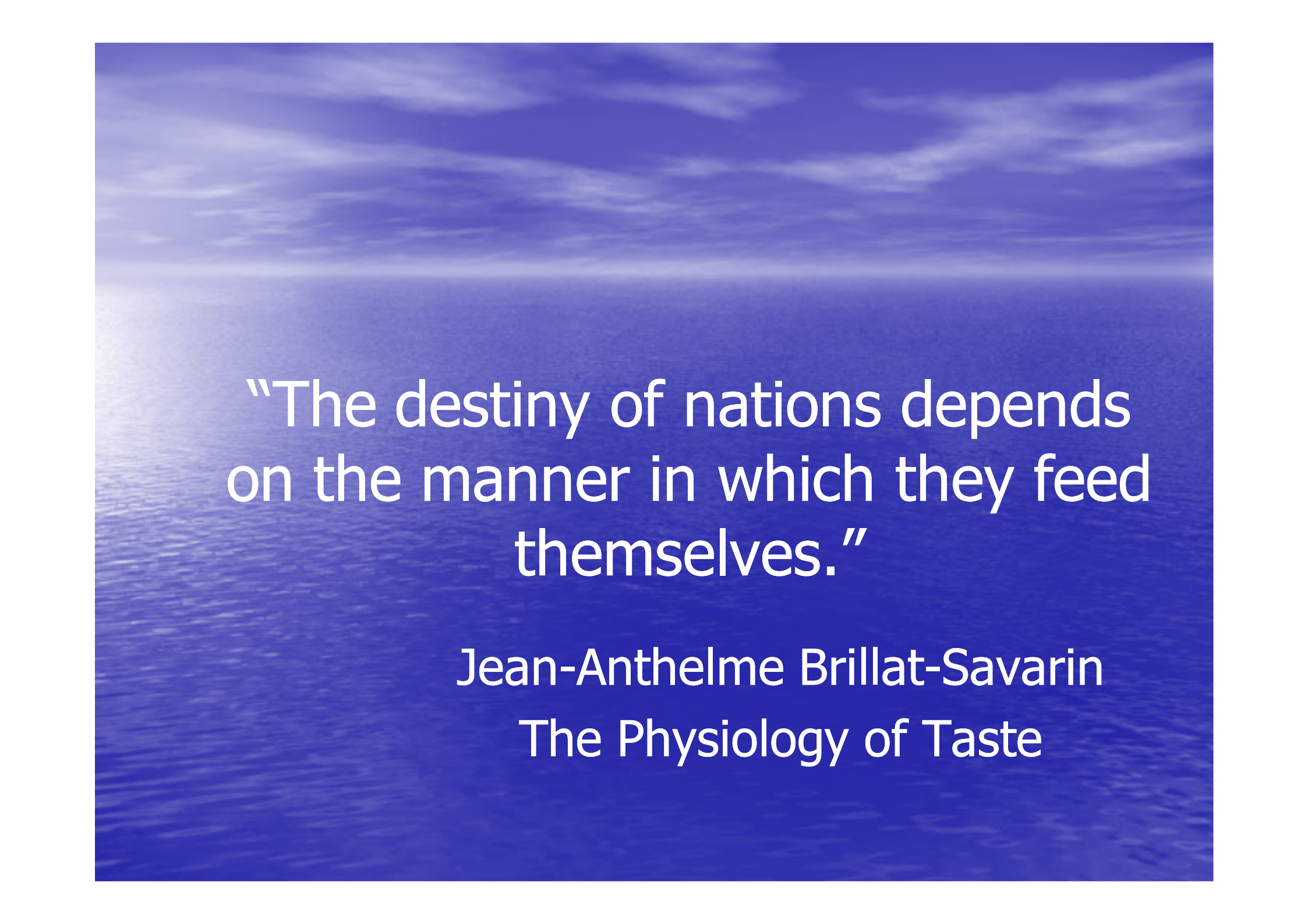


# Is Food Security a Strategic Priority for South Africa ?

Milla McLachlan, PhD

Full Circle Connect

DBSA Knowledge Week 2008



“The destiny of nations depends  
on the manner in which they feed  
themselves.”

Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin  
The Physiology of Taste

# Why focus on food?

- Both basic and complex
- Our technical language - distancing and abstract
- Globally, renewed concern about food systems – food prices, food safety, sustainability of the food system.
- In Africa, the concerns are more immediate and urgent: it is the only continent that is not feeding itself today, and where malnutrition improvement has stagnated

# DBSA Research Initiative on Food Security

- Part of a comprehensive study on food and water security in South and Southern - DBSA Board Approved Research Agenda
- Multiple perspectives – Initiative seeks to
  - construct alternative FS scenarios, based on available research; and
  - explore policy and program options and innovations to ensure FS in the region in context of regional and global economic and environmental challenges

# Four broad themes:

- Is FS a strategic priority for South Africa?
- The food system –
  - Agriculture through a food security lens
  - Sustainability and the food supply chain
- Institutional Arrangements for FS in SA
- Engaging the population in making FS a national priority

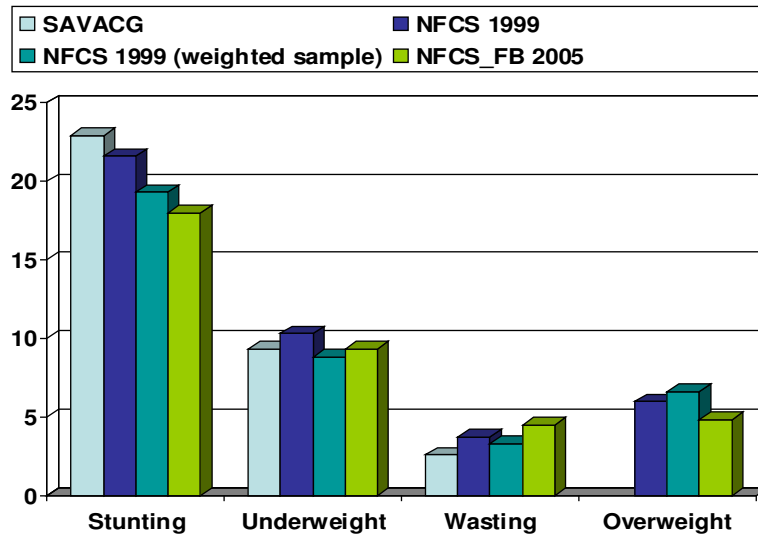
# Food Security Definition (s)

- Availability, Access/acquisition, Utilization
- Both quantity (energy) and quality (protein / micronutrients)
- Safe, culturally acceptable
- Sustainability

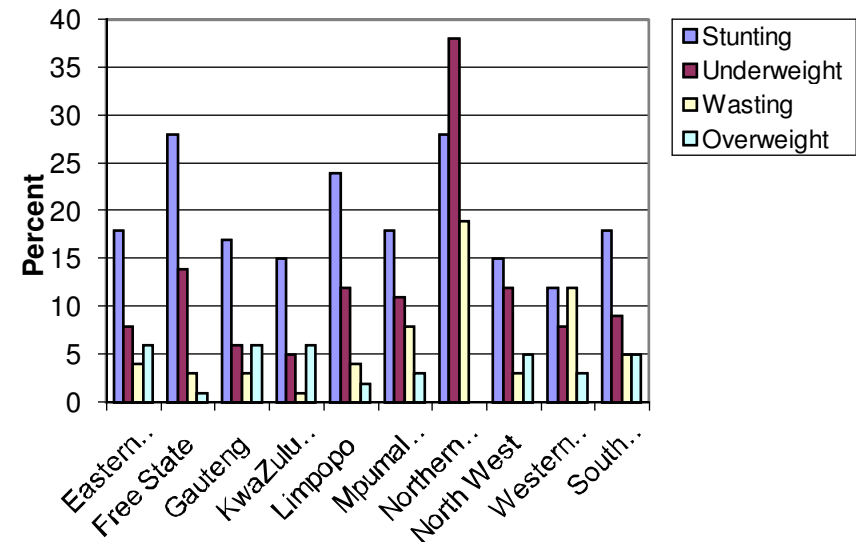
# Some facts to think about...

- MDG 1: halve the proportion of hungry people by 2015
- World Food Summit: halve the number of food insecure people between 1990 and 2015
- On current trends (business as usual) Africa will increase number of Food Insecure people from 190 to 265 million

