food decisions.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the Plan's implementation, progress towards predefined targets, assess factors that facilitate or inhibit its implementation, examine the Plan's institutional arrangements, and provide recommendations for refinement and enhancement. Based on the evaluation's findings, the following recommendations have been suggested.

R1. Commence the next iteration of the NFNSP, by revising the current Plan with the below enhancements.

- R1.1: Update the Theory of Change.
- R1.2: Update the situational analysis, including the enabling processes, institutional arrangements and capabilities that drive FNS.
- R1.3: Develop detailed implementation plans for each Strategic Objective.
- R1.4: Identify priority actions that can be considered as 'double duty' actions.
- R1.5: Incorporate a holistic systems approach to FNS through the inclusion of the informal sector and urban food systems.
- R1.6: Enable bottom-up interventions in support of top-down objectives.

R2. Integrate and leverage existing planning processes and reporting tools at various government levels to enhance accountability, monitoring, and collective efforts in addressing food and nutrition security.

- R2.1: Prioritise FNS within existing national planning processes.
- R2.2 Incorporate FNS priorities within provincial and local planning tools.

R3. Secure funding and human resources for at least the first year of the revised Plan's implementation. This should be secured in advance of finalising the next iteration of the Plan

- R3.1: Implement recommendations in the 2023 HSRC's Review and Sources of Funding Analysis report.
- R3.2 Prioritise high-impact interventions that can achieve multiple desired outcomes within budget constraints.

R4 Utilise legislative mechanisms for better coordination on FNS-related issues and activities.

- R4.1: Incorporate existing legislative mechanisms to enable intergovernmental coordination.
- R4.2: Consider existing coordination vehicles that enable engagement with non-state actors.

R5. Elevate FNS and its importance in the national discourse

- R5.1 Elevate the FNS agenda across all spheres of government.
- R5.2: Raise the importance of the FNS crisis among the public.

R6. Establish the M&E System prior to the finalisation of the revised Plan to ensure that the M&E unit is in place from the commencement of implementation of the Plan's next iteration.

- R6.1 Establish the M&E system and unit.
- R6.2 Ensure that the indicators and data are useful for decision-making.
- R6.3 Ensure the indicators in the revised Plan are applicable and feasible.

R7. Strengthen collaboration by involving diverse stakeholders and sectors at all levels while ensuring accountability and balance among stakeholder groups.

- R7.1 Assess and reconsider the most appropriate and impactful vehicles to enable multi-stakeholder collaboration at the different levels of implementation.
- R7.2 Framework terms of reference for stakeholder collaboration vehicles should be established within the Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

Genesis Analytics (hereafter 'Genesis') was appointed by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) to conduct an implementation evaluation of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023 (NFNSP). The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the Plan's implementation, progress towards predefined targets, assess factors that facilitate or inhibit its implementation, examine the Plan's institutional arrangements, and provide recommendations for refinement and enhancement.

2. Methodology

A systems-thinking lens and a theory-based approach was adopted to evaluate the Plan, considering the interconnections and interactions within the food and nutrition security (FNS) system. Systems thinking allowed a comprehensive understanding of the Plan's context and encouraged a holistic assessment using qualitative and quantitative data. The theory-based evaluation approach utilised a Theory of Change (ToC) to map the Plan's logic, linking activities to outputs, outcomes, and intended impact. By integrating both approaches, the evaluation assessed the Plan's contribution to outcomes while considering the broader FNS system.

A stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken to identify all relevant stakeholders within the FNS system. This included all spheres of government and non-state actors within the FNS system. Drawing on the stakeholder map and the Theory of Change, an evaluation framework was developed that included the key evaluation questions, sub-questions and data sources through which these questions would be answered. The evaluation used both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was collected in the form of 31 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with key stakeholders in the system. Secondary data was consolidated across NFNSP reports, relevant departmental reports, and external literature.

3. Background to NFNSP

South Africa faces a complex food and nutrition security challenge due to historical, socioeconomic and environmental factors. Many lack access to nutritious food, resulting in high levels of malnutrition. The NFNSP aims to address malnutrition through seven objectives, including aligning policies and implementing programmes, expanding social protection measures, and encouraging informed food decisions. The plan hopes to reduce the number of individuals and households experiencing hunger and inadequate access to food as well as address the triple burden of malnutrition, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight/obesity.

4. Findings

The findings below are presented according to the evaluation questions.

To what extent has the implementation of the NFNSP been effective towards achieving the Impact-level targets?

The Plan has 17 impact-level indicators (Table 1) of which only five are able to track and report progress, this is due to data availability and frequency of key data sources such as surveys not being in line with reporting requirements and timeframes. Four indicators have achieved modest progress; while these indicators show improvements from the 2016 baseline values, there remains a considerable gap to the 2023 target. The other indicator deteriorated marginally since 2016.

Table 1: Summary of the 17 SMART Impact Targets of the NFNSP

Impact Targets	#	%
Number of Impact Targets	17	100
# 2023 targets met	0	0
# 2023 targets likely to be met	0	0
# progressing but not likely to meet the 2023 target	4	24
# very limited progress towards 2023 target	1	6
# Data not collected/available	12	71

To what extent has the implementation of the NFNSP been effective towards achieving the Strategic Objective-level targets?

Progress and performance towards targets vary across the Strategic Objectives. Table 2 below provides an overview of the performance of the Plan against the various Strategic Objectives' targets, with more detail on each Strategic Objective provided in the full report. As Table 2 shows, 17% of the 2023 targets have been met and a further 6% are likely to be met by the end of 2023. 29% of the targets are not likely to be met by the end of 2023 and a further 18% have made very limited progress, and will not be met. This indicates that approximately half of the targets will not be met. The remaining 29% of the indicators have no updated information or are not routinely collected, and as such, their performance could not be assessed.

Table 2: Performance summary of the Strategic Objectives against their targets

Strategic Objective Performance Summary	SO1	SO2	SO3	SO4	SO5	SO6	SO7	Totals	%
Number of interventions/key actions	3	5	4	4	3	2	0	21	
Number of indicators	3	21	12	18	6	5	0	65	100
# 2023 targets met	0	6	4	0	1	0	0	11	17
# 2023 targets likely to be met	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	6
# progressing but not likely to meet the 2023 target	0	6	2	5	1	5	0	19	29
# very limited progress towards 2023 target	3	6	1	1	1	0	0	12	18
# Data not collected/limited access, likelihood not applicable	0	2	3	12	2	0	0	19	29

What factors enable the effective implementation of the NFNSP?

The National Task Team provides stability and institutional memory for Plan implementation. Departments demonstrate resourcefulness, aiding implementation. Most provinces are at the initial stages of implementation, but pockets show early adoption and collaborative approaches. In the Western Cape, early uptake of the province's food system framework has spurred progress. Limpopo's Health Department benefited from following a systems lens and leveraging existing resources and organisations. KwaZulu-Natal showcased effective implementation through strong leadership, accountability, and targeted nutrition interventions for children and infants.

What factors inhibit the effective implementation of the NFNSP?

Stakeholders identified several obstacles to the Plan's implementation, including slow progress of the Plan's interventions, lack of budget allocation, non-convening of the National Council, limited awareness among state and non-state actors, fragmented strategic goals, a narrow food system perspective, capacity issues at the ground level, and challenges in securing leadership support at the highest government levels. The onset and impact of

the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted planned activities and adversely affected implementation efforts. Financial constraints, particularly the size of the Plan's budget and insufficient funding, pose significant challenges. Furthermore, the absence of a coordinating arm within some provincial governments to convene necessary departments and the Office of the Premier's lack of leadership were identified as obstacles to driving the Plans forward at the provincial level. In addition, there were challenges in engaging and involving the private sector and civil society was identified as lacking, impeding progress.

Are the institutional arrangements working optimally?

A key institutional gap in the Plan is the absence of the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security, a crucial element for effective coordination across the system. While the National Technical Task Team has played a critical role in technical oversight, the lack of a Council has limited the priority given to FNS and the coordination thereof. Linked to this, there is limited visibility of the food and nutrition security agenda among key decision-makers. Engagements with provincial stakeholders were felt to be sporadic and coming towards the end of the Plan's implementation timeframe, mainly focused on reporting outcomes rather than coordinated institutional collaboration. The absence of an effective monitoring and evaluation system, along with challenges in data collection, sharing, and utilisation, has hindered the Plan's implementation by undermining data-driven decision-making and coordination among government departments. At the provincial level, the Office of the Premier should be tasked with driving provincial institutional arrangements, but this has not been consistent across most provinces.

To what extent is the plan implemented cost-efficiently?

The Plan initially estimated a total cost of R86,806 million, allocating a significant share to Strategic Objective 2 (78.2%) and Strategic Objective 3 (12.8%). However, the Plan lacks clarity on funding sources, hindering its implementation. A detailed implementation plan was not developed at the outset of the Plan to assess costs and sources of funding, making cost efficiency identification challenging. Additionally, no annual review mechanisms exist, and non-state actors' spending is not tracked, potentially underestimating the overall implementation costs. Stakeholders indicated that insufficient funding, particularly for Strategic Objective 2, has impeded target achievement, suggesting reliance on existing budgets rather than the Plan's mandate. Lastly, limited progress in effective coordination structures and adaptive decision-making has led to missed opportunities as departments continue to operate in silos.

What lessons emerged from the implementation of the NFNSP?

The Plan's design, as noted by stakeholders, inadvertently encourages siloed implementation due to its departmentalised approach. The tension between the need for flexibility and the rigidity of government systems that are key performance indicator- (KPI-) driven poses a challenge. Limited visibility of the Plan has influenced its prioritisation, stressing the necessity for leadership to enhance its visibility for effective implementation. The Plan is considered to be a top-down approach, which would benefit from a more bottom-up perspective to address contextual factors and foster an adaptive response. Political will, collaboration with various stakeholders, and timely and localised FNS data collection were identified as crucial learnings to drive successful implementation.

5. Conclusions

The Plan is designed to address critical issues of FNS in South Africa. It aligns with national and international policies like the Sustainable Development Goals. However, it overlooks crucial elements like a holistic systems approach, explicit considerations of urban food security, the informal sector as it relates to the FNS system, and localised implementation strategies. Additionally, the departmental-led focus hinders inclusive and coordinated implementation with non-state actors. The Plan's progress has been slow in relation to intended outcomes, impacting the achievement of the Strategic Objective-level targets and impact-level targets. Key aspects like the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security and adequate funding have not been effectively realised. Poor alignment of indicators with collected data and no established unified M&E system further limits comprehensive monitoring. Despite the potential of the Plan, the complex nature of the FNS system in the country means that

coordination, senior-level prioritisation and adequate financial and human resources are required to achieve the transformative impact stated in the Plan. Although the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated FNS challenges, it emphasised the need for robust risk mitigation strategies, and adaptive management strategies. The lack of progress in Strategic Objectives 1 and 6, which underpins the plan's Theory of Change, has ripple effects on the ability of the other Strategic Objectives to be truly coordinated and successful. As a result, typically, implementing departments have been undertaking activities within their existing mandates resulting in a business-as-usual approach and siloed operational delivery. In addition, the estimated additional funds required have not materialised further impacting implementation and hindering the NFNSP's full potential for catalysing meaningful change.

6. Recommendations

Based on the evaluation's findings, seven primary recommendations have been suggested with supporting sub-recommendations. This implementation evaluation comes at the end of the Plan's lifecycle, and as such, the recommendations have been developed with this in mind.

R1. Commence the next iteration of the NFNSP, by updating and revising the current Plan with the below enhancements.

