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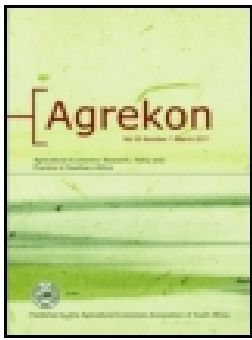
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# The Integrated Food Security Strategy of South Africa: An institutional analysis

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# THE INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY OF SOUTH AFRICA: AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS<sup>1</sup>

Scott Drimie<sup>2</sup> and Shaun Ruysenaar<sup>3</sup>

## ABSTRACT

In 2002 the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) was approved by Cabinet as the strategy that would integrate the many previously isolated policies tackling the challenge of food insecurity in South Africa. Recent focus on food security due to rising food prices at a national and global level has placed the food security agenda back in the spotlight. In this paper it is argued that there is a disjuncture between the institutional response mechanism defined in South Africa's strategy and the complexity of food insecurity nationally. It outlines why, as a response seated uncomfortably under the leadership of the National Department of Agriculture, the IFSS remains frustrated by a range of structural and organisational challenges. The IFSS provides a useful case study to demonstrate the importance of institutional arrangements to achieve food security that by its nature, requires integrated responses from diverse stakeholders.

Keywords: food security, institutional analysis, integration

## 1 INTRODUCTION

A commitment to focusing on the poor and reducing the number of the food insecure was revitalized at the World Food Summit in 1996. Within the “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs), world leaders have committed themselves to halving the number of hungry people before 2015. As this deadline draws near, the realisation of these goals becomes more unlikely in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa where recent estimates indicate a shortfall (UN 2008), while recent global food price increases have created an international crisis (Wiggins and Levy 2008; Von Braun 2008). Indeed, the Global Hunger Index, as developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to track and compare progress in reducing food insecurity, shows that sub-Saharan Africa has made marginal progress between 1990 and 2008 (Von Grebmer *et al.* 2008). Of the ten worst performing countries in terms of percentage change in the index in this period, nine are from Africa.

South Africa is not untouched by this situation. The reality of heightened inflation with rising fuel and food costs, the brunt of which is directed towards the 14.3 million people defined as vulnerable to hunger and 43 per cent of households



vulnerable to food poverty (Statistics SA 2000a; National Treasury 2003; De Klerk *et al.* 2004). Two national nutrition surveys in 1999 and in 2005 indicate that stunted growth and being underweight remain by far the two most common nutritional disorders in South Africa (Chopra *et al.* 2009). The 2005 survey reports that despite the growth of the South African economy at the national level, one out of two households (51.6 %) experienced hunger, approximately one out of three were at risk of hunger and only one out of five appeared to be food secure (Chopra *et al.* 2009).

The prevalence of households experiencing hunger was highest in the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Limpopo. Households at risk or experiencing hunger were consistently related with socio-economic factors including household monthly income, weekly expenditure on food and employment status (Chopra *et al.* 2009). In the rural areas, most households are net deficit food producers, as their access to food is partially or wholly reliant on household income. As a result, food security is largely about direct or indirect access to cash to purchase food (Chopra *et al.* 2009). Due to “purchasing power” being the key determinant, the poor have suffered the most from food price increases. Food insecurity is not an exceptional, short-term event, but a continuous threat for more than a third of the South African population (Drimie and Ziervogel 2006). Greenberg argues that “the ghettos (rural and urban) created by the segregationist system of apartheid ... continue to underpin the economic and social, if not political, structure of the country exacerbating differentiation at a household level – and even within households – so that those without effective command over resources may be food insecure even in areas where there is local-level security” (2006, p.13).

Despite national and international commitments such as the South African Constitution, the MDGs and the Rome Declaration to meeting the rights of all South Africans to adequate food (Republic of South Africa 1996; Pieterse and Van Wyk 2006), many of these obligations have not been met in reality. Government capacity is often highlighted in the context of failing service delivery as the major reason why many rights remain unrealised (National Government 2003; see also Layman 2003; Hunter *et al.* 2003). Theoretically, South Africa’s response to declining food security should be derived through the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) under the leadership of the National Department of Agriculture (NDA). However, institutional arrangements and a disjuncture between the strategy and reality of food insecurity in South Africa present barriers to any meaningful implementation. In this paper, a case study of the institutionalisation of the IFSS and associated challenges are provided to demonstrate the importance of institutional arrangements to achieve food security.

