South Africa: a basic food basket

Statistics South Africa (2016) recorded that 22.3% of households in South Africa have inadequate or severely inadequate access to food. This figure has improved during recent years, but still indicates that many households require support to alleviate hunger.

Many organisations, such as non-governmental organisations, faith based organisations, service organisations and corporate social responsibility projects provide food support to those in need. This can be in the form of food handouts, assistance with preparation of food gardens or soup kitchens.

Assistance that is offered should aim to provide nutritious food choices, rather than just foods that are filling. Using economical food choices rather than some popular foods (such as meat), will mean that more food can be provided. I have compiled a list of foods that are an example of a basic food basket for a family of four – two adults and two adolescents. The foods included in this basket are provided in the correct proportions for relief feeding, as described by the World Food Programme (WFP) (https://www.wfp.org/food-assistance/kind-food-assistance/wfp-food-basket).

Typically a basic food basket will contain food from the following food groups:

- starchy staples such as maize, flour, rice, 4 in 1 soup mix, barley, wholewheat
- beans, lentils, split peas or soya
- vegetable oil, peanut butter
- iodized salt
- Where possible fresh produce (vegetables, fruit), eggs, milk, chicken should also be provided
- Other: tea, sugar, soup powder



The basic basket overleaf includes food from all food groups, in the recommended proportions, as described in the Guidelines for Healthy Eating and illustrated in the South African Food Guide.

Food group	Food item	Unit	Quantity required / 4 people / 4 weeks	Cost Rand
Starchy foods	Mealie meal	kg	20 kg	155
	Mabella	kg	2kg	30
	Rice	kg	5 kg	66
	Brown bread	Loaves 700g	6 = 80 slices	69
	Samp	kg	2 kg	19
	Potatoes	kg	10 kg	67
	Cake flour	kg	2.5 kg	26
				432
Vegetables and fruit	Variety, including at least 5 kg carrots / butternut	kg	45 kg	540
				540
Dry beans, lentils, split	Sugar beans	kg	1 kg	31
peas, soya	Lentils	kg	0.5 kg	20
	Soya mince 4 Different flavours	kg	4 x 500g	125
				176
Fish, chicken, lean	Chicken liver	kg	1	32
meat, eggs, liver	Eggs	unit@50g	64	108
	Chicken, whole	4 kg	4	132
				272
Milk	Milk	e	24 ୧	312
				312
Oil	Oil	m e	4 x 750mℓ	75
	Peanut butter	g	1600 g	131
				206
Sugar	Sugar	kg	5 kg	75
	Jam	g	4 x 450g	60
				135
Other	Tea bags	each	100	22
	Stock cubes, mixed	each	3 x 12	30
	Salt, iodated		500 g	5
	Tomato paste 50g	each	10	36
	Plain bleach		750 m ℓ	12
	Laundry soap		3 x 250g	24
				129

- Provides average of 9017kJ per person per day (2147 kCal). The total food energy per person is thus within recommended amounts.
- The percentage of energy as protein is 11.8%, recommended is 10 12%.
- The percentage of energy from fat is 22.3%, WFP recommend >15%, WHO goal is 15 30%.
- The remainder of energy is carbohydrate 64.1%, WHO goal is 55 75% of energy: sugar as a percentage of the total energy is 10%, which is the recommended maximum.
- Total R2202.00: 2 adults and 2 teens for 4 weeks (prices July 2021, Durban).