The need for, and importance of, an NFNSP in the country is as critical as when the Plan was released in 2018. As such, it is recommended that the Plan be updated to reflect the next planning cycle and to ensure that the Plan remains relevant, effective, and aligned with changing FNS circumstances in the country. It is suggested that the below considerations be incorporated into the next iteration of the Plan

- R1.1: Update the Theory of Change.
- R1.2: Update the situational analysis, including the enabling processes, institutional arrangements and capabilities that drive FNS.
- R1.3: Develop detailed implementation plans for each Strategic Objective
- R1.4: Identify priority actions that could be considered as 'double duty actions
- R1.5: Incorporate a holistic systems approach to FNS through the inclusion of the informal sector and urban food systems.
- R1.6: Enable bottom-up interventions in support of top-down objectives.

R2. Integrate and leverage existing planning processes and reporting tools at various government levels, particularly provincial and local, to enhance accountability, monitoring, and collective efforts in addressing food and nutrition security.

In the next iteration of the Plan, there is potential to explore, better align and utilise existing overarching planning processes to embed the revised Plan's objectives and activities. Embedding activities and outcomes into existing mechanisms will enable better accountability, monitoring, and support for FNS goals.

- R2.1: Prioritise FNS within existing national planning processes.
- R2.2 Incorporate FNS priorities within provincial and local planning tools.

R3. Secure funding and human resources for at least the first year of the revised Plan's implementation. This should be secured in advance of finalising the next iteration of the Plan

In the next iteration of a national FNS planning process, there is a need to secure funding for the Plan well in advance of its implementation and explore long-term financing options to ensure sustained support for FNS initiatives

- R3.1: Implement recommendations in the 2023 HSRC's Review and Sources of Funding Analysis report.
- R3.2 Prioritise high-impact interventions that can achieve multiple desired outcomes within budget constraints.

R4 Utilise existing legislative mechanisms for better coordination and collaboration on FNS-related issues and activities.

Given the complexity and diverse requirements of an effective FNS response, it is unlikely that one set of coherent legislation pertaining to food and nutrition security will be developed in the short term. It is recommended that existing legislative mechanisms be carefully reviewed when revising the Plan.

- R4.1: Incorporate existing legislative mechanisms to enable intergovernmental coordination.
- R4.2: Consider existing coordination vehicles that enable engagement with non-state actors.

R5. Elevate FNS and its importance in the national discourse

There is a need to elevate the importance of FNS and the threat that the FNS crisis creates, especially the multiple burden of malnutrition that is facing South Africa.

- R5.1 Elevate the FNS agenda across all spheres of government.
- R5.2: Raise the importance of the FNS crisis among the public

R6. Establish the M&E System prior to the finalisation of the revised Plan to ensure that the M&E unit is in place from the commencement of implementation of the Plan's next iteration.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning needs to be prioritised in the next iteration of the Plan. Improved target setting and data collection for the impact targets is needed to better understand the Plan's impact, as well as the incorporation of localised data.

- R6.1 Establish the M&E system and unit.
- R6.2 Ensure that the indicators and data are useful for decision-making.
- R6.3 Ensure the indicators in the revised Plan are applicable and feasible.

R7. Strengthen collaboration by involving diverse stakeholders and sectors at all levels, while ensuring accountability and balance among stakeholder groups.

Achieving substantial change in the South African Food System requires collaboration beyond government efforts alone. The current Plan is clear in that there is a need for multi-stakeholder responses to address the challenges of FNS and that these efforts need to be aligned and coordinated

- R7.1 Assess and reconsider the most appropriate and impactful vehicles to enable multi-stakeholder collaboration at the different levels of implementation.
- R7.2 Framework terms of reference for stakeholder collaboration vehicles should be established within the Plan.

SUMMARY REPORT

1. Introduction

Genesis Analytics (hereafter 'Genesis') has been appointed by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) to conduct an implementation evaluation of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023 (hereafter 'NFNSP' or 'the Plan'). This report is the final evaluation report presenting the key findings from the evaluation.

1.1. Background to Food and Nutrition Security in South Africa

In 2020, 23.6% of South Africans experienced moderate to severe food insecurity, while 14.9% experienced severe food insecurity¹. The COVID-19 pandemic, and recent socio-political events in Europe, further exacerbated hunger, food insecurity, poor nutrition outcomes and malnutrition. Malnutrition is a complex and multi-faceted problem in South Africa due to a combination of historical, social, economic, and environmental factors. Many South Africans, especially those living in marginalised communities and those who are unemployed, lack the financial means to access a diverse and nutritious diet; there is broadly a lack of awareness about healthy eating practices and good nutrition; and there is low coverage of quality maternal and infant care. Among other factors, these contribute to unhealthy eating habits and dietary choices that lead to high levels of malnutrition in South Africa. The consequences of malnutrition are wide-sweeping, impacting individuals' health, livelihoods and the economy as a whole. Children who are stunted perform lower at school and later in life than their non-stunted counterparts; children and adults diagnosed with obesity and diabetes generate economic costs for their families and the economy; and lastly, it is estimated that malnutrition depresses GDP by 11% for African countries².

Goals two and three of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to end world hunger and ensure general good health and well-being, respectively. In relation to these goals, as well as the challenges facing South Africa with regard to Food and Nutrition Security (FNS), the country recognises the importance of having a national, coordinated response to FNS. To this end, South Africa developed the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023, based on the FNS Policy for South Africa. The Plan highlights the importance of food security as key to ensuring that South Africa has a reliable and sufficient supply of food to meet the dietary needs of its population. It also highlights the importance of integrating social protection into the FNS ecosystem to address immediate food and nutrition needs.

The NFNSP aims to address FNS challenges by aligning with best practices, international commitments, and local policies. It incorporates national policies to provide a comprehensive plan for achieving food and nutrition security. The implementation is guided by seven Strategic Objectives coordinated by councils at national, provincial, and district levels, overseeing planning, resource mobilisation, and progress monitoring. The Office of the Deputy President leads, with 12 government departments assigned specific roles. The Plan stresses cross-sector collaboration involving the public and private sectors, NGOs, and civil society. The estimated cost is approximately R86.8 billion, with a significant portion allocated to establishing inclusive local food value chains and expanding social protection measures and sustainable livelihood programmes. These strategic objectives drive nearly all of the estimated additional total costs.

Looking at the seven Strategic Objectives, the first Strategic Objective aims to align policies and coordinate the implementation of programmes which address FNS. The second strategic objective aims to establish inclusive local food value chains to support access to nutritious and affordable food. The third Strategic Objective aims to expand targeted social protection measures and sustainable livelihood programmes. The fourth Strategic Objective aims to scale high impact nutrition interventions targeting women, infants and children. The fifth Strategic Objective aims to encourage South Africans to make informed food and nutrition decisions. The sixth Strategic Objective focuses on monitoring and evaluation and enabling data-informed decision making around FNS. The final Strategic Objective

¹ StatsSA. (2022). How COVID-19 affected food security in SA

² The National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023

focuses on building entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills for South Africans to achieve self-sustainability. Together these strategic objectives hope to address South Africa's triple burden of malnutrition, which includes, undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight and obesity.

1.2. Purpose of the evaluation and key evaluation questions

Given the importance of FNS in South Africa, and the role of the Plan in this, this evaluation aims to understand the implementation of the Plan to date. This includes unpacking its progress against its targets, identifying if the Plan will achieve its outcomes and impacts as expected, and providing recommendations for iterations and adjustments that need to be made to support its successful delivery. More specifically, the evaluation aims to answer:

- To what extent has the implementation of the NFNSP been effective towards achieving the impact-level targets?
- To what extent has the implementation of the NFNSP been effective towards achieving the strategic objective-level targets?
- What factors enable the effective implementation of the NFNSP?
- What factors inhibit the effective implementation of the NFNSP?
- Which components of the Plan were implemented well, and which were difficult to implement?
- To what extent is the Plan implemented cost efficiently?
- Are the institutional arrangements working optimally?
- What lessons emerged from the implementation of the NFNSP?
- What can be done to improve the implementation of the NFNSP?

These evaluation questions were guided by the evaluation's terms of reference and were refined based on consultations with the Steering Committee and further engagement with programme-related content.

2. Methodology

Given that the Plan's implementation involves multiple stakeholders in a complex administrative environment, necessitating coordination, management, and technical expertise, a systems-thinking lens combined with theory-based approach was adopted to evaluate the Plan, considering the interconnections and interactions within the food and nutrition security system. Systems thinking allowed a comprehensive understanding of the Plan's context and encouraged a holistic assessment using qualitative and quantitative data. The theory-based evaluation approach utilised a Theory of Change (ToC) to map the Plan's logic, linking activities to outputs, outcomes, and intended impact. By integrating both approaches, the evaluation assessed the Plan's contribution to outcomes while considering the broader FNS system.

A stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken to identify all relevant stakeholders within the FNS system. A visual of this system is presented in Figure 1 below. This includes all spheres of government and non-state actors within the FNS system. At the centre is the National Food and Nutrition Security Coordinating Committee, supported by key national-level departments such as the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Department of Health, Department of Social Development, and the Department of Basic Education. Several other national departments also play vital roles, as included in the figure below that do not have an asterisk at the national level. Provinces, local entities, and a range of institutional stakeholders are also part of the complex FNS system, including private actors, civil society, and academia, as included in the outer circles of the figure below. This mapping exercise was used to inform the stakeholders included in the interviews.

Figure 1: Food and nutrition security ecosystem actors



Drawing on the stakeholder map and the theory of change, an evaluation framework was developed that included the key evaluation questions, sub-questions and data sources through which these questions would be answered. The application of the evaluation framework ensured consistency throughout the evaluation, from the development of data collection tools to analysing the data collected through key informant interviews (KIIs) and document and data reviews

The evaluation used both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was collected in the form of 31 KIIs with key stakeholders in the system. Secondary data was consolidated across NFNSP reports, relevant departmental reports, and external literature. A comprehensive desktop review was conducted to achieve multiple objectives. Firstly, it aimed to understand the implementation context of the NFNSP and gather existing evidence on its progress, challenges, and successes. Secondly, it guided the evaluation framework and helped formulate evaluation questions. Thirdly, it informed the development of primary data collection tools by identifying gaps in available information. The literature review also revealed successful experiences and lessons from food and nutrition security efforts in other countries.

The evaluation conducted semi-structured interviews with 31 stakeholders involved in planning and implementing the NFNSP. Stakeholders were selected from various groups shown in Figure 1 to ensure diverse perspectives. Interviews were tailored for different stakeholder types. National-level interviews prioritised the National Food and Nutrition Security Coordinating Committee and key national departments. At the provincial level, six provinces were engaged: three with significant implementation experience (KwaZulu-Natal, North West, and Western Cape) and two at a higher-level engagement (Limpopo, Northern Cape). Interviews were also conducted with academia, civil society organisations and non-governmental institutions. This approach aimed to gather insights into NFNSP implementation, institutional models, and nutrition outcomes across a diverse representation of South Africa's food system.