Two main arguments are developed to demonstrate the disjuncture between the IFSS and the reality of food insecurity. The first is the level of understanding

of the complexity of food insecurity, its causal factors, preventative measures and its very nature as it occurs in South Africa. The second is that the response strategy, as implemented, is inadequate to engage this complexity. The institutional arrangements are insufficient in terms of engaging food insecurity at national and local levels. There are thus two major concerns to be considered. First is the consideration of what food security is and the role of the Agricultural department in leading the approach to dealing with the challenge. Second, the institutional framework in which the current National Department of Agriculture, as leader of the IFSS, is located restricts the integration mandate proposed by the Strategy.

## 2 FOOD SECURITY: KEY CONCEPTS

Though numerous definitions of food security exist (see Smith *et al.* 1993, listing over 200), for the purposes here, the definition used by the South African government is relevant, whereby food security implies:

*Physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food by all South Africans at all times to meet their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life* (NDA 2002, p.15; see also World Bank 1986).

Definitions of food security have changed considerably since the 1970s, reflecting a shift in perspectives. Definitions of food security have evolved and tend to revolve around the two essential themes of availability and access (see FAO 1983). These two themes could be considered as opposite sides of the food equation (Van Zyl and Coetzee 1990). The one side deals with ensuring that sufficient food is available at a national level, and was the main food security focus after the initial Malthusian crises in the 1970s. The other side relates to accessibility and was highlighted within the entitlement literature and resulting livelihood approaches emphasised after Sen (1981).

Food availability depends largely on domestic food production and generally implies sufficient quantities of appropriate, necessary types of food from domestic production, commercial imports or other donors (USAID 1992). A purely production orientated perspective, even at household or local level of analysis is simplistic and empirically unfounded as a complete solution to food insecurity (Young 2004, p.13), as it assumes that increasing the amount of food available will reduce levels of malnutrition. This still popular interpretation (see De Klerk *et al.* 2004) was first critiqued by Sen (1981), with his entitlement theory, which states that people are hungry because of their lack of entitlement and inability to secure food, rather than a lack of food availability (*ibid.*). Hunger and malnutrition are never simply about food availability and increases in food supplies, as these do not necessarily reduce the incidence of hunger or malnutrition (Devereux 1993). Indeed, examples exist where the expansion of commercial agriculture

has exacerbated malnutrition, because the rural poor have lost access to key entitlements (Kay 1999).

The concept of food accessibility implies an ability of households to secure food in the market place, by growing it or from other sources such as transfers, gifts or grants. Access can also be affected by gender, age or illness (Woods 2006). The point is raised that even by growing food, households may not be food secure. Pressing financial constraints may result in produce being sold with profits spent elsewhere; food is neither consumed nor provides money to be spent on its acquisition (Kalibwani 2005, p.7). It is also questionable whether household production leads to any significant nutritional benefits to the cultivators (Webb 2000). It is important to consider food quality in general, which refers to whether the food available, when utilised meets people's micronutrient requirements – for example, under-nutrition frequently results from imbalanced diets, which provide sufficient macronutrients (carbohydrates, fat, protein) but insufficient vitamins and minerals: iodine, Vitamin A and iron in particular (Benson 2004). Inadequate consumption of the relatively small quantities of these nutrients required for a healthy life contributes to a spiral of malnutrition and deprivation.

Nutritional wellbeing is therefore, a factor of not only access and availability of food, but also its quality and final utilisation within the household (Food Security Working Group 1997; Young 2001; Pelletier 2002). Once food has been obtained, utilisation refers to the eventual use of food by individuals at the household level. This comprises a range of household practices; including preservation and storage, selection, preparation and final consumption of food (Food Security Working Group 1997). These processes are especially important considering the influence that intrahousehold factors have on utilisation and its outcomes. Utilisation is also dependent on health education, necessary infrastructure such as good storage, clean water, sanitation and a host of related needs.

As demonstrated in Figure 1 below, food availability is necessary, but not sufficient for access, and access is necessary but not sufficient for utilisation (Webb and Rogers 2003; Maunder and Wiggins 2007). Stability is also sometimes included as a fourth central concept in food security discourse (e.g., Food Security Working Group 1997; Webb and Rogers 2003; Swindale and Bilinsky 2005; FAO 2005; FAO 2007). Stability refers to food security being maintained over time and in the face of a variety of natural, economic, social and policy shocks and stresses.

The links between each of the concepts are complex and rely on multiple programme outcomes. Gains in food access, consumption and nutrition status may depend more on *how* gains in food availability, access and consumption, respectively, are achieved than on *whether* they are achieved (Diskin 1994). Depending on the programme focus, there are specific risks that need to be accommodated to ensure food security. These issues are embedded within

the general causes of food insecurity. Institutions could also be considered as crosscutting, affecting the availability, accessibility, and utilisation of food to varying degrees and across levels (e.g., from macro policy influencing national availability to cultural norms defining ways food is prepared and shared within a household).

