



# Implementation Evaluation of the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan

Full Report

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planning, monitoring  
and evaluation

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ANC	Antenatal Care
APP	Annual Performance Plans
ATI	Agricultural Training Institutes
BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
BMI	Body Mass Index
CFR	Case Fertility Rate
CNDC	Community Nutrition and Development Centres
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COE	Centre of Excellence in Food Security
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
DALRRD	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DCST	District Clinical Specialist Team
DHE	Department of Higher Education
DHIS	District Health Information System
DOH	Department of Health
DP	Deputy President
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
EDP	Economic Development Partnership
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FNS	Food and Nutrition Security
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHS	General Household Survey
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practices
GNI	Gross National Income
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
IDP	Integrated Development Plans
IFSS	Integrated Food and Nutrition Security Strategy
ISHP	Integrated School Health Policy
ISPIS	Integrated Social Protection Information System
IYCF	Infant and Young Child Feeding
KMC	Kangaroo Mother Care
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MAFISA	Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MCEP	Manufacturing Competitiveness Enhancement Programme
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
MUAC	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference
NAMC	National Agricultural Marketing Council
NCD	Non-Communicable Diseases

NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NFNS	National Food and Nutrition Security
NFNSP	National Food and Nutrition Security Plan
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
PIIP	Perinatal Problem Identification Programme
PVM	Poor, Vulnerable and Marginalised
SA-GAP	South African Good Agricultural Practices
SADHS	South Africa Demographic and Health Survey
SAFEX	South African Futures Exchange
SAFL	South African Food Lab
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SANAC	South African National AIDS Council
SANHANES	South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SAVAC	South African Vulnerability Assessment Committee
SDF	Spatial Development Frameworks
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small-Medium Enterprise
SO	Strategic Objective
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
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
WBOTS	Ward-Based Outreach Teams
WC	Western Cape
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WOGA	Whole of Government Approach
WRA	Women of Reproductive Age

# Executive Summary

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 whose performance can be tracked have achieved modest progress. While all four impact 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. As this shows, 17% of the 2023 targets have been met and a further 6% are likely to be met by the end of 2023. 28% 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 31% 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	1	0	0	4	6
# progressing but not likely to meet the 2023 target	0	6	2	5	1	4	0	18	28
# 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	1	0	20	31

### 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.

## **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, 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.

## 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.

#### **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. 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.

# 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 insecurity<sup>1</sup>. 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 countries<sup>2</sup>.

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 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 Food and Nutrition Security (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 Plan seeks to address malnutrition<sup>3</sup> issues, including both undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency and overweight and obesity, through 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 up 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 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Stats SA. (2022). How COVID-19 affected food security in SA

<sup>2</sup> The National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023

<sup>3</sup> As per The National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023- "People are malnourished if their diet does not provide adequate nutrients for growth and maintenance, or if they are unable to fully utilise the food they eat due to illness (undernutrition). They are also malnourished if they consume too much energy (overnutrition) and are at risk of micronutrient deficiencies."

## 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 and milestones, 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:

1. To what extent has the implementation of the NFNSP been effective towards achieving the impact-level targets?
2. To what extent has the implementation of the NFNSP been effective towards achieving the strategic objective-level targets?
3. What factors enable the effective implementation of the NFNSP?
4. What factors inhibit the effective implementation of the NFNSP?
5. Which components of the Plan were implemented well, and which were difficult to implement?
6. To what extent is the Plan implemented cost efficiently?
7. Are the institutional arrangements working optimally?
8. What lessons emerged from the implementation of the NFNSP?
9. 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

The implementation of the Plan is a multi-stakeholder endeavour occurring in a complex and multifaceted environment. It is also a heavily administrative undertaking requiring coordination, management and technical skills to guide implementation. As a result of the nature of this Plan, Genesis used a systems-thinking lens, combined with a theory-based approach, to conduct this evaluation.

Systems thinking is “*an understanding of a system by examining the linkages and interactions between the components that comprise the entirety of that defined system...*”<sup>4</sup>. In the context of the NFNSP, the system comprises all the departments, provinces and stakeholders involved in coordinating food and nutrition security. The purpose of using systems thinking during this evaluation was to provide the relevant stakeholders with feedback on the Plan within the context of its environment and to develop new knowledge to improve the FNS system. The systems thinking approach encouraged the use of both qualitative and quantitative data methods to respond holistically to the evaluation questions.

A theory-based evaluation approach aims to understand an intervention's contribution to observed results through the use of a Theory of Change (ToC). A ToC for the Plan was developed that maps out the Plan's logic by linking its activities to outputs, outcomes and intended impact. Developing a ToC supported the evaluation approach by identifying the Plan's key objectives and the steps it takes to achieve these. Combining a theory-based approach with a systems thinking lens enabled the evaluation to assess the Plan and its contribution to its outcomes while remaining cognisant of the broader FNS system within which it is operating.

The ToC and systems map informed the development of the evaluation framework. Each of these are discussed further in the sections that follow.

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<sup>4</sup> [Principles of systems thinking](#)

## 2.1. Stakeholder Mapping

Central to a systems thinking approach is identifying all the relevant stakeholders within the system. Figure 1 below presents the key stakeholders in the complex and layered FNS ecosystem. Central to the ecosystem is the NFNS Coordinating Committee within the red circle. In the orange national-level stakeholder circle, there are four key national departments with direct strategies and interventions related to food and nutrition security: the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as noted with an asterisk (\*). However, approximately half of the national-level government departments have a role in the food system, and as such, these departments are also included in the orange national-level list of stakeholders - for example, the Department of Trade Industry and Competition (DTIC), the Department of Higher Education (DHE), the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), and the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS). Flowing outwards in the green provincial-level circle are the corresponding provincial departments with a role to play in the ecosystem. The light green circle speaks to the myriad of local and municipal stakeholders who have a role in FNS. Lastly, the outer grey layer includes all the institutional stakeholders that form part of the ecosystem. This includes private actors that are active along agri-food value chains such as input providers, producers (individual farmers and farm businesses), processors, wholesalers and retailers; civil society organisations (CSOs) and academia. Section 2.3.2 presents the stakeholders from this map that were interviewed as part of the evaluation.

Figure 1: Food and nutrition security ecosystem actors



## 2.2. Evaluation Framework

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, as illustrated in Table 3 below. 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.

**Table 3: Evaluation Framework**

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Sub-Questions	KIIs	Doc Review	Data Review
<b>Achievement of Impact Targets</b>				
To what extent has the NFNS plan achieved its impact targets?	Which of the impact targets have been achieved within the expected timeframes?			
	What are the factors enabling the achievement of the impact targets?			
	What are the factors inhibiting/ contributing towards the nonachievement of the impact targets?			
	What is the likelihood that the impact targets will be met in 2023?			
How are the impact targets set?	How are the impact targets defined?			
	Who is involved in the target setting?			
What is the likelihood of the NFNSP achieving its intended targets in 2023?	To what extent have the inhibiting factors been mitigated?			
	To what extent have strategies been implemented to expediate the achievement of the underperforming indicators?			
<b>Achievement of Strategic Objectives</b>				
To what extent has the implementation of the NFNSP been effective towards achieving the six priorities/objectives?	Which of the six priorities/objectives set in the NFNSP have been achieved within the expected timeframes?			
	What are the factors enabling the achievement of the six priorities/objectives of the NFNSP?			
	What are the factors inhibiting/ contributing towards the nonachievement of the six priorities/objectives of the NFNSP?			
	What is the likelihood that the objectives will be met in 2023?			
<b>Design and institutional arrangements</b>				
How does the plan's design affect its implementation?	Which components of the plan were challenging to implement and why?			
How does the Plans' institutional arrangements affect its implementation.	To what extent are the institutional resources adequate to support the implementation of the NSNFP?			
	To what extent are the institutional structures adequate to support the implementation of the NSNFP?			
	To what extent are the institutional arrangements working optimally?			
	What mechanisms should be put in place to improve the plan's implementation?			
<b>Cost-effectiveness</b>				
What is the level of priority given to the implementation of the NFNSP?	What level of priority is given to the NFNSP at the national level?			
	What level of priority is given to the NFNSP at the provincial level?			
	What level of priority is given to the NFNSP at the institutional level?			
How can the Plan be implemented more cost effectively?	To what extent has the Plan been implemented within budget?			
	What is the main cost driver in implementing the NFNSP?			



Learnings and Recommendations			
What has worked well in implementing the NFNSP?	Where are there examples of good practices in implementing the NFNSP?		
What can be done to improve the implementation of the NFNSP?	What lessons (positive and negative) can be drawn from the implementation of the NFNSP?		
	What changes should be considered for future NFNS plans?		

## 2.3. Evaluation Methods

The evaluation used both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was collected in the form of key informant interviews (KIIs) with key stakeholders in the system. Secondary data was consolidated across NFNSP reports, relevant departmental reports, and external literature.

### 2.3.1. Desktop Review

A comprehensive desktop review was conducted, consisting of a document and literature review. The purpose of the desktop review was multifaceted. Firstly, the desktop review aimed to build an understanding of the NFNSP’s implementation context, as well as to identify and document existing evidence regarding the Plan’s progress, challenges and successes. Secondly, the desktop review was guided by the evaluation framework and enabled early considerations of the evaluation questions. Thirdly, the findings from the desktop review informed the development of the primary data collection tools, pinpointing where information was not readily available at a desktop level which needed to be included in the primary data collection process. Additionally, the literature review highlighted successes achieved in food and nutrition security in other countries, and some of the lessons from these cases.

### 2.3.2. Key Informant Interviews

The evaluation drew on a series of semi-structured KIIs with 31 stakeholders involved across the planning and implementation of the NFNSP. These stakeholders were selected across the stakeholder map presented in Figure 1 above, ensuring that perspectives across all stakeholder groups were included. The interviews were based on semi-structured interview guides suited to the various types of stakeholder groups / respondents.

At the national level, the National Food and Nutrition Security Coordinating Committee were priority stakeholders as well as all key national departments. At a provincial level, six provinces were selected to form the basis of provincial-level engagements, with relevant departments. The evaluation followed a two-pronged approach to conducting the provincial reviews. In-depth engagements were conducted with three of the provinces that have arguably moved far in developing plans and have experience in the implementation of integrated strategies relating to food security and nutrition (i.e. KwaZulu-Natal, Northwest, and Western Cape). Higher-level consultations were also conducted in an additional three provinces that have developed plans (i.e. Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Northern Cape) but who are less progressed in their implementation. Collectively, the six provinces represent a cross-section of the South African food system.

The three in-depth provincial engagements, together with three higher-level provincial engagements, enabled the evaluation to increase the coverage of provinces, while optimising the opportunity to gather more detailed information from the provinces that have experience implementing the plans. The aim of the selection of the provinces was to draw out learnings for the evaluation, showcasing the implementation of the NFNSP across different models of implementation, institutional arrangements, and nutrition outcomes. A full list of the stakeholder groups interviewed as part of the evaluation as presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: List of stakeholder groups interviewed**

Stakeholder Category	Organisation
NFNS Coordinating Committee	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, in the Presidency
	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
	Department of Health
	Department of Social Development
	Department of Basic Education
KwaZulu-Natal	Office of the Premier and Strategic Management in the Office of the Premier for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
Limpopo	Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
	Provincial Department of Health
Northwest	Provincial Department of Social Development
Northern Cape	Office of the Premier
	Provincial Department of Social Development
Western Cape	WC Economic Development Partnership
	Provincial Department of Agriculture
	Office of the Premier
	Provincial Department of Health
Institutional Stakeholders, Academia, Partners, Civil Society Organisations	University of Cape Town
	University of Western Cape, Centre of Excellence in Food Security
	University of Pretoria
	UNICEF
	AgriSA
	Do More Foundation
	Food Forward SA
	Stats SA
Department of Science and Technology	

## 2.4. Limitations to the Methodology

As with any research, this evaluation relied on a number of assumptions and was subject to inherent constraints. The limitations to the methodology are presented in the table below. Despite these limitations, the quality of the evaluation has not been adversely affected.

**Table 5: Limitations to the methodology**

Limitation	Significance of the limitation
<p>There was very limited awareness of the Plan amongst the KII respondents. When setting up and conducting the interviews, a range of the stakeholders indicated that they had never encountered the Plan or heard of its implementation. To overcome this, when setting up the interviews, the evaluation team asked respondents if there was someone better placed to speak to the Plan's implementation within their organisation. Where there was no one better suited, the interviewer provided an outline of the Plan and its contents at the start of the interview.</p>	<p>Many respondents were not able to speak about specific elements of the Plan's implementation, but focused rather on the contents of the Plan and what they see in the FNS ecosystem as a result of the Plan.</p>
<p>The Plan does not have a consolidated monitoring system for monitoring implementation. This is department-led, whereby departments feed their indicators and information to the DPME and then consolidate this into the progress reports for the Plan. In some cases, indicators that are presented in the Plan are not tracked by departments. The evaluation team worked with the various departments to identify data sources and progress for their respective indicators. However, even so, many departments did not know of the indicators and stated that these were not tracked. In addition, there is no annual financial data to accurately understand cost efficiency of implementation</p>	<p>Not all the strategic objectives have up-to-date progress data. The evaluation team thus relied on interviews to understand progress; however, this information could not be verified against quantitative monitoring data. This is the same for financial data, although the HSRC report does provide some indication, it is not a definitive data source on spending against specific activities in the plan</p>
<p>The impact-level indicators for the Plan rely on data sources such as the GHS, SADHS and SANHANES. However, these data sources have a number of challenges. Firstly, indicator coverage is not well represented within the GHS. Secondly, both SANHANES and SADHS are periodic surveys whose next round is yet to be determined. As such, the evaluation could only report progress on a select few impact-level indicators. The evaluation team identified external sources of information to better understand progress and impact in the FNS ecosystem. However, these were not directly linked to the Plan's impact targets.</p>	<p>The evaluation team used external literature and interviews with FNS ecosystem actors to understand progress within the FNS system.</p>
<p>The evaluation aimed to interview 35 ecosystem stakeholders according to the various groupings noted in the table above. Four stakeholders did not respond to numerous attempts to set up the interviews and as such, a total of 31 stakeholders were successfully consulted.</p>	<p>These 31 stakeholders represented a range of perspectives across the FNS ecosystem, and as such, this is not considered a material limitation.</p>
<p>Mpumalanga province was included in the sample, however, none of the stakeholders from Mpumalanga could be secured for an interview. Many indicated that they did not know about the Plan or its implementation. Desktop level information on the province's Plan is similarly limited and, as such, there is limited commentary on Mpumalanga.</p>	<p>At the provincial-level, the stakeholder engagements reached saturation for new information. As such, having limited input from Mpumalanga is not a material limitation.</p>

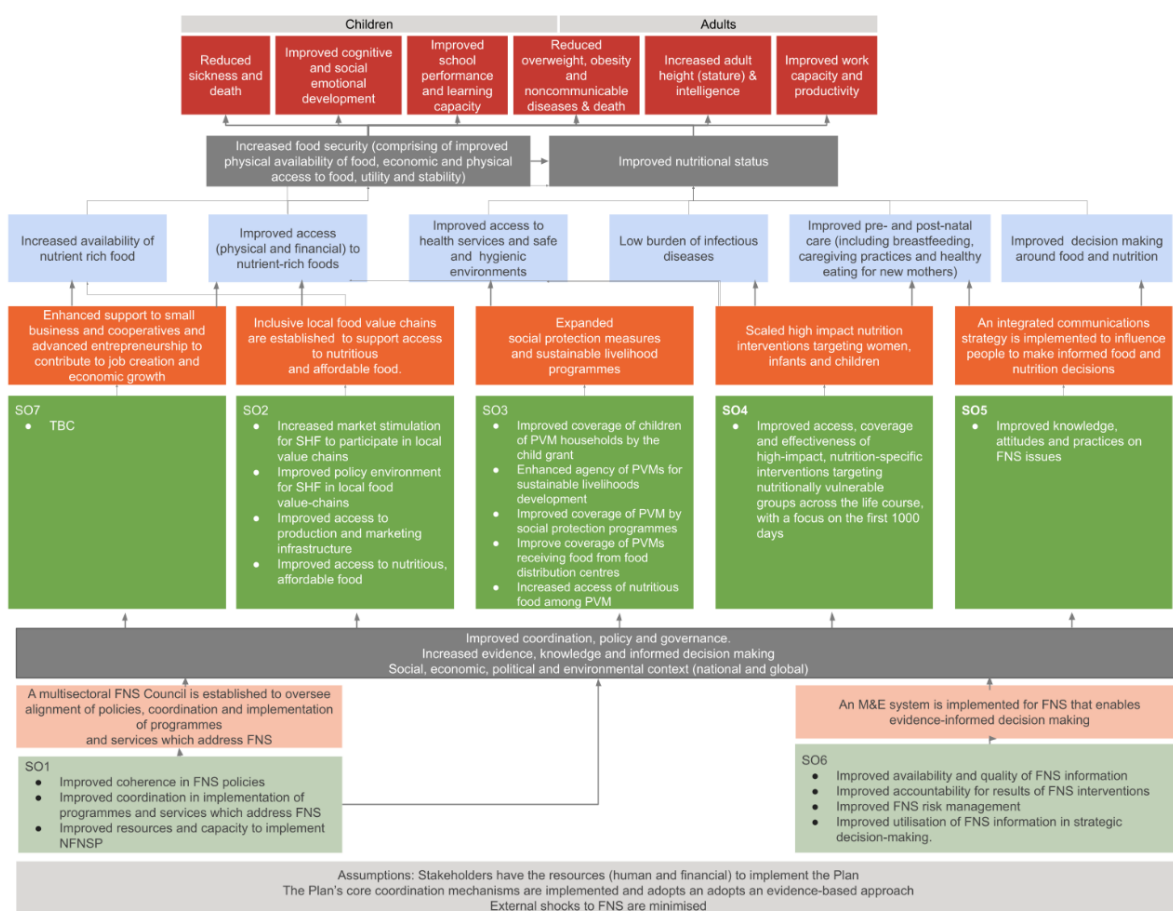
### 3. The National Food and Nutrition Security Plan’s Theory of Change

The NFNSP ultimately aims to improve both food security and nutritional outcomes in South Africa. The impact of this is the improvement of health-related outcomes for adults and children, including reduced sickness and death; improved cognitive and social development; improved school performance; reductions in overweight, obesity, non-communicable diseases and death, among others.