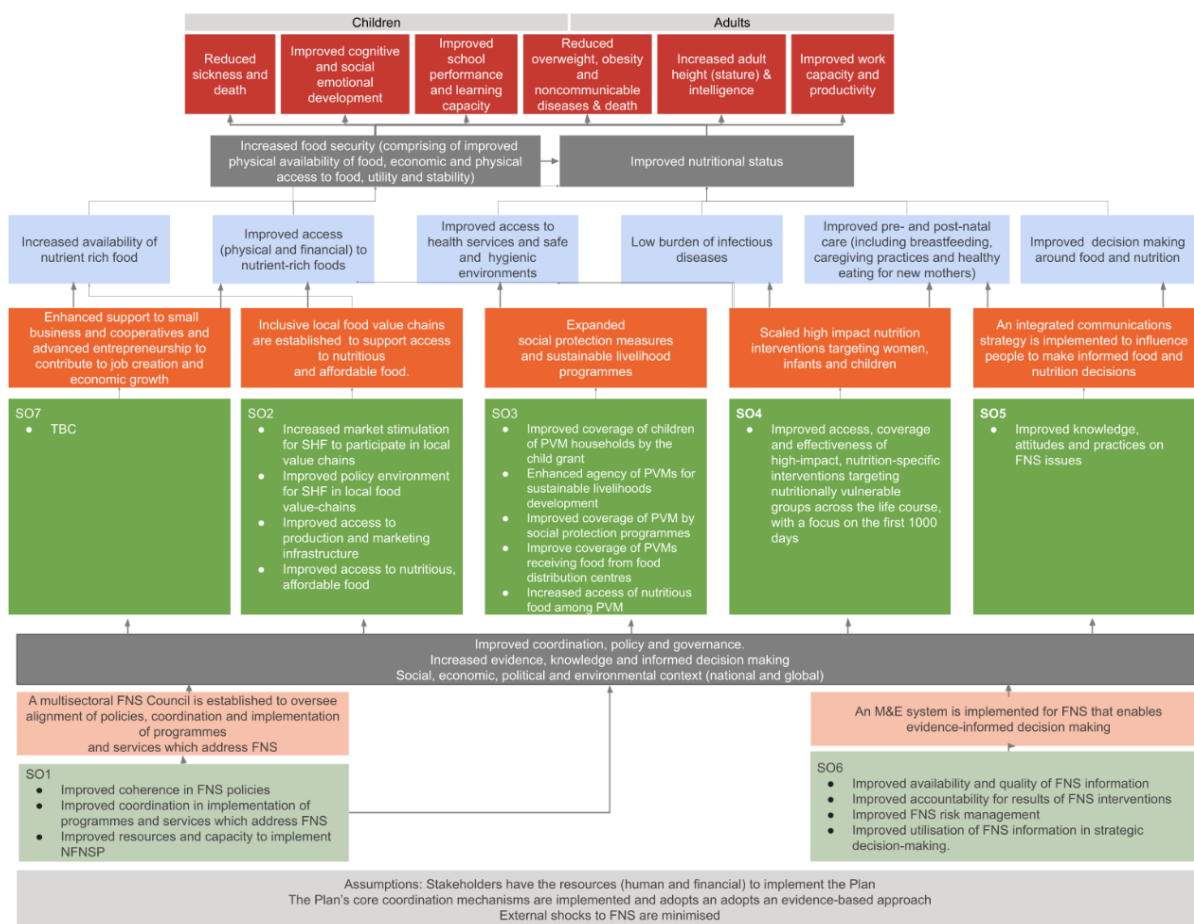
A key limitation of the evaluation was the widespread lack of awareness about the Plan among interviewed stakeholders. To address this, the evaluation team provided an outline of the Plan at the start of interviews. Additionally, many respondents couldn't discuss specific Plan-level implementation details and focused more on its

contents and its influence on the FNS ecosystem. The Plan lacks a consolidated monitoring system, which limited the extent to which the evaluation could unpack performance and progress. Impact-level indicators faced challenges due to data source limitations, necessitating the use of external literature and interviews to assess progress. Despite efforts, four stakeholders could not be interviewed, and limited information was available for Mpumalanga province. Despite these challenges, the quality of the evaluation has not been affected.

3. The National Food and Nutrition Security Plan’s Theory of Change

The NFNSP aims to enhance food security and nutritional outcomes in South Africa, leading to improved health for both adults and children, including reduced illness and death, enhanced cognitive and social development, better school performance, and lower rates of overweight, obesity, non-communicable diseases, and mortality. The Plan’s theory of change outlines the pathways to achieve these goals. In this evaluation, the original theory of change was refined by integrating Strategic Objective seven and enhancing causal pathways for a clearer connection between objectives, intended outcomes, and overall impacts. This updated theory of change was finalised and approved in July 2023 by the evaluation Steering Committee.

Figure 2: Updated Theory of Change



The foundation of the Theory of Change for NFNSP is Strategic Objective 1 and Strategic Objective 6. Strategic Objective 1 aims to enhance coordination, policy, and governance within the FNS system. Concurrently, Strategic Objective 6 focuses on establishing a monitoring and evaluation system to track FNS interventions and inform decision-making and sector knowledge. Effective coordination and evidence-based programming across strategic objectives aims to ensure coherent implementation and amplify overall impact on the sector.

Strategic Objective 2 seeks to establish inclusive local food value-chains, enhancing production and access to nutritious, affordable food, particularly through smallholder farmers. This aligns with Strategic Objective 7, benefiting small businesses and cooperatives. Strategic Objective 3 aims to expand social protection and sustainable livelihood programs, ensuring access to safe and nutritious food and essential needs.

Strategic Objective 4 focuses on scaling high-impact nutrition interventions for women, infants, and children, improving healthcare access and reducing infectious disease burden. Strategic Objective 5 aims to influence informed food and nutrition decisions through an integrated communications strategy.

By increasing the availability and access to nutrient-rich foods, South Africa can enhance food security and nutritional status, leading to improved health outcomes. This includes reduced sickness, lower obesity rates, enhanced school and work performance, and improved cognitive and social development

4. Document and Literature Review

A literature and document review on food and nutrition security was conducted in the early stages of the evaluation. The main themes emerging from the literature are FNS governance, food security, social protection and nutrition security.

4.1. FNS Governance in South Africa

The literature indicated that food and nutrition policy coherence in South Africa is notably lacking due to layered frameworks, weak government integration, and limited local government mandates.^{3,4,5,6,7,8} Cross-sectoral participation during policy implementation is scarce, and there's a lack of shared understanding and coordination mechanisms. Despite the Plan's intent to coordinate the FNS system, its implementation remains challenging.^{9,10} Also, evaluations of the Plan's implementation or translation of high-level statements of intent into practice are considered to be limited.¹¹ Competing agendas and policy fragmentation further impede coherence. Additionally, the absence of a framework act on food security renders existing policies non-legally binding and unenforceable, despite constitutional obligations to ensure the right to food^{12,13}

Further incoherence is seen in the priority being given to food production and food supply, despite a recognition of the cross-sectoral dimension of food security. There was found to be policy fragmentation between departments and programmes and weak coordination mechanisms. The literature argues that stakeholder engagement is partial and inadequate due to the domination of top-down approaches and participation that is considered 'ticking-the-box'.¹⁴ Issues are also raised about fragmented initiatives, undesirable overlaps and duplication of roles and responsibilities in food policy formulation, while the level of engagement of civil society organisations in the process of developing food policies was noted to have been minimal.¹⁵

³ FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

⁴ Sandra Boatemaa Kushitor et al., "The Complex Challenge of Governing Food Systems: The Case of South African Food Policy," *Food Security* 14, no. 4 (August 1, 2022): 883–96, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-022-01258-z>.

⁵ Anne Marie Thow et al., "Improving Policy Coherence for Food Security and Nutrition in South Africa: A Qualitative Policy Analysis," *Food Security* 10, no. 4 (August 1, 2018): 1105–30, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-018-0813-4>.

⁶ May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

⁷ Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

⁸ Sandra Boatemaa, Scott Drimie, and Laura Pereira, "Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in South Africa: A Review of Policy Responses since 2002," *African Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics* 13 (January 1, 2018): 264–79.

⁹ FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

¹⁰ National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023

¹¹ Kushitor et al., "The Complex Challenge of Governing Food Systems."

¹² Thow et al., "Improving Policy Coherence for Food Security and Nutrition in South Africa."

¹³ Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

¹⁴ Kushitor et al., "The Complex Challenge of Governing Food Systems."

¹⁵ Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

The coordination of food system interventions faces challenges, with sub-programmes often implemented separately in various government departments^{16,17,18}. Insufficient institutional arrangements and mandates for stakeholders is considered to hinder effective coordination^{19,20,21}. Communication gaps and limited sharing of experiences contribute to the issue²². While committees and councils are proposed to address coordination challenges, they are not considered to be effectively implemented. Additionally, the lead departments responsible for coordination are noted to lack the administrative capacity and authority to perform necessary actions.²³ The limited engagement of other stakeholders is noted as hindering the utilisation of the expertise and interests of key actors within the food system, thereby potentially reducing the effectiveness of food governance efforts.²⁴

4.2. The South African Food System

South Africa's food system is highly concentrated, with dominant enterprises holding double the global average market shares. This concentration spans all aspects of the food chain, from inputs to distribution. It results in a few enterprises holding significant income shares, granting them disproportionate power without effective checks from other stakeholders. This power concentration stifles policy reforms favouring diversity, smaller businesses, and underprivileged communities due to high market entry barriers. Large retailers heavily influence demand, production, branding, and costs in the food value chain, impacting food accessibility and variety. The efficiency gap between smallholder and commercial farmers contributes to poverty persistence, despite policy support. High mark-ups by large firms drive up food prices, affecting affordability and exacerbating food insecurity among low-income households.^{25,26,27,28}

4.3. Social Protection in South Africa

The South African grant system experiences high demand due to poverty, unemployment, and the added impact of COVID-19. In 2022, approximately 28.2 million people, around 47% of the population, received social grants, an increase from 18.2 million in 2021.²⁹ The demand for government grants is driven by high poverty and unemployment rates, with about 56% living below the national poverty line in 2017.^{30,31}

South Africa has extensive social protection policies for children, notably the Child Support Grant, foster care grant, and care dependency grant. However, these policies do not always yield the expected food and nutrition outcomes. The Child Support Grant, with 13 million recipients, is the largest in number but has the lowest value, falling below the food poverty line. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it remained unchanged. High poverty and unemployment levels mean grants for children often contribute to household income rather than directly benefiting children's nutrition. Despite this, social grants have helped alleviate poverty for children and their families³²

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Boatemaa, Drimie, and Pereira, "Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in South Africa."

¹⁸ May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

¹⁹ Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

²⁰ Admire Nyamwanza and Peter Jacobs, *Stronger Policy Coordination for Better Food and Nutrition Security Outcomes*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.27443.17440>.

²¹ Kushitor et al., "The Complex Challenge of Governing Food Systems."

²² Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."°

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Boatemaa, Drimie, and Pereira, "Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in South Africa."

²⁵ Kushitor et al., "The Complex Challenge of Governing Food Systems."

²⁶ May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

²⁷ FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

²⁸ May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

²⁹ Leila Patel, Viwe Dikoko, and Jade Archer, "Social Grants, Livelihoods and Poverty Responses of Social Grant Beneficiaries in South Africa," n.d.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Patel, Dikoko, and Archer, "Social Grants, Livelihoods and Poverty Responses of Social Grant Beneficiaries in South Africa."

³² May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*

Historically, many working-age South Africans lacked social protection, leaving them vulnerable to hunger. Gaps in the South African social safety net system was shown in that during the COVID-19 pandemic, vulnerable South Africans of all ages went without food.^{33,34} During the COVID-19 pandemic, a temporary R350 Social Relief of Distress grant was introduced in May 2020. However, it faced criticism for being below the food poverty line and excluding those in informal or low-wage employment. Despite its limitations, 93% of recipients used the grant for food, highlighting the vulnerability of working-age adults to hunger, especially those already facing unemployment and poverty before the pandemic.³⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic showed the shortcomings of the food system concerning providing sufficient, healthy, nutritious food to the most vulnerable people in South Africa, including children of all ages³⁶.

Progress made in reducing hunger since 2002 has been undermined by COVID-19, as per National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) data. These data revealed that 40% of the NIDS-CRAM sample reported a loss of employment due to COVID-19. Additionally, 22% of adults and 15% of children were reported to have experienced hunger from March to June 2020.³⁷ These outcomes show that pervasive inequality and poverty continue to render almost two-thirds of children in South Africa at risk of food insecurity and hunger.