# Child malnutrition South Africa

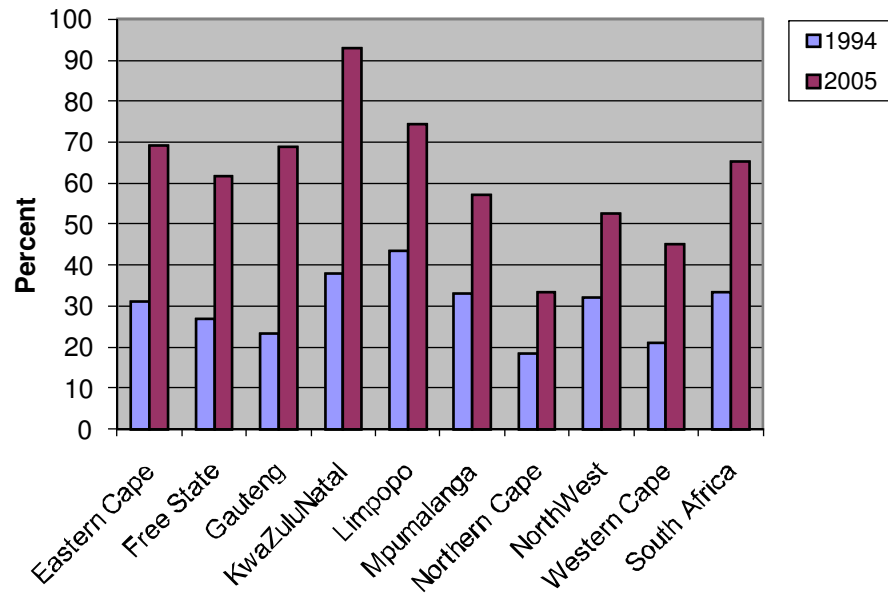


Child Malnutrition South Africa 2005

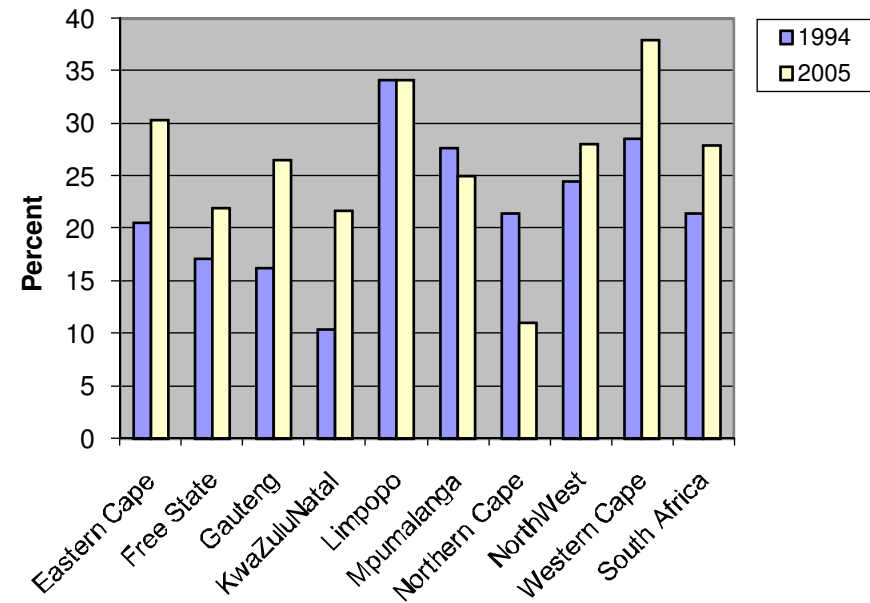


