

Social support: Food sovereignty¹

SUMMARY OF NOTES TAKEN DURING FIRST SEMESTER, 2018

BACKGROUND

The Department of Student Affairs facilitated a number of conversations about food sovereignty at the UFS during the first semester of 2018. The following individuals were involved in various discussions: Pura Mgolombane; Dr WP Wahl; Vicky Simpson; Prof Louise van den Berg; Annelize Visagie; Elizabeth Msadu; Mojaki Mothibi; Karen Scheepers; Billyboy Ramahlele; Rethabile Motseki; and Codi Rogers.

This document aims to summarise the notes of these conversations. Although this document will specifically focus on the challenge related to food sovereignty, this intervention should be seen within the context of the broader reconfiguration of the social support focus area. In this regard, Student Affairs has centralised all social support programmes, activities and personnel in one unit positioned within the office of the Dean: Student Affairs. This unit has the following two focus areas: (1) advocacy and awareness; and (2) response and support.

More specifically, to achieve food sovereignty at the UFS multi-pronged approach is suggested. This multi-pronged approach includes the following: a layered *No Student Hungry Food Club* (NSH FC); food banks; community gardens, dining halls, and fostering strategic partnerships. The following sections outline suggestions on how this multi-pronged approach could be established.

NSH FOOD CLUB

The purpose of the *No Student Hungry Food Club* (NSH FC) is to expand the current *No Student Hungry* programme from having an exclusive focus on a limited number of severely food insecure students, to address the needs of the broader student population at the UFS. This can be achieved through a layered system within the current NSH programme by introducing student membership to the NSH FC. Based on their respective socio-economic status, members of the NSH FC will belong to the following categories:

CATEGORY	GROSS HOME INCOME	SUBSIDY FOR ONE NUTRITIOUS MEAL PER DAY
Severely food insecure	>R120 000 p.a.	100%
Food insecure	R150 000 – R300 000	R10 per meal per day
Loyalty programme		Donate R5 per meal to NSH FC

NSH FC statuses will be uploaded onto student cards, which will enable the relevant subsidies or donations to take effect with the purchase of meals. Meals for the NSH FC will be purchased through

¹ “Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations” (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007).

the UFS catering system, administered through the division Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA). This will enable the UFS to ensure that meals being offered through the NSH FC are nutritious and affordable. A partnership with the Department of Dietetics in the Faculty of Health Sciences should be established in this regard.

FOOD BANKS

Student Affairs is already distributing food parcels on a monthly basis to food insecure students. Food parcels consist of Rice, Soya, and Vitamins. One food parcel can feed up to six individuals. The current system of distribution revolves around a central food bank, that also supplies food parcels to decentralised food banks in residence communities and specific student associations. In this regard, close collaboration has already been established with non-profit organisations like Rise-Against-Hunger and Gift-of-the-Givers.

It is suggested that the distribution of food parcels via the food bank system should in the future also be aligned with the NSH FC. To this effect, students who qualify to receive food subsidies under the categories, *severe food insecure* and *food insecure* will also be eligible to receive food parcels. This process will be administered by the unit for social support within the office of the Dean: Student Affairs.

Thus, students who wish to apply for membership of the NSH FC will complete an electronic application form on the Kowsie Life Student Portal on the UFS website. All application forms will be sent to the Student Affairs social support unit who will then test it against the same criteria used for NSH applications to date. However, the Social Worker will also have an opportunity to make additional recommendations in this regard. This office will then process the application and notify the student accordingly. A copy of this correspondence will also be sent to the Kowsie ACT office who will administer the operational aspect of the food bank.

To establish this endeavour, the following categories (with their relevant foci) will be used during further planning:

- Food parcels: Nutritional value; donations and benefactors; packing and distribution; perishable vs non-perishable;
- Financial management: Ownership of entity; administration of entity; critical financial decisions on income and expenses;
- Administration: Online applications; renewal of applications; verification of payment; acknowledgement of donations; feedback to benefactors; volunteers' working hours;
- Training of stakeholders;
- Promotion and distribution of information: Printed promotional material; online promotions; promotional events; promotion in UFS publications;
- Operations: Benefactors (compilation of contact list; making contact); receiving, storing and packing of parcels; the flow of information; left-over goods.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community Gardens aim to facilitate, through Kovesie ACT, a cooperative project within different students' communities where students can work together to establish food sovereignty at the UFS. This project will enable individual student communities to develop and maintain their own vegetable gardens to address food insecurity within their environment.

Any group of students – more than 20 individuals – (e.g. on-campus residences, day residences, student associations, faculty organisations, private student communes, etc.) may register a community garden at Kovesie ACT. Students involved in designated groups will receive training on the basic principles of establishing and maintaining a vegetable garden, as well as the distribution of its products. This training will be presented in the format of a Short Learning Programme.

The division Kovesie ACT has already established a strategy to pilot the community garden project in 2019. To this effect, a strong partnership has been formed with the UFS' University Estates.

HRA DINING HALLS

The division Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA) is currently administering the dining facilities at Abraham Fischer residence – not only for this residence community but the broader student population. It is suggested that HRA expands this leadership to include all other dining halls in residences to provide affordable, nutritious meals to a more significant number of students through the NSH FC. It is furthermore suggested that large donations should be sourced from corporate entities (and surplus produce from community gardens) to support the financial sustainability of this project.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

To foster food sovereignty at the UFS, strategic partnerships should be built with the following entities:

- External corporations;
- NPO's (e.g. Rise-against-hunger; Gift-of-the-givers, etc.);
- Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences;
- Agricultural enterprises;
- UFS Estates;
- Communication and Brand Management;
- Centre for Teaching and Learning (conversations with CTL started during the second semester).

END