4.4. Nutrition Security in South Africa

Despite having sufficient food production and well-developed food and nutrition security policies, South Africa still grapples with a triple burden of malnutrition, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight/obesity. Approximately seven million South Africans suffer from chronic hunger, and in 2016, 26.9% of children under five were stunted, which is high considering the country's economic wealth. Despite initiatives like the Child Support Grant, child stunting rates have remained relatively unchanged over the past two decades.^{38,39,40}

The FAO Food System report for South Africa highlights that nearly 40% of South African children in grades 8 to 11 frequently consume high-sugar and high-fat foods, while their salt intake exceeds WHO's recommended levels^{41, 42}. This unhealthy consumption is exacerbated by the advertising of unhealthy foods to children. May et al. (2020) identify poverty as the underlying driver of child malnutrition, linked to high unemployment and inadequate incomes, particularly among women. Issues affecting food and nutrition outcomes include inadequate access to nutritious food due to the ready availability of processed fast foods and powerful advertising. Other contributing factors include healthcare system inequalities, weak government support for Early Childhood Development (ECD) services, insufficient value of child support grants, gaps in the uptake of the Child Support Grant for infants, and limited social protection for refugee and migrant children.⁴³ On school feeding schemes, although international evidence on their nutritional impacts is inconclusive, an evaluation of a South African school breakfast scheme in the Eastern Cape showed a significant reduction in child stunting, wasting, and overweight. However, most school feeding schemes, like the National School Nutrition Programme, have limited impact as meals are provided only on school days.^{44,45}

³³ May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

³⁴ "Foods Procured, Nutritional Status and Dietary Intake of People Living in South Africa."

³⁵ The Rapid Assessment of the Implementation and Utilisation of the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant, accessed June 12, 2023

³⁶ May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

³⁷ The Rapid Assessment of the Implementation and Utilisation of the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant, accessed June 12, 2023

³⁸ FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

³⁹ May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

⁴⁰ Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

⁴¹ Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

⁴² Government Notice, Department of Health, Regulations Relating To Foodstuffs For Infants And Young Children, Foodstuffs, Cosmetics And Disinfectants Act, 1972 (Act 54 Of 1972), 2 March 2012

⁴³ May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

⁴⁴ Julian May, Chantell Witten, and Lori Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020: Food and Nutrition Security*, 2021.

⁴⁵ Tessa Hochfeld, Lauren Graham, Karen Peters, Leila Patel, Tshinakaho Nyathela, & Jacqueline Moodley, Evaluation of the Tiger Brands Foundation's Pilot In-School Breakfast Feeding Programme, 2013

5. Key Evaluation Findings

The literature review highlighted significant challenges regarding food system governance, specifically in policy development, programme execution, coordination among stakeholders, and inclusivity of various actors in the food system. Governance within these domains was stressed as a primary barrier to achieving desired food system outcomes outlined in previous policies and is a goal that the NFNSP aims to address. The role of Strategic Objectives 1 and 6 in this regard should not be understated in being able to address these challenges. In addition, the literature also identified a paradox in South Africa's food system, where despite ample food production, diversity, and policy measures, there are persistent challenges such as high malnutrition, hunger risk, food insecurity, and a rising burden of non-communicable diet-related diseases. The following section presents the key evaluation findings according to the evaluation questions, presented in the evaluation's terms of reference.

5.1. To what extent has the implementation of the NFNSP been effective towards achieving the impact-level targets?

The NFNSP features 17 impact-level indicators, aligned with national goals, global priorities, and the Plan's objectives. Data sources for these indicators include the General Household Survey (GHS), the South African Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS), the South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (SANHANES-1), and the District Health Information System (DHIS). Four indicators with available data show modest progress but fall short of ambitious 2023 targets. The other indicator with available data shows a deterioration from 2016 values. Various global, geopolitical, and environmental challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest, have impeded progress. Stakeholder interviews reveal disjointed efforts to collect impact-level data, hindering comprehensive monitoring. Additionally, the line of causality between activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact is unclear in the Plan, leading to accountability challenges among government departments and stakeholders. Table 3 provides a status update of the 17 impact targets in relation to the 2023 target.

Table 3: 17 SMART Impact Targets of the NFNSP

Key:

	Good progress based on available data from source documentation
	Modest progress based on available data from source documentation
	No progress or deteriorated based on available data from source documentation
	No recent information available based on available data from source documentation

Impact Indicators		Current Status	Target (2023)
Reduced experience of hunger			
1	Percentage (%) of households vulnerable to hunger	11.6% % in 2022 (From 11.2% in 2019)	5.70%
2	% of individuals vulnerable to hunger	12,9% in 2022 (from 12,2% in 2021)	6.60%
Additional indicators			
3	% of households experiencing hunger	The GHS 2021 and 2022 report the same results for indicator 3 and 4 as 1 and 2 respectively	TBD
4	% of individuals experiencing hunger		TBD
Decrease in months of food shortages among the poor, vulnerable and marginalised			
5	% of households with inadequate or severely inadequate access to food	19.6% in 2022 (from 20.9% in 2021)	<10%
6	% of individuals with inadequate or severely inadequate access to food	22% in 2022 (from 23.8 % in 2021)	<5%
Additional indicators			
7	Number of months (and actual months) in which the household experienced food shortages	No further updated information in the GHS 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022	TBD

Reduced prevalence of under-nutrition in children (acute)			
8	Wasting: Proportion of children below 5 years of age with height for weight <-2 Z-scores of the median WHO child growth standards	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	<20% in 2020 <15% in 2023
9	Stunting: Proportion of children below 5 years of age with height for age <-2 Z-scores of the median WHO child growth standards	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	<20% in 2020 <15% in 2023
Reduced prevalence of overnutrition in children			
10	Overweight: Proportion of children less than 5 years of age with height for weight >+2 Z-scores of the median WHO child growth standards	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	No increase in child overweight by 2020, 10% reduction by 2022
Reduced prevalence of Low Birth Weight			
11	Prevalence of infants born <2500g (% , proportion of total live births)	13.6% in 2022 (DHIS tracks live births <2500g in facility rate)	30% reduction by 2023
12	Prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding (%) at 6 months	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	50% by 2023
Reduced prevalence of overnutrition in adults (Women aged 15 years and above)			
Overweight: Women			
13	Body Mass Index (BMI): Weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in metres (kg/m ²)	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS and SANHANES	10% reduction by 2020 15% reduction by 2023
Obesity: Women			
14	BMI	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS and SANHANES	10% reduction by 2020 15% reduction by 2023
Reduced prevalence of overnutrition in adults (Men aged 15 years and above)			
Overweight: Men (aged 15 years and above)			
15	BMI	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS and SANHANES	10% reduction by 2020 15% reduction by 2023
Obesity: Men (aged 15 years and above)			
16	BMI	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS and SANHANES	10% reduction by 2020 15% reduction by 2023
Reduced prevalence of Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies			
17	Percentage (%) of women of reproductive age (16- 35 yoa) who have a haemoglobin level of less than 11g/dl)	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	25% reduction by 2020 (to 7.3%), 50% reduction by 2023 (to 1.5%)

5.2. To what extent has the implementation of the NFNSP been effective towards achieving the Strategic Objective-level targets?

Table 4 below provides an overview of the performance of the Plan against the various Strategic Objectives' targets, with more detail on each Strategic Objective provided in the full report. As Table 4 shows, 17% of the 2023 targets have been met and a further 6% are likely to be met by the end of 2023. 29% of the targets are making progress but are not likely to be met by the end of 2023 and a further 18% have made very limited progress, and will not be met. This indicates that approximately half of the targets will not be met. The remaining 29% of the indicators have no updated information or are not routinely collected, and as such, their performance could not be assessed.

Table 4: Performance summary of the Strategic Objectives against their targets

Strategic Objective Performance Summary	SO1	SO2	SO3	SO4	SO5	SO6	SO7	Totals	%
Number of interventions/key actions	3	5	4	4	3	2	0	21	
Number of indicators	3	21	12	18	6	5	0	65	100
# 2023 targets met	0	6	4	0	1	0	0	11	17
# 2023 targets likely to be met	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	4	6
# progressing but not likely to meet the 2023 target	0	6	2	4	1	5	0	19	29
# very limited progress towards 2023 target	3	6	1	1	1	0	0	12	18
# Data not collected/limited access, likelihood not applicable	0	2	3	12	2	0	0	19	29

5.2.1. Strategic Objective 1

The National FNS Council has been established but not convened, and none of the provincial or district councils are in place. Formal ministerial appointments to the National FNS Council were made in 2022 but have not progressed further. Challenges in implementing Strategic Objective 1 include changes in the office of the Deputy President and limited prioritisation from senior officials. Coordination, policy, and governance are central to Strategic Objective 1, and without the establishment and convening of councils, the foundation for the Plan's theory of change is incomplete, affecting coordination at higher levels.

Table 5: Output Indicators for Strategic Objective 1

Key:

Met 2023 target	Likely to meet 2023 target	Progress but not likely to meet the 2023	Very limited progress towards 2023 target	Data not collected/limited access to information, likelihood not applicable
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Source: NFNSP Implementation Progress Report Q4 Jan-Mar 2023, stakeholder interviews, DPME

#	Output Indicators	Progress at March 2023 (FY 2022/2023)	Target 2023	Likelihood of meeting target
1	FNS Council convened, and records of proceedings compiled	The FNS council has been established according to stakeholders but not yet convened	Improved coordination of Government Food and Nutrition Security programmes resulting from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FNS Council convening bi-annually to provide oversight for the delivery of FNS programmes. FNS Council holding government departments accountable for coherent delivery of FNS programmes across all government departments. FNS Council leading resource mobilisation efforts for the delivery of FNS programmes 	
2	Provincial FNS Council approved by the Offices of the Premiers	The Provincial councils have not been established	Improved delivery of Government FNS programmes resulting from the effectiveness of Provincial FNS Councils	
3	District FNS Council approved by the Offices of the Mayors	The District councils have not been established	Improved delivery of Government FNS programmes in 40 Districts, resulting from the effectiveness of District FNS Councils	

5.2.2. Strategic Objective 2

Progress under Strategic Objective 2 has been mixed. Out of 21 indicators, six have met the 2023 target, one is likely to meet it, six are progressing but unlikely to meet the target, and six have shown very limited progress. Two indicators lacked updated information. While there's been some success in supporting smallholder producers and implementing

the Agro Processing Scheme, increased production by smallholder and subsistence farmers remains marginal, particularly in specific types of produce. Stakeholders noted the commitment by DALRRD to align with the Plan.