The pathways towards achieving these goals are presented in the theory of change below, presented in the Plan itself. However, for the purposes of this evaluation, the original theory of change was updated to include Strategic Objective seven. Additionally, the causal pathways were adapted to show a clearer connection between the various Strategic Objectives, their intended outcomes and how these contribute to the Plan’s overall outcomes and impacts. This is presented in the figure below.

This updated version links closely to the original theory of change; however, the more delineated pathways and change mechanisms enabled the evaluation to better unpack progress towards the intended outcomes and impact. This updated theory of change was presented in the desktop review and signed off by the Steering Committee in July 2023.

Figure 2: Updated theory of change



The foundation of the theory of change is Strategic Objective 1 and Strategic Objective 6. Through Strategic Objective 1, the NFNSP aims to improve the coordination, policy and governance of the FNS system. Similarly, through Strategic Objective 6, the FNS monitoring, and evaluation system will enable improved tracking and monitoring of FNS interventions and their outcomes that informs decision making,

adaptation and contributes to the sector's knowledge base. With improved coordination across the sector and evidence-informed programming, each of the other strategic objectives will be implemented with more coherence, coordination and therefore have greater impact on the sector as a whole.

Strategic Objective 2 aims to establish inclusive local food value-chains to support access to nutritious, affordable food. Through the various activities under this Strategic Objective, there will be greater production largely through smallholder farmers, and access to nutrient-rich food, and following from this, farming households will also have greater financial access to nutritious food. Strategic Objective 7 similarly contributes to this, but from the perspective of small businesses and cooperatives.

Strategic Objective 3 aims to expand targeted social protection measures and sustainable livelihood programmes, and in doing so, ensure access to safe and nutritious food, as well as other essential needs such as safe water, sanitation, and healthcare.

Strategic Objective 4 aims to scale high impact nutrition interventions targeting women, infants and children so as to improve pre- and post-natal care, reduce the burden of infectious diseases and improve access to health services and hygienic environments.

Strategic Objective 5 aims to implement an integrated communications strategy, and in doing so, influence people across the life cycle to make informed food and nutrition decisions and informed decisions around accessing health services.

By increasing the availability of nutrient rich foods and increasing access to nutrient rich foods, South Africa should see an increase in food security. Similarly, by increasing access to nutrient-rich food, reducing the burden of infectious diseases, improving pre- and post-natal care and improving people's decision-making processes around food and nutrition, together with improved food security, South Africa should see an improvement in nutritional status. Together, improved nutrition status and food security support improved health outcomes such as reductions in sickness and reduced obesity; improvements in school and work performance; and improvements in cognitive and social development.

## 4. Document and Literature Review

As noted above, 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. These key components of food and nutrition security are discussed in detail below.

### 4.1. FNS Governance in South Africa

#### 4.1.1. Coherence of Policies in the Food System

Coherence in food and nutrition policy was found to be lacking according to most of the literature reviewed.<sup>5,6,7,8,9,10</sup> The reasons offered for why there is a lack of coherence is that interventions suffer

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<sup>5</sup> FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

<sup>6</sup> 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>.

<sup>7</sup> 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>.

<sup>8</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>9</sup> Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

<sup>10</sup> 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.

from layered frameworks, weak government integration, and limited mandates of local governments.<sup>11</sup> The literature also notes that there is limited effort for cross-sectoral participation during policy implementation, a lack of shared understanding and institutional arrangements to enable coordination and a generalised intent on broad participation with a lack of a strategic roadmap to achieving participation. This is despite the Plan's overarching intent of coordinating the FNS system and providing guidance that there be "a single leadership and governance structure and a single national plan of action for food and nutrition security".<sup>12</sup> Also, evaluations of implementation or translation of high-level statements of intent into practice are considered to be limited, making it difficult to assess implementation and to access data on implementation.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the literature notes that there are competing agendas in the food security and nutrition policy space as one of the key challenges to policy coherence identified is the different framing of food and nutrition between different coalitions in the sector. For example, there is an implicit incoherence between economic and agricultural policy and health policy.<sup>14</sup>

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'.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> A prominent example of incoherence is the sugar tax introduced by the National Treasury that was adopted by the National Assembly without any amendment and further consultations, despite some concerns within the Treasury and some civil society organisations (CSOs).<sup>17,18</sup> The sugar tax example demonstrates a lack of alignment between the views of some within National Treasury and the National Assembly, which adopted the tax. The decision highlights a risk to the NFNP's implementation in that a decision was made without the full buy-in of a key department, which, if repeated in the NFNSP, could result in a lack of buy-in amongst key stakeholders for the NFNSP's implementation. Lastly, Section 27(1)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that, "everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water." This obligation is extended in Section 27(2), according to which "the State must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights." However, despite this obligation to ensure the right to food, there has been no framework act on food security to actualise this right, meaning that existing food policies are not legally binding and thus not enforceable.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Coordination of food system policy implementation

The coordination of food system interventions in South Africa was shown to face several challenges and shortcomings.<sup>20,21,22</sup> As mentioned in Adeniyi, et al. (2021) sub-programmes of food system interventions are typically implemented separately in different government departments, lacking genuine integration.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, there is seen to be a lack of adequate institutional arrangements to ensure

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<sup>11</sup> FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

<sup>12</sup> National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023

<sup>13</sup> Kushitor et al., "The Complex Challenge of Governing Food Systems."

<sup>14</sup> Thow et al., "Improving Policy Coherence for Food Security and Nutrition in South Africa."

<sup>15</sup> Kushitor et al., "The Complex Challenge of Governing Food Systems."

<sup>16</sup> Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Boatemaa, Drimie, and Pereira, "Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in South Africa."

<sup>19</sup> Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Boatemaa, Drimie, and Pereira, "Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in South Africa."

<sup>22</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>23</sup> Boatemaa, Drimie, and Pereira, "Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in South Africa."

effective coordination between state and non-state actors, as well as insufficient definition of mandates and responsibilities for various stakeholders.<sup>24,25,26</sup> Communication across lead departments is considered to be limited and there is thought to be a lack of sharing of experiences.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the lead departments responsible for coordination are noted to lack the administrative capacity and authority to perform necessary actions.<sup>28</sup> Stakeholder consultation and engagement in food policy development and programme implementation were also said to have been limited.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

Most often, the response to the challenges in coordination has been the establishment of committees, councils, and working groups for intra-governmental, intergovernmental, and inter-stakeholder coordination at all levels. However, in many cases, these proposed structures have not been implemented.<sup>31</sup> Evidence presented by May, Witten, and Lake (2021) suggests that the potential of policies and legislative mandates is undermined by inadequate and ineffective implementation, as well as incoherent actions and interventions by stakeholders across different sectors and parts of the food system. It is noteworthy that the NFNSP is positioned within the Presidency, showing the seriousness with which, the government is trying to tackle the issues around food system outcomes. However, this intention has likely been overshadowed by slow progress in establishing the National Food and Nutrition Security (NFNS) Council and subsequent provincial and district councils.

## 4.2. Food security in the South African food system

South Africa's food system is characterised as having a highly concentrated food and agro-processing sector, with the market shares of the most powerful enterprises being double the global average.<sup>32</sup> Concentration is present at all nodes of the food system value chain, including input markets, food manufacturing, storage and handling, provision of feedlots for livestock, and distribution. The result of high concentration has been that a small number of enterprises earn a high share of the income generated by the food system, leading to them accumulating outsized power over the food system, without other food system actors being able to counter-balance that power.<sup>33,34</sup>

The concentration with regards to power has resulted in impacts such as the stifling of policy reform that favours more diverse ownership, smaller enterprises, new entrants, and under-serviced communities as these groups face high barriers to entering the market. Concentration has also created food value chains in which large retailers influence what is demanded and produced, how it is branded and what it costs, meaning that access to food and to various types of food is a function of the decisions of a small number of private enterprises. There also exist significant efficiency gaps between smallholder and commercial farmers, which are linked to farmer experience and access to off-farm income that cannot easily be addressed by public policy.<sup>35</sup> These efficiency gaps have led to the erosion of the opportunity for poverty reduction, even when smallholder farmers are supported by policy programmes. Demand-side impacts have included high food price levels through high mark-ups on food that have been found to be driven

<sup>24</sup> Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

<sup>25</sup> 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>.

<sup>26</sup> Kushitor et al., "The Complex Challenge of Governing Food Systems."

<sup>27</sup> Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."°

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>30</sup> Boatemaa, Drimie, and Pereira, "Addressing Food and Nutrition Security in South Africa."

<sup>31</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>32</sup> FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

<sup>33</sup> Kushitor et al., "The Complex Challenge of Governing Food Systems."

<sup>34</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>35</sup> FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

by changes in mark-ups charged by large firms. Ultimately prices affect the affordability of food leading to a lack of food security amongst the lower income households.<sup>36,37</sup>

### 4.3. Social Protection in South Africa

The International Labour Organisation defines social protection as a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability and includes measures to ensure access to child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment benefits, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, health protection, old-age pensions, disability pensions, and survivors' pensions.<sup>38</sup> Delpont (2019) also notes that the primary goals of most social protection policies are to: alleviate poverty and to manage vulnerability, by either increasing household incomes or stabilising pre-existing incomes in order to reduce livelihood vulnerability.<sup>39</sup> It is further noted that both poverty and vulnerability are significant drivers of food insecurity, particularly with regards to farming households in rural areas where agricultural production and income levels are closely interrelated. Consequently, it follows that there is a strong link between FNS and social protection.

The South African Grant system faces high levels of demand due to high rates of poverty and unemployment and, recently, the impacts of COVID-19, which gave rise to the introduction of a new social grant for working-age adults. Patel, et. al. (2023) outline that during 2022, 28.2 million people (roughly 47% of the population) received a social grant, up from 18.2 million people in 2021.<sup>40</sup> The additional 10 million people were mainly made up of recipients of a new temporary Social Relief of Distress grant, the recipients of which were people of working age who were unemployed or engaged in informal employment and did not have access to formal social protection benefits. Following several extensions, the new grant was due to end in March 2023, though, according to Patel, L., et al. (2023), there are commitments to extend this grant.<sup>41</sup> The high demand for government grants is a function of extremely high rates of poverty and unemployment, even prior to the pandemic, where roughly 56 percent of the population lived below the national upper-bound poverty line of R992 in 2017.<sup>42,43</sup>

South Africa's social protection policies for children are amongst the most comprehensive of all developing countries. However, these policies do not necessarily result in the expected food and nutrition outcomes. The largest grant by number of recipients (but smallest in terms of value) is the Child Support Grant, which has 13 million recipients. Other grants that cover children are the foster care grant (over 350 thousand recipients) and the care dependency grant, for caregivers of children with disabilities (over 150 thousand recipients).<sup>59</sup> Impediments to children's grants providing for the food and nutrition needs of children, especially the Child Support Grant, include the fact that the child support grant is the only existing grant that is below the food poverty line (this was also the only grant that was not increased during the COVID-19 pandemic). Moreover, due to the high levels of poverty and unemployment, social grants targeted at children often effectively contribute to the total income of households, undermining the effects of those grants on children's food and nutrition outcomes. However, notwithstanding the use of child support grants for supplementing household income, the literature cites studies showing that social grants have played an important role in mitigating the effects of poverty for children and their families.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>38</sup> "Social Protection," accessed June 11, 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/100/en>.

<sup>39</sup> Delpont, "The National Vision, Policy Space and Policy Alignment."

<sup>40</sup> Leila Patel, Viwe Dikoko, and Jade Archer, "Social Grants, Livelihoods and Poverty Responses of Social Grant Beneficiaries in South Africa," n.d.

<sup>41</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Patel, Dikoko, and Archer, "Social Grants, Livelihoods and Poverty Responses of Social Grant Beneficiaries in South Africa."



Many working-age South Africans have historically not been included in South Africa's social safety net measures, and, as a result, have lacked social protection which has resulted in their vulnerability to hunger.<sup>59</sup> As noted above, a temporary COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress grant of R350 was rolled out in May 2020.<sup>59</sup> The grant faced a number of criticisms, including that it was below the food poverty and was not a liveable amount (yet qualifying for the grant required that applicants to be living on nothing prior to receiving the grant); the grant excluded those working in informal, insecure, and low-wage employment; and the implementation of the grant faced serious issues resulting in slow uptake and thus reducing the intended support that it was meant to provide over its planned six-month duration.<sup>59</sup> A rapid assessment commissioned by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) found that 93% of recipients of the Social Distress Relief grant used the grant to buy food.<sup>44</sup> The finding was in line with previous research findings in South Africa and strengthened calls for a social assistance programme to cover those between the ages of 18-59.<sup>59</sup> Albeit an insufficient amount to live, the introduction of the 'missing grant' and its subsequent use amongst 93% of recipients to obtain food shows that without the grant, South African working-age adults have indeed been vulnerable to hunger, as many were unemployed and in poverty before COVID-19.

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.<sup>45,46</sup> 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 ages<sup>47</sup>. Progress made in reducing hunger since 2002 has been undermined by COVID-19, as per 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.<sup>48</sup> 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. However, even though COVID-19 exacerbated the food insecurity context generally, opportunities for how to better address social protection emerged in terms of how the South African government responded to a national crisis, as discussed under the recommendations section below.

#### 4.4. Nutrition security in South Africa

Although South Africa usually produces a sufficient quantity of food and diverse food types, the country still faces a triple burden of malnutrition, which includes undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight and obesity.<sup>49</sup> These nutrition outcomes are even though the country has well-developed food and nutrition security policies and programmes, and agricultural policies. At the same time, it is documented that roughly seven million South Africans experience chronic hunger. It is further noted that a total of 26.9% of children below five years old were stunted in 2016, which made South Africa an outlier in terms of the prevalence of stunting, compared to its economic wealth as measured by per capita gross national income (GNI).<sup>50,51</sup> The prevalence of stunting was noted to be slightly higher in rural areas. Despite measures such as the Child Support Grant, which was partly intended to address issues around child nutrition, data report by the FAO shows that stunting amongst children has remained roughly unchanged over the past 20 years.<sup>52,53</sup>

<sup>44</sup> The Rapid Assessment of the Implementation and Utilisation of the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant, accessed June 12, 2023

<sup>45</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>46</sup> "Foods Procured, Nutritional Status and Dietary Intake of People Living in South Africa."

<sup>47</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>48</sup> The Rapid Assessment of the Implementation and Utilisation of the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant, accessed June 12, 2023

<sup>49</sup> Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

<sup>50</sup> FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

<sup>51</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>52</sup> Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

<sup>53</sup> FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

Furthermore, the FAO Food System report for South Africa cites a report that indicates that almost 40% of South African children in grades 8 to 11 regularly consume food items high in sugar and fat. The report also shows that the mean per capita salt intake exceeds the recommended 5 grams per day set by the WHO. These patterns of consumption of non-nutritious food are argued to be aggravated by the advertising of unhealthy foods to children.<sup>54, 55</sup> In addition, May, et al. (2020) argue that South Africa's food system produces products of low nutritional value that are harmful to health, while significantly under-producing beneficial foods such as seeds and nuts, fruits and vegetables.<sup>56</sup>

The underlying driver of child malnutrition is noted in May, et al. (2020) as being poverty, which is in turn driven by high unemployment rates and low levels of income for many of those who are employed, particularly women.<sup>57</sup> Factors affecting child nutrition are said to be worsened by food system issues that result in the lack of access to sufficient nutritious food by many children, such as the ready availability of highly processed fast foods and the power of advertising in distorting dietary choices. Other important issues driving food and nutrition outcomes include: the inequality between the private and the public health care system, specifically regarding the primary health care system's response to the nutrition security of young children; weak government support for ECD services, where young children could potentially receive additional meals; the low value of the child support grant, a gap in the uptake of the Child Support Grant for infants; and the relative lack of provision of social protection for refugee and migrant children.<sup>58</sup>

Regarding the impact of school feeding schemes, although international evidence on the nutritional impacts of school feeding schemes is inconclusive, evidence from an evaluation of a South African school breakfast scheme introduced in the Eastern Cape found a significant reduction in child stunting, wasting and overweight<sup>59, 60</sup>. However, the impact of most school feeding schemes, such as the National School Nutrition Programme, are limited by meals only being provided on school days.<sup>61</sup>

## 4.5. The National Food and Nutrition Security Plan

### 4.5.1. Overview

The NFNSP aims to address many of these challenges related to food and nutrition security. The development of the NFNSP was mandated by Cabinet, based on the FNS Policy for South Africa and the Evaluation of Nutrition Interventions for Children under five years. It seeks to align with best practices and international commitments and harmonise local FNS policy. It incorporates existing national policies and frameworks and aims to provide a comprehensive and coordinated plan to achieve food and nutrition security in the country.