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 however, understates the temporal nature of food security. Food insecurity may be transitory, meaning a temporary (short-term) inaccessibility, or it may be chronic, implying a constant deficit in available food or long-term inadequate diet (World Bank 1986, p.1; Food Security Working Group 1997; Kalibwani 2005). The temporal nature of food insecurity does not equate to the intensity or severity of the food insecurity experienced (Maxwell 1990). It is increasingly recognised that chronic food insecurity is a major factor of the food crises experienced in Southern Africa (Maunder and Wiggins 2006).

Similarly, the concept of food distribution, which is the provision of food to points of demand at the right time and place, is also missing from the framework. One could consider distribution as closely linked with local-level availability, since it forms a key element to ensure – to various degrees – its fulfilment. Additionally, reliability of food refers to its nutritional content and safety (NDA 2002). The crosscutting feature of stability is also absent from Figure 1. Ultimately, people should not be at risk of losing their access to food because of sudden shocks (e.g., an economic or climatic crisis) or cyclical events (e.g. seasonal food insecurity). The concept of stability can therefore refer to both the availability and access dimensions of food security (FAO 2006, p.1). As food security is dependent on a whole gambit of issues relating to development and poverty analysis, other complex issues often impact on whether food security is achieved. Indeed, most factors involved in food insecurity are interdependent and may be influenced by one another through time. Responding to food insecurity, therefore, depends on a wide range of interlinking and coherent programmes.

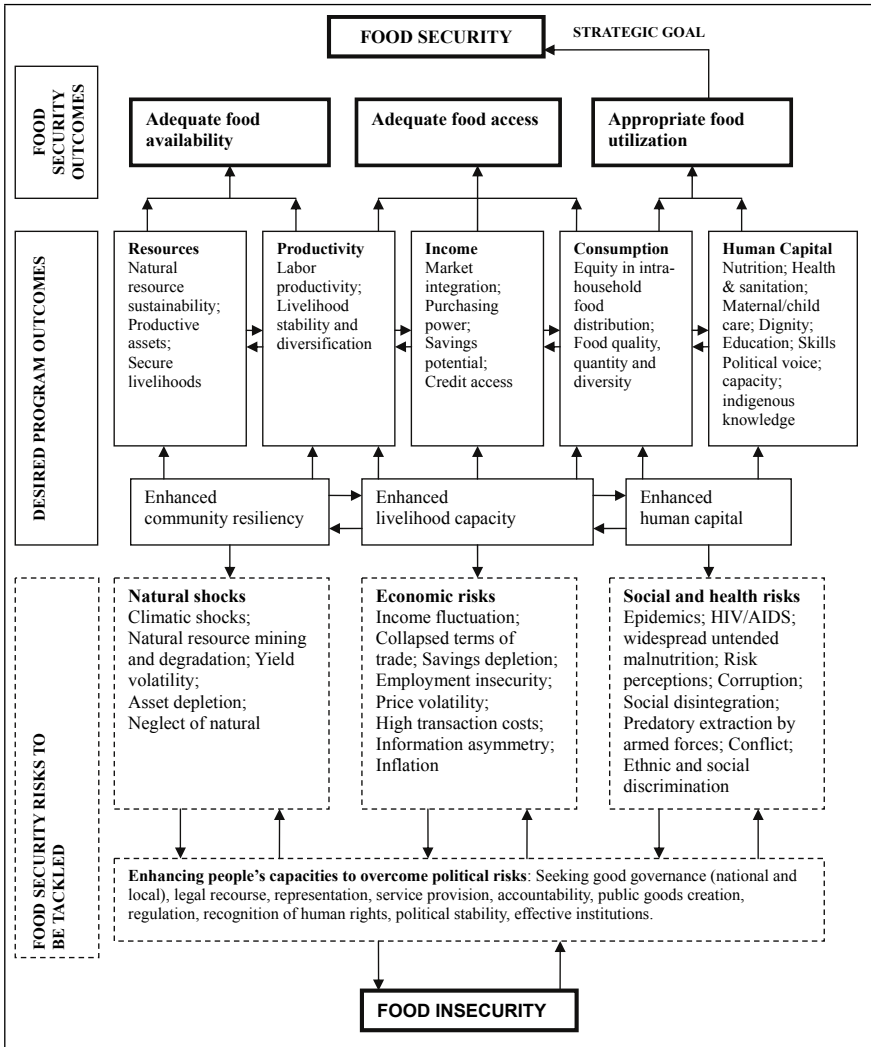


Figure 1: Conceptual model for understanding food security

Source: Webb and Rogers 2003, p.6.