Table 6: Output Indicators for Strategic Objective 2

Key:

Met 2023 target	Likely to meet 2023 target	Progress but not likely to meet the 2023	Very limited progress towards 2023 target	Data not collected/limited access to information, likelihood not applicable
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Sources: NFNSP Implementation Progress Report Q4 Jan-Mar 2023, Quarterly Labour Force Survey STATS SA Q1: 2023, Final Socio-Economic Impact Assessment report, 2023, DALRRD Presentation on Progress of Strategic Objective 2, DALRRD Report on The Process of Transforming Colleges Of Agriculture Into Centres Of Excellence 2023

#	Output Indicators	Progress at March 2023 (FY 2022/2023)	Target 2023	Likelihood of meeting target
1	Quantity of food produced by smallholder and subsistence farmers by type of produce (tonnes of fruit and vegetables annually)	2,09 million tonnes of fruit	5 million tonnes of fruit and vegetables per annum	
2	Quantity of food produced by smallholder and subsistence farmers by type of produce (tonnes of maize and beans annually)	6 million tonnes of maize and beans per annum	6 million tonnes of maize and beans per annum	
3	Number of Indigenous food crops developed and produced	2 (amadumbe and cow pea)	8 African vegetable cultivars developed and produced	
4	Tonnage of Tilapia and Catfish produced by subsistence and smallholder producers	No updated information available - DALRRD does not measure this anymore	1 700 tonnes of Tilapia and 3 300 tonnes of Catfish	
5	Number of households involved in agriculture	2,613,939	2,879,683	
6	Number of households with vegetable gardens	14 372 subsistence producers have been supported through PES ⁴⁶ and 104 908 subsistence producers verified	148,026	
7	Number of smallholder producers certified for SA GAP	105 smallholder producers SA GAP certified	100 smallholder producers SA GAP certified	
8	The number of smallholder producers supplying food to institutional markets	10 smallholder producer supplying WFP and 51 supplying Tiger Brands	10% of 16 000 smallholder producers supplying food to institutional markets	
9	The value of food being procured from smallholder producers	Values not provided in source documentation, however, respondents indicated that government spending remains lower than the 2023 target	50% value of the food procurement budget spent on smallholder producers	
10	Quantity of food being procured from smallholder producers	No updated information available from source documentation, however, there is work ongoing with the Government Food Purchase Programme (DBE, DSD, Correctional Services and Military) regarding this.	1,200 000 tonnes per annum of food supplied into government departments procuring food	
11	Number of centres of excellence and Agricultural Training Institutes for producer development	0 Agricultural Training Institutes (ATIs) can be declared as fully fledged Centres of Excellence ⁴⁷	11 Agricultural Training Institutes (ATIs) operating as Centres of Excellence	
12	Number of extension officers	1 994 ⁴⁸	5 600	
13	Number of people employed	860 000 people were employed in agriculture	1 million people across the	

⁴⁶ PES is the Presidential Employment Stimulus

⁴⁷ Current talks and a transferring process is ongoing between DALRRD and DHE

⁴⁸ However, there are an additional 4 346 Assistant Agricultural Practitioners

	in the agricultural sector		agricultural sector	
14	Number of women agropreneurs and participants	16 320 female smallholder producers who were supported	50% women of 16 000 smallholder producers supported	
15	Number of youth agropreneurs and participants	45 406 youth smallholder producers were supported	50% of smallholder producers supported are youth	
16	PCPDS approval by Cabinet	The PCPDS was not approved by Cabinet	Comprehensive Producer Development Support Bill	
17	Number of Instruments developed	Implementation of the Agro Processing Scheme with EU Funds is ongoing	1 Agro Processing Incentive scheme operational	
18	Number of matching credit grant schemes	1 (The Jobs Fund)	9 matching credit grant schemes aligned to APAP commodities	
19	Credit guarantee scheme	DALRRD Blended Finance Scheme has been launched and the transaction is under due diligence	Operational credit guarantee scheme servicing 30% of smallholder producers	
20	Number of agricultural cooperatives benefiting from the instruments	155 agricultural cooperatives receiving incentives	300 agricultural cooperatives receiving incentives	
21	Number of commodity organisations benefiting from the instruments	9 commodity organisations (roundtables) are being implemented - AAMP ⁴⁹ document approved	9 commodity organisations based	

5.2.3. Strategic Objective 3

Strategic Objective 3 has shown mixed performance. Out of 12 indicators, four have met the 2023 target, two are likely to meet it, and two are progressing but unlikely to meet the target. One has shown very limited progress, and for the remaining three indicators, updated information was unavailable. Despite this, 93% of public schools successfully provided nutritious food to over nine and a half million children daily through the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), indicating positive efforts. However, challenges persist in adequately meeting nutrition guidelines for ECDs, affecting the effective implementation of targeted social protection measures and sustainable livelihood programmes for vulnerable children.

Table 7: Output Indicators for Strategic Objective 3

Key:

Met 2023 target	Likely to meet 2023 target	Progress but not likely to meet the 2023	Very limited progress towards 2023 target	Data not collected/limited access to information, likelihood not applicable
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Source: NFNSP Implementation Progress Report Q4 Jan-Mar 2023, ECD Census 2021, DSD Government Official, NISPIS Progress Report 18 July 2023, Stats SA website, SASSA Annual Reports, Medium Term Strategic Framework Report 2019 - 2024

#	Output Indicators	Progress at March 2023 (FY 2022/2023)	Target 2023	Likelihood of meeting target
1	Number of infants born in public health facilities registered	No updated information available from from Home Affairs source documentation	N/A	
2	% of infants born in public and private health facilities registered within 30 days in population register	No updated information available, however, this was 80% in 2020 ⁵⁰	95%	
3	Registration strategy developed	The Policy has not yet been approved and is to be tabled in Parliament	Approved policy on pregnancy and maternity benefits.	
4	Number of registered infants (<1 year) from PVM households	No updated information available from source documentation	15% increase of children registered	

⁴⁹ AAMP - Agriculture and Agro-processing Masterplan

⁵⁰ Stats SA -

<https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=14902#:~:text=A%20total%20of%201%20003,but%20were%20registered%20in%202020.>

5	Integrated Social Protection Information System (ISPIS) developed	ISPIS Domain is registered and still under development	ISPIS expanded to 10 Departments ⁵¹	
6	Number of ECDs providing nutritious food to targeted PVMs.	42 420	54 000	
7	Number of schools providing nutritious food to targeted PVMs	21 201 public schools	19 800 schools	
8	Number of Community Nutrition and Development Centres (CNDCs) providing nutritious food to targeted PVMs	353 CNDCs	302 CNDCs	
9	Number of children provided with food through ECDs	No updated information available from source documentation	1 500 000	
10	Number of learners provided with nutritious food through NSNP	9 613 630 ^{52, 53}	9.9 million	
11	Number of people provided with food through CNDCs	929 830	75 000 people	
12	Number of PVMs accessing Social Relief of Distress	10 622 628 ⁵⁴	180 000	

5.2.4. Strategic Objective 4

Strategic Objective 4 faced challenges due to reliance on NIDS for data, lack of regular surveys, changes in data collection, and indicator prioritisation. Seven indicators could not be reported, and out of 18 indicators, none will meet the 2023 target, with only one likely to meet it. Stakeholders emphasised the need to streamline maternal health indicators and reported advocacy efforts during World Breastfeeding Week and National Nutrition Week. One stakeholder report highlighted the potential of community-based services, particularly the Family Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) project, in enhancing nutrition outcomes.

Table 8: Output Indicators for Strategic Objective 4

Key:

Met 2023 target	Likely to meet 2023 target	Progress but not likely to meet the 2023	Very limited progress towards 2023 target	Data not collected/limited access to information, likelihood not applicable
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Source: Source: Source FY 2022/23 DHIS data, NFNS coordinating committee meeting minutes, [DOH Ideal Health Facility Website](#)

#	Output Indicators	Progress at March 2023 (FY 2022/2023)	Target 2023	Likelihood of meeting target
1	Proportion of pregnant and lactating women receiving with micronutrient supplements	This indicator is not routinely collected as part of the National Indicator Data Set (NIDS)	90% of pregnant and lactating women attending public health facilities receiving micronutrients supplements (folic acid and iron, calcium)	
2	Effectiveness score to assess coverage micronutrient supplementation	This indicator is not routinely collected as part of NIDS	Effectiveness Score 90%	
3	Proportion of pregnant women on iron and folate supplementation	This indicator is not routinely collected as part of NIDS	80% of women with Hb >10 g/ dL at delivery	

⁵¹ DOH, DBE, DSD, DALRRD, DEFF, DWS, CoGTA, DPME, DSBD, Stats SA

⁵² In the Q4 Jan- Mar 2023 implementation progress report, it is noted that the closure of schools due to COVID-19 in 2020 impacted the reach of the NSNP. A case in point is that in 2018/19, progress was already at 9, 965,500 learners benefitting from the NSNP – which had exceeded the set target of 9,9 million.

⁵³ The Q4 Jan - Mar 2023 implementation progress report does not specify in the description what quintile schools this indicator result is made of; however, the progress report mentions 4 provinces as follows: North West Province (165 schools), Eastern Cape Province (All Quintile 1-3 primary schools), Gauteng Province (All Quintile 1-3 schools), Western Cape Province (All Quintile 1-3 schools).

⁵⁴ Taken from SASSA 2021/22 report “Social Assistance plays an important role in protecting the vulnerable groups from the worst effects of food insecurity and hunger. Of the total grants in payment, 83.06% (10 622 628) were women, 32.5%, (4 165 615) were youth and 7.85% (1 004 798) were persons with disabilities”.

	with Hb >10 g/dL at delivery			
4	Proportion of target populations receiving nutritional supplements	The available data includes all children < 5 years supplemented including SAM and MAM, and is not disaggregated for children with MAM and SAM.	U5 Children: 90% of children with MAM and SAM receiving nutritional supplements WRA, PLW, HIV and TB: 80% of the undernourished target population receiving nutritional supplements	
5	Effectiveness score to assess coverage micronutrient supplementation	This indicator is not routinely collected as part of NIDS	Effectiveness Score 90%	
6	U5 children: Proportion of MAM and SAM that die in facilities (case fatality rate, CFR)	U5 SAM inpatient CFR (DHIS): 7.2% U5 MAM inpatient CFR (DHIS): 4.2%	U5 SAM inpatient CFR (DHIS): <5% U5 MAM inpatient CFR (DHIS): <4%	
7	Older target groups: proportion of target groups receiving nutritional supplements achieving appropriate weight gain or improvement in anthropometric criteria	No updated information available from source documentation	Older groups: >80% recovery rates	
8	Number of primary health care facilities reported on the ideal clinic dashboard with functional anthropometric equipment	1928 ideal clinics	3477 primary health care facilities with functional equipment	
9	Proportion of infants under 6 months exclusively breastfed as measured in DHIS at 14 weeks	44.7%	60% exclusively breastfed at 14 weeks	
10	Proportion of Low-birth-weight babies admitted to facility- based quality KMC who survived (discharged alive)	This indicator is not routinely collected as part of NIDS	80% of low-birth-weight babies initiated on facility-based quality KMC survived	
11	Proportion of under 5 children reached with GMP (coverage)	This indicator is not routinely collected as part of NIDS	90% GMP coverage	
12	Proportion of children under 59 months with identified with growth faltering	This indicator is not routinely collected as part of NIDS	<30% of children under 5 with growth faltering	
13	Number of children <12 months & 12-59 months receiving one dose of Vitamin A every 6 months	Children 12-59 months receiving one dose of vitamin A: 70.8% % of children 12-59 months receiving one dose of deworming every 6 months: 63.3%	90% of children 12-59 months receiving one dose of vitamin A and deworming every 6 months	
14	Proportion of ECD sites providing good quality and quantity nutritious foods according to the minimum standards	No updated information available from source documentation	90% of ECD sites providing good quality and quantity nutritious foods according to the minimum standards	
15	Proportion of children in Grade R and Grade 1 in Q1, Q2 and Q3 Schools reached with deworming medication	Access to this data has been limited ⁵⁵	90% deworming coverage	
16	Proportion of Q1 and Q2 primary school children screened and appropriately referred in Grade 1 and Grade 8	Grade 1: 21,2% Grade 8: 14,6% ⁵⁶	Grade 1: 65% Grade 8: 60%	
17	Proportion of ideal clinics conducting BMI, waist	2046 ideal clinics	3 477 ideal clinics (100% coverage)	

⁵⁵ The relevant department has contacted the M&E unit to provide access to the relevant data, however, it has been noted that the challenge to deworming is the shortage of tablets

⁵⁶ NDOH_ISHP Data Request_27 Jun 2023

	circumference and lifestyle counselling			
18	Proportion of registered users who have successfully completed the e-learning course	No updated information available from source documentation	70%	

5.2.5. Strategic Objective 5

One indicator for Strategic Objective 5 has met the 2023 target (namely, the implementation of the communication strategy). One indicator is making progress, namely improved knowledge, attitudes and practices on FNS issues. This indicator does not have quantitative targets and as such, the change in this indicator is indicative of the *likelihood* of meeting the 2023 target, rather than being definitive around meeting the target. Lastly, one indicator showed progress but was unlikely to meet the target. Efforts to disseminate breastfeeding and complementary feeding information through media were noted, and the Side-by-Side evaluation report suggests that some parents and caregivers expressed an interest in changing their FNS parenting behaviours based on the campaign.