### 4.5.2. Governance and Implementation Mechanisms

The Plan's implementation is guided by seven strategic objectives, as presented in Section 3 above. These are intended to be coordinated by councils at the national, provincial, and district levels of government. These councils aim to oversee key activities such as planning, coordination, resource mobilisation, and progress monitoring. The national council is intended to have core functions such as

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<sup>54</sup> Adeniyi, Losch, and Adelle, "Investigating the South African Food Insecurity Paradox."

<sup>55</sup> 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

<sup>56</sup> FAO, *Food Systems Profile - South Africa*.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> May, Witten, and Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020*.

<sup>59</sup> Julian May, Chantell Witten, and Lori Lake, *South African Child Gauge 2020: Food and Nutrition Security*, 2021.

<sup>60</sup> 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

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

providing leadership, coordinating programs, mobilising resources, and monitoring progress. The provincial and district level councils are intended to have roles similar to the national council but at the subnational level. This includes: the establishment of standing committees, being responsible for inclusive public participation by involving stakeholders and civil society in discussions related to food and nutrition security at the national, provincial, or municipal level. The Plan outlines that standing committees should be established to carry out specific FNS activities; and forums are intended to be set up to engage with civil society and ensure participatory planning, reporting processes and accountability in addressing FNS.

### **4.5.3. Stakeholders and Responsibilities**

The allocation of responsibilities for implementing the Plan is outlined in the NFNSP, with the Office of the Deputy President providing leadership and 12 government departments assigned specific implementation roles. The Plan also mentions enabling factors such as leveraging funding, affirmative procurement, coordination by stakeholders, addressing post-harvest losses, modelling and projections, utilising unemployed graduates, agreements with partners, and the involvement of financiers. The Plan notes the importance of cross sector collaboration across the public and private sectors, NGOs, and civil society, understanding the need for partnership across society.

### **4.5.4. Costing and Financing the Plan**

The Plan's seven Strategic Objectives outline a number of interventions, activities, and outputs, along with indicators and targets that explain how the objectives will be achieved and what success will look like. To support the achievement of these targets, the NFNSP underwent a costing exercise to estimate the resources needed to implement the Plan. The total estimated cost of the NFNSP is approximately R86 806 million.<sup>62</sup> The largest share of the cost (78.2%) is for Strategic Objective 2, which is to establish inclusive local food value chains to support access to nutritious affordable food. The next largest share of the cost (12.8%) is for Strategic Objective 3, which is to expand targeted social protection measures and sustainable livelihood programmes. Strategic objectives 2, 3 and 4 are the largest cost drivers, accounting for 99.14% of the total costs between the three of them.

## **5. Key Evaluation Findings**

The NFNSP aims to address food and nutrition security challenges, aligning with global best practices and local policies. Its goals include enhancing food access, sustainable agriculture, aiding vulnerable groups, and supporting overall well-being and equity while reducing poverty. Implementing the Plan required establishing governance mechanisms and fostering collaboration among government departments, development partners, NGOs, civil society, and diverse stakeholders.

The literature review highlighted significant challenges regarding food system governance, specifically in policy development, program 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 current 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.

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<sup>62</sup> National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023

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

The Plan has 17 impact-level indicators. The selection of the indicators, together with their targets, was driven by three main factors: national goals aimed at reducing poverty, inequality, and unemployment, as outlined in the National Development Plan 2030; the World Health Assembly indicators for nutrition; and consideration of food security indicators from the General Household Survey (GHS). The process of selecting the impact indicators and targets was defined through stakeholder involvement and consultations across different spheres of government and society<sup>63</sup>. As such, the impact-level indicators are relevant and aligned to national and global priorities and are well-aligned to the Plan's objectives.

The impact-level indicators, their targets and performance against these targets are presented in Table 4 below. As this table shows, the data sources for the impact indicators include the GHS, the South Africa Demographic and Health Survey (SADHS), the South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (SANHANES-1) and the District Health Information System (DHIS). The latest SADHS was conducted in 2016; it is anticipated that SANHANES-2 will only commence in the latter part of 2023; and not all linked GHS indicators were reflected in the latest GHS (2022). As such, it is only possible to report progress for five of the 17 impact indicators (1, 2, 5 and 6)<sup>64</sup>.

Four indicators whose performance can be tracked have achieved modest progress. While these four impact indicators show improvements from the 2016 baseline values, there remains a considerable gap to the 2023 target. The remaining indicator shows deterioration. The Plan sets out ambitious 2023 targets linked to the WHO 2025 global targets which means that much progress needs to be made on the targets even when considering the WHO 2025 horizon.

It was noted during stakeholder interviews that the confluence of global, geo-political and environmental challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, social unrest particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, recurring load shedding and natural disasters epitomised in the "eThekweni floods" of 2022 slowed the progress of the impact indicators and negatively impacted the performance of the impact targets. This is validated in the GHS, where the percentage of households that had limited access to food increased during COVID-19 from 17,8% in 2019 to 20,9% in 2021, and then decreased to 19,6% in 2022. Similarly, the percentage of persons with limited access to food increased to 23,8% during COVID-19 before declining to 22,0% in 2022. The results of the five waves of the National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) on food security (between May 2020 and May 2021) show that despite significant investments in social protection in the form of relief grants, food insecurity and household and child hunger remained high<sup>65</sup>. Given the protracted nature of the pandemic and slow economic recovery, household and child hunger have stabilised at higher levels than before the pandemic. The phasing out of the COVID-19 emergency relief coupled with the constrained economic situation, explain why levels of food insecurity and hunger have remained high since the pandemic. Despite COVID-19 and the above-mentioned factors having a role to play in the slow progress against the 2023 targets, these were ambitious targets, given that they are in fact WHO 2025 targets, and performance remains well short of the 2023 targets.

Strategic Objective 6 aims to develop a monitoring and evaluation system for FNS. However, the interviews reveal that efforts to monitor, collate and collect impact level data is disjointed and not housed in a central mechanism, as planned under Strategic Objective 6. Without such a system, tracking the

<sup>63</sup> "The NFNSP 2018-2023 is a culmination of consultations and deliberations undertaken through a number of processes that included a wide range of stakeholders." - *The National Food and Nutrition Security Plan 2018-2023*, page 41

<sup>64</sup> Impact indicators - 1: Percentage (%) of households vulnerable to hunger; 2: % of individuals vulnerable to hunger; 5: % of households with inadequate or severely inadequate access to food; and 6: % of individuals with inadequate or severely inadequate access to food

<sup>65</sup> *Servaas van der Berg, Leila Patel & Grace Bridgman (2022) Food insecurity in South Africa: Evidence from NIDS-CRAM wave 5, Development Southern Africa, 39:5, 722-737, DOI: 10.1080/0376835X.2022.2062299*

full system and performance across the system at an impact-level is not possible, and relies on the four above-mentioned indicators to be proxies for the full food system at the impact-level. This presents a narrow perspective of the food system and the progress of the Plan.

Furthermore, from an implementation perspective, the line of causality between the activities, outputs, outcomes, their indicators and targets and those associated with the Plan's impact is unclear, as the Plan itself (and original theory of change) does not clearly detail the line of causality. Government respondents from the key line departments noted that they felt that they could not be held accountable to the impact-level targets as these were beyond the reach of the work they were doing. They could not 'see' their work's contribution towards these, given that they are focused on their annual performance plans (APPs) and the outcome-level indicators therein, with no line of sight on how these outcome-level changes contribute to these impact-level indicators. This is due to the lack of visibility of the theory of change among all the relevant ecosystem stakeholders as well as an understanding of the interplay of how the Plan's activities feed into the theory of change's impact pathways. Linked to the above, many provincial respondents, in particular, were not aware of how their work aligned with others to reach the overarching goals 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

**Table 6: 17 SMART Impact Targets of the NFNSP**

Impact Indicators	Baseline (2016)	Current Status	Target (2023)	Data Source	
<b>Reduced experience of hunger</b>					
1	Percentage (%) of households vulnerable to hunger	11.8%	11.6% % in 2022 (From 11.2% in 2019)	5.70%	GHS <sup>66</sup> 2022
2	% of individuals vulnerable to hunger	13.40%	12.9% in 2022 (from 12,2% in 2021)	6.60%	GHS 2022
<b>Additional indicators</b>					
3	% of households experiencing hunger	New	The GHS 2021 and 2022 report the same results for indicator 3 and 4 as 1 and 2 respectively	TBD	GHS 2018
4	% of individuals experiencing hunger	New		TBD	GHS 2018
<b>Decrease in months of food shortages among the poor, vulnerable and marginalised</b>					
5	% of households with inadequate or severely inadequate access to food	22.30%	19.6% in 2022 (from 20.9% in 2021)	<10%	GHS 2022
6	% of individuals with inadequate or severely inadequate access to food	24.90%	22% in 2022 (from 23.8 % in 2021)	<5%	GHS 2022
<b>Additional indicators</b>					
7	Number of months (and actual months) in which the household experienced food shortages	New	No further updated information in the GHS 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022	TBD	GHS 2019-2022
<b>Reduced prevalence of under-nutrition in children (acute)</b>					
8	Wasting: Proportion of children below 5 years of age with height for weight <-2 Z-scores of the median WHO child growth standards	3% (increase from 2.2% in 2012, SANHANES-1, HSRC 2013)	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	<20% in 2020 <15% in 2023	SADHS 2016
9	Stunting: Proportion of children below 5 years of age with height for age <-2 Z-scores of the median WHO child growth standards	27% (was 26,9% amongst children aged 1-3 years SANHANES-1, HSRC 2013)	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	<20% in 2020 <15% in 2023	SADHS 2016
<b>Reduced prevalence of overnutrition in children</b>					
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	13% in 2016 (decrease from 14% in 2012, SANHANES-1 2013)	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	No increase in child overweight by 2020, 10% reduction by 2022	SADHS
<b>Reduced prevalence of Low Birth Weight</b>					
11	Prevalence of infants born <2500g (% , proportion of total live births)	13.3% in 2016	13.6% in 2022 (DHIS tracks live births <2500g in facility rate)	30% reduction by 2023	DHIS
12	Prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding (%) at 6 months	32%	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	50% by 2023	SADHS 2016
<b>Reduced prevalence of overnutrition in adults (Women aged 15 years and above)</b>					
<b>Overweight: Women</b>					
13	Body Mass Index (BMI): Weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in metres (kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	26.6% in 2016 decreased from 39% in 2012	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS and SANHANES	10% reduction by 2020 15% reduction by 2023	SADHS 2016 SANHANES 2012

<sup>66</sup> Stats SA, [General Household Survey 2021](#) and [General Household Survey 2022](#)

<b>Obesity: Women</b>					
14	BMI	41% in 2016 worsened from 24.8% (in 2012)	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS and SANHANES	10% reduction by 2020 15% reduction by 2023	SADHS 2016 SANHANES 2012
<b>Reduced prevalence of overnutrition in adults (Men aged 15 years and above)</b>					
<b>Overweight: Men (aged 15 years and above)</b>					
15	BMI	20.3% in 2016 (was 19.6% in 2012)	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS and SANHANES	10% reduction by 2020 15% reduction by 2023	SADHS 2016 SANHANES 2012
<b>Obesity: Men (aged 15 years and above)</b>					
16	BMI	11% in 2016 (was 11.6% in 2012)	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS and SANHANES	10% reduction by 2020 15% reduction by 2023	SADHS 2016 SANHANES 2012
<b>Reduced prevalence of Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies</b>					
17	Percentage (%) of women of reproductive age (16- 35 yoa) who have a haemoglobin level of less than 11g/dl)	23.1% (SANHANES 2013)	No updated information available, requires data from the SADHS	25% reduction by 2020 (to 7.3%), 50% reduction by 2023 (to 1.5%)	SADHS

## 5.2. 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. This progress is typically dependent on the responsible department and their commitment towards their activities and the alignment with their annual performance plans (APPs). Where outputs and targets in the Plan are mirrored in the respective department's APPs, generally, there was found to be more commitment and associated progress towards targets. However, where there was not clear alignment with the APPs, stakeholders noted that they did not know how their associated outcome-level targets were derived or how these link to their outputs and activities. Additionally, provincial stakeholders noted that they did not understand how the provincial-level targets feed up into the national-level targets, or how the national-level targets cascaded down to the provincial-level. This results in stakeholders not taking full ownership of the Plan's objectives and performance towards the targets therein.

Table 7 below provides an overview of the performance of the Plan against the various Strategic Objectives' targets, with more detail on each Strategic Objective provided below. As Table 7 shows, 17% of the 2023 targets have been met and a further 6% are likely to be met by the end of 2023. 28% 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 32% of the indicators have no updated information or are not routinely collected, and as such, their performance could not be assessed. This missing data links to the discussion above about the gaps in a Plan-level monitoring system that was intended under Strategic Objective 6. Without such a system, tracking progress across the Strategic Objectives is fragmented and does not enable the data to be used for decision making purposes.

**Table 7: Performance summary of the Strategic Objectives against their targets<sup>67</sup>**

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	4	6
# progressing but not likely to meet the 2023 target	0	6	2	5	1	4	0	18	28
# 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	1	0	20	31

### 5.2.1. Strategic Objective 1

The first Strategic Objective is to establish a multisectoral FNS Council to oversee the alignment of policies, coordination and implementation of programmes and services which address food and nutrition security. Key actions include:

1. Establishing the National FNS council
2. Establishing the Provincial FNS councils
3. Establishing the District FNS councils

The table below outlines the respective indicators, their progress and likelihood of meeting the 2023 targets. The table below also provides a colour coded legend for the progress of the output indicators, applicable to each Strategic Objective.

**Table 8: 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 Dec 2022-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"> <li>• FNS Council convening bi-annually to provide oversight for the delivery of FNS programmes.</li> <li>• FNS Council holding government departments accountable for coherent delivery of FNS programmes across all government departments.</li> <li>• FNS Council leading resource mobilisation efforts for the delivery of FNS programmes</li> </ul>	
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	The District councils have not been established	Improved delivery of Government FNS programmes in 40 Districts, resulting from the	

<sup>67</sup> Percentages have been rounded up



#	Output Indicators	Progress at March 2023 (FY 2022/2023)	Target 2023	Likelihood of meeting target
	of the Mayors		effectiveness of District FNS Councils	

Based on the programme documentation and stakeholder consultations, the National FNS council has been established but has not been convened. In 2022, the Presidency formally appointed Ministers to serve in the National FNS Council, however, this has not progressed beyond this, and none of the provincial-level or district-level councils have been established or convened. As such, all the targets under this Strategic Objective have not been achieved. It is worth noting that an Inter-Governmental Technical Working Group (IGTWG) was established to coordinate the NFNSP, led by the DPME, and while this Working Group exists, it does not fill the role of the National FNS Council.

The implementation of Strategic Objective 1 has faced a number of challenges. Stakeholders shared that at the time of the Plan (2018), the Office of the Deputy President has subsequently had two Deputy Presidents. While the Deputy President was allocated a role of leading the IGTWG, the Office of the Deputy President does not appear to have prioritised this role or the work of the Plan, instead, the DPME led the IGTWG. Stakeholders also noted that while the DPME has done well in leading the IGTWG, they should not be seen as a substitute for the Deputy President and be primarily responsible for implementing and overseeing the Plan because of capacity constraints. It was also argued that the IGTWG had no role in the development of the national FNS policy which was endorsed by Cabinet in 2013.

Strategic Objective 1 forms the foundation of the Plan's theory of change. The rationale of Strategic Objective 1 is the weightiness of having a unified leadership and governance structures for FNS. Through Strategic Objective 1, the Plan aims to improve the coordination, policy and governance of the FNS system. The political commitment to drive the Plan would be embodied in the councils. The establishment and subsequent convening of national, provincial and district councils are thus core to this objective and are fundamental to the coordinated implementation of the Plan as starkly noted by stakeholders. Without this coordination, the foundation of the theory of change is not in place, negatively affecting the upper-levels of the theory of change, and the coordination across these.

### 5.2.2. Strategic Objective 2

The second Strategic Objective aims to establish inclusive local food value-chains to support access to nutritious, affordable food. The main actions and targets are:

1. Increasing production by smallholder and subsistence producers
2. Increasing the number of households in agriculture
3. Improving smallholder farmers' capacity and skills to produce food
4. Increasing employment and participation in local agricultural value chains
5. Supporting smallholder producers' access to markets through policy and instruments

The table below outlines the respective indicators, their progress and likelihood of meeting the 2023 targets.