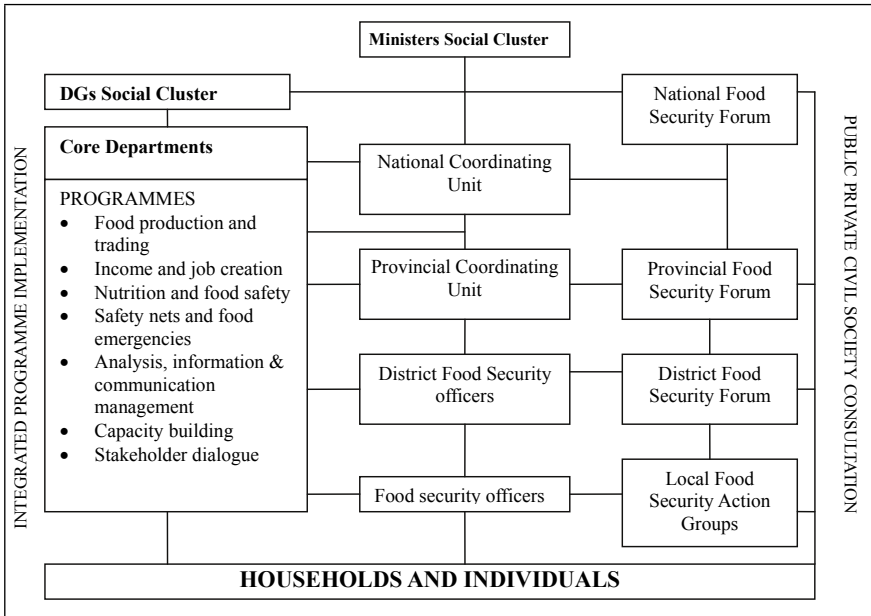


### 3 THE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS OF THE IFSS

The IFSS was politically motivated by the “unsatisfactory situation that was occasioned by the implementation of many food security programmes by different Government departments in all spheres” (NDA 2002, p.5). Reacting in particular to a rapid increase in food prices in 2002, which exposed the lack of a prior unified approach, Cabinet decided to formulate a “national food security strategy that would streamline, harmonise and integrate the diverse food security programmes into the Integrated Food Security Strategy” (*ibid.*). The strategy detailed a number of objectives that drew heavily on contemporary analysis and understanding of the food security challenge and seemed to encapsulate the full spectrum of issues detailed above that needed to be addressed:

- To ensure that enough food is available to all, now and in the future;
- To match incomes of people to prices in order to ensure access to sufficient food for every citizen;
- To empower citizens to make optimal choices for nutritious and safe food;
- To ensure that there are adequate safety nets and food emergency management systems to provide people that are unable to meet their food needs from their own efforts and mitigate the extreme impact of natural or other disasters on people;
- To possess adequate and relevant information to ensure analysis, communication, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the impact of food security programmes on the target population.

These ambitious objectives were to be met through carefully laid out institutional arrangements, which are depicted in Figure 2. A note of caution was articulated in the Strategy that “one of the fundamental problems standing in the way of targeting and effective delivery of food security initiatives is the lack of institutional capacity in poor areas” (NDA 2002). Thus the authors of the Strategy demonstrated a nuanced understanding of food insecurity and one of the major challenges to achieving the objectives of the IFSS. However, as will be illustrated, it was in fact institutional arrangements and poor alignment of sectors at all levels – and not just in poor areas – that contributed to the lack of effective delivery.



**Figure 2:** Institutional arrangements behind the IFSS

Source: NDA 2002

To address this challenge, the IFSS proposed that institutional reform for food security should enhance coordination by following priority areas and strategic objectives of institutional arrangements (*ibid.*). These would include enhancing intergovernmental relations and improving coordination among regional, national, provincial and local governments in support of food security goals, the strengthening of existing decentralized planning systems by backing them up with resources and technical support, enabling coordination among political and administrative structures, fostering cooperation among government, parastatals, private sector and nongovernmental organisations and enabling coordination among government departments at national and provincial levels. Thus, major structural challenges in government would be addressed through the experience of the IFSS, providing lessons for improved intergovernmental relations.

The institutional arrangements and organisational design to implement the undertaking was outlined within the IFSS as depicted in Figure 2, which was considered the “blueprint” to address the challenge. In sum, the IFSS could only become a reality through clear programmes, coordinating units and multisectoral fora to stimulate and support interventions to engage creatively with food insecurity. In many ways the approach built on international best practice and

adequately problematised the challenge of food insecurity in the country. Thus a major question arises as to why this strategy has not yet yielded significant results since 2002, especially on reflection of the statistics around hunger and malnutrition summarised in the introduction.