Table 9: Output Indicators for Strategic Objective 5

Key:

Met 2023 target	Likely to meet 2023 target	Progress but not likely to meet the 2023	Very limited progress towards 2023 target	Data not collected/limited access to information, likelihood not applicable
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Source: NFNSP Implementation Progress Report Q4 Jan-Mar 2023, Side By Side Performance and Presentation, 2018–2023 NATIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR SOUTH AFRICA, Side By Side Performance and Presentation July 2023

#	Output Indicators	Progress at March 2023 (FY 2022/2023)	Target 2023	Likelihood of meeting target
1	Integrated advocacy and communication FNS strategy approved by office of the Deputy President (Key technical messages compiled and collated)	A Communication Strategy for FNS was developed in September 2020, approved in September 2021 and disseminated	Integrated advocacy and communication FNS strategy implemented in all 52 districts	
2		The Side-by-Side evaluation report indicates that there have been positive changes with regards to FNS issues among the respondent group.	Empirical surveys reflect improved knowledge, attitudes and practices on food and nutrition security issues	
3	Increased number of media platforms conveying food and nutrition messages	FNS messages, through the Side-by-Side campaign, communicated through 9 Radio Stations with 5.7 million listenership of mothers and caregivers with children under 5 years	FNS messages communicated through 256 Community Radio Stations station and 40 commercial radio stations	
4	Number of ECD sites registered with DSD where nutrition education is given	No updated information - There was a function shift for ECD from DSD to DBE and this information is not available	80% of the total number of ECD caregivers in registered ECDs	
5	Number of youth and adolescents who are registered to use the (BE WISE MOBISITE)	1 year after release of the NFNSP, the approach was changed, and youth were no longer required to register to use the mobisite	1 million	
6	Number of facilities in which Youth Friendly Services have incorporated food and nutrition messages	0 facilities	570 (35%) facilities	

5.2.6. Strategic Objective 6

Strategic Objective 6 faced challenges with no indicators meeting the 2023 target and a lack of a unified monitoring and evaluation system in place. The current implementation evaluation, planned for 2020, is only happening in 2023, making it too late to inform corrections for the 2018-2023 Plan. The absence of a consolidated tracking mechanism for indicators hindered evidence-informed decision-making, and stakeholders emphasised the need for better data collection and reporting, especially at the local level.

Table 10: Output Indicators for Strategic Objective 6

Key:

Met 2023 target	Likely to meet 2023 target	Progress but not likely to meet the 2023	Very limited progress towards 2023 target	Data not collected/limited access to information, likelihood not applicable
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Source: NFNSP Implementation Progress Report Q4 Jan-Mar 2023

#	Output Indicators	Progress at March 2023 (FY 2022/2023)	Target 2023	Likelihood of meeting target
1	Report of the GHS 2017 and subsequent surveys incorporating set of core indicators	11.6% of households and 12.9 % of individuals experiencing hunger - GHS 2022	5.7% of households and 6.6% of individuals experiencing hunger (Impact indicator 1 and 2). All subsequent GHS (surveys) collecting data on the expanded set of core indicators. Food and Nutrition statistics publication produced annually	
2	Report on the implementation evaluation of the NFNS Plan by 2020, approved by the FNS Council	Implementation evaluation of the NFNS Plan 2018- 2023 in progress and to be completed in 2023 through this report. Summative evaluation has not commenced.	Summative evaluation of the NFNS Plan 2018- 2023 completed. Report on the summative evaluation of the NFNS Plan 2018- 2023 approved by the FNS Council	
3	Report on analysis and rating of different hazards and their impacts	Some reports developed, for example, the South African Vulnerability Assessment Committee released a 2020/21 Rapid COVID Assessment. However, this is not an analysis and rating of different hazards and their impacts as envisaged	Updated Risks and Hazards Analysis completed	
4	Reports on implementation of different mechanisms to address FNS risks (Establishing a grain reserve facility, Instituting price support mechanism etc, Review Marketing Agricultural produce act of 1996 and other relevant marketing legislation)	1. Grain reserve facility has not been implemented 2. Price support mechanism report was produced 3. The review of the Marketing of Agricultural Produce Act was not conducted	1. Grain reserve facility implemented 2. Price support mechanism implemented 3. Amended Marketing of Agricultural Produce Act implemented	
5	Reports on the Risk profiles of vulnerable groups	A National Food and Nutrition Security Survey (NFNSS) (2021-2023) was conducted to collect baseline information on the state of food insecurity and vulnerability with an intention to understand district profiles and locations of vulnerable populations. The final NFNSS report was released in August 2023. The 2023 target referred to biannual updates, however this NFNSS represents the baseline and has only been released in 2023.	Risk profiles for vulnerable groups completed biannually	

5.2.7. Strategic Objective 7

Strategic Objective 7 was not initially part of the Plan, however, in 2021, the Social Protection, Community and Human Development (SPCHD) Cabinet Committee directed the government to focus on developing entrepreneurial

skills and supporting local farmers to achieve self-sustainability rather than relying on government-provided support. There is very limited documentation on Strategic Objective 7, for example on how the Objective's elements fit into or are filtered into the NFNSP to understand the impact pathways, outcomes, outcome indicators, progress towards the achievement of this objective, and associated estimated costs. Similarly, there was very limited awareness of Strategic Objective 7 in the stakeholder interviews.

5.3. What factors enable the effective implementation of the NFNSP?

Key factors that have enabled the successful implementation of the NFNSP include the consistent and engaged FNS National Task Team that has provided stability, institutional memory, and driven progress where possible within their respective mandates. National departments showed resourcefulness by utilising existing budgets to implement relevant Plan aspects, aligning with their mandates.

Reviewing provincial-level implementation of the NFNSP, it is evident that most provinces are in the early stages of adopting and establishing the necessary structures for implementation. Limpopo has formed a coordinating committee but faces resource constraints and meeting challenges, while KwaZulu-Natal is in the process of finalising its draft Plan. The Northern Cape has adopted the National Plan with an added poverty reduction objective but is yet to implement it. The North West has a draft FNSP that is in line with the national Plan and includes a proposed budget. However, the province has not fully started implementing their plan. Mpumalanga has developed a plan in 2022 that is in line with the national Plan however it does not include a proposed budget. Gauteng has an older food security plan; however, implementation is limited and it was not clear if there is a process in place to update and align with the national plan. The Eastern Cape does not have any current planned FNS process underway. Only the Western Cape is actively implementing its Household Food and Nutrition Security Strategic Framework. Despite the varying stages of implementation, these provincial experiences offer valuable insights into enabling factors for successful FNS Plan execution.

In KwaZulu-Natal, effective nutrition interventions under Operation Sukuma Sakhe, driven by strong leadership and communication, have paved the way for potential FNS success. Similarly, Limpopo's Department of Agriculture leverages local context and agro-ecological conditions for relevant interventions, while the Department of Health collaborates with local organisations like ECD centres to enhance nutrition efforts. Limpopo's focus on community-level preventative nutrition and using existing structures, such as community health workers, has proven cost-effective. In the Western Cape, early institutional commitment and engagement, coupled with expertise from universities and NGOs, provides a robust foundation for FNS implementation. The province adopts a food systems approach, emphasising listening to local voices, and remains flexible in its implementation strategies, facilitating adaptability and relevance.

Moreover, the Western Cape's partnership with intermediary organisations helps sustain focus and coordination, while the province's willingness to adapt its Plan based on ongoing learning fosters efficiency and impact. These diverse approaches showcase the importance of context-specific strategies and adaptive leadership in the successful implementation of FNS Plans across South African provinces.

5.4. What factors inhibit the effective implementation of the NFNSP?

At the national level, several inhibiting factors hinder the implementation of the NFNSP. These include slow progress in achieving the strategic objectives, and a fragmented approach with different departments operating in silos. Furthermore, the Plan does not comprehensively address all aspects of the food system, such as explicitly understanding the role of the informal sector and differentiation between rural, peri-urban and urban food security. Leadership buy-in at the highest government levels, including in the Office of the Deputy President, is lacking, leading to a lack of political will for plan implementation trickling down to implementing departments.

Additionally, the absence of the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security and related sub-committees, which were meant to coordinate efforts and reduce policy incoherence, further hinders progress and buy-in. While the National Technical Task Team has been instrumental in the technical oversight of the Plan's implementation to date, this Team does not have the mandate to do everything that the Council is intended to do and as such, has not been

able to fulfil the role of the Council. There has been no robust M&E system put in place and therefore data collection and analysis has not taken place to enable adaptive management. The estimated R86.6 billion additional funding needs have not been secured during the Plan's implementation window which has resulted in departments operating within existing budgets as business as usual. The Plan's Game Changers, requiring interdepartmental coordination, remain unimplemented due to staffing shortages and a lack of strategic capacity. The volunteer-based nature of the council's role and the absence of a structured recruitment process is believed to have contributed to its non-convening. Lastly, limited engagement with the private sector and civil society organisations, compounded by the unforeseen impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has affected the Plan's implementation. Moreover, budget constraints and inadequate funding sources have impeded the Plan's execution, with ongoing discussions about securing the necessary funding.

At the provincial level, the implementation of Plans has been hindered by a lack of decisive and central leadership within provincial governments to convene necessary departments. Except for two provinces, the Office of the Premier, seen as the most appropriate department to convene others, was not leading Plan implementation. For instance, in Limpopo, the Department of Agriculture faced resistance when trying to convene meetings with other departments due to a perceived lack of authority. Consequently, no progress has been made on the provincial Plan, with departments not meeting again after their initial gathering. In the Northern Cape, the provincial Plan's development was led through the Department of Social Development, and efforts for the Office of the Premier to take over the coordination role have been challenging, this is a similar situation in the North West.

Insufficient funding has prevented provinces from scaling successful interventions in food and nutrition security where there was commitment and capability for implementation. In the Western Cape, efforts in the Breede Valley Municipality to understand and support local needs were successful but replicating this intensity across all 29 municipalities was constrained by limited resources and capacity. Similarly, in Limpopo, budgetary constraints limited the reach of food support initiatives to only a limited number of individuals in need.

5.5. Are the institutional arrangements working optimally?

The key gap in the Plan's institutional arrangements is the absence of the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security, a crucial element for effective implementation. While the National Technical Task Team has had technical oversight of the Plan's implementation, it does not have the mandate for full role of the Council and as such, has not garnered the political buy-in envisaged by the Council. The lack of convening of this council has led to limited visibility of the food and nutrition security agenda with key decision-makers. Other key coordination activities under Strategic Objective 1, such as the establishment of sub-committees and annual FNS forums have also not taken place. Engagements with provincial stakeholders were considered to be sporadic and coming towards the end of the Plan's implementation timeframe, and mainly focused on supporting the development of provincial plans rather than coordinated institutional collaboration under the national plan. The absence of an effective monitoring and evaluation system, along with challenges in data collection, sharing, and utilisation, have also hindered the Plan's implementation by undermining data-driven decision-making and coordination among government departments.