**Table 9: 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 Dec 2022-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 <sup>68</sup> 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 <sup>69</sup>	11 Agricultural Training Institutes (ATIs) operating as Centres of Excellence	
12	Number of extension officers	1 994 <sup>70</sup>	5 600	
13	Number of people employed in the agricultural sector	860 000 people were employed in agriculture	1 million people across the agricultural sector	
14	Number of women agro-preneurs and participants	16 320 female smallholder producers who were supported	50% women of 16 000 smallholder producers supported	

<sup>68</sup> PES is the Presidential Employment Stimulus

<sup>69</sup> Current talks and a transferring process is ongoing between DALRRD and DHE

<sup>70</sup> However, there are an additional 4 346 Assistant Agricultural Practitioners

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 <sup>71</sup> document approved	9 commodity organisations based	

There has been mixed performance across the various activities and targets under Strategic Objective 2. As shown above, out of 21 indicators, six indicators have met the 2023 target; one indicator is likely to meet the 2023 target; six indicators are making progress but not likely to meet the 2023 target; six have made very limited progress towards 2023 target; and two of the remaining indicators had no updated information from either the Plan's implementation reports, or from the DALRRD directly.

While there has been some progress with regards to supporting the capacity of smallholder producers, implementing the Agro Processing Scheme, and the number of commodity organisations benefiting from instruments, this has only partially translated into increased production by smallholder and subsistence farmers, as evidenced by marginal progress in the indicator *quantity of food produced by smallholder and subsistence farmers by type of produce*.

Stakeholder consultations indicated that the performance of Strategic Objective 2 towards its targets is as a result of the commitment to the work being done by DALRRD. This commitment was said to be as a result of there being clear alignment with the Plan and its outputs and those included in the department's APPs. However, this optimism was primarily shared about the activities and outputs being produced and there was less certainty about how these translate into outcome-level changes such as increased production by smallholder farmers, which is central to the Plan's focus on the production side of the food system.

### 5.2.3. Strategic Objective 3

Strategic Objective 3 aims to expand targeted social protection measures and sustainable livelihood programmes. Key actions include:

1. Promoting early registration of children born in public health facilities, within the prescribed 30-day period
2. Achieving a universal child grant registration for eligible children born in public facilities
3. Integrating social protection registration with food and nutrition education
4. Improving the provision of nutritious meals to targeted learners in schools through the NSNP.

The table below outlines the respective indicators, their progress and likelihood of meeting the 2023 targets.

<sup>71</sup> AAMP - Agriculture and Agro-processing Masterplan

**Table 10: 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 Dec 2022-Mar 2023, ECD Census 2021, DSD Government Official, NISPIS Progress Report 18 July 2023, Stats SA website, SASSA 2021/2022 Annual Report, Revised Medium Term Strategic Framework 2023

#	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 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 <sup>72</sup>	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	
5	Integrated Social Protection Information System (ISPIS) developed	ISPIS Domain is registered and still under development	ISPIS expanded to 10 Departments <sup>73</sup>	
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 <sup>74, 75</sup>	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 <sup>76</sup>	180 000	

For Strategic Objective 3, out of 12 indicators, four indicators have met the 2023 target; two indicators are likely to meet the 2023 target; two indicators are making progress but not likely to meet the 2023 target; one has made very limited progress towards 2023 target; and the remaining three indicators had

<sup>72</sup> Stats SA -

<https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=14902#:~:text=A%20total%20of%201%200003,but%20were%20registered%20in%202020.>

<sup>73</sup> DOH, DBE, DSD, DALRRD, DEFF, DWS, CoGTA, DPME, DSB, Stats SA

<sup>74</sup> In the Q4 Dec 2022- 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.

<sup>75</sup> The Q4 Dec 2022- 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).

<sup>76</sup> 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”.

no updated information available from source documentation, and the likelihood of meeting the target is not applicable.

Despite the mixed performance and sparse data, from the documentation and stakeholders, it is notable that 93% of public schools provided nutritious food to learners through the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), successfully feeding over nine and a half million children daily, with efforts made to improve accessibility through the DBE. Additionally, it was noted that 21 201 public schools and 353 CNDCs are providing nutritious food to targeted PVMs.

Given the critical role of Early Childhood Development centres (ECDs) in feeding infants and young children, stakeholders mentioned that while the DBE wants to follow the nutrition guidelines and menus, the costs of meeting the menus requirements has become a costly exercise for the DBE and there is a struggle to procure an adequate supply of ingredients based on the menu and guidelines. This contributes to hampered efforts to effectively implement certain aspects of the Plan and reach vulnerable children through targeted social protection measures and sustainable livelihood programmes.

#### 5.2.4. Strategic Objective 4

Strategic Objective 4 aims to scale high impact nutrition interventions targeting women, infants and children. Key actions include:

1. Increase availability of micronutrient supplements, deworming tablets and fortified porridge
2. Improving advocacy around exclusive breastfeeding
3. Improving nutrition training and focus of community health workers and food handlers in community nutrition centres (ECDs, schools and CNDCs)
4. Improving the ability of ECDs to address nutrition issues.

The table below outlines the respective indicators, their progress and likelihood of meeting the 2023 targets.

**Table 11: 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 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 with Hb >10 g/dL at delivery	This indicator is not routinely collected as part of NIDS	80% of women 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 <sup>77</sup>	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% <sup>78</sup>	Grade 1: 65%  Grade 8: 60%	
17	Proportion of ideal clinics conducting BMI, waist circumference and lifestyle counselling	2046 ideal clinics	3 477 ideal clinics (100% coverage)	
18	Proportion of registered users who have successfully completed the e-learning course	No updated information available from source documentation	70%	

With regards to Strategic Objective 4, a key finding is the reliance on NIDS as a data source and the changes in NIDS' data collection, indicator prioritisation and lack of ongoing survey data. Stakeholders shared that while there is a need to engage with maternal health on a minimum critical set of indicators for maternal nutrition, there have been calls to reduce select indicators. Stakeholders shared that this is based on managing the current collection of indicators as well as competition on proposed new data elements and indicators. As a result, seven indicators under Strategic Objective 4 could not be reported

<sup>77</sup> 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

<sup>78</sup> NDOH\_ISHP Data Request\_27 Jun 2023



on. Out of 18 indicators, it was noted that no indicators will meet the 2023 target; four indicators are making progress but not likely to meet the 2023 target; one has made very limited progress towards 2023 target; twelve indicators have no updated information or the data is not routinely collected and the likelihood of meeting the target is not applicable.

Stakeholders provided reports on campaigns for World Breastfeeding week and National Nutrition week to note the advocacy efforts that have been carried out. One report shared by a stakeholder cites that “Lessons learned from Family Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) project can provide a basis for rolling out a wider range of community-based services.”<sup>79</sup> Such reports are a valuable tool for understanding the role of community-based services and their role in improving nutrition outcomes.

### 5.2.5. Strategic Objective 5

Strategic objective 5 aims to influence people across the life cycle to make informed food and nutrition decisions through an integrated national Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) strategy. Key actions include:

1. Better communication to improve consumer choices.
2. Better regulations to incentivise businesses towards food and nutrition security.
3. Better capacity for front-line workers.

The table below outlines the respective indicators, their progress and likelihood of meeting the 2023 targets.

**Table 12: 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 Dec 2022-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	80% of the total number of ECD caregivers in registered ECDs	

<sup>79</sup> DOH, UNICEF, 2023, Project Evaluation the use of Family Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) in South Africa for early identification and referral of children with acute malnutrition.

		available		
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	

For Strategic Objective 5, out of six indicators, one indicator met the 2023 target, this being the communication strategy that was developed in 2020, approved in September 2021 and disseminated to all provinces. 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. One indicator is making progress but not likely to meet the 2023 target; one has made very limited progress towards the 2023 target; and two either have no updated information or that data is no longer being collected, thus the likelihood is not applicable.

In addition to commemorating world breastfeeding week and nutrition week, it has been noted that breastfeeding and complementary feeding is routinely communicated through mass media and social media platforms, such as the Side-by-Side campaign. A recent evaluation of the Side-by-Side campaign found “parents and caregivers generally find the Side-by-Side campaign and its materials beneficial and helpful in providing guidance, knowledge, and support, particularly for new mothers.”<sup>80</sup> The evaluation also found that some parents and caregivers expressed an interest in changing their parenting behaviours based on the campaign. In particular, parents and caregivers noted that they are giving their children a more nutritious diet, are breastfeeding more and are taking their children for regular check-ups.

### 5.2.6. Strategic Objective 6

The aim of Strategic Objective 6 is to develop a monitoring and evaluation system for FNS, including an integrated risk-management system for monitoring FNS related risks. Key actions include:

1. Developing a unified system for tracking inputs and outcomes with the understanding that the monitoring system should track food and nutrition status, but also indicators related to the other six Strategic Objectives.
2. The establishment of a risk register to guide action.

The table below outlines the respective indicators, their progress and likelihood of meeting the 2023 targets.

**Table 13: 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 Dec 2022-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	11.6% of households and 12.9 % of individuals experiencing hunger -	5.7% of households and 6.6% of individuals experiencing hunger (Impact indicator 1 and	

<sup>80</sup> Side-by-Side Campaign, Review Report, Sept 2023, pg 21



	set of core indicators	GHS 2022	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 <sup>81</sup>  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	Reports on implementation of different mechanisms to address FNS risks including grain reserve facility, price support mechanism and legislation to enable State participation in the food System	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	No updated information from National FNS Survey	Risk profiles for vulnerable groups completed biannually	

With regards to Strategic Objective 6, of five output indicators, no indicators will meet the 2023 target; four indicators are making progress but not likely to meet the 2023 target; one has no updated information and the likelihood of meeting the target is not applicable. The current implementation evaluation is only happening now in 2023, as opposed to 2020 as planned, and there are no plans for the summative evaluation. The lapse in time means that it is too late to inform course correction for the current Plan given that it covers the period 2018-2023. In a number of stakeholder consultations, there was no knowledge of a unified system for tracking inputs and outcomes, outside of the implementation progress reports, which are not publicly available, and are developed by compiling the various departments' information rather than using a consolidated system. It is not clear based on the progress reports if an expanded set of FNS indicators have been included in the other national surveys. The progress report indicates that the South African Vulnerability Assessment Committee (SAVAC) conducts periodic surveys on food security in the country, however, this uses secondary data sources. Furthermore, the National Food and Nutrition Security Survey 2020-2022 was to be launched in February 2023, however, at the time of this evaluation, this was yet to be finalised. Similarly, even after conducting stakeholder consultations, it is not known if a FNS Risks and Hazards Analysis had been completed, which illustrates that even if this has happened it is not institutionalised across the FNS system.

The slow progress under Strategic Objective 6 is primarily linked to the slow establishment of the M&E system and processes, which is linked to the responsible department having very limited awareness of their role in the Strategic Objective and its activities. Strategic Objective 6 forms the foundation of the theory of change and is crucial to the tracking of the Plan and subsequent adaptive decision-making. Without this foundation, the upper-levels of the Plan cannot benefit from timely data and adaptive decision-making processes.

Stakeholders also commented on the strong need for better data collection, aggregation and timeous reporting of nutrition outcomes. In particular this was noted as being key for grassroots implementation

<sup>81</sup> A Thematic study was conducted by DALRRD, but the report was not made available

and understanding nutrition needs at the district-level. Stakeholders reflected on the unified and data-driven response to the HIV epidemic, and how this showed success in tackling the associated challenges with the epidemic. This was considered to be a lost opportunity for the Plan and the FNS system more broadly. While each department routinely collects information across their respective indicators, without a central tracking mechanism for all the indicators and targets, making evidence-informed decisions in the FNS ecosystem is difficult.

### 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. It was noted that along with the responsible department, agencies such as SEDA and SEFA, support the implementation of the NFNSP by providing financial and non-financial support to small businesses and cooperatives.

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. This suggests that there is limited visibility of Strategic Objective 7 and its role in the FNS system.

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

The following section presents the factors that enable the implementation of the NFNSP. These are presented first at the national-level, and then at the provincial-level.

### 5.3.1. Enabling Factors at the National Level

The FNS National Task Team, that is responsible for driving the implementation of the Plan, is considered an enabler of the Plan's implementation. The National Task Team was set up in 2015/16 and has remained in place since then, with a largely consistent membership and engagement by the member departments. The presence of the Task Team is considered a source of stability with regard to the Plan's implementation. In addition, the National Task Team has been largely responsible for the efforts to progress the National Council on Food and Nutrition security. Lastly, the National Task Team, as a result of the consistency of its membership, has been a source of institutional memory and has provided continuity regarding the implementation of the Plan.

“There is a well-established national task team, which has been stable with members who have been there from the beginning and are still there and still working”.

- **KII respondent at a National Government level**

The implementation of the Plan has been further enabled by national departments being resourceful by identifying aspects of the Plan that could be implemented from their existing budgets, and implementing these, while funding for the Plan was yet to be decided upon. The Plan includes elements that were new to departments' existing mandates as well as elements that were already a part of departments' responsibilities. Some departments recognised that certain items in the Plan were already a part of their key responsibilities. These departments allocated some of their equitable budgets to implement these aspects of the Plan, despite additional resources not being made available. Furthermore, some

departments indicated that they recognised that implementation of the Plan would be delayed if they waited for the National Council to be established. Instead, the Plan was communicated by the DPME to the Provinces, which were called upon to develop Provincial Food and Nutrition Security Plans, and work started on the development of Provincial Plans ahead of the National Council being established. The proactiveness shown by departments who implemented aspects of the Plan not only allowed progress to be made with regard to the Plan, but it also meant that those Departments had a better understanding of how much budget they would need to fill in their funding gaps.

### 5.3.2. Enabling Factors at the Provincial Level

Most Provinces interviewed as part of the evaluation are only beginning to adopt their provincial-level FNS Plans and are starting to set up the necessary structures for implementation. In Limpopo, a Provincial Food and Nutrition Security Coordinating Committee has been formed, and there are plans for Food and Nutrition Security in the Province. However, the plans have not yet begun implementation because of a lack of resources and difficulties with convening meetings. In KwaZulu-Natal, a draft Plan has been created but is still being circulated at different structures in order to be approved. In the Northern Cape, the National Plan has been adopted by the Province as the Province's approach to Food and Nutrition Security, with the addition of an objective aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty<sup>82</sup>. The Northern Cape has tested its Plan, but it is also yet to implement its Plan throughout the Province. Only the Western Cape is fully implementing a Food and Nutrition Security Plan, which is referred to as the Household Food and Nutrition Security Strategic Framework, or 'Nourish to Flourish'.

Notwithstanding the early stages of the implementation of many of the provincial Plans, these still have important learnings with regards to the enabling factors that have supported the implementation thereof.

#### KwaZulu-Natal

KwaZulu-Natal has had success in implementing effective nutrition interventions under Operation Sukuma Sakhe, which were targeted at children. The implementation of these nutrition interventions has been enabled by strong leadership and direction emerging from the Office of the Premier supported by communication that cascaded from the provincial Department of Health through to the ward-level. Stakeholders in KwaZulu-Natal claimed that Food and Nutrition Security interventions that were undertaken under Operation Sukuma Sakhe, a model of government service delivery that integrates the services of provincial and local government in order to enhance service delivery, were strengthened by the fact that the province designed the interventions, under the Provincial Department of Health. The design of interventions by the province made interventions more relevant to the local context. These interventions were then led by the nutrition directorate of the Provincial Department of Health. Progress on nutrition objectives was then enabled by the nutrition directorate holding wards accountable for how money was spent, and whether expenditure translated into improved nutrition and less nutrition-related hospital admissions. Stakeholders indicated that the province's success with respect to its nutrition objectives emerged because of clear communication within the province, from Provincial-level down to the district-level and further down to ward-level.

"But I think KZN, at least, was one Province that was showing some progress; and we could understand from their programming what they were doing right. And what they were doing right is that they were communicating clearly from the Province down to the District; from a District down to a Subdistrict; and from a Subdistrict to a ward. And they called those Ward platforms 'War Rooms'; and they were planning at the war room level. I think that was a good model to use. I don't know why it was never elevated as good practice."

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<sup>82</sup> Strategic Objective 7: Establish Livelihood options systems towards building resilient communities.

**- KII respondent representing academia**

KwaZulu-Natal's current plans for translating the NFNSP into its provincial-level Plan reflect a similar, integrated, strong leadership approach to Food and Nutrition Security, with the Office of the Premier taking leadership of the process. KZN's Office of the Premier has been circulating, amongst KZN's Provincial Government structures, a proposal for the province's institutional arrangements and approaches to addressing Food and Nutrition Security, which includes adding Food and Nutrition Security to an existing council that is convened by the Office of the Premier. The intended approach is built on the existing experience of Sukuma Sakhe and further inspired by the Western Cape Day Zero Campaign's monitoring systems, such that the Province will use its District platforms to measure and track how much food is available and how much food is required. These measures, it was argued, would be used to create a food security index for the province that will allow the redistribution of food from areas where there is excess to areas where there are shortages. However, these actions remain in the proposal stage and have yet to be approved and implemented.

"Let's take uMgungundlovu District as an example. If within the District there is malnutrition that's affecting Umngeni local Municipality, then the matter will be taken to the District Municipality. The Local and District Municipalities will convene, and it may be identified that Umsunduzi Local Municipality has excess food, based on their reporting. Therefore, the excess food in Umsunduzi can be given to Umngeni in order to balance out the need of one Municipality and the excess of another in terms of food".

**- KII respondent at Provincial Government level****Limpopo**

Prior to the roll-out of the NFNSP, Limpopo's Departments of Agriculture and Health had been implementing Food and Nutrition Security interventions, which included agricultural interventions for households and infant and child nutrition interventions. These interventions have been implemented separately as line departments.