A number of original contributions have highlighted the institutional challenges facing the IFSS, some commissioned directly by government (e.g., Watkinson 2003; Hamid 2005; Misselhorn 2006; Drimie and Verduijn 2007, Misselhorn *et al.* 2007; and Ruysenaar 2009). Through these, a number of key issues have emerged, including “a lack of political will” and “poor civil society involvement” (Drimie and Verduijn 2007), and “a lack of legislation” (*ibid.*, see also Watkinson 2003; Hamid 2005) as crucial elements missing from the IFSS. Through additional research involving interviews with key stakeholders engaged in the IFSS (Ruysenaar 2009) and an analysis of relevant documentation (Drimie and Verduijn 2007 and Misselhorn *et al.* 2007), this paper identifies the major constraints that have limited the IFSS. The paper attempts to interrogate the meaning of “political will” by demonstrating the bureaucratic and organisational hurdles that have limited the impact of the IFSS. In particular, this paper argues that within the South African context, poorly executed institutional arrangements were the major constraint towards meeting this complex array of issues, particularly due to an emphasis on agricultural productivity – rather than on all aspects of the phenomenon – through the leadership of the National Department of Agriculture. This argument is elaborated below.

#### 4 AN EMPHASIS ON AGRICULTURE AS THE SOLUTION TO FOOD INSECURITY

The very nature of food security dictates that any response strategy should be multisectoral and interdisciplinary in nature (Maxwell 2001). An overview of the institutional arrangements embedded within the IFSS reveals that these follow guidelines of “inclusivity” and integration (NDA 2002, p.34). The structure provides for a range of functionaries, whose activities are integrated to accommodate delivery line mandate, advisory (monitoring and setting objectives), as well as coordination, compatible with the three-tier levels of government. Progress has been made, however, these arrangements are largely superficial and overridden by departmental line-function demands on budgets and personnel, rather than providing true integration. According to interviews with state officials, the high-level decision making required to bring line-function demands into line with an “integrated approach” have been lacking, with the result that the “institutional architecture” of the IFSS remains no more than scaffolding (Ruysenaar 2009). In other words, it does no more than outline good intentions with no real attempt to apply them in reality. Higher level political directives and pressures are needed for

effective action to be mounted by the various sectors and agencies concerned to provide food security that can be sustained, and to combat malnutrition effectively (ACC/SCN 2001).

A crucial dimension of this effort has been that the leadership of the IFSS has been consigned to the Department of Agriculture, which has given the strategy a particular emphasis. Ultimately the food production-based rationale of the Department has limited the conceptualisation and necessary approach to achieving food security. A consideration of the role of the Department during Apartheid reveals that its focus during that era was largely on agricultural production in the White commercial sector (Kirsten *et al.* 1998; Vink *et al.* 2000; Nieuwoudt and Groenewald 2003; Pieterse and Van Wyk 2006). Little if any consideration was given to issues of food security amongst the poor black majority (Greenberg 2003). The fact that the Department still equates food security with national food security – and agricultural output in particular – rather than with household food security, suggests that its residual institutional memory remains intact.

Addressing food insecurity would necessarily involve a comprehensive understanding of the issue and addressing it through the elements of availability, access, utilisation and stability, which would only be partly achieved by an agriculture based agenda. Indeed, the IFSS itself outlines these interrelated issues as being crucial to addressing hunger in the country, which demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the issue. Yet, as the lead department of the IFSS, the bias towards production created by the Department of Agriculture – and, indeed, encouraged by a lack of engagement by other departments – subdued the stated intention of an integrated approach. The emphasis on agricultural production by the NDA continued to influence how other departments conceptualised food security and entrenched a silo-approach to addressing the problem (Drimie and Verduijn 2007; Misselhorn *et al.* 2007).

## 5 COORDINATING THE IFSS

A key challenge regarding the coordination of the IFSS is the poor definition of mandates and responsibilities for the various sectors and agencies that have a role to play in enhancing food security. Food security does not fit easily into the existing bureaucratic organisation of government sectors and agencies. The hierarchical and sector-specific organization of government contributes to limited communication and, more importantly, limited sharing of experiences and new technologies in addressing the challenge. Coordination of appropriate activities, monitoring vulnerability to hunger and nutrition outcomes, and predicting and anticipating food emergencies, are crucial for ensuring food security for all citizens.

Within the IFSS, the responsibility of coordination falls upon a National Coordinating Unit (NCU). With the allocation of overall responsibility of the

IFSS to the Department of Agriculture, this function fell to a technical support team in the Department, whereby, the Chief Food Security Officer, Food Security Manager and Food Security Specialists would run the NCU. These personnel were based in the Food Security Directorate of the Department and were assigned the responsibility of coordinating all the activities of the IFSS and the activities of National Programme Managers from other national departments that had a bearing on food security. Although the National Department of Agriculture wilfully took stewardship of the IFSS, and became the custodian of food security in South Africa, no real attempt was made to empower or enable the Food Security Directorate to become an effective coordinating unit. Neither was there an evident attempt to translate the structures proposed in the IFSS into a functioning entity. This meant that, in effect, the Directorate was not sufficiently equipped to accommodate the requirements of a National Coordinating Unit, particularly in terms of operations and planning.