# Micronutrient status: Children

Vitamin A deficiency (<20 ug/dL), Children, 1-5 yrs

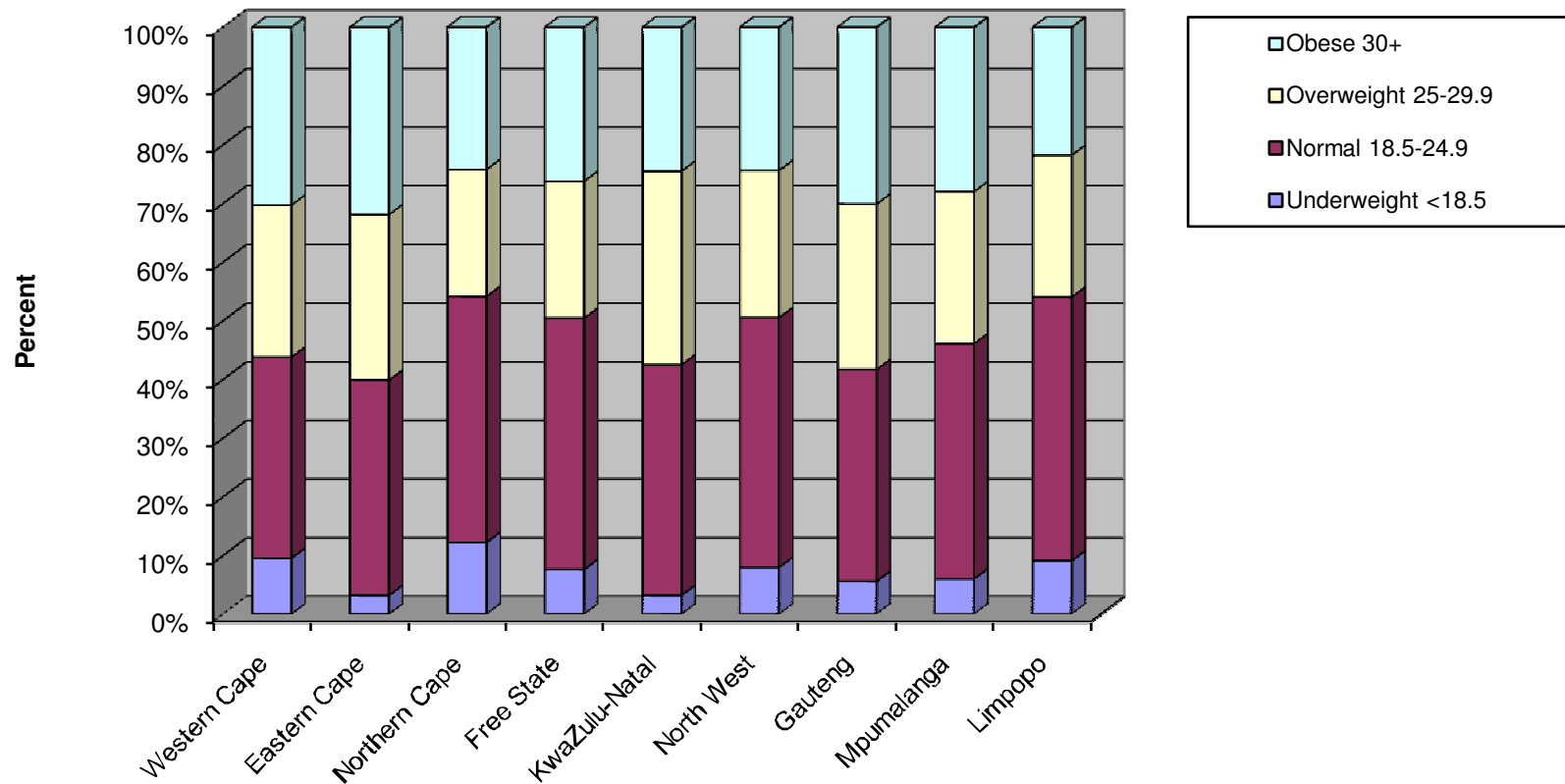


Anemia in children 1-5 years (Hb <11g/dL)