The success of the Department of Agriculture's interventions was enabled by its existing agricultural capabilities and its understanding of the varying agro-ecological conditions of different areas when planning interventions. The Department of Agriculture's efforts in curbing food and nutrition insecurity have been bolstered by aligning agricultural initiatives with the agro ecological conditions in the areas they serve. For example, some areas experience low rainfall and require different agricultural interventions compared to areas receiving higher rainfall. Differential agricultural interventions by the Department of Agriculture for households in low rainfall areas have included training households on water saving techniques and prioritising commodities that do not require a lot of water, such as poultry production. In Limpopo, taking a context-appropriate approach and tailoring interventions to the realities that face various areas has been critical in delivering interventions that are relevant and that translate into outcome-level change.

From a Department of Health perspective, Limpopo had been implementing interventions for infants and young children before the National Plan was established. Partnerships with local organisations, including ECDs, is a key enabler of Limpopo's Department of Health's efforts to roll out Food and Nutrition Security interventions for infants and young children. Centres not only serve as the site for their interventions, but they also play a role in a wider drive to increase breastfeeding through exclusive breastfeeding information and communication offered to carers and parents of children attending the ECDs. One of the Department's interventions implemented through ECD centres to improve young child

feeding was developing menus, including recipes, and providing these to ECD centres to ensure that young children receive nutritious meals. ECD centres also allowed the Department to track how much every item in their recipes cost throughout the year, through what were termed as “master orders”. The tracking of prices through master orders allowed the Provincial Department of Health to provide feedback to the Province’s Department of Social Development on the budget that ECD centres require in order to feed young children in accordance with the menus prescribed by the Department of Health. As a result, the Department of Social Development was in a position to provide adequate resources to ECD centres to ensure the provision of Food and Nutrition Security through ECD centres. Apart from this effective inter-departmental coordination, Limpopo’s infant and child nutrition interventions further highlights the importance of partnering with local organisations, such as local ECD centres, as a site for implementation and effective targeting (Infant and Young Child Feeding, IYCF) as well as by securing accurate perspective about costs and implementation approaches.

A systems approach enables the Limpopo Department of Health to have a fuller perspective of children’s nutrition needs and how to cater to these needs. Recognising the importance of ECD centres to infant and child nutrition, Limpopo’s Provincial Department of Health engaged ECD centres to ensure that infants (6–12-month-olds) in their care would receive the appropriate nutrients by way of feeding them breastmilk instead of formula. The Department of Health increased sensitivity amongst parents regarding exclusive breastfeeding of children for six months after birth. Parents were also advised to express their milk and provide the milk to ECD centres so that their babies could still be fed with breast milk when at creche. Both parents and ECD centre staff who were mothers were also encouraged to express and donate their milk-to-milk banks, which helped to increase the supplies of breast milk, not only in ECDs, but also in hospitals, where the breast milk from the breast milk banks was donated, after being tested and pasteurised. By following a systems approach, the Limpopo’s Department of Health was able to leverage parts of the system in which infants and children spend a lot of their time (hospitals and ECD centres), to make changes to improve children’s nutrition.

Limpopo’s Department of Health also leverages existing structures, in the form of community health workers, to roll out parts of the Department’s interventions. Community health workers who were budgeted for under the HIV directorate, have been empowered to support nutrition interventions. These community workers conduct growth monitoring for children who are outside the reach of the hospital or ECD centre interventions. Community health workers also encourage mothers to go to their nearest clinic or hospital for growth monitoring and are equipped to conduct growth measurements themselves, on site. The work done by the health workers enables the Department of Health to intervene sooner in children’s lives who are not growing as expected. Community health workers also help distribute Vitamin A tablets to households in wards that are in outlying areas, for which a hospital would be too far away. In addition to allowing the Department of Health to roll out its interventions in a timely manner, leveraging these existing structures provided a more cost-efficient approach as the Department only had to incur the cost of training the existing health workers, as opposed to recruiting new health workers.

Limpopo’s Department of Health also focuses efforts at a community-level, prioritising preventative efforts. The Department of Health deploys dieticians and nutritionists at community level, rather than at the hospital level, which enables the Department to prioritise preventative nutrition over clinical nutrition through educating communities about healthy eating and nutrition. Acting early to prevent nutrition related diseases not only allows for a more efficient use of resources in the long term, but it also helps to minimise the incidence of children incurring any long-term health consequences associated with malnutrition.

## **Western Cape**

The Western Cape has emphasised FNS as a policy priority since 2013, which means that FNS enjoys institutional commitment and buy-in that can be leveraged. The Western Cape was able to respond quickly when the national coordinating committee began to advocate for provinces to adopt and drive the NFSNP. The Western Cape responded to the Food and Nutrition Security Policy as early as 2013,

leading to the 2016 Western Cape Government Strategic Framework on Household Food and Nutrition Security. The consultative process leading to the development of the Western Cape Policy was led by a team of officials in the Western Cape's Department of the Premier, under the Policy and Strategy Unit. The research that informed the Western Cape's Strategic Framework was obtained through managers of Provincial Government Departments, stakeholders throughout the food system value chain, NGOs and academics.

The Policy was also careful to move away from the IFSS, which had been widely criticised by academics and NGOs in terms of its conceptual framing and the institutional arrangements. This allowed the province to glean lessons early that would help to inform its approach to FNS as it sought to create a policy for the Province. Having an early start sets the province apart in terms of implementation. This proved to be valuable because arguably the province had established stronger networks and greater coordination through strategies such as the "whole of government approach" (WOGA) when the COVID-19 pandemic began. The province was able to enhance its approach and implementation through lessons stemming from the COVID-19 crisis, which amounted to a stress test of the province's Household Food and Nutrition Security Framework.

Stakeholders in the Western Cape attribute some of its success to the presence of food and nutrition experts in the province who are based at universities who are able to provide inputs to the province's strategy. The Western Cape's Plan benefits from work on food and nutrition that is conducted at the University of Cape Town, University of Stellenbosch, and the University of the Western Cape. The province leveraged these resources when it developed its framework on food and nutrition security. Additionally, these resources provide an up-to-date evidence base on food and nutrition security that feeds into the implementation of the province's Plan. Furthermore, the Western Cape government was able to make inputs into the kind of data and research questions that is pursued by the Centre for Excellence in Food Security based at the University of Western Cape, as well as numerous other universities and research partnerships further ensuring alignment with data and supporting evidence-informed decision making. The availability of knowledge and data is used by the Western Cape to determine what to implement and how to implement it, and it also gives the province a reference point from which assumptions can be adjusted and the plan adapted in line with learnings from implementation.

The Western Cape leverages active civil society organisations when implementing food and nutrition interventions. In addition to universities, NGOs play a key role in the implementation of the Western Cape's Plan, along with other community organisations at every level, which has resulted in the effort being called a 'Whole of Society Approach', which consistently recognises the roles of the different sectors and actors involved. Through the involvement of NGOs, the province is able to broaden its reach of FNS interventions by leveraging their capacity and resources. In doing so, the province is able to reduce duplication of efforts at a community level, and more efficiently support these efforts. The involvement of NGOs has also enabled interventions to be more context specific and responsive to the needs of the different vulnerable communities.

"Western Cape also has a strong and assertive civil society system. Communities mobilise and sometimes they have mobilised in spite of the government. So, I think those were all factors that contributed to the relative strength of the province and compared to others. The Western Cape drew on the resources, and particularly the resources in civil society and the universities quite quickly after the National Plan was set up."

- **KII respondent representing academia**

The Western Cape emphasises looking at FNS through a food systems lens, which entails analysing the full food system, going below local municipality level, and understanding how the government can



support food security within this system. The Western Cape framed its Plan with a food systems lens, which sought to focus on the relationships between people and the food system, instead of adding a top-down lens in the form of a top-heavy government plan. The province's food systems approach included understanding the perspectives of people most affected by food insecurity and hunger and what society was already doing in response, and then understanding how the government could support this. Through emphasising a "listening rather than telling" approach, the province gathered insights on how people were accessing food through food system learning journeys that were conducted in areas with high levels of vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity. The learning journeys involved practitioners, researchers and policy makers, and sought to understand how people accessed food and what options they have for accessing food when they do not have food. The level of granularity of the data collected through the food system learning journeys went to the point of asking mothers how they made choices about whether to pay for their children's ECD centre fees for the next month or buy food. This gave the province insights into how people are managing their food and nutrition security needs. It also provided insights about community-level NGOs involved in the local food systems. This data was then used to inform the interventions. In addition to creating efficiencies, taking a food system lens allowed the province to develop local understanding, to better understand the FNS gaps, and in doing so, identify interventions that are additive.

"[The whole of society approach] has nothing to do with policies and it was very practical ideas on who's already supporting the system, which NGOs are working there, which community groups are working there, which churches are working there, Islamic groups... Then having mapped that out... obviously it changes if you're in a township in Cape Town versus a rural area, you'll get nuances. So, context matters, and you can't have a one size fits all approach."

- **Kil respondent representing CSOs**

The presence of third-party intermediary organisations to help build relationships and coordinate food system partners enabled the Western Cape to give sustained attention to food and nutrition security. Stakeholders noted that the Premier's Office has various competing priorities, and as such, the Plan had the potential to lose focus and impetus as other matters became a priority. Anticipating that the focus on the plan would likely shift, the Western Cape Government partnered with Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) and the Southern Africa Food Lab (SAFL) with financial support from the Centre of Excellence in Food Security to support the implementation of the Plan. The EDP is funded by the Western Cape Government to build relationships in the province to enable effective public private partnerships and also plays the role of sustaining relationships with stakeholder groups that need to work together to enable the process of change to happen. The EDP collaborated closely with SAFL in designing "food-sensitive" learning journeys to deepen the understanding of food issues and appropriate ways to collaborate. The partnerships help to expand the provincial government's capacity to implement the plan, as intermediary organisations take on the role of building the necessary relationships with appropriate state and non-state actors and coordinating the efforts of other partners in the food system. Furthermore, the intermediaries serve as a mechanism for the province's Plan to receive sustained attention.

Implementation in the Western Cape was also enabled by being responsive and adapting their Plan if things were seen to not be working; this flexibility led to faster adaptations to the Plan once lessons were learned, which allowed implementation to sharpen as the Plan was being rolled out. The Western Cape's approach to implementation has been characterised by learning while implementing. This has been underpinned by a focus on adaptive leadership, where implementation has allowed time to pause and reflect on implementation, and then learn and adapt where necessary. As a result, the Province has continually adjusted its approach to implementation as work is done. This process of pausing, reflecting

and adapting has sometimes even occurred on a monthly cycle, and the province has viewed a willingness to change the Plan as being important to its success in remaining relevant and impactful.

“You pick up very quickly if something is not working and you change course in midstream. And you’ve got to help your authorising environment, which tends to be very constrained by saying: ‘we’ve got these KPIs for this year attached to this budget, therefore we need to stick to our course’.

We’ve learnt to try and bring in a very different approach to the planning, monitoring, and adaptation processes for implementation than your traditional linear approach.

- **KII respondent representing CSOs**

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

As with the enabling factors, this section presents the factors that have inhibited the implementation of the Plan at a national-level and a provincial-level.

### 5.4.1. Inhibiting Factors at the National level

The literature review indicated that there is a lack of coherence among FNS policies in that interventions suffer from layered frameworks, weak government integration, and limited mandates of local governments. The NFNSP’s design is aimed to tackle these aspects through the combination of Strategic Objective 1 and 6. However, progress against these Strategic Objectives has been limited and as such has limited the Plan’s ability to influence FNS-related policy. Stakeholders noted that the biggest factor hindering the implementation of the Plan is its slow pace of implementation. At the national level, this includes the National Council not yet being convened and the lack of a budget allocated to the Plan’s implementation. Exacerbating this further is that many stakeholders, including both state and non-state actors, were unaware of the Plan until consulted through this evaluation process. As a result of these and other factors, many food system stakeholders noted that it is as if the Plan itself is not being implemented, but rather that departments are continuing to do what they are mandated to do irrespective of the Plan.

“The adverts for the Council to be established have taken too long. I was hoping by now, it would at least have [been] established.”

- **KII respondent at National Government level**

A key challenge identified in the literature is the lack of adequate institutional arrangements to ensure effective coordination within and between state and non-state actors, as well as insufficient definition of mandates and responsibilities for various stakeholders to reduce siloed thinking. Although the Plan was seen by many to have had a food systems lens in how it was conceptually framed, it was said that the same lens was not carried through into a food systems response. Instead, stakeholders were of the view that the National Plan, after highlighting food system elements, presented a fractured response in its strategic objectives, as shown in situating different parts of the Plan in the different Departments, which were said, even amongst government Departments, to operate in silos. Fragmentation and siloed operations were seen both at a national and provincial level. For example, when asked about the Plan’s inhibitors, one stakeholder explained that implementation was inhibited because of allowing implementing Departments to continue to work as they usually work, and not integrating Departments’ activities and resources, such as personnel, financial resources, and facilities. An illustration of this was



made through an example where there was potential for departments to collaborate on Community Nutrition Development Centres. Collaboration would have allowed the Centres to leverage the Department of Health's Community Health Workers to target the centres' efforts to the right people. There was also the possibility of collaboration with the Department of Health on developing age-specific menus, which was a recommendation of the Department of Health. However, these collaborations did not materialise. Another stakeholder expressed that although the Plan is referred to as an integrated Plan on paper, departments are still working in silos. This is practically manifested by the fact that line departments only focus on the Strategic Objectives that they are solely responsible for. As a result, for those actions that require two or more-line departments to work together, it was said that limited work takes place towards those actions.

A number of stakeholders noted that the Plan does not take a holistic perspective of the full food system into account. For example, respondents indicated that the Plan does not adequately address how food insecurity should be addressed in urban areas and the role that informal traders could play in addressing urban food insecurity. It was noted that the Plan shows low engagement with how people access food in the retail sector, including the role of the informal food sector in food and nutrition security. Although the Plan alludes to the wider food system, stakeholders indicated that the Plan is heavily weighted toward the production side, specifically the incorporation of smallholder agriculture actors into the food value chain. Furthermore, in light of the significant proportion of South Africans who live in urban areas, a relatively small amount of work is being done on urban agriculture as a way to address urban food insecurity; and the production-side focus of the plan, which is focused in rural areas, was said to further reduce the efficacy of the Plan for improving urban food security.

Stakeholders also mentioned that even when reviewing the progress on the Plan from data or reports, lead departments tend to focus on their specific Strategic Objectives and do not look at the holistic picture of the Plan and how it is progressing. This was corroborated in an interview with a stakeholder who attested to progress having been made on all the Strategic Objectives, but who, when asked what data supported this observation, could only speak to data regarding their specific department, and could not provide a reference to data supporting progress by other departments.

“The lack of integration is also seen in that it is not always apparent how food and nutrition security and considerations are integrated into other government policies that support the vulnerable. For example: when education is thinking of their life orientation curriculum, it's not apparent how they choose the nutrition content they include.”

- **KII respondent at National Government level**

Another factor that inhibits the Plan's implementation is the lack of capability, on the ground, to translate the Plan into action. Stakeholders said that there are only a few skilled people employed in the different sectors involved with food and nutrition security. Stakeholders also said that nutrition interventions lacked skills and capabilities around nutrition programming, which has to do with how interventions should be designed in order to achieve nutrition objectives. There was also the view that nutrition skills and competencies were only at the provincial level of leadership, but not at the level of implementation.

“At provincial-level, when someone is needed for work, it's not easy to find people who understand the operational and structural elements of the work required.”

- **KII respondent at Provincial Government level**

Another inhibiting factor noted across stakeholder groups is the lack of leadership buy-in within the national structures of government at the highest levels, such as the Office of the Deputy President and

the Offices of the Director Generals amongst the different line departments. Stakeholders indicated that there is a lack of political will to implement the Plan, at the highest levels of government. For example, although the Plan was meant to be driven by the Office of the Deputy President, no one from the Office of the Deputy President is on the coordinating committee to drive the process of implementation. Instead, the DPME is facilitating and directing the process. There was also the view that high-level officers within the departments, such as Ministers and Directors General, do not place a high priority on the Plan. This is partly evidenced by the fact that when a meeting for the Director Generals of the lead departments was called by the Director General of the DPME to discuss the Plan, only the Director General of the Department of Small Business Development, and a Deputy Director General from the Department of Social Development attended. The other officers who were in attendance were said to have been more junior than Chief Directors. This evidences the low priority given to the Plan amongst the leaders of the lead implementing departments. This low priority, it was argued, is a significant contributor to the slow progress of the implementation of the Plan.

“There is no political will. Nobody is driving the process ... it’s only on paper that the Deputy President’s office is involved.”

- **KII respondent at National Government level**

“The official responsible for the Plan has been the Deputy President and there does not seem to be much interest from that office up until quite recently.”

- **KII respondent representing academia**

The absence of the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security, as provided for under Strategic Objective 1, is a major inhibiting factor to the Plan’s implementation, given that the council was meant to play a coordinating role between the various actors in the food system including aiming to reduce FNS policy incoherence. As identified in the literature, coordination among actors is a primary challenge to FNS in the country. Part of the council’s responsibility, according to stakeholders, was to ensure that responsible departments were capacitated and that resources were available to implement the Plan. In addition, the council was tasked with setting up the necessary institutional structures required for the Plan’s implementation. However, the roles and responsibilities of the council have not been fulfilled because the council has not yet convened, and undertaken responsibilities as envisaged in the Plan. While the 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.

