

NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

A black and white photograph of a person wearing a straw hat, seen from behind, walking through a dense field of tall corn plants. The sky is visible in the background with some clouds.

MANDELA UNIVERSITY FOOD SYSTEMS NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021 | ISSUE ONE

INTRODUCTION

*from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Engagement and Transformation
at Nelson Mandela University, Prof André Keet*



Within the context of wide-spread poverty, the production, distribution, availability and politics of food is a key marker of systemically-anchored inequalities. It thus comes as no surprise that 'food' remains central to people's daily struggle for dignified and sustainable livelihoods.

After multiple engagements with internal and external stakeholder-communities within existing food and food systems projects, it became clear that there was potential to evolve a productive and collaborative transdisciplinary programme across knowledge-fields and functional areas within and beyond the University. So, the Mandela University Food Systems programme was initiated in early 2021.

This initiative is central to the University's vision of being in service of society, and to work in tangible, equalizing ways to make real-life contributions in tackling key socio-economic challenges.

The programme has been hard at work to understand, clarify, and map the various existing food systems projects and programmes active in the University, and to explore the potential of connecting – or the convergence of – these projects and programmes to be responsive

to the challenges related to food and food systems, through a number of internal and external signature projects.

In other words, the purpose of the Mandela University Food Systems is not to displace any of the existing work being done, but rather to find means to complement, strengthen, coordinate and streamline the work already being done for a better, more sustainable social impact.

We are now at an exciting phase in the programme where we are bringing ideas and deliverables to life; one of which is this newsletter. The aim behind the newsletter is to allow for greater connectivity and communication across different projects and people, and to allow other interested university staff, students and members of the broader community to stay up-to-date with the work being done.

***"This initiative
is central to the
University's vision of
being in service of
society"***

This newsletter, like the Mandela University Food Systems, is about collective ownership, practise and voice – including yours. We hope you enjoy reading through the first issue, and encourage you to share it with your own networks who may be interested in this kind of work. Please engage with the content and reach out to the secretariat with ideas and thoughts for the upcoming issues.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference were co-constructed by the Working Group as a guide for the Mandela University Food Systems programme. The development of the Terms of Reference was framed around who potential stakeholder-communities could be, what this could potentially entail or look like, as well as potential areas of focus and impact. Furthermore, it was framed around the importance of the programme, possible linkages across the Terms of Reference, and what actionable steps could be made moving forward.

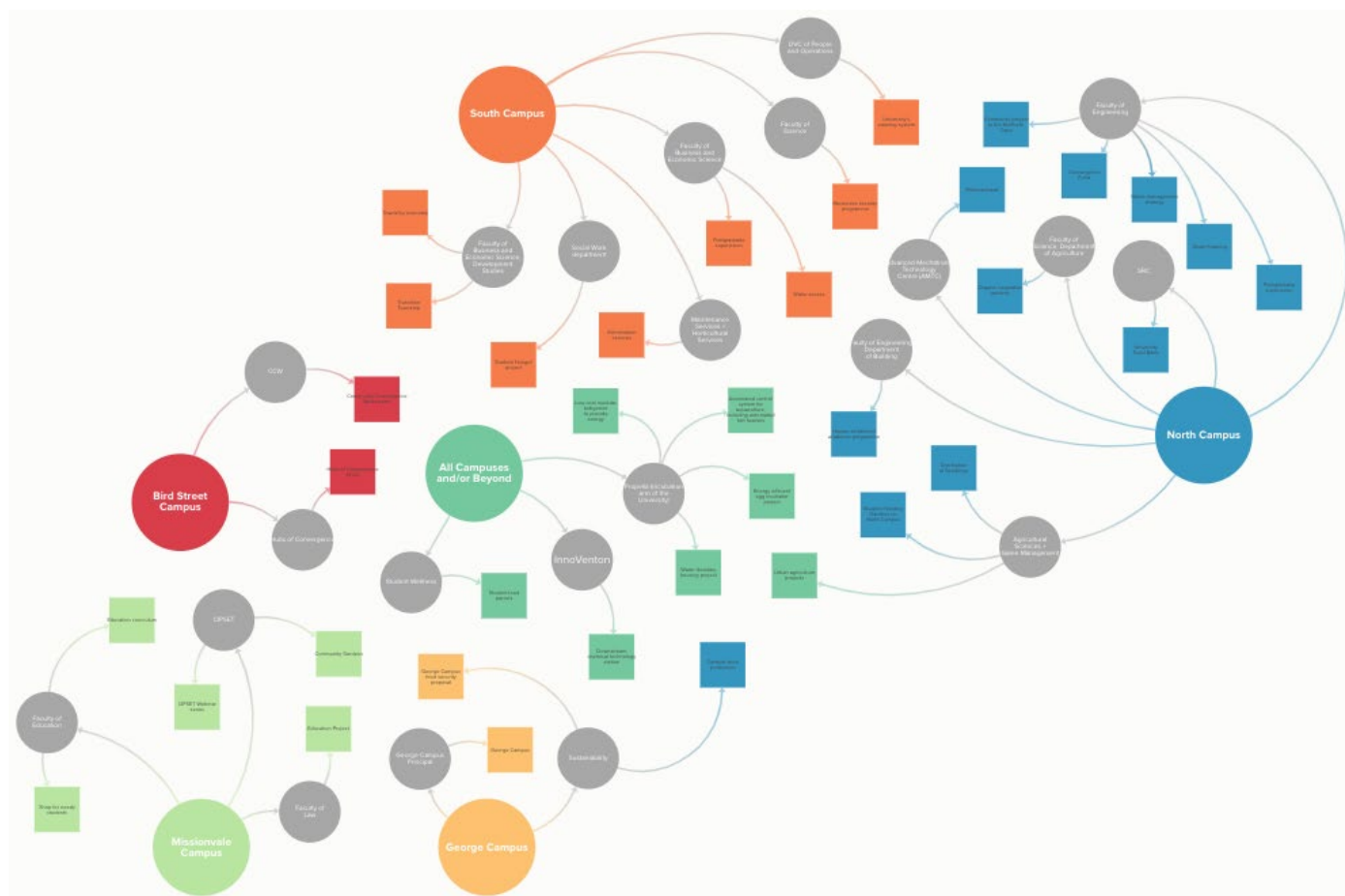
Currently, the purpose of the programme has been set out as follows:

-  To coordinate and create a level of priority for our collective approaches and interventions related to 'food' as a key component of Nelson Mandela University's engagement strategy.
-  To clarify, explore and nurture a demonstrable and transdisciplinary programme across knowledge-fields and functional areas of the University.
-  To collaborate with multiple stakeholder-communities, both internal and external, that are food systems-oriented.
-  To develop strategic partnerships provincially, nationally, continentally and globally, and to reach out to diverse stakeholders for input, buy-in and programme implementation.
-  To hold meetings of the various stakeholder-communities in order to engage in dialogues, discuss progress made, and collaborate on new ideas moving forward.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

This is an initial mapping of all the projects and programmes across the University space that are currently part of the Mandela University Food Systems Working Group.

If you want to view the full interactive map, [click here](#).



GET INVOLVED

If you are involved in a food or food systems-related project within or around the University, or if you are a student (or a supervisor of a student) whose research is related to food and food systems, we would love to hear about the work you are doing, and how we can potentially support you!

Get in touch with the Mandela University Food Systems secretariat by [clicking here](#).

RESOURCES

In every issue, we will be sharing some resources, readings, and other recommended texts that are relevant to the work being done in this space.

To kick off this section, we will be sharing the Mandela University Food Systems Working Document. Compiled by the Working Group, the Working Document serves as a blueprint for the Mandela University Food Systems, and will give you an inside look into the work that has been done thus far, as well as the work that is yet to be done. To view the Document, [click here](#).

Working document: Mandela University Food Systems
Terms of Reference and Operational Framework

Content

1. Concept Note
2. Conceptual Mapping
- 2.1. Breakdown of Participants
- 2.2. Proposed Timeline
- 2.3. Approach
- 2.4. Phase Breakdown
3. Conclusion

Appendixes

- Appendix A: Terms of Reference
- Appendix B: Clarification of Emerging Concepts
- Appendix C: Programme of Action
- Appendix D: Working Group Members

g and action research method is pragmatic stems to establish a solid foundation for its al stakeholder-communities. This method tive process amongst the stakeholder- ing, collaboration, and conceptualization s related to food and food systems. This ously reshape and manifest itself through ed theory in the space, which encourages nd take ownership of the work.

the processes used in co-constructing the Food Systems. The processes have been oments:

ISED TOR	MOTIVATION
op strategic hips ally, y, tally and and to reach verse ders for input, nd programme ntation.	It was argued that this ToR should be written in a manner that is inclusive, and reflects that we will – where and when necessary – collaborate and partner with the relevant organisations, researchers and entities to be able to harness the collective capacity that we may have access to.
meetings of us der- ities in order e in s, discuss ; made, and ate on new ving forward.	It was proposed that this ToR include the different structures of Mandela University Food Systems.

ussions held with the steering committee f deliverables we have set out to achieve. erence each deliverable is linked to, the her deliverable(s) it depends on. The table

PROGRESS	PRIORITY	DEPENDENCY
Yet to be done	H	
In progress	H	Depends on 7
In progress	M	
In progress	H	
Yet to be done	L	Depends on 4
Done	H	
Done	H	
In progress	H	Depends on 7
Ongoing	H	Depends on 7

SHARE YOUR WORK

If you have created any work - from an opinion piece to an academic article, to a poster or community project report - that you would like to share in our next issue, we would love to hear from you! Alternatively, if you come across any external resources that you think would be worth highlighting, you are welcome to share those too.

