

**SPEECH BY DAN PLATO
UCT FOOD SECURITY WORKSHOP
19 October 2009**

It is obvious and unavoidable that Cape Town has not escaped the current global economic crisis. The City is very aware and concerned about the fact that the current economic crisis and high food price inflation are pushing thousands of Cape Town residents deeper into poverty. Although we observe this trend it is not always possible to gauge the deepness and severity thereof due to lack of recent and sufficient data and information. The Council requires comprehensive and reliable research and data to base policies and strategic interventions on and the expectation is that the outcomes of this survey by the African Food Security Network as facilitated through the University of Cape Town will contribute meaningfully towards this need.

Poverty has many faces and is caused by a plethora of autonomous and reinforcing factors as demonstrated in the current global crisis. The City realises that poverty remains a challenge of huge proportions in Cape Town and in order for the Council to compile and introduce appropriate and effective interventions to alleviate it, it is necessary to identify and analyse its causes of poverty. The Council's interventions should be seen and evaluated against its constitutional mandate, availability of resources, strategic partnerships and co-operative governance. The fight against poverty and hunger is not a single agent's responsibility - it requires a collective effort by all.

Hunger as a consequence of poverty is a profound challenge for the City and needs to be addressed immediately through a more collaborative and sustainable effort by all role-players i.e. the different spheres of government, the private sector, civil society, NGOs, churches, etc. We need to raise awareness about the seriousness of hunger in the city and should lead actions to overcome it.

While I believe that over time the benefits of economic growth and development will trickle down and that poverty will be reduced, it is a very slow process with many distractions and pitfalls. We need to eradicate, not reduce, hunger in the immediate and short term and we can do so by transferring resources from the better off to those in greatest need. But trying to deal with hunger as a matter of welfare is simply not financially feasible over the longer term. Thus the only sustainable response to hunger (food insecurity) as a mass phenomenon is to enable the poor, the landless and especially deprived women to improve their own productivity and income-generating capacities. Empowering the poor with resources to pull themselves out of hunger will have a direct impact on the severeness and scope of hunger in the city.

Resources are scarce and to make the maximum impact on hunger the City has to ensure that our support has an explicit beneficiary orientation and is as carefully targeted as possible to the hungry so as to minimise leakages to other groups.

The City has policies, programmes and actions in place to address both the immediate needs of the poor as well as to empower them over time to look after themselves – to restore their dignity.

Currently the City has the following measures and interventions to assist the poor:

- An Indigent Policy
 - Property rates: 100% rebate on rates is given to the following:
 - All properties with a value less than R88 000
 - Plus all households where the household income is less than R2 880 per month
 - Free water and sanitation (6 – 10kl/month)

- Free electricity - 50kw hours/month for household using less than 450kw hours/month
- Rebate on Refuse Removal Tariff
 - Free for property with value less than R100 000
 - Subsidised for properties up to R300 000
- Other assistance
 - 100% rates rebate for NGOs and Public Benefit Organisations
 - Shelters for homeless people - rates on property 100% rebate
 - Free water 25l/person/day
 - Free sanitation 17.5l/person/day
 - Refuse removal 50% rebate on tariff
- Assistance to informal settlements
 - Solid water service all informal settlements receive a free service
 - Water service all informal settlements receive a free service
 - i.e. 1 standpipe per 25 households
 - Sanitation service currently a huge backlog
 - 1 toilet per 5 households
 - Electrical service problem of provision split between City and Eskom
 - huge backlog
 - Some households cannot be provided due to their location

- Grants-in-aid

The Council allocates annual grants to meritorious institutions/NGOs such as

Childcare Centres, Old Age Homes, HIV/AIDS facilities, foodbanks etc.

- Some economic empowerment initiatives of the Council include:
 - Support for urban food production (Urban Agricultural Policy), mainly vegetable gardening, but also animal husbandry. This assistance programme includes access to municipal land, provision of basic infrastructure (fencing, water supply), provision of tools and equipment, provision of production inputs such as seeds and compost and training in agricultural and business skills
 - Support for business development (Business Support Programme) which includes, inter alia, a voucher system to assist people to start their own business/income-generating activity
 - Support for informal trading by providing spaces for trading, assistance with business skills development, etc

In conclusion, it seems that although Cape Town does not have a problem with the availability of food, many residents cannot afford enough food. Feeding cities is a growing problem world-wide and the time has come for us to have a close look at the food supply system to the city and to analyse and address emerging risks such as the unaffordability of food by the poor.

I wish you a fruitful workshop and trust that the outcomes will be reflected in some way or the other in the respective future plans of all participants.