A review of the NDA organogram is illuminating in depicting the lines of command in the Department. Clearly the Food Security Directorate occupies a position low down in the hierarchy of the bureaucracy, one shared by many other directorates that would have a role in addressing food security issues. Enquiries with these other related directorates in the Department highlighted limited knowledge and involvement with the IFSS (Ruysenaar 2009). Despite these directorates having an important role to play they have not attended meetings facilitated for the IFSS largely because they are under separate chains of command. In theory it is these directorates that should be grouped together more effectively under a management unit and replicated at provincial level.

This institutional weakness of the IFSS is not unique within the Department of Agriculture. In a presentation to the Select Committee on Land and Environmental Affairs in Parliament, the Director-General of Agriculture stated that “at the end of 2005, we reviewed the department’s organizational structure with the objective being to align it to the strategic objectives, strategies and programmes of the department [as a whole]” (Mbongwa 2006). This was in recognition that many of the structures were a hindrance to achieving different strategic objectives. The changes proposed to Parliament were intended to be implemented in 2006. However, in the Strategic Plan for the Department of Agriculture for the period September 2008 to November 2010 (NDA 2008), these changes had not been implemented.

Reinforcing this “inability” to comprehensively steward the IFSS, another limiting factor to effective coordination existed within the Department itself: a disjuncture between the national and provincial tiers, legislated through the Constitution. According to the Constitution, Agriculture is classified as a concurrent national and provincial function, which includes specified legislative competencies

(Rep. South Africa 1996). As such, the responsibility for agricultural development, including food security, rests with the provincial Departments of Agriculture under a provincial Director-General. Thus the NDA was required to devolve a wide range of agricultural functions to the provinces, making them responsible for agriculture within their regions. This means that if the IFSS was to be effectively coordinated within the Department, efforts to ensure its implementation had to occur at provincial level. This has not been forthcoming, with few of the provincial departments instituting anything akin to what the IFSS required.

Two immediate examples help explain why this has not happened. Firstly, the provincial Departments only have to consider directives from the NDA as guiding principles and not necessarily as mandatory. The provincial dispensation of Agriculture also means that the food security directorates of the provinces fulfil line-function demands of the provincial Departments and are not necessarily accountable to the National Department. The result is that the provincial Departments do not have to account to the National Department about meeting the objectives of the IFSS. Secondly, as a result of limited capacity within the NDA, a major question arises around the organisational capacity at national level to effectively manage the uptake of these programmes. For example, while the proposed guidelines within the IFSS have strict monitoring commitments, there are no associated directorates overseeing this at national level.

## 6 ALIGNING SECTORS

To reiterate, as a “crosscutting” agenda, food security strategies require the involvement of multiple stakeholders, not least of which are the various departments within government (Maxwell 2001). In South Africa, “joined-up” government – as envisaged by the IFSS – must be seen in a financial context where the fiscal control and oversight of the National Treasury have to be adhered to. These arrangements do not easily allow for a “blurring of funds” to be used in joint projects. Richard Calland quotes an insight of Kader Asmal that, “as an attempt to strengthen ‘joined-up government’, unless budget is allocated to the clusters – which it isn’t – then it can’t be ‘joined-up’ decision-making” (2007, p.54). Chief Director of Fiscal Policy for the National Treasury, Mr K. Naidoo noted a similar challenge arguing that current mechanisms to reorganise funding are problematic given the need for stringent accountability of government spending (cited Ruysenaar 2009). An awareness of this challenge was articulated by the Director General of Agriculture when discussing opportunities for convergence between different policies to achieve sustained agricultural development in Africa (Badiane 2007).

With financing highlighted as a key challenge, consideration should also be given to the institutional arrangements aimed at fostering joint planning of

initiatives that would fall within the IFSS. The infrequent participation of different government departments, such as Health and Social Development, and related directorates within Agriculture, has been a major weakness of the Strategy. From interviews with key informants from the NDA in 2007, participation on the task team overseeing the IFSS depends on the motivation of line department managers with the result that many of the responsible officials have been absent (Ruysenaar, 2009). This is, in many ways, a symptom of decision-making procedures within the hierarchies of the state and how these undermine an integrated approach. These hierarchies, explicit in the way the NDA is structured, dominate government management systems. Managers have to obey their superiors but can also generally overrule their subordinates and the public, and most public service managers receive no encouragement or reward for consulting other departments, much less civil society (Makgetla 2008).