Stakeholders also pointed to the absence of the council as the reason why the Plan’s Game Changers could not be implemented. The Game Changers require interdepartmental coordination, a role that was meant to be fulfilled by the council. Stakeholders also said that line departments have a high workload and face staffing shortages and long turnaround times for filling vacancies. As a result, the Plan’s Game Changers could not be implemented because they require a shift in the usual way departments operate, which requires strategic thought and experimentation, which departments did not have the capacity to do.

“The individual departments that are accountable for implementing the Plan are all keen to do so. And it’s evident that there is interest and an enthusiastic technical subcommittee in the DPME that is trying to coordinate activities. And yet some absolutely critical things for the Plan’s implementation have not been put in place. And as a result, it becomes a document where the only role-player is the

government, and there's no way that a food system Plan can be implemented only by the government.”

- **KII respondent representing academia**

The process for creating the council as well as the proposed nature of the role of the council members is seen as part of the cause of the council not being convened. The council is to be formed through applications from interested parties, and the role is to be on a volunteer basis, with the council members receiving no remuneration. Stakeholders argued that this arrangement stifled the process of recruitment for the council because the council stood in contrast to similar sectoral bodies, such as the boards of Eskom, Transnet, ICASA, and other government initiatives where boards have been established. In addition to having boards, other sectors were also argued to have had robust recruitment processes to include experts who are remunerated for their work. The South African National Aids Council was cited as an example where the council was remunerated for their work, which led to focused work being done and led to the council being held accountable. In contrast, the food council was seen to encourage potential members to participate if and when they could, underscoring the low priority given to the Plan's implementation. Stakeholders also indicated that there is no human resource support behind the efforts to establish the council, which meant that there was no structure for processing applications.

The Plan's implementation is also inhibited by a lack of engagement with, and inclusion of, private sector and civil society organisations. Although the Plan was not envisaged to be implemented by the government alone, in most instances, only the government has been in a position to implement the Plan. To date, there have been very few partnerships or collaborations with non-government entities. There is said to be a process for including civil society, through which UNICEF came on board to assist with the Plan's implementation. However, some organisations who were meant to be involved, for example, the World Health Organisation and Family Health Initiative, either did not come on board, or were initially involved but subsequently ceased their involvement. As a result, the Plan has relied heavily on the government as the sole implementor. Ultimately, given the siloed implementation of the Plan, there is likely to have been lost opportunities for maximising the efficiency of the Plan's implementation.

“The Plan has been too government driven, which is not what we wanted.”

- **KII respondent at National Government level**

“We have a very complex food system in South Africa, the most complex on the continent, it's not a food system that easily responds to government policy, so the extra money that government can put into dealing with Food and Nutrition Security is very small compared to how much we actually spend on food each day, or how much resources the private sector has. So, all of that means that it's not easy for the government to shift the food system in South Africa.”

- **KII respondent representing academia**

The Plan's implementation has also been impeded by the onset and the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which was unanticipated. COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and their accompanying economic impact were a major barrier to food and nutrition security, not least because of the multitude of job losses and the effects on people's incomes. Stakeholders held the view that while the Plan did not foresee the pandemic, the response to COVID-19 was slow and the resources allocated to the COVID response, in terms of Food Security, were limited. The slow and poorly resourced response led to civil society playing

a major role in sourcing and distributing food to the vulnerable. In addition, the stopping of school feeding during the pandemic was seen by stakeholders as a poor policy decision in light of the Plan's objectives and the role of the school feeding in the Plan's objectives.

As discussed in the sections regarding the costing of the plan, the additional estimated costs required to implement the plan have impacted the ability for lead departments of the respective SOs to implement where additional funds have not been made available. The costing report undertook analysis to determine the additional estimated costs to implement the plan, in some cases this represented double existing funding availability. Consequently, the affordability of interventions required discussions about funding sources and options to secure the budgets needed. As the required funding has not been made available, this has inhibited the implementation of the plan. A study undertaken by the HSRC was commissioned in 2022 by the DPME to build on this costing exercise to identify funding gaps and sources of funding to try to assist departments in securing funds needed to implement. The findings and recommendations of this study are still to be finalised. However, the timing of this study has come at the end of the Plan's timeframe and therefore consideration of these findings needs to be brought into the next iteration of FNS planning as it will be too late to inform the current plan's implementation timeframe.

"Throughout the Plan's implementation, it was not clear what the funding gaps were, since the budgeting process did not factor in areas where funding was already available through Departmental Equitable Budgets and where no funding was available at all to establish the funding gap. This work was only done in 2023, the last year of the Plan's initial implementation period."

- **KII respondent at National Government level**

#### 5.4.2. Inhibiting Factors at the Provincial level

Across provinces, the implementation of the provincial Plans were inhibited by a lack of leadership by an authoritative arm of the provincial government that has the ability to convene the necessary provincial departments. In all but two provinces, the arm of the provincial government responsible for the Plan's implementation was not the Office of the Premier, which, according to stakeholders, was the only provincial department with the authority to convene other departments. For example, in Limpopo there is a view that the implementation of the Plan is lagging because of a lack of leadership. When the Department of Agriculture, which is responsible for Limpopo's Plan, tried to convene meetings with the other departments, it received pushback. The other departments expressed that the Department of Agriculture did not have the authority to convene meetings with them. Even when the Department of Agriculture managed to convene a meeting with the other departments, the other departments could not commit any resources to the Plan's implementation. As a result, no work has progressed with the provincial Plan in Limpopo, and the departments have not met again since their initial meeting.

"The province is still lagging behind in terms of implementation of the NFNSP. The lack of progress is due to lack of leadership, someone in a position to marshal all the departments to work together."

- **KII respondent at Provincial Government level**

"Coordination at the provincial level [...] it could take a long time to get them moving faster than they are currently, [it] could be their structures that are probably not sitting as frequently as we sit at a national level".

- **KII respondent at National Government level**

In the Northern Cape, better progress has been made in terms of engaging the various departments who are required for the Plan's implementation. However, stakeholders in the province maintained that the absence of the Office of the Premier had left a significant gap in terms of being able to further any work on implementing the Plan. The same was true in the North West Province.

"In my culture, we always say, if a journey doesn't have a leader, that journey will not go anywhere. So, we have not really been having someone in a position where he could marshal all the departments to come together and work."

- **KII respondent at Provincial Government level**

Insufficient funding has inhibited provinces from scaling successful interventions where there is commitment and capability to implement food and nutrition security interventions. In the Western Cape, for example, work was done in the Breede Valley Municipality to get to a local-level and nuanced understanding of how to best support the municipality. The work involved meetings at the municipal-level; finding alignment between the Municipality's IDP and budget; and understanding the state of political support for Food and Nutrition Security. This process was intended to allow the province to respond in a nuanced way to what was happening on the ground in areas such as Zwelithemba, Woester, and De Doorns. However, it was said that scaling these efforts to the other 29 municipalities of the Western Cape with the same intensity would have been difficult on account of the lack of resources and capacity to reproduce the effort required to respond to each municipality in the same way.

Similarly, in Limpopo, departments indicated that there were not many challenges to the achievement of their targets, apart from budgetary constraints. These budgetary constraints meant that they could reach only a limited number of individuals that require food support through the province's initiatives.

"The need out there for supporting poor and vulnerable households with agricultural initiatives is quite massive, but unfortunately the budget is always limited. [Were it not for budget constraints,] we were going to be in a position to support thousands and thousands of households with agricultural initiatives. The only limiting factor is the extent to which our budget can carry what we want to do. The five thousand [households] which we target on an annual basis, we sometimes increase it. But as a result of the budget not being that much, we are forced to stick to the number that we know. So, we don't really have a challenge in terms of us doing what we are expected to do in terms of supporting the targets that we have. The only thing is that we need more money."

- **KII respondent at Provincial Government level**

## 5.5. Are the institutional arrangements working optimally?

The following section presents the findings from the evaluation as they relate to the Plan's institutional arrangements. These are presented at a national-level, followed by the provincial level.

### 5.5.1. Institutional Arrangements at the National Level

A key gap in the Plan's institutional arrangements is the National Council on Food and Nutrition security not being established. Several stakeholders remarked that the absence of the council was a missing ingredient for the effective implementation of the Plan. Stakeholders highlighted the achievements of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), noting that the council for Food and Nutrition Security was meant to play a similar role to that of SANAC. It was noted that the Council, being located in the Office of the Deputy President, would likely garner political buy-in, necessary for the Plan's effective implementation. However, as this did not happen, and there has been limited visibility of the food and nutrition security agenda. Furthermore, stakeholders suggested that if the Plan was being reported to the Deputy President, there would likely have been faster progress with implementation and greater accountability than has been the case to date. While the 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 Council is intended to play a coordination function between line departments, and between government and the different sectors of the food system. However, this coordination function has been largely missing without the Council, which has meant that, for the most part, line departments, the private sector, and civil society remain operating in silos in most parts of the country.

The National Task Team was seen to have been largely absent from the process of developing and implementing the provincial Plans, which led provincial Governments to believe that the NFNSP was not a priority, further leading to the Plan being seen as a low priority in provinces. Many provincial stakeholders expressed that they only had an encounter with the committee when the National Plan was initially rolled out in 2018 and 2019; and they have only been engaged by the National Task Team when they need to report on outcomes of the Plan. For example, in the Western Cape, the Province indicated that they had only had two sets of engagements with the National Committee since the Plan's launch, in two different forums. The first was with the National Committee itself, the second was with a representative of the committee. Subsequent engagements have been geared towards provinces learning from provinces that were at an advanced stage with implementing their Food and Security Plans. A similar experience was noted from Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, and North West Province, where stakeholders expressed that the National Committee only engaged with them when something was required from them for reporting purposes, such as with the present evaluation. Other than those engagements, the provincial stakeholders indicated that the provinces hardly heard from the national-level government about the Plan during the period of implementation. There was also said to be no institutional coordination between the national and the provincial structures behind the implementation of the national and provincial plans.

The lack of a monitoring and evaluation system and processes for collecting, managing and using data for decision-making was identified as an impediment to efforts to implement the plan. Stakeholders stated that data is siloed as there is a lack of interoperability between government's data systems. So even where there is data, on certain metrics, the data is not accessible to all government stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluation efforts and processes were further hindered by Statistics South Africa not being aware of the most recent developments of the Plan, and their role therein. As a result, the implementation of the plan is not data-driven, and both national and provincial departments are relying on scarce data regarding the numbers of people facing vulnerability, where those people were located, and whether or not they are currently receiving any interventions, and, most importantly, how the food system can intervene and support.



“When our mother to child transmission of HIV was up at 15%, and they were trying to move it down to five percent, literally, the teams that were being sent out to support the districts were a team per District. That means 52 teams were sent out to help. They made decisions using data, so if you had so many mothers that were HIV positive and that gave birth, [they tracked] where those babies were. If so many mothers are on treatment, [they tracked] what was the compliance? So, the whole program was led by data and data for decision making; and South Africa reached the 2% transmission rate, I think it was 2012 or 2013. And that's the kind of movement you want to have, when you are making programmatic progress.

I mean, if you had to say 27% of children are HIV positive in a country, would that be acceptable? Because that's the percentage of children that are stunted.”

- **KII respondent representing CSOs**

### 5.5.2. Institutional Arrangements at the Provincial Level

Given the limited progress with the implementation of the provincial Plans, analysis of the institutional arrangements at a provincial level is limited on account of these structures either not being in place, or because of the stakeholders' limited awareness of them.

A model of a bottom-up mobilisation combined with top-down support has been an effective institutional model in the Western Cape. After the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Western Cape shifted away from trying to embed its Food and Nutrition Security response in departmental plans. Instead, the Province sought to take an area-based approach. The motivation behind this approach was that during COVID-19, the province learned that responding required coordination at the local and community-level; and the provincial government's mandate was not strong enough to coordinate efforts at the municipality level. Furthermore, because the contextual drivers of food insecurity varies across municipalities, the Western Cape recognised that a centralised approach to solving FNS challenges was abstract. The area-based approach, therefore, allows the province's priorities to be driven by local stakeholders, which has allowed those driving “Nourish to Flourish” to learn and experience a more context-relevant, strategic approach to food and nutrition insecurity in the province. This is evolving as the current approach is being piloted actively in the Breede Valley Municipality with an intention to also work in two other sites (Langa in the City of Cape Town and Knysna in Eden) before rolling it out more widely.

The Office of the Premier in the provinces are supposed to drive the institutional arrangements at a provincial level. However, this has not been the case in most provinces, as the Offices of the Premier have not been involved in the majority of the provinces. On the other hand, the Western Cape shows an interesting model that has combined the authority of the Office of the Premier and the relationship building and maintaining capability of the EDP. The Office of Premier convenes meetings of food system stakeholders, but the EDP has the role of running the meetings. The Western Cape Province opted to house its Strategic Framework on Food and Nutrition Security under the Office of the Premier to mitigate against the Plan being skewed towards any particular departments' mandate. The Plan's location in the Office of the Premier also helped to mitigate against over-burdening any particular department, which means that departments are reportedly not over-stretched because of the Plan. However, recognising that the Premier's Office would not continue to have capacity to give sustained attention to the Plan's roll out, the Premier's Office structured implementation such that it would convene meetings, to ensure attendance. However, the meetings are run by an intermediary, the EDP, which is capacitated to drive the necessary coalitions for the Plan's implementation. As previously discussed, a key result is that the Western Cape's Plan has the institutional relationships with academic partners and non-profit organisations that work in the FNS sector, who already convene groups, have the core skills required in the sector, and have credibility through their independence, but are still able to partner with the Western

Cape Government. Through its partnerships, the Western Cape has been able to give sustained attention to FNS.

A further institutional arrangement that stakeholders mentioned as being effective is the relationships with credible, local grassroots organisations who also convene and manage food and nutrition security efforts, which complements the efforts elsewhere in the province's institutional structure. However, a major threat noted by stakeholders to sustaining these institutional arrangements is how to fund these structures, especially as the province looks to scale its interventions.

“We took a step back and we said here is a system that is working. It's [also] creaking, and it is not giving people what they need. [But] that is the reality of life on the ground. That's how people are surviving. Then we asked, what can the Municipality do to help the system? Which of their powers, functions, mandates, budgets, and projects should they deploy to support that system? So, it was about matching government support for what is already happening in what I would call the bottom-up mobilising environment. [...] So it's a Plan that resonates with the reality of the government. It's not an abstract Plan. And it's drawn from deep knowledge of what is happening on the ground in communities.

**Kll respondent representing CSOs**

The EDP working with SAFL, and the COE has also helped to enhance the institutional response in the Western Cape through encouraging government leadership to foster a safe space for risk-taking and experimentation. This has been partly done through the sustained learning journeys and reflective meetings, particularly involving provincial authorities and a range of stakeholders in the Breede Valley. The partnership engaged stakeholders in the top-down political structure of the province, including municipalities, and addressed the issue that government staff could not be expected to take risks to get the required work done if, at the same time, they would not be defended if they made mistakes. The point was made that governments' approaches tend to be compliance-driven because of the way performance is measured. A lack of taking risks often results in a slower process of change than would be the case if risks were mitigated instead of being avoided altogether. Where there has been receptivity to a paradigm shift in terms of risk management, it has created a space for flexibility and experimentation that is necessary for responding to what has been characterised as a fluid food system.

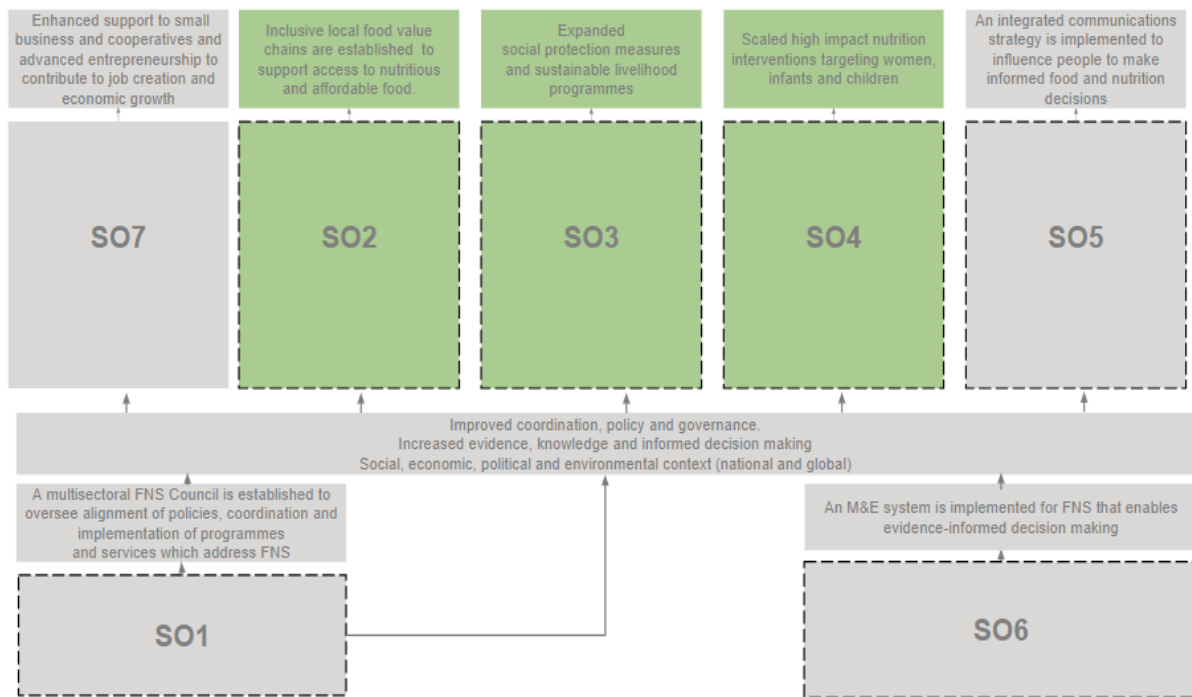
## **5.6. Which components of the plan were implemented well, and which were difficult to implement?**

The above sections provide detailed perspectives of the Plan's performance and the factors that contribute and detract from its implementation. The following section presents a higher-level vantage of how this translates into which components were implemented well and which were not.