At the provincial level, the Office of the Premier is ideally tasked with driving provincial institutional arrangements, but this has not been consistent across most provinces. One model that encourages collaboration is implemented in the Western Cape where partnerships with academic and grassroots organisations are facilitated by an external intermediary. There has also been some early success in KwaZulu-Natal through the Premier's Office. However, securing funding for these structures remains a concern.

5.6. To what extent is the Plan implemented cost efficiently?

The Plan initially estimated a total cost of R86,806 million, allocating a significant share to Strategic Objective 2 (78.2%) and Strategic Objective 3 (12.8%). However, the Plan lacks clarity on funding sources and does not track Plan-specific budget expenditure, hindering adaptive decision-making or the ability to identify cost-efficiency opportunities. A detailed implementation plan was not developed linking estimated costs and sources of funding, further making cost efficiency identification challenging. Additionally, no annual review mechanisms exist, and non-state actors' spending is not tracked, potentially underestimating the overall implementation costs.

The gap between when the Plan's estimated costs were developed and the HSRC report on identifying funding pathways is five years and spans the length of the Plan's implementation timeframe. This suggests that during the implementation of the Plan, the respective line departments have been relying on utilising their existing resources without clear sight of funding gaps or seeking opportunities to coordinate and synergise across departments to avoid duplication. Stakeholders indicated that insufficient funding, particularly for Strategic Objective 2, has impeded target achievement, suggesting reliance on existing budgets rather than accessing funds through the Plan's mandate. Lastly, limited progress in effective coordination structures and adaptive decision-making has led to missed opportunities as departments operate in silos.

5.7. What lessons emerged from the implementation of the NFNSP?

The Plan's design, noted as a key learning by stakeholders, inadvertently encourages siloed implementation due to its departmentalised approach. The tension between the need for flexibility and the rigidity of government systems that are Key Performance Indicator- (KPI-) driven poses a challenge. Limited visibility of the Plan has influenced its prioritisation, stressing the necessity for leadership to enhance its visibility for effective implementation. The Plan's inherent top-down approach is viewed to be too high-level which would benefit from a more bottom-up perspective to address contextual factors and foster an adaptive response to dynamic and differing community-level needs. The Western Cape Provincial departments noted that the ability to learn, adapt and have a flexible response to contextual challenges has been key to the province's ability to implement the Plan effectively. The learning and adaptive nature of the provinces' approach enables stakeholders to learn from what is not working and make adjustments to the framework in a way that balances reporting requirements, progress against objectives and meeting the needs of its citizens.

Political will, collaboration with various stakeholders, and timely and localised FNS data collection were identified as crucial learnings to drive successful implementation. It was noted that the driving force behind the Plan should be elevated by the Office of the Deputy President as this would provide a strong sense of obligation based on that Office's hierarchy and authority. Likewise, at a provincial level, the role of the Office of the Premier should promote forward motion in the implementation of the provincial Plans. Examples from the HIV epidemic and the response to this illustrate the importance of political will alongside the appointments of individuals on a long-term basis to drive the agenda and manage the response.

Regarding the Plan's implementation, limited visibility poses a significant issue, with many stakeholders, especially governmental departments outside the technical working committee, provincial departments, CSOs and academia, lacking awareness of the Plan's existence. There was felt to be limited guidance from the National Plan on provincial planning, and the need and structure of a provincial-level plan is not detailed in the National Plan, resulting in compliance-oriented provincial-level plans replicating the national structure rather than fit-for-purpose provincial plans. FNS planning at the local level is also not well communicated in the National Plan. While there is the intention of trickling down planning, the mechanisms to do this have not been established or well-defined in the current NFNSP, as a result, localised, context-specific actions are limited.

Another key learning that came through the evaluation is the need for collaboration between the government and partners, including non-governmental organisations, businesses, and local communities to plan interventions collaboratively and address the multifaceted FNS challenges. NGOs have implementation capabilities at a grass-roots level and a sharper view of implementation challenges to be able to feed that information to decision-makers. Similarly, CSOs and academia have access to nuanced data that can assist in driving informed decision-making. Local communities have a clear understanding of the FNS challenges they face and can assist in effecting the necessary changes required. However, effective partnership approaches with CSOs and NGOs need to be enabled by fair tender processes and clear terms of references so that implementation can be carried out effectively, and such that the roles of the NGOs and CSOs do not become unclear.

6. Conclusion

The Plan is highly relevant within the South African food system as it responds to an urgent need for food and nutrition security and the need to address South Africa's burdens of under- and over-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. This is particularly evidenced in the Plan and its focus on the most vulnerable in the country, with its emphasis on mothers, infants and young children and adolescent girls. Similarly, the Plan is in line with the National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security and is in alignment with the South African Government's external policy commitments in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals, including goals 1, 2, 3, and 8.

Notwithstanding the importance of the Plan in the context of South Africa's food and nutrition system, certain core issues are missing from the Plan. These include the use of a full systems lens of FNS, which would, for example, emphasise the important role of the informal food sector and its relationship with the formal sector, considerations of food and nutrition security issues in urban environments, accounting for various local contexts and nuances, and clear plan for implementation from national level through to local level, as well as a definition of specific roles for different food system stakeholders. The Plan's multi-stakeholder design recognises the need for an approach that includes the government as well as the private sector and civil society. This is particularly relevant in the food and nutrition system where there are a diverse range of actors and roles within the system at varying levels.

The funding resources, namely the additional R86 806 million estimated costs for the Plan's implementation, are yet to be made available and the budgeting process did not initially make explicit how much of departments' equitable share budgets would form part of the Plan's budget and where the sources of this additional funding requirements would come from. As a result, there was an unclear allocation of resources for the Plan's implementation which has affected the implementation of activities that are above what departments are already doing, limiting progress. Additionally, the Plan's implementation had an unknown path to close the funding gap throughout the period of implementation as there was no detailed tracking of budget allocations and or spending in relation to interventions.

The Plan's progress has been slow in relation to intended outcomes, impacting the achievement of the Strategic Objective-level targets and impact-level targets. Strategic Objective 1 includes the establishment of the National Food Security Council, which was intended to give political impetus towards interdepartmental collaboration and coordination. However, this Council has not yet been convened. As a result, there is limited coordination and departments typically take responsibility for the implementation of the Strategic Objectives, and the activities therein, to which they are accountable; but not those beyond this. The impact of not having established the Council is evident at the provincial-level where the lack of a high-level mandate has affected the coordination and implementation of the provincial Plans and local level FNS planning.

The implementation of Strategic Objective 6 was recognised as a means through which implementation of the Plan could be efficiently implemented through data-driven decision making and adaptive management. However, the opportunity to leverage these efficiencies through data could not be harnessed without the rollout of the monitoring and evaluation system, necessary for learning and adjusting for better operational efficiency. The indicators contained in the Plan at both the impact-level and Strategic Objective level are not well aligned to the data that departments routinely collect nor those readily available in routinely collected national-level data sets. As such monitoring is departmental-led, whereby information is made available by the relevant departments for reporting and accountability purposes but not to inform a holistic perspective of the Plan's implementation. Given that not all the indicators are monitored by the departments, this provides a limited perspective of the Plan's implementation

Although the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated FNS challenges, it emphasised the need for robust risk mitigation strategies, and adaptive management strategies. Given the lack of progress in Strategic Objectives 1 and 6, which underpin the Plan's Theory of Change, there have been ripple effects on the ability of the other Strategic Objectives to be truly coordinated and successful. As a result, implementing departments have been undertaking activities within their existing mandates resulting in a business-as-usual approach and siloed operational delivery. In addition, the estimated additional funds required have not materialised further impacting implementation and hindering the NFNSP's full potential for catalysing meaningful change.

7. Recommendations

The recommendations presented below are based on the findings of this evaluation and have been developed to advance the progress and objectives of FNS in South Africa. The Plan intended that the implementation evaluation report would be available 2020 and recommendations would be able to effect change for the remaining time period of the plan. This implementation evaluation however comes at the end of the plan's lifecycle; therefore, recommendations have been developed with this in mind.

R1. Commence the next iteration of the NFNSP, by updating and revising the current Plan with the below enhancements.

As reflected in the evaluation findings, the need for, and importance of, a national Plan for food and nutrition security in the country is as critical as it was when the Plan was released in 2018. As such, it is recommended that the Plan be updated to reflect the next planning cycle and to ensure that the Plan remains relevant, effective, and aligned with changing FNS circumstances in the country. Building on the foundation of the existing Plan and the cross-sectorial approach and consultative process to develop the 2018-2023 Plan, it is suggested that the below considerations be incorporated into the next iteration of the Plan.

R1.1: Update the Theory of Change.

Once the interventions are determined, to improve the impact pathways and the interconnectedness of interventions, the Theory of Change should be updated. The relationship between impact pathways and interventions needs to be documented in detail to ensure that interventions are fit for purpose for the Plan's intended impact and reflective of the current situation around FNS in South Africa.

R1.2: Update the situational analysis, including the enabling processes, institutional arrangements and capabilities that drive FNS.

Given that the FNS situation with South Africa has continued to evolve since the current Plan's formulation, the revised Plan needs to update the situational analysis and identify and revise the enabling process and institutional arrangements. This will assist in clearly identifying the FNS policy and institutional landscape and the respective roles and responsibilities of state and non-state actors as they relate to FNS. In addition, national departments have undergone restructuring, and therefore, a process to revise responsibilities needs to be undertaken in respect to the interventions.

The revision process should include a thorough assessment of the capabilities and resources of relevant government departments and, where possible, align departmental roles and responsibilities with objectives to ensure effective implementation and avoid overburdening any single entity or duplication of efforts. This can be further enhanced by exploring ways to mobilise resources for sustaining the Plan's positive effects, including public-private, NGO and or civil society partnerships.

R1.3: Develop detailed implementation plans for each Strategic Objective.

The next iteration of the Plan should include detailed implementation plans for each strategic objective that clearly outline activities, sub-actions, responsibilities, timeframes, costs, and funding sources. In developing these detailed implementation plans, opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration and cost efficiencies should be identified and documented.

R1.4: Identify priority actions that could be considered as 'double duty actions'⁵⁷.

In the context of fiscal restraint, build on opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration and cost efficiencies. These

⁵⁷ Double-duty actions are interventions, programmes and policies that simultaneously prevent or reduce the risk of both nutritional deficiencies leading to underweight, wasting, stunting and micronutrient deficiencies, and problems of obesity, and diet-related non-communicable diseases.

include interventions that can be classified as “double duty actions” in that they engage holistically with food system issues, including the multiple burdens of malnutrition. Such opportunities should become a priority whilst long-term financing (see recommendation 3) is sought.

R.1.5: Incorporate a holistic systems approach to FNS through the inclusion of the informal sector and urban food systems.

Include the full FNS system in the Plan, for example, include the role of urban food systems and the role of the informal sector in achieving FNS targets. Local contexts and needs will vary from an urban context to a rural or peri-urban context. In addition, the role that the informal sector plays within the broader FNS system needs to be considered.

R1.6: Enable bottom-up interventions in support of top-down objectives.

Enhance focus on a localised context-specific approach that enables bottom-up engagement such that relevant solutions to FNS can emerge, including improved enabling mechanisms for local organisations, such as NGOs and other civil society organisations, to contribute to the Plan’s objectives. The revision process should elevate and showcase successful interventions and approaches that have shown localised impact and potential for scalability. Enabling mechanisms such as memorandums of understanding between government and local non-state actors can support localised implementation that is specific to the needs at the community level. Where non-state actors are able to be more efficient from a cost or delivery perspective, partnerships should be encouraged. The next iteration of the Plan should consider how to build these mechanisms explicitly to empower state and non-state actors to progress on FNS challenges.