An example of the lack of coordination or alignment within the IFSS is provided by the Food Emergency Scheme (FES), which was intended to provide immediate food aid combined with longer term agricultural development for people identified as eligible for the scheme. By its very nature, the FES required joined-up government at the level where it mattered most: those affected by hunger “on the ground”. The scheme demonstrates how the NDA, as lead department, led to an explicit focus on an agricultural production rationale that has not succeeded in engaging the reality of food insecurity “on the ground”. The disjuncture between the provincial and national departments led to the FES programme not being implemented in a manner consistent with the original plans, and ineffective planning through the IFSS that has not achieved sustainability. NDA officials confirmed that the FES was an example of government acting in haste when worsening food insecurity required an urgent solution (Ruysenaar 2009).

The FES was initiated in the 2002/2003 fiscal year as a response to increased food prices and worsening poverty for some vulnerable groups. The initiative consisted of two phases involving the allocation of food packs that were to be phased out as produce from agricultural starter packs – the second phase – became available. As such the FES demonstrated a continuum between a relief initiative and a development initiative. However, even though the FES looked good on paper, it was logically unsound. The major flaw was to assume that those people receiving food packs would have land and water to allow them to create food gardens (Greenberg 2006). Additionally, the synchronicity of the two phases was never achieved – the responsible departments failed to align their inputs, and the second phase based on the agricultural starter packs was delayed (Poltzer and Schüring 2003). Other problems included internal administration issues, which included challenges of incomplete lists of the indigent, eligible for hand-outs.

Despite the involvement of both the Departments of Social Development and Agriculture, which allowed the programme to be officially labelled as an integrated response, no such integration occurred. The framework of the IFSS was for the most part discarded, and the emergency scheme soon became the responsibility of provincial and municipal Departments of Social Development and Agriculture. To date there is no officially available follow-up or evaluation to ensure lessons were learnt and mistakes remedied. During implementation, there was provision made for evaluation, but this was only undertaken for the pilot phases of the food pack handouts (Poltzer and Schüring 2003). Seven years later, the activities of the FES are still active in some provinces – and still unfolding in relative isolation. The absence of any active revision of mechanisms to implement the integrated approaches remains problematic (e.g., Ruysenaar 2009).

As part of the institutional machinery intended to implement the IFSS, the Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Task Team (IFSNTT) was formed to develop an integrated food security programme (see Figure 2). The IFSNTT would, in theory, become a platform for integrated planning. From the outset, integration was to be achieved by interdepartmental communications through this task team. However, this has not functioned as was intended in the strategy. The IFSNTT has been described as taking the role of a report-back mechanism to which departments are not obliged to respond (Ruysenaar 2007). Similarly, it seems that the Social Cluster – both at Ministerial and Director-General level – has not provided the oversight and leadership to ensure that the IFSS actually happened. At the level where decisions can be made and authorised, ministers and directors-general have rarely appeared at such meetings, instead, delegating junior officials as representatives (Drimie and Ziervogel 2006; Ruysenaar 2009). This has crippled the process since the policy-making forum where important decisions, particularly around aligning budgets need to be made and agreed upon has been “junior-ised”.

NDA officials claimed that an Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Plan (IFSNP) had been developed and represented a cohesive and organised programme of action with active alignment towards the IFSS and integration of the various associated departments; itself a subprogramme of the government Plan of Action (Ruysenaar 2009). However, the same interviewees revealed that the many subprogrammes within this broad framework were weakly integrated, as such alignment was not defined or planned for. Informal interaction between departments does not constitute an effective integrated plan, as demonstrated by the FES. Another example in this respect is neglecting to include the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), which provides special infrastructure and user benefits for food security programmes, in discussions about food security (*ibid.*).



Broader stakeholder engagement, consultation and ultimately accountability have been notably absent. The IFSS envisioned a National Food Security Forum, and related provincial platforms (see Figure 2), that would comprise a mix of stakeholders from the public, private and civil society sectors. The Forum would provide strategic leadership and advisory services on food security, set standards and recommend policy options (NDA, 2002). The NDA commissioned a paper to look into opportunities to develop a Food Security Forum in 2005 (Tapscott 2006 cited Drimie and Verduijn 2007). What is apparent is that, although the IFSNTT represents the closest attempt to establishing the National Food Security Forum, the commissioned report indicates that it fell considerably short of its mandate and that there was need “to look for opportunities to develop” (another) one. Certainly the Task Team has not involved civil society and public-private partnerships, a crucial part of any food security forum (noted by NDA 2002).