While certain components of the Plan have been implemented well, key components have faced significant challenges. Figure 3 below highlights the components of the Plan that have been implemented relatively well (light green) and the components that have had limited progress (light grey), having been met with many of the challenges indicated above.



**Figure 3: Progress of components of the Plan at a Strategic Objective level**



Strategic Objectives 2, 3 and 4 have implemented many components of the Plan, led by DALRRD, DSD and DOH, respectively. Stakeholders indicated that the main reason for the successful implementation of these components is because these departments had existing momentum and an existing food security mandate. This mandate and momentum preceded the Plan and was leveraged and continued, in some cases, despite the Plan. The department’s APPs and the Plan’s alignment to these was also highlighted as a core driver of their implementation.

Strategic Objectives 1 and 6 have had limited progress. These are foundational aspects of the theory of change and, as previously noted in this report, have limited the extent of coordination and holistic ecosystem response to FNS, as envisioned in the Plan.

Strategic Objective 7 was added most recently, and there is very limited information on its performance, and very limited awareness of its activities among ecosystem actors. As such, the evaluation is unable to comment extensively on its implementation.

### 5.7. To what extent is the plan implemented cost efficiently?

The Plan provided costing estimates for each Strategic Objective to support the achievement of its targets as is outlined in Chapter Eight of the Plan, with an approximate total cost of R86 806 million. However, the Plan does not identify the sources of funding for the respective interventions, nor does it explicitly investigate possible areas for efficiencies by understanding overlapping or supporting activities (although, there are some instances where overlapping activities were highlighted such as with consolidation of government’s smallholder and producer support programmes under Strategic Objective 2).

As illustrated in Figure 4 below, Strategic Objective 2 holds the largest share of the total budget (78.2%), while Strategic Objective 3 follows with 12.8%. Together with Strategic Objective 4, these objectives drive 99.14% of total costs, leaving the remaining three objectives contributing to just 0.86% of the total budget. However, there is no clear monitoring and tracking of funds in relation to the Strategic objectives to understand if the estimated costing model was operationalised and if funds have been made available to implementing departments, how much has been spent. In addition, non-state actors’ contributions

towards Strategic Objective outcomes are not tracked and therefore not possible to understand if there have been cost efficiencies across implementing actors.

**Figure 4: Percentage cost allocation by Strategic Objective**



Assessing the estimated cost per intervention, 97% of the estimated costs at the Plan's inception concentrate on six out of 26 activities, three from Strategic Objective 2 and three from Strategic Objective 3. As has been noted above, drawing on the theory of change, Strategic Objective 1 and Strategic Objective 6 are foundational to the success of the Plan in achieving its intended outcomes and impact. However, only 0.02% and 0.03% of the total estimated costs are attributed to Strategic Objective 1 and Strategic Objective 6, respectively. While proportionality of estimated costs is not a direct reflection on the potential to drive impact in the FNS system, it does indicate that Strategic Objective 1 and Strategic Objective 6 may not be sufficiently costed or that the proposed activities may not be fit for purpose to set the Plan up for success. Reviewing the estimated cost breakdown also indicates the emphasis Strategic Objectives 2 and 3 as drivers of Plan being able to achieve intended impacts. However, it is not clear if these additional budgets have been made available and if not, what adjustments have been made in the Plan's programming.

The approach to the costing exercise used a bottom-up descriptive analysis of cost forecasts. Unit costs and quantities were estimated to determine the approximate costs of each Strategic Objective in the Plan, with some assumptions made on implementation. There is no detailed implementation plan specifying when and how activities will occur and what resources will be required, as is recognised in the Plan. Although the costing exercise attempted to consider funded and unfunded activities of the Plan, this is not sufficiently detailed to assist implementing departments in costing and resourcing their activities. Sources of funding and developing an understanding of where there might be an overlap of activities was not part of the costing study's scope. As such, opportunities for cost efficiency between departments (across the three spheres of government) or with non-state actors are difficult to identify.

The costing and financing chapter underscores Strategic Objective 2's additional funding needs at roughly 2.5 times the available budget for the responsible departments. This is a large financial requirement in the context of the fiscus and how activities related to this Strategic Objective are funded. It would have required considerable efforts from the implementing departments to unlock this funding from the fiscus or support through partnerships. While Strategic Objective 3 and Strategic Objective 4 have proportionately high estimated costs to implement, the Plan acknowledges that these are typically well-funded functions within government implying that these Strategic Objectives can be implemented through reallocations or requesting additional budgets. Similarly, Strategic Objective 1 and Strategic Objective 6 have low estimated implementation costs in relation to the overall Plan's cost and the funding from budget programs, indicating a minimal additional funding need compared to the current level. The Plan identifies for Strategic Objective 5 that rather than limiting the integrated advocacy and communication FNS strategy's scope due to costs, it is suggested that a collaborative funding approach involving all departments be used to unlock additional funds to result in cost efficiency. Based on documentation reviewed and the stakeholder consultations, this collaborative approach to funding this objective does not appear to have been undertaken.

Due to the lack of a detailed implementation plan accompanying the Plan itself, and the scope of the costing study being limited to developing estimated additional costs, the DPME commissioned the

HSRC in 2022, with funding from the FAO, to investigate the availability of adequate resources in both state and non-state sectors to support the financial requirements to implement the NFNSP. More specifically, the research aimed to identify any shortfalls and gaps in covering the estimated costs of the Strategic Objectives and identify possible funding sources. The study used data from the National Treasury to determine what the Government spent on food and nutrition security in four fiscal years from 2018/19 through to 2021/22. Based on this, the report presents four possible scenarios for funding the R86 806 million required.

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. The HSRC report further suggests that there is a lack of cooperation among the departments that contribute to the NFNSP, limiting cost efficiencies for the Plan. Further exacerbating costing challenges is that there are no annual review mechanisms to monitor costs and funding gaps, and as such, the Plan is not able to make adaptive and data-led decision-making as it relates to costing.

In addition, data from non-state actors is not tracked and therefore difficult to monitor the costs of localised initiatives undertaken by the private sector, NGOs, donors and civil society. The Plan calls for a multistakeholder approach to address the challenges of food and nutrition security. However, there is no system to track spending by state and non-state actors. Estimates of the cost of implementation of the Plan are therefore likely underestimated as it does not account for non-state spending.

Stakeholders suggested that a possible reason for the Plan not meeting all its targets is that the full R86 806 million estimated costs have not been availed and that departments are relying on their existing budgets and plans rather than anything mandated through the Plan. Stakeholders also suggested in the interviews that there is a major shortfall of funding for Strategic Objective 2, which has negatively impacted the progress in addressing the Plan's objectives, given its weight in the Plan's implementation and the Plan's focus on the production side of the food system. Analysis in the HSRC report for Strategic Objective 2 identifies only R7.9 billion spent out of an estimated cost of R67 billion over the five years. Lastly, cost efficiencies are intended to happen through effective coordination structures (SO1) and data for adaptive decision-making (SO6), however, limited progress under these two Strategic Objectives has resulted in departments still operating in silos and therefore opportunities are being missed.

"There are glaring financial shortfalls on SO2 and SO7".

- KII respondent at National Government level

## 5.8. What lessons emerged from the implementation of the NFNSP?

The following section presents the key learnings that emerged from the evaluation. These learnings are reflective of the stakeholders' opinions on what they have learned through the implementation of the Plan and their key takeaways.

### Design of the Plan

A key learning mentioned by stakeholders is that the design of the Plan, with its departmentalised approach to its design and implementation, promotes siloed implementation. This is exacerbated by the lack of the councils which were felt to be key to the Plans' implementation. In order for there to be an

integrated approach, stakeholders felt that departments at all levels need dedicated personnel to manage the coordination of efforts.

Similarly, an additional learning related to the design of the Plan is the juxtaposition between the need for flexibility and adaptivity with regard to FNS responses and a relatively rigid and KPI-driven government system. 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.

### **Implementation of the Plan**

One of the key learnings is the limited visibility of the Plan and how this has influenced its prioritisation. Many stakeholders noted that they had not seen or heard of the Plan, nor were they aware of it. Particularly, a large portion of the CSOs and academia stakeholders consulted in the interviews had very limited awareness of the Plan. At the provincial level, some provinces also reported not being aware of the Plan, or how their work fits within the Plan. From the interviews, at a national level, it was similarly felt that there was limited awareness and prioritisation of the Plan. This highlights the importance of leadership creating visibility of the Plan in order for it to be effectively implemented. Without visibility of the Plan, engagement and prioritisation of the Plan is limited.

It was noted that between 2021 and 2022, the National FNS coordinating committee offered all the provinces (except for the Western Cape and Eastern Cape<sup>83</sup>) the assistance of service providers to develop customised provincial plans. Despite this support offered, during the interviews, provinces felt that there was limited guidance on how to translate the national Plan to provincial Plans. Without this clear guidance, many of the provincial plans 'regurgitate' the national plan with limited interrogation of what this means for their province and the context therein. As such, these are considered to be reporting requirements and compliance oriented rather than a tool to affect real FNS change.

Linked to the above, the Plan is universally considered to be driven from a top-down approach which stakeholders felt was not as effective as a bottom-up approach that gives insight into the contextual factors that affect implementation and decision making. The National FNS Coordinating Committee stakeholders shared that there was district level engagement and consultations about the Plan, and that the provinces should have been provided guidance through the Office of the Premier, to the districts on implementation modalities. Despite this, provincial-level stakeholders still felt that a more bottom-up approach was needed because the top-down approach was high-level and far removed to provide an adaptive, context-specific targeted response that meets the needs of vulnerable communities. An example of where this happened is in the Breede Valley, as noted in the sections above.

The need for political will also emerged as a key learning. 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, illustrates the importance of political will alongside the appointments of individuals on a long-term basis to drive the agenda and manage the response. These help to provide a level of impetus to drive implementation in a manner that is sustainable.

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

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<sup>83</sup> The Western Cape had already started to develop their provincial framework. Reasons for why the Eastern Cape was not provided assistance were not given

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. A practical example of collaboration, sharing and learning is presented above where the EDP collaborated with SAFL and the COE to improve the institutional response in the Western Cape. That collaboration encouraged innovation and experimentation, which was achieved through ongoing learning journeys and reflective meetings, involving provincial authorities and various stakeholders in the Breede Valley region. Another practical example from KwaZulu-Natal is under Operation Sukuma Sakhe, where the implementation of nutrition interventions was supported by clear communication that cascaded down from the provincial level to the district level and to the ward-level. It was in the war-rooms that researchers were able to document the best practices and share them in meetings.

FNS data is context specific and can be very localised. A key learning from the consultations is that data collection, aggregation and timeous reporting of nutrition outcomes is critical to make evidence-informed decisions. This increases the likelihood of success in meeting objectives, reaching targets in a shorter period of time, and overall improved responsiveness of the Plan.

## 6. Conclusions

The following section presents the conclusions stemming from the evaluation. This commences with an overarching assessment of the relevance of the Plan at a strategic level followed by key conclusions regarding the implementation of the Plan.

### 6.1. Strategic vision of the Plan

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, 8. However, while the Plan is in alignment with these various policies and policy commitments, it is not able to fulfil the constitutional imperative of the right to sufficient food through legislative measures, as it is not legally binding.

Notwithstanding the importance of the Plan in the context of South Africa's food and nutrition system, there are certain core issues that 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. In the last decade, the reality of malnutrition places emphasis on a wide range of nutrition challenges including persistent stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiency, overweight and obesity and the relationship with non-communicable disease. The NFSNP must coherently engage all these dynamics and provide guidance for an effective collaborative response.

Linked to the above, the Plan's multi-stakeholder design recognises the need for an approach that includes 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. However, the Plan's departmental-led focus detracts from this inclusive, holistic approach in implementation. The current structures, whereby departments are accountable for specific objectives and outcomes, detracts from a truly aligned and coordinated approach, which is intended for in the Plan's design.

Lastly, and building on the above, the Plan is seen as a top-down approach to food and nutrition security, which limits the extent to which it is tailored to local contexts and emerging needs. While provinces and districts are encouraged to build their own Plans and solutions for FNS, in practice this is not happening in a locally relevant and contextually nuanced way. Instead, provinces are largely mirroring what is documented in the national Plan. Throughout the evaluation the importance of a bottom-up approach for context-specific and relevant solutions to food and nutrition insecurity was emphasised. The role of local organisations, including NGOs and other civil society organisations, is largely missing in the Plan's approach to implementation.

## 6.2. Implementation of the Plan

The implementation of the Plan has made slow progress including in materialising into meeting the impact targets and Strategic Objective targets. Additionally, a further subset of Objectives, namely the Plan's Game Changers, are yet to be implemented. This is particularly relevant given that the Plan is in its last year of implementation.

In the theory of change, Strategic Objective 1 and Strategic Objective 6 are foundational to the Plan's effective and coordinated implementation. The lack of progress on Strategic Objectives 1 and 6 have impeded progress toward implementation and has effectively resulted in departments continuing to do what they were already doing, with limited coordination. The lack of the implementation of Objective 6 in particular, has stifled the ability to make data-driven decisions about where to target interventions and how to adjust interventions including aligning with other interventions.

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. Further, not establishing this Council has resulted in a lost opportunity to leverage efficiencies through interdepartmental collaboration and broader partnership across the food system.

The Plan was designed to be spearheaded by the Deputy President. However, the office of the Deputy President does not appear to have prioritised its role to drive the Plan forward, thus further affecting its implementation. While the DPME has led this function relatively effectively, it lacks the convening power and authority to drive implementation to the extent as intended under the direction of the Deputy President. Political will and convening authority were consistently found to be necessary drivers of the provincial Plans, without which, implementation lags.

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. The status of the implementation of the provincial Plans differs across provinces; with only one province currently actively implementing its Plan. Without the national-level convening council and authority, provincial implementation is largely determined by structures for leadership, partnership, and coordination of implementation.

The achievement of the Plan's objectives has been further hampered by the lack of visibility of the Plan to stakeholders outside of government's implementing departments and structures. In addition, a lack of visibility to stakeholders who are included as part of an objective's implementation has also affected

the extent of the Plan's implementation. This has included, but was not limited to, Stats SA's Poverty and Inequality Directorate, which deals with food and nutrition security data, not knowing about the finalised Plan until they were contacted for the current evaluation. As a result, there are pockets of success where coordination and the Plan's intended implementation has occurred, such as in Western Cape where implementation is ongoing, and Limpopo, where existing programmes have taken inspiration from the province's Plan. However, these two cases are exceptions instead of the norm.

The resources, namely the R86 806 million that was budgeted 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. 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. Additionally, the Plan's implementation had an unknown path to close the funding gap throughout the period of implementation. The possible sources of funding were only explored during the last year of implementation, which is likely too late to affect the outcomes and process of current implementation.

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.

Linked to the above, the indicators contained in the Plan at both the impact-level and Strategic Objective-level are not well aligned to the data that is routinely collected by departments nor those that are 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.

As a result of the various issues noted above, which have slowed the Plan's implementation, the status of food and nutrition security in the country has remained largely unchanged, with persistent challenges with stunting, overweight and obesity. In part, the lack of change has also been a function of the COVID-19 pandemic, which stalled, and in some cases, reversed gains made in food and nutrition security. However, this example also illustrates the food system's vulnerability and the importance of identifying and mitigating potential risks to food and nutrition security, which was planned for under Strategic Objective 6. Without a risk register and plans for mitigating risks to the Plan's implementation, the food and nutrition security response to the COVID-19 pandemic was slow with limited resources to provide food to those who were impacted by COVID-19.

The dichotomy between the Plan's design and the implementation thereof has meant that while there is potential for change to occur as a result of the Plan, this potential has not been fully realised due to a slow pace of implementation. Furthermore, it was found that the complexity of South Africa's food system, and a slow, and low, responsiveness of the food system to government policy limits potential for change to be achieved with government's efforts alone. Furthermore, government's resources make up a small proportion of the total resources in South Africa's food system; further limiting the potential for impact drawing on these resources alone.

## 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 food and nutrition security in South Africa. The plan had an initial indicator target 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.