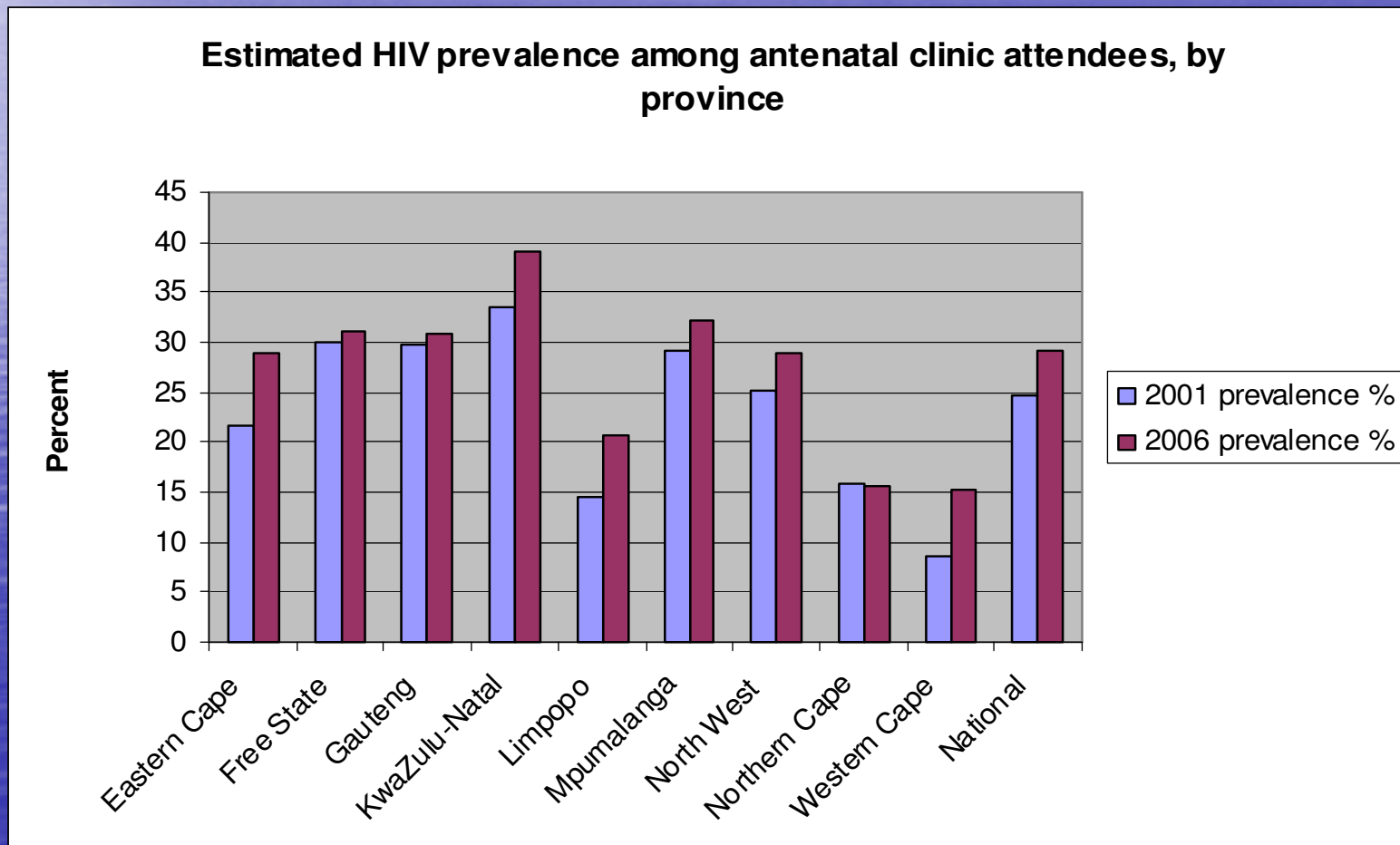


# The other food insecurity

Body Mass Index by Province: Adult women



# HIV Prevalence Rates



# Food Security: A Strategic Priority?

- How do we know an issue is a strategic priority?
  - When the issue has implications beyond its immediate focus; and
  - Those in power allocate significant resources to it, and
  - Measure whether action is having an impact, and
  - Adjust action to ensure a successful outcome.
- Is Food Security a Strategic Priority in South Africa today?
- Should it be?

# Arguments for FS as a Strategic Priority:

- The ethical argument
  - Right to food enshrined in the SA Constitution
- Efficiency arguments:
  - Human development relies on adequate nutrition
  - Economic growth relies on adequate nutrition
  - The agriculture sector can have a key role in equitable employment-generating economic growth
  - National food security – and self-reliance in food production and processing – can increase nation's resilience in the face of global economic upheavals
- Sustainability arguments
  - A secure, self-reliant food system is less vulnerable to shocks from international economic and environmental upheavals – a more resilient nation.

# South Africa's Policy Commitment to Food Security

- Right to Food in the Bill of Rights
- Integrated Food Security Strategy (availability, access, utilization)
- Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS)
- Wide range of economic and social welfare policies in support of realizing the Right to Food
  - Social grants
  - School feeding
- Some progress, but not nearly enough....
  - 50% households self-reported hunger
  - Stagnating nutrition improvement
  - Slow progress on land reform and restitution
  - Declines in agricultural productivity

# Right to Food

- Section 27 of Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution of 1996
  - “Everyone has the right to have access to ...sufficient food and water;....
  - The State must take reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of ....these rights.”

# FS: An Opportunity to Achieve Strategic Goals

Focusing on Food Security can contribute to:

- Addressing the core challenge of the developmental state: finding the balance between pro-poor, employment-generating economic growth, and social welfare through redistribution
- Re-establishing 'vital linkages' between leaders and ordinary citizens
- Re-engaging a broad cross-section of South Africans in a cause that matters to everyone
- Establishing South Africa's leadership in the sub-region, in the face of a new 'scramble for Africa'

# Why make FS a Strategic Priority?

- To achieve regional integration
  - Food insecurity has no respect for borders
  - SA can be an effective leader in FS in the region, by building agro-industrial linkages, maximizing comparative advantages of each country, building on strengths, opportunities in each country
  - Enhanced food security will increase peace in the region

# Why make FS a Strategic Priority?

- To ensure Resilience in the face of global economic and environmental challenges:
  - Recognize superpowers' overriding interest in the food security of their own people, and position SA accordingly
  - Do we need to rethink SA's position on food sovereignty and free trade in key commodities
    - what are the options and implications?

# Repositioning the food system as...

- Engine of economic growth,
- Source of greater equity,
- Focus for regional integration, and
- Foundation for resilience into the future

## REQUIRES

- Visionary, transformative leadership
- Involvement of all levels of society
- Collaboration among public, private and civil society organizations in sectors ranging from agriculture to health and education.