



Who is making food policy in **South Africa**



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**Centre for
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Shaping an effective food system

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National government responsibilities for food policy-making in South Africa

Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

Ensuring that all sectors of the economy, including food, consider women's socio-economic empowerment and gender equality and create opportunities for people with disabilities in the food system

National Youth Development Agency

Mainstreaming youth issues and job creation in the food sector

Department of Transport

Improved food and agricultural transport infrastructure (road, rail, sea ports, aviation)

Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

Overarching co-ordination, including National Development Plan and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies regarding food and nutrition security and job creation in agriculture

Department of Small Business Development

Food sector entrepreneurship, promotion and development
Support small food businesses and co-operatives
Informal food business upliftment

Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries

Climate policy, including the role of agriculture in mitigation and adaptation
Fisheries and coastal management
Rules on environmental impact assessment relevant to food businesses
Sustainable use of biological diversity, including foraged and wild harvested foods
All water policy, including water rights for irrigation

Department of Water and Sanitation

All water policy, including water rights for irrigation

Department of Trade, Industry and Competition

Strategic growth and economic development of food sector
Import and export duties, tariffs etc. on food commodities
Trade agreements on food and agricultural goods
Economic empowerment to encourage black-owned businesses, including in the food sector
Industrial policy for agro-processing
Consumer protection to ensure fair business practices in the food sector

National Treasury

Overall departmental spending including budget allocation to food-related sectors
Taxation, including sugar tax, carbon tax and zero-rated value added tax for essential food items

Health

Department of Health

Nutrition
Child nutrition and breastfeeding policies
Fortification guidelines
Communicable diseases and nutrition
Non-communicable disease and obesity policy

Higher Education, Science & Technology

Department of Science and Innovation

Food system research and development, including agricultural research centres and intellectual property rights such as genetic resources of indigenous crops

Employment and Labour

Department of Employment and Labour

Food sector job creation
Poverty alleviation to ensure economic access to food
Labour relations to protect food workers, especially from inequality and discrimination
National minimum wage

Social Development

Department of Social Development

Household food and nutrition security including food parcels
Social protection (e.g. grants) often used to buy food
Monitoring of early childhood development centres that offer nutritious meals to young children

Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs

Department of Cooperative Governance

Coordinating food between levels of government, including provincial and local levels and with traditional authorities and ensuring food and nutrition policies are coherently implemented across jurisdictions

Agriculture Land Reform & Rural Development

Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development

National food and nutrition security
Agricultural training, advisory and extension services
Fertilisers, pesticides and feeds
Livestock, incl. animal health
Agricultural research
Marketing of agricultural products
Food safety policy
Land reform, access and ownership
Rural infrastructure development

Basic Education

Department of Basic Education

National school nutrition, including school feeding schemes



Who is making food policy in South Africa

Food policy in South Africa is made by 15 departments across government. The **Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development**¹ emerges as the most important for food policy. Together with the **Department of Social Development**, their mandate includes the *National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security*, the most significant single piece of food policy in the country. The *National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security* provides a broad framework for the fulfilment of the “right to food” which was embedded into the national constitution in 1993. It serves as a guide to national, provincial and local government in pursuing food security at every level. However, it is the **Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation** that has an overarching coordination function connecting food policy to the other national strategies like the *National Development Plan*. This assumption of responsibility for food and nutrition improvement at the highest levels of government is unique in that this overarching department is responsible for implementing processes to help leaders coordinate action and monitor progress towards achieving food and nutrition security. The **Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs** plays the role of coordinating between different levels of government to ensure policies are implemented coherently across jurisdictions.

Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development is also responsible for supporting agricultural development through promoting the production of field crops and livestock and implementing land reform. Programmes include financial assistance through the *Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment*

Framework for Agriculture (AgriBEE), and the *Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa* (MAFISA) and the *Comprehensive Rural Development Programme* (CRDP) to promote economic development in rural areas and address the legacy of Apartheid through land reform. Stimulating innovation and training in improved agricultural and food systems, and ensuring intellectual property rights is the mandate of the **Department of Science and Innovation**.

The **Department of Health** has a mandate to address undernutrition, obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). They deal with *Regulations Relating to the Fortification of Certain Foodstuffs* that makes it compulsory for dry and uncooked wheat flour, uncooked maize meal, and bread to be fortified with micronutrients, alongside iodine in salt; micronutrient supplementation programmes, and dietary guidelines, food labelling regulations, salt reduction, and a tax on sugar sweetened beverages.

The **Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries** also cover major policy mandates, including the *Small-Scale Fisheries Policy* (2012), sustainable use of biodiversity, including marine resources, many of which are harvested for consumption as food and the Climate Change Response, which outlines how government is working to mitigate and adapt to climate change, especially relevant for agriculture in a drought-prone country. The **Department of Water and Sanitation** covers the *National Water Act* (1998) and water regulation.

The **Department of Basic Education** took over the *National School Nutrition Programme* from the Department of Health in 2004, and extended it to secondary schools in 2009. Its purpose is to address hunger, and improve school attendance, performance

and attentiveness in poorer schools. The **Department of Social Development** is also involved in nutrition since they manage Early Childhood Development centres which are critical spaces for young children to access healthy food.

The **National Treasury** and **Department of Social Development** are critical for the economic aspects of food policy. The latter provides unconditional cash transfers to help support qualifying households through the *Social Assistance Act* (2004) that includes grants for pensioners, people with disabilities, and a child support grant. In 1991, the National Treasury introduced a zero-rating Value Added Tax (VAT) policy that removed the 15% VAT levy (originally 14%) on nineteen staple foods to make them more affordable for poor households. The **Department of Small Business Development** is responsible for supporting entrepreneurs, and in the context of the food system has a particularly important role in supporting informal businesses, of which many are food traders. The **Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities** holds the mandate to ensure no discrimination in the workplace and the **National Youth Development Agency** mainstreams youth issues, including in the food sector. The **Department of Employment and Labour** protects workers’ rights, including the right to a fair wage and focuses on job creation to alleviate poverty and thereby ensure economic access to food.

The **Department of Trade, Industry and Competition** plays a critical role in food policy in that it regulates the trade of food within the country, and ensures fairness in business practice, but is also responsible for regulating food imports and exports. All food trade is dependent on well-functioning transport systems, which is the mandate of the **Department of Transport**.

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Further Reading

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