## 7.1. Recommendation 1: Revise and update the NFNSP

**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'<sup>84</sup>.**

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

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<sup>84</sup> 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.



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.

## **7.2. Recommendation 2: Leverage existing planning and reporting tools**

### **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 a 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.

**Box 1: Practical example of recommendation 2**

An example of this is the inclusion of ECDs in the Breede Valley IDP after learning journeys that highlighted the role such centres play in provisioning nutritious food and nutrition education. Provincial FNS plans need to take into consideration these tools to enable the mainstreaming of FNS within government planning.

### 7.3. Recommendation 3: Plan and secure long-term financing and efficient resource allocations

**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.

**Box 2: Practical examples of recommendation 3**

Practical examples of double-duty actions include coupling social grants with incentives for recipients to participate in well-targeted, culturally sensitive food literacy programmes based on an understanding of barriers to consumption of nutritious foods. The NSNP and DBE support to ECDs can act double-duty by meeting basic energy and nutrient needs and restricting nutrient-poor yet calorie-rich foods, snacks, and beverages. This also presents an opportunity to prioritise procurement from smallholder farmers, providing structured demand to stimulate job generation in the nutritious foods sector. Similarly, providing credit on fair terms to smallholder farmers, investing in cooperatives and food hubs for distribution of healthy foods, providing financing for SMEs to innovate new nutritious products, and providing technical and financial support to street vendors to switch to healthier offerings, are all examples of this.

## 7.4. Recommendation 4: Strengthen coordination by leveraging existing legislative mechanisms

### 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

## 7.5. Recommendation 5: Elevate the priority and urgency of FNS more broadly

### 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 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 address 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.

## 7.6. Recommendation 6: Enhance Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

### 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.

## **7.7. Recommendation 7: Promote Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration**

### **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 and included as part of a guideline pack that supports the next iteration of the Plan.

# Annex 1: Strategic Objectives Theories of Change

Figure 5: Strategic objective 1 theory of change

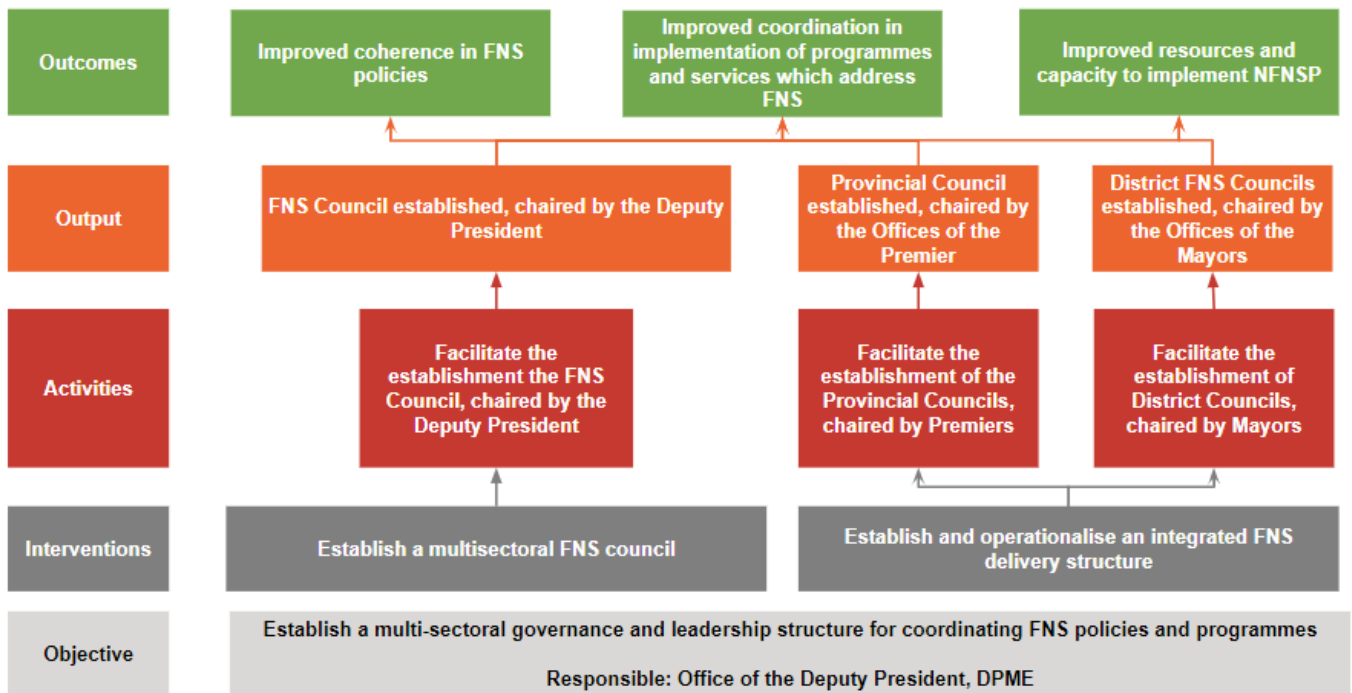


Figure 6: Strategic objective 2 theory of change

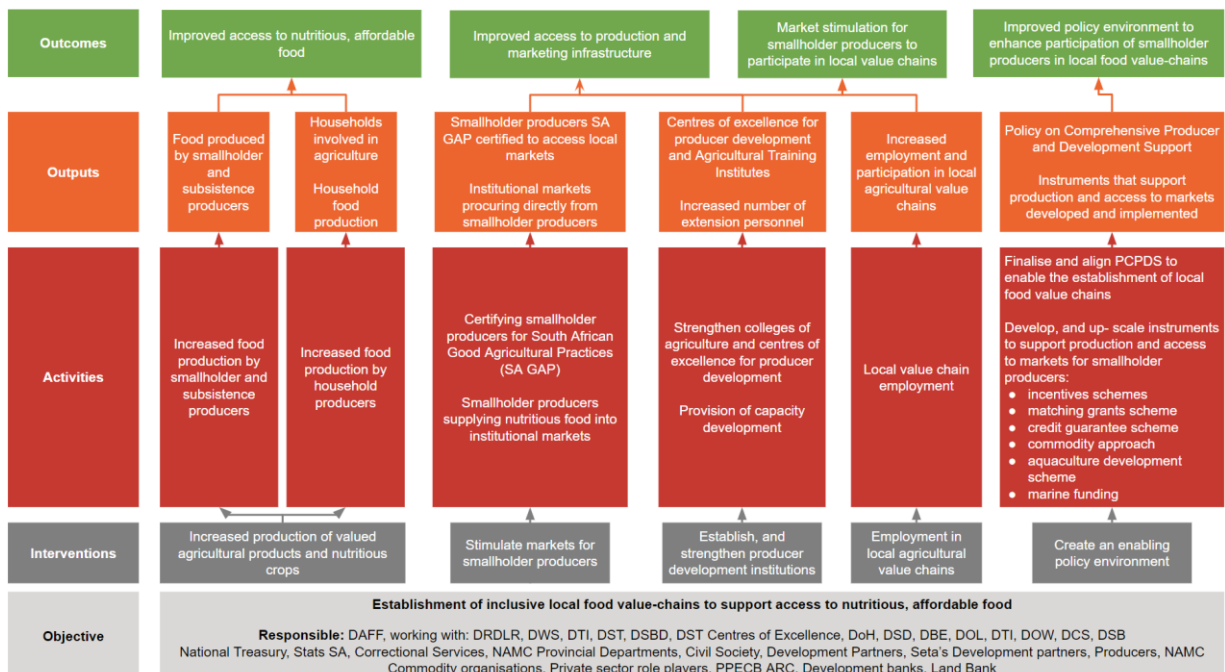




Figure 7: Strategic objective 3 theory of change

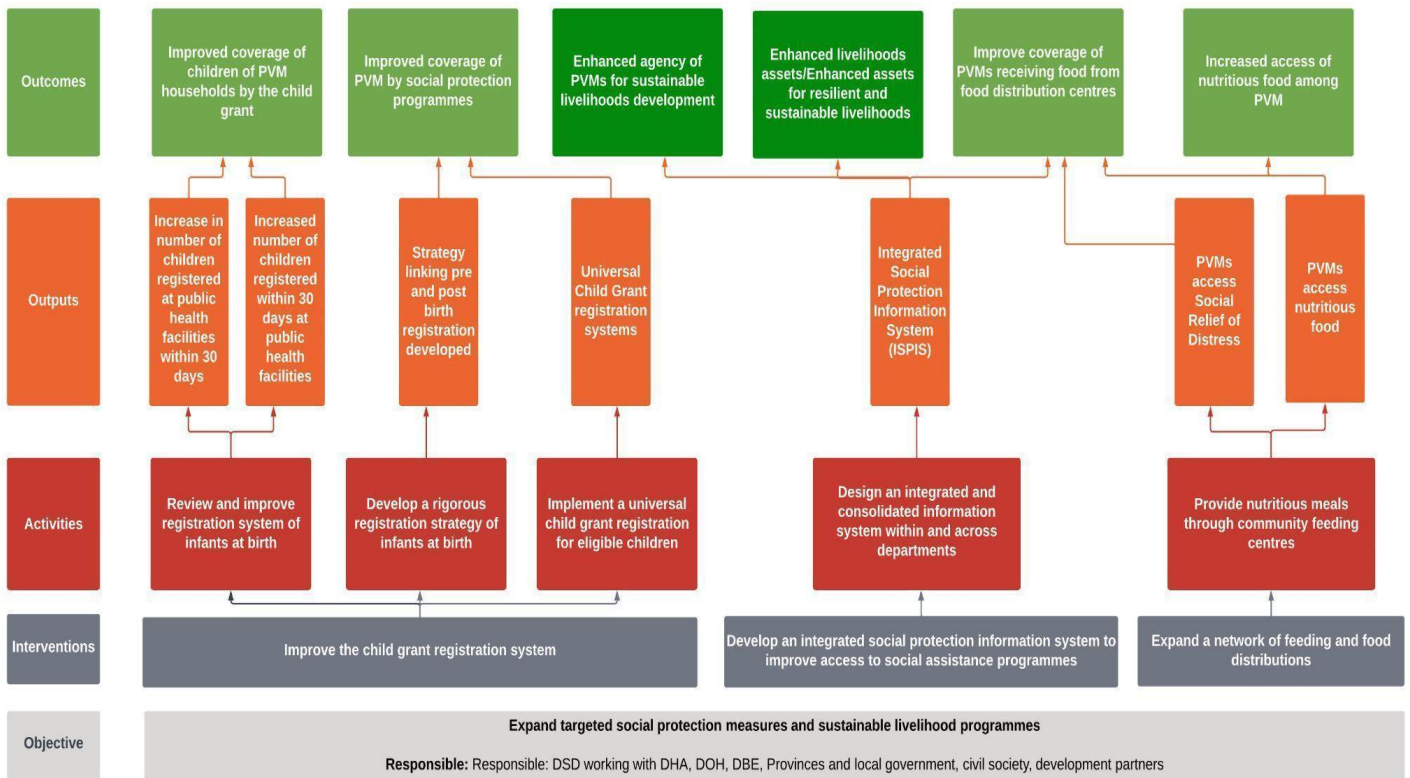


Figure 8: Strategic objective 4 theory of change

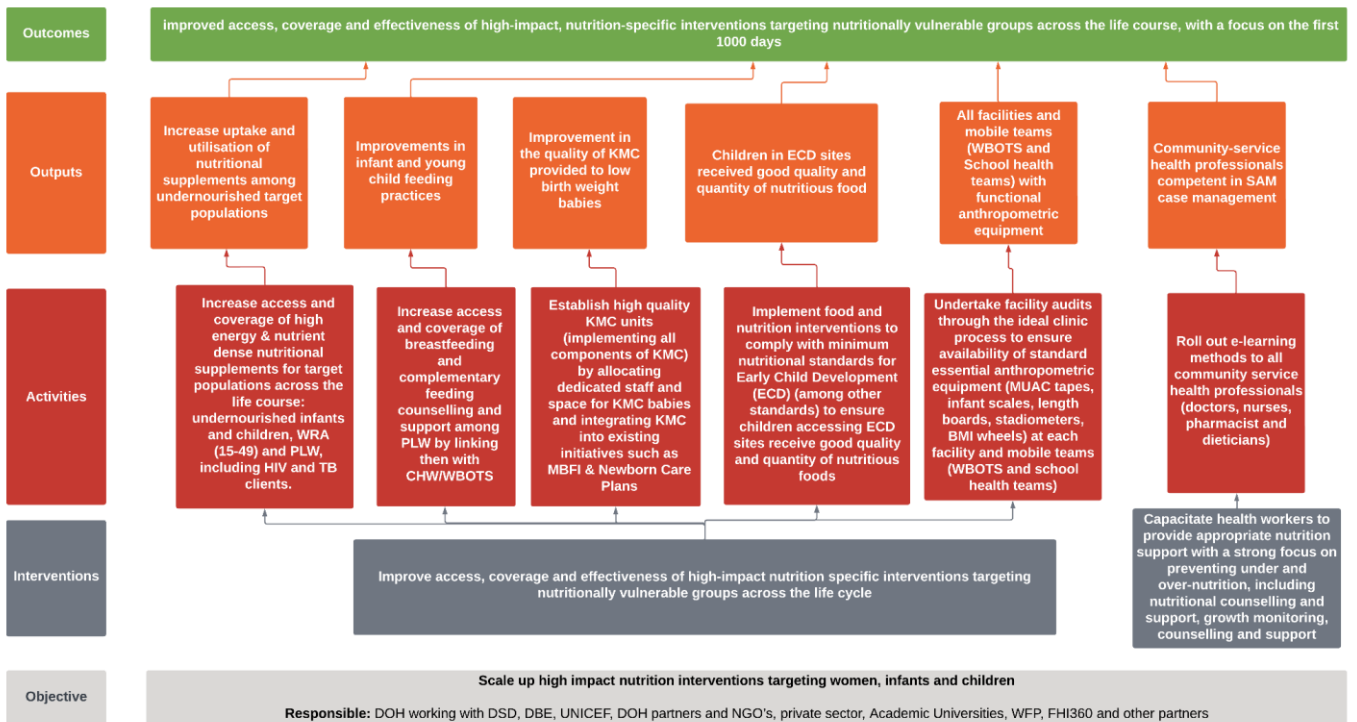




Figure 9: Strategic objective 5 theory of change

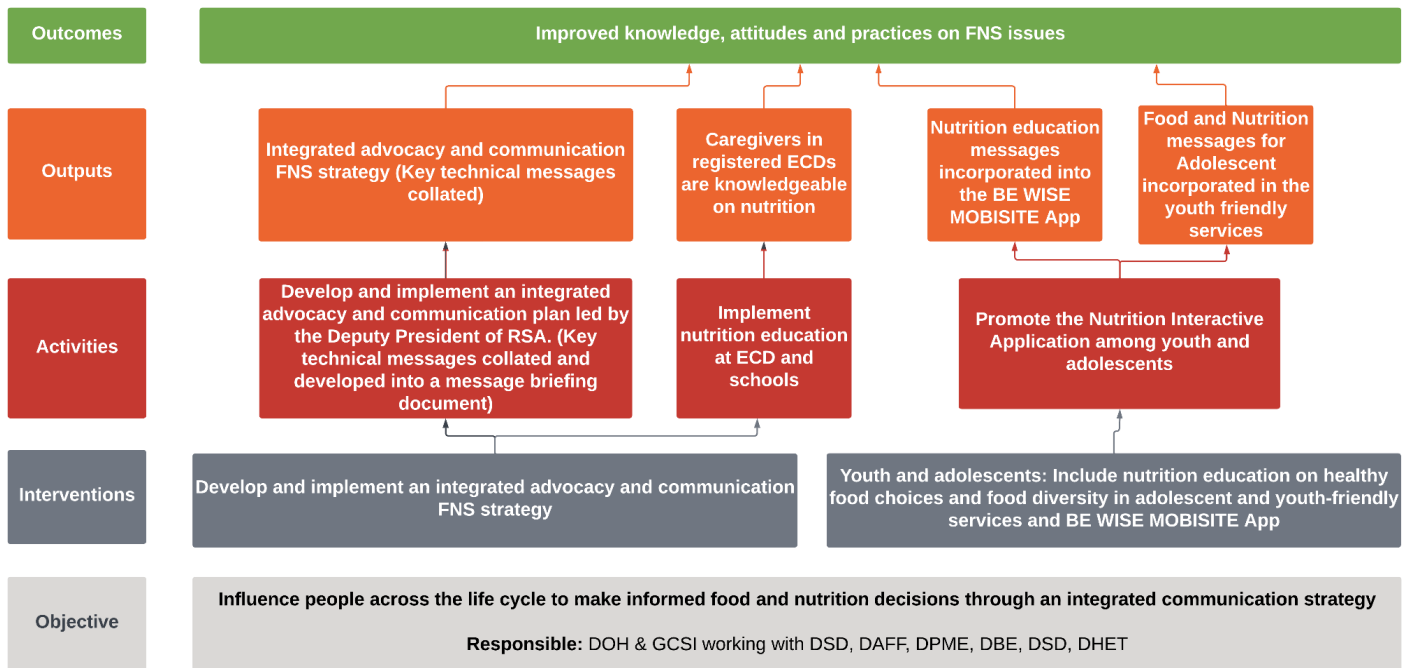


Figure 10: Strategic objective 6 theory of change