Get in touch with the Mandela University Food Systems secretariat by [clicking here](#).

EVENTS

In this section we will share any relevant upcoming events, both internally and externally, starting with our very own conversation series:

MANDELA UNIVERSITY FOOD SYSTEMS CONVERSATION SERIES

The Mandela University Food Systems programme invites you to join the first conversation under the theme 'food and food systems'.

DATE: THURSDAY, 09 SEPTEMBER 2021
TIME: 12:00 - 13:00 (SAST)

SPEAKERS

- **FOOD SYSTEMS SECRETARIAT**

Dr Bruce Damons, Ms Oyama Mkaza and Ms Amy De Raedt will be discussing the proposed architecture, strategic objectives, and emerging learning of the programme to date.

- **GEORGE CAMPUS OPERATIONS DIRECTOR**

Mr Martin Loubser will be highlighting the work of George Campus around food sustainability and production.

REGISTER HERE



NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Mandela University Food Systems Conversation Series - Theme Two: *Food Sovereignty and Security - October 2021*
- Mandela University Food Systems Conversation Series - Theme Three: *Food Production - November 2021*
- Mandela University Food Systems Conversation Series - Theme Four: *Food Relief - December 2021*

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

If you are a part of any events - from webinars to Facebook lives - related to food and food systems, including any past events that are available online, we would love to hear from you. Alternatively, if you know of any events taking place - both internally and externally - that you would like to highlight, you are welcome to share those too!

Get in touch with the Mandela University Food Systems secretariat by [clicking here](#).

SECRETARIAT

In this section the secretariat share around the background of the programme, and how it aligns with the Engagement and Transformation Portfolio's vision, as well as the University's Vision 2030.

The secretariat's role is to coordinate and facilitate the work of the Mandela University Food Systems programme, and have utilised the critical participatory action learning and action research method to establish a firm foundation for the programme - one that is inclusive of all social structures within the institution and its stakeholder-communities. Based on this method, it is important to note that the work of the programme will continuously reshape and manifest itself through the process of learning and co-learning with its stakeholder-communities. Currently, the Mandela University Food Systems programme has been active within the University, however, plans are to further engage with external stakeholder-communities aligned with the following:

ALIGNMENT WITH ETP's VISION

1. As evinced in Term of Reference 4, the Mandela University Food Systems aims to be '*locally responsive, nationally active, regionally alive, and globally aware*'. It is also focused on creating '*socio-economic impact...in the interest of the public good*' which is one of the ETP's key performance areas.
2. Intending to become a signature project of the University, the programme aligns with the ETP's aim of leading '*creative and innovative engagement and transformation projects*'.
3. One of the proposed research outputs for the project is the publication of academic articles, and fits with the portfolio's aim of '*cultivating a culture of scholarship*'.
4. It is important to note the upscaling and coordination for food intervention is a key priority that has been recognized and acknowledged through the different sets of structures within the University beyond the ETP, such as the Senate and Council. The programme will aim to advance and assist linkages amongst the sciences to further develop better interdisciplinary solidarity. In other words, to encourage the ability to embrace the different schools of thought and paradigms we adhere to when we work around questions and responses concerning food.

ALIGNMENT WITH VISION 2030

1. Food production, distribution, availability, and its politics is a significant discourse to social inequalities. It thus came as no surprise that food re/emerged as a major thematic through Covid-19; central to people's daily struggle for dignified and sustainable livelihoods.
2. The University's emerging strategic plans focus on serving society to contribute positively to the formation of a sustainable socio-economic and epistemically just world.
3. In striving to address the issue of food, the programme is deeply aligned with the University's Vision 2030 to be in service of society and to create a sustainable, socially just world.
4. The pandemic has forced us to adopt a sustainable, long-term approach in questioning food systems and thus aims to connect existing projects and initiatives to create a collaborative space in which meaningful, productive work can be achieved.
5. We aim to upscale this within the University through its various divisions, sectors, and across the different sets of networks within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM). Furthermore, linking networks within the Eastern Cape Province will also be a priority.

Find out more:

<https://etp.mandela.ac.za/Projects/Mandela-University-Food-Systems>