A final issue that may be limiting effective integration is a lack of legislation in the form of a policy or bill that could be used to compel sectors to work together (Watkinson 2003; Drimie and Verduijn 2007; Ruysenaar 2009). However, the lack of integration described above is not endemic to the food security strategy alone, as poor intergovernmental relations are a challenge across the South African state (DPLG 2008). This shortcoming means that having “coercive legislation” would not necessarily compel different departments and different levels of government to cooperate. As the advent of the South Africa’s Intergovernmental Relations Act attests, and literature on intergovernmental relations shows, legislation alone is insufficient to ensure greater government coordination (Steytler *et al.* 2005; Kuye and Ile 2007; Nealer and Raga 2007; Edwards 2008; Kanyan and Nazo 2008). This raises a question about what would compel the state to adhere to existing commitments without legislation. The discussion and conclusions that follow reiterate some of the key factors.

## 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of the IFSS has been to develop and facilitate diverse food security programmes within South Africa as part of a more holistic response to hunger and malnutrition. While the strategy and some of its directives are in place, this paper has argued that the IFSS has largely failed in its mandate as a result of insufficient and inappropriate institutional arrangements to underpin the strategy. Secondly, the paper has argued that the complexity that defines food security in South Africa has been inadequately conceptualised and engaged within the IFSS, as an emphasis on agricultural production and food availability are not the core tenets of food security in the country. Issues around food accessibility clearly take precedence, but are entwined with issues of availability, utilization and stability.

The paper has identified a number of institutional constraints that have limited the success of the IFSS. These are summarised below:

1. The government department appointed to coordinate and facilitate the integrated strategy inside government has failed to do so in a comprehensive fashion, as its focus has been on a prosperous agricultural sector rather than ensuring “food security for all”. This has led to a “bias” in the food security response in the country, which has inadequately engaged with the challenge.
2. The coordination of food security has, moreover, been tasked to a directorate that does not have much administrative capacity. As such, the directorate has no mechanisms to drive the process or recourse to ensure that other departments, let alone directorates in its own organisation, work within the strategy.
3. There are no dedicated funds for government to spend on food security at all administrative levels. All budgets have been allocated by sector, preventing the emergence of joint projects and programmes, funded by one entity.
4. The absence of a Food Security Policy or legislative framework prohibits government from providing a clear line of authority, as well as means of enforcing noncollaboration and implementation of relevant programmes in a disjointed manner.
5. Stakeholder dialogue with civil society and indeed within government has been minimal. With access the cornerstone of food security and directly or indirectly reliant on income, Social Cluster interventions are quite possibly undermined by the lack of involvement from the Economic Cluster.

Departmental structures aside, the IFSS has also not sufficiently crystallised baseline information to give an indication of food insecurity in South Africa, despite significant investment into an information management system (Misselhorn *et al.* 2007). Certainly this has not ensured a comprehensive monitoring and evaluating of the various food security programmes in progress and qualifying their impacts. Maunder and Wiggins (2006, p.5) raise a crucial requirement of governance in food security: to take cognisance of the problem, integrate this into policy, and align programming with the stated policy objectives. Without adequate reconsideration given to the IFSS and the institutional architecture responsible for its implementation, the strategy cannot begin to resolve the pressing food security challenges already recognised.

Furthermore, it does not appear that there is sufficient information allowing for any alignment to stated policy objectives, let alone estimation of how far on track South Africa is to meeting those objectives. Lessons from international experience dictate that strategies include the development of a framework for integrating food security considerations into general economic and social programmes; identification of the most urgent food security needs and determination of

priorities; preparation of national strategies by the nationals of the countries concerned; the combination of resources, institutional analysis, policy formation, education, consensus building, action taking; and the monitoring and evaluation of results (Sigot 1999, p.174).

In conclusion, a strategy, as envisaged by the IFSS is intended to provide a carefully-devised plan to achieve the goal of food security in South Africa. Although a range of public institutions, research bodies, private sector organisations and civil society exist that are concerned about food security, no real attempt has been made to harness their expertise in a forum or in piloting initiatives that might guide future larger-scale attempts to combat hunger. As the IFSS is a government strategy – and one focused on the Constitutional obligation to the “right to food” – the institutions mandated to lead the IFSS should be held responsible to review and remedy the issues identified in this paper and in others (Watkinson 2003; Hamid 2005; Misselhorn 2006; Drimie and Verduijn 2007; Misselhorn *et al.* 2007 and Ruysenaar 2009). It is thus argued that the necessary institutional framework needs to be put in place to meet the food security objectives, as defined within the IFSS, through a broad range of services from government and nongovernmental actors. The facilitation of such “joined up government”, although in existence in theory, requires a concerted effort and recognition of the issues within a wider array of government departments, and elsewhere, for it to become a reality.

## NOTES

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