R2. Integrate and leverage existing planning processes and reporting tools at various government levels, particularly provincial and local, to enhance accountability, monitoring, and collective efforts in addressing food and nutrition security.

In the next iteration of the Plan, there is potential to explore, better align and utilise existing overarching planning processes to embed the revised Plan’s objectives and activities. Embedding activities and outcomes into existing mechanisms will enable better accountability, monitoring, and support for FNS goals.

R2.1: Prioritise FNS within existing national planning processes.

FNS needs to be prioritised and integrated into existing national planning processes such as the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), Long Term Sector Plans, and relevant departmental Strategic Plans. Prioritising FNS within these national planning processes will translate to FNS being considered in financing mechanisms such as annual budgets and national, provincial and local government budgeting processes. In implementation, this will enable FNS interventions to be reflected in annual performance plans, operational plans and programme implementation plans. The current MTSF time frame comes to an end in 2024 and the timing of an NFNSP iteration presents an opportunity to elevate FNS issues in the MTSF 2024 - 2029. FNS coordinating departments should aim to include an FNS focus in the upcoming MTSF process and consider how FNS was reflected when reviewing the implementation of the current MTSF. Having specific FNS objectives reflected in a key national planning document will also support the prioritisation of FNS trickling down to provincial and local level planning.

R2.2 Incorporate FNS priorities within provincial and local planning tools.

Although the current Plan alludes to the role of local government planning tools, there is no reference to provincial planning tools that can further institutionalise FNS issues at the provincial and local levels. Further exploration of the role of these provincial and local government planning tools (such as Provincial Growth and Development Strategies, Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs)) can enhance the collective and intersectoral interventions outlined in the current Plan. Spatially understanding the relationship between all FNS actors would help identify coordination opportunities and challenges. At the district level, this would also consider the spatial differences between department demarcations such as school districts in relation to health districts and possible challenges when aiming to work collaboratively on FNS interventions. The revised national Plan should provide enabling and reinforcing mechanisms to ensure FNS considerations are more intentionally addressed in

provincial and local government planning processes. Leveraging existing tools can assist in providing the balance of the need for national coordination and policy setting and bottom-up responses. For example, a national Plan that compels local government to consider FNS as an IDP priority will enable the development of Local Economic Development Plans, Strategies and Sector Plans that include an explicit goal of addressing FNS issues that are local context-specific.

R3. Secure funding and human resources for at least the first year of the revised Plan's implementation. This should be secured in advance of finalising the next iteration of the Plan.

In the next iteration of a national FNS planning process, there is a need to secure funding for the Plan well in advance of its implementation and explore long-term financing options to ensure sustained support for FNS initiatives. The revision process needs to include an analysis of sources of funding in the detailed Strategic Objective-level implementation plans. Having FNS issues reflected in the MTSF would support in unlocking the budget and also encourage consideration of interventions that can achieve multiple outcomes.

R3.1: Implement recommendations in the 2023 HSRC's Review and Sources of Funding Analysis report.

Implementing the recommendations outlined in the HSRC's Review and Sources of Funding Analysis report will enhance efforts to secure, report, monitor and adjust funding requirements needed for implementation. Importantly, a transparent budgeting process is required that explicitly designates funds and ensures clear and adequate budget allocation for the Plan's implementation.

R3.2 Prioritise high-impact interventions that can achieve multiple desired outcomes within budget constraints.

The revised Plan should maximise the impact of the available funds by adopting efficient resource management strategies. Through an enhanced understanding of impact pathways, the revised Plan should prioritise high-impact interventions and consider innovative approaches that can achieve desired outcomes within budget constraints.

As revealed in this evaluation, actions to address different forms of malnutrition are typically managed by separate departments, programmes and funding streams. By contrast, double-duty actions emerge as one way to increase the food system response to risks of food insecurity, undernutrition and obesity.

R.4 Utilise existing legislative mechanisms for better coordination and collaboration on FNS-related issues and activities

Given the complexity and diverse requirements of an effective FNS response, it is unlikely that one set of coherent legislation pertaining to food and nutrition security will be developed in the short term. SO1 is aimed to identify legislative incoherency or outdated FNS-related policy. However, this has not been achieved. It is recommended that existing legislative mechanisms be carefully reviewed when revising the Plan.

R4.1: Incorporate existing legislative mechanisms to enable intergovernmental coordination.

In the Plan's next iteration, a more in-depth consideration of existing legislative mechanisms should be undertaken. For example, the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act (No. 13 of 2005) may provide a more robust mechanism for convening and coordinating within government. Applying a food and nutrition systems lens within the context of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) (No 16 of 2013) will support more informed land use planning decisions as it relates to FNS and enable context-specific and relevant planning decisions informed through national policy. A review of available legislative mechanisms should be undertaken in the Plan's revision to enable a more holistic approach to implementation and possibly limit siloed action and instances of political inertia. Using these instruments will enable programmes to cascade through the spheres of government with the appropriate roles, responsibilities and opportunities identified. In addition, a key component of the current plan was to address the incoherence of policies as it relates to FNS. It is suggested that a policy review be undertaken to identify these areas of incoherence to inform the next iteration of FNS planning.

R4.2: Consider existing coordination vehicles that enable engagement with non-state actors.

The FNS system is broader than just intergovernmental coordination and planning. This is reflected in the provision within legislative mechanisms to enable broader non-state participation and collaboration. Integration of FNS is a priority issue in existing vehicles such as NEDLAC, which brings together government, business, labour and civil society. There are opportunities to bring FNS to other public entities, such as SALGA which has been actively engaged in the Western Cape processes that could assist in a coordination capacity. These opportunities should be explored in conjunction with a consultative process for the Plan's revision

R5. Elevate FNS and its importance in the national discourse

There is a need to elevate the importance of FNS and the threat that the FNS crisis creates, especially the multiple burden of malnutrition that is facing South Africa. The real impact of FNS issues is not elevated in public awareness and, therefore, is not considered a priority in the highest level of decision-making across the spheres of government. This translates to poor integration of FNS issues on the national agenda and, more specifically, within key nation-planning documents. While interventions outlined in SO5 are an important part of the solution, there needs to be an immediate and concerted effort to understand the impact of inaction on FNS and how the additional burden can be avoided to meet the constitutional rights of citizens. Consideration should be made in the Plan's next iteration on the role of the active citizenry in raising awareness on FNS issues and what structures need to be in place at the highest level of government in the Office of the Presidency.

R5.1 Elevate the FNS agenda across all spheres of government.

There is a need to raise the level of priority of FNS at all levels of government. Political and technical state actors all need to play a role in addressing the FNS crisis. Clear statements that the country faces major FNS challenges from the highest political office would help the priority level. For example, reflecting this crisis within the State of the Nation address would enable political movement and allow for national priority setting.

R5.2: Raise the importance of the FNS crisis among the public

While the above recommendation and public statements, such as the State of the Nation address, are one mechanism to increase the public's awareness, there is also a need for South African citizens to be made more aware of the FNS challenges in the country and how they can contribute to addressing FNS. The citizenry needs to have access to information and data to have a holistic picture of progress towards impact and SDG targets related to FNS. Impactful FNS-related research and studies need to be made available to the public in an accessible form to raise challenges and elevate solutions. Civil society needs to have a platform to engage and contribute to efforts to support advocacy action. The role of the Media needs to be explored in more detail as a force for good. Lessons can be learnt in how the climate crisis has been elevated into public awareness to the point that there is a commission being led through the Office of the Presidency. Similarly, engaging the National Planning Commission will help elevate the issue of FNS, particularly as some Commissioners have identified this as an urgent issue. The Commission consists of respected thinkers in South Africa and is expected to bring about fresh ideas and insight into the long-term plan to advance growth and development in South Africa.

R6. Establish the M&E System prior to the finalisation of the revised Plan to ensure that the M&E unit is in place from the commencement of implementation of the Plan's next iteration.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning needs to be prioritised in the next iteration of the Plan. This needs to include data that is relevant and timely and is able to inform decision-making and adaptive management. In particular, improved target setting and data collection for the impact targets is needed to better understand the Plan's impact, as well as the incorporation of localised data within the priority districts reflected in the Plan to enable local-level decision-makers to respond effectively to FNS challenges, or for provincial or national actors to adjust activities.

R6.1 Establish the M&E system and unit.

In the Plan's next iteration, activities around the establishment and successful functioning of an FNS M&E unit need to be incorporated, as this is not reflected in the current Plan's strategic interventions and outputs. Ideally, this unit should be in place prior to the Plan's implementation and be able to support the revision of the current SO6. In addition, there should be clearly defined roles for collecting data and how this data is used to inform decision-making

and how provincial- and departmental-level data is fed into the Plan's reporting.

R6.2 Ensure that the indicators and data are useful for decision-making.

An enhanced monitoring, evaluation and learning system should consider what data is required and leverage existing data collection efforts by FNS actors in the system. In order to generate food security actions that are responsive to food insecurity and its drivers, there is a need to be more inclusive about the kinds of data and knowledge that inform action. Much of the current data does not tell us about how households navigate different food sources to maximise their food security or the critical choices that households make in their attempts to balance their budgets and the ways in which food insecurity is the result of multi-dimensional poverty. Data like this is collected by FNS actors such as academia and CSOs and should be incorporated into FNS planning and decision-making in conjunction with Stats SA surveys and data sources that are currently stated in the plan.

R6.3 Ensure the indicators in the revised Plan are applicable and feasible.

Once the Theory of Change has been updated and impact pathways determined, the indicator set needs to be updated. In addition, indicators that are in the Plan need to be aligned to what departments collect and/or are available at a national statistics level to inform progress. There, however, also needs to be consideration around how local-level or provincial-level data can feed into national objectives. In addition, the frequency of data availability needs to be considered to enable more responsive decision-making. There also needs to be consideration of lead times for national, provincial or local level surveys between survey design and analysis and results sharing and dissemination.

R7. Strengthen collaboration by involving diverse stakeholders and sectors at all levels while ensuring accountability and balance among stakeholder groups.

Achieving substantial change in the South African Food System requires collaboration beyond government efforts alone. The current Plan is clear in that there is a need for multi-stakeholder responses to address the challenges of FNS and that these efforts need to be aligned and coordinated. This needs to be emphasised and actioned in the next iteration of the plan.

R7.1 Assess and reconsider the most appropriate and impactful vehicles to enable multi-stakeholder collaboration at the different levels of implementation.

While the Plan currently outlines that coordination and collaboration would largely be through coordination councils and activities under SO1, there is an opportunity to reconsider the roles and responsibilities of existing structures and learn from success stories where effective coordination is taking place. For example, the Office of the Premier can play a role beyond just a provincial council structure, in that it can act as an intermediary in a continually coordinated effort through dedicated resources and foster information sharing between state and non-state actors. Similarly, as has worked in the Western Cape, an intermediary organisation can be mandated to provide convening and coordination support.

R7.2 Framework terms of reference for stakeholder collaboration vehicles should be established within the Plan.

The revised Plan needs to be inclusive of extra-governmental perspectives. Clear guidelines are required to govern how non-state actors are involved and should be developed as part of the Plan. This has been recognised in the Plan through the inclusion of different stakeholders on the respective councils that would inform policy and programmatic decisions. However, multi-stakeholder collaboration needs to be carefully facilitated as it can lead to an uncritical inclusion of stakeholders that have elevated influence in shaping the food system, including large commercial interests. The state will be required to hold the private sector accountable partly through including a wider set of non-governmental actors to be involved. A framework Terms of reference for these stakeholder collaboration vehicles should be agreed upon and included as part of a guideline pack that supports the next iteration of the Plan.