

Beyond the Economics of Food: Household Food Strategies in Clusters of the Umkhanyakude District Municipality

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Abstract : Food insecurity continues to persist in rural areas of South Africa today. A number of factors can be attributed to this including declining rural economies, rising unemployment, natural disasters such as drought as well as shifting cultural norms, values, traditions and beliefs. This paper explores mechanisms used by rural households to achieve food security in the midst of various threats and risks to their livelihoods. The study used semi-structured questionnaire to collect information on lived experiences of households in their quest to access and ensure availability of food. The paper finds that households use a number of food strategies namely economy-related, culture-related and rite-of-passage related strategies to achieve food security. The thrust of argument in the paper is that there is a need for food security studies to move beyond the orthodox, economic analytic framework, towards new institutional economics, focusing on local governance and socio-cultural systems supporting households to achieve food security. It advocates for localised food security plans to be developed by local municipalities to improve food security status for rural households.

Keywords : household, food insecurity, food strategies, new institutional economics, umkhanyakude

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