

Informal traders must be included in policy decisions, says alliance

The South African Informal Traders Alliance (Saita), at its National Executive Council (NEC) last week, highlighted its acute unhappiness about being excluded from critical policy decisions, laws and planning, and resolved to work tirelessly to ensure that informal traders across the country are taken into account by Government and the formal sector.



Credit: Rainer Halama via Wikimedia Commons

Rosheda Muller, national president of Saita, said, “All the resolutions adopted at our NEC are based on our motto, which is ‘Nothing about us, without us.’ For too long, the informal trade has been an afterthought, and is simply forced to accept the policies, plans and laws imposed upon it by both local and national government, as well as the formal sector. This is often to the detriment of the informal sector, which as we know employs and provides an income for millions of people in this country.

“The jobs we create and support are just as valuable as those of the formal sector; they also put food on the table and pay for our children’s schooling. The lack of regard for the specific circumstances, concerns and needs of the informal sector were highlighted this year when the Covid-19 pandemic hit us, along with the lockdown.

“Going forward we are determined to be the authors of our own destiny. To do this we have resolved to proactively engage with stakeholders, wherever and whenever possible, about any issue or matter that impacts our sector, to ensure that any decisions, policies or new laws are inclusive of, and support the growth and success of the informal trade, and do not damage it in any way.”

Key resolutions proposed by Saita include:

1. Inclusive relationship with the Department of Small Business

- In February 2020, the Department of Small Business launched the Township and Rural Entrepreneurship Programme (TREP). The Department never engaged with Saita regarding TREP and it is implementing Regulation R204, forcing informal traders to formalise their business before they are eligible to apply for TREP. The effect is to make it impossible for most informal traders to apply for TREP, said Saica. The only exception is the fruit and vegetable hawkers who can apply to TREP for R1,000, without formalising.

- The NEC has resolved to meet with the Minister of Small Business to raise concerns, discuss the requirements and find a compromise that will work in practice.



Informal traders urged to apply for grant

23 Nov 2020



2. Covid-19 relief for the informal trade

- The Alliance said it remains deeply concerned that there is no relief available for the informal traders across the country, despite the devastating economic impact it has had on the sector. During President Ramaphosa's speech when he announced the R500bn bailout, he mentioned that they would look at how to assist informal traders. "Despite many attempts to engage with the Presidency and writing to request a meeting, all we have received is a pro forma letter of acknowledgement," Saita said.
- Consequently, the NEC has resolved to organise a march to the Union Buildings to present the memo to the President.

3. Harm reduction policies for the informal trade

- Saita said it supports the principle of a healthier citizenry, and believes that policies, interventions and products that can reduce the harmful impact of certain consumer products must be supported and endorsed.

• The Alliance said the sale of cigarettes is a key driver of sales in the informal market, however, it also understands that the world is moving away from traditional cigarettes to less harmful products. "As Saita, we dare not be left behind. Inclusivity and affordability are key to integrating these products into the informal market, and to ensuring both our traders and customers have access to them. For this to happen, we need informal market traders and consumers who are educated about and understand the benefits of harm reduction," the Alliance said.

- Therefore, the NEC has resolved to: Seek opportunities to educate both traders and consumers about the benefits of harm reduction; seek opportunities to provide access to harm reduction products to both traders and consumers; and seek to influence regulatory and tax policy that will support the integration of harm reduction into the informal market.