



WORKERS WHO PRODUCE FOOD CANNOT BE CONDEMNED TO HUNGER: FAWU DEMANDS THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE 28 SUNBAKE WORKERS

The Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) condemns the dismissal of 28 Sunbake workers in 2023 over allegations relating to the implementation of a workplace bread-allocation agreement.

FAWU aims to clarify the facts. The workers were entitled to bread under a union-employer agreement. The dispute isn't about workers accepting bread they weren't entitled to, but about claims that some workers took more than the agreed amount.

FAWU maintains that the dismissal of 28 workers in these circumstances was grossly disproportionate, economically destructive and socially insensitive.

Workers who bake the bread must never be condemned to hunger.

The Sunbake dismissals expose a deep contradiction in South Africa's economy: workers produce food and generate wealth, yet many remain poor and vulnerable to hunger. Rising food prices, transport costs, electricity tariffs and other living expenses continue to deepen economic insecurity among working-class families.

The dismissal of these workers did not only affect 28 individuals; it deprived entire households of income and plunged families and communities into further hardship. For almost three years, the affected workers and their families have borne the devastating consequences of losing their livelihoods.

FAWU rejects attempts to criminalise the workers and portray this matter as simple theft when there was a recognised agreement that entitled workers to receive bread.

The central question remains: Can an allegation that workers exceeded an agreed bread allocation justify the economic destruction of 28 workers and their families?

FAWU's answer is an unequivocal No.

Discipline in the workplace must be fair, corrective and proportionate. The employer had alternatives available, including engagement with the union and progressive disciplinary measures. Instead, the ultimate sanction was imposed.

THE SUNBAKE STRUGGLE IS A FOOD-JUSTICE STRUGGLE

The Sunbake case is not merely a disciplinary dispute. It speaks directly to the inequalities within South Africa's food system, where workers participate in every stage of food production and distribution but often struggle to afford the very food they produce.

FAWU believes that food justice cannot exist without economic justice, and economic justice cannot exist while workers who create wealth are denied a fair share of it.

FAWU DEMANDS:

1. The immediate reinstatement of the 28 dismissed workers.
2. Good-faith engagement between Sunbake, FAWU and the affected workers to reach a fair resolution.
3. Recognition that an agreement existed entitling workers to receive bread.
4. A review of the bread-allocation system and workplace benefits through meaningful engagement.
5. Disciplinary practices that are fair, corrective and proportionate.

FAWU welcomes the solidarity of the Union Against Hunger (UAH) and all progressive organisations committed to fighting hunger and defending the dignity of the working class.

FROM SUNBAKE TO SHOPRITE: ONE FOOD SYSTEM, ONE WORKING-CLASS STRUGGLE

The struggle of the Sunbake workers is connected to FAWU's broader campaigns throughout the food value chain, including the union's campaign involving Shoprite.

The food economy must not become a chain of exploitation where workers are exploited in production, distribution and then confronted with unaffordable food prices as consumers.

Should Sunbake and RCL Foods fail to take meaningful steps to resolve this injustice, FAWU will mobilise working-class communities in support of a consumer boycott of Sunbake bread and related products.

FAWU WILL PICKET AT THE SAHRC FOOD SYSTEM HEARING

FAWU will picket outside the South African Human Rights Commission's National Investigative Hearing into South Africa's food system in **Braamfontein on Friday, 10 July 2026.**

Our message is simple:

- A discussion about hunger cannot take place without discussing wages.
- A discussion about food prices cannot exclude the workers who produce and distribute food.
- A discussion about food security cannot ignore workers who lose their livelihoods in disputes involving food.

The 28 Sunbake workers will not be forgotten. Their struggle forms part of the wider fight for an economy that places human dignity before corporate power and social need before profit.

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