Work & Sustainable Livelihoods Where People Live

Presentation by A.M. Mashilo on Work and Sustainable Livelihoods as a Key SACP Manifesto Priority

Jack Simons Party School

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Sustainable livelihoods

CONCEPTUAL FRAME

A general definition and a Marxist critique of capitalist livelihood deficits

1 GENERAL MEANING

A livelihood combines people's capabilities, assets, activities and access to resources used to secure the necessities of life.

It is sustainable when it can withstand and recover from shocks, maintain or enhance its resource base, avoid undermining other livelihoods and provide opportunities for future generations.

2 MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

Sustainable livelihoods require democratic control over land, labour, nature, technology and the social surplus, with production organised around human need rather than private profit. From this perspective, livelihood deficits are structural outcomes of capitalist accumulation.

3 THE DEFICIT MECHANISM

1. Labour and nature create value
2. Surplus is privately appropriated
3. Wealth and productive assets concentrate
4. **Precarity and ecological risk deepen**

MARX ON CAPITALIST ACCUMULATION

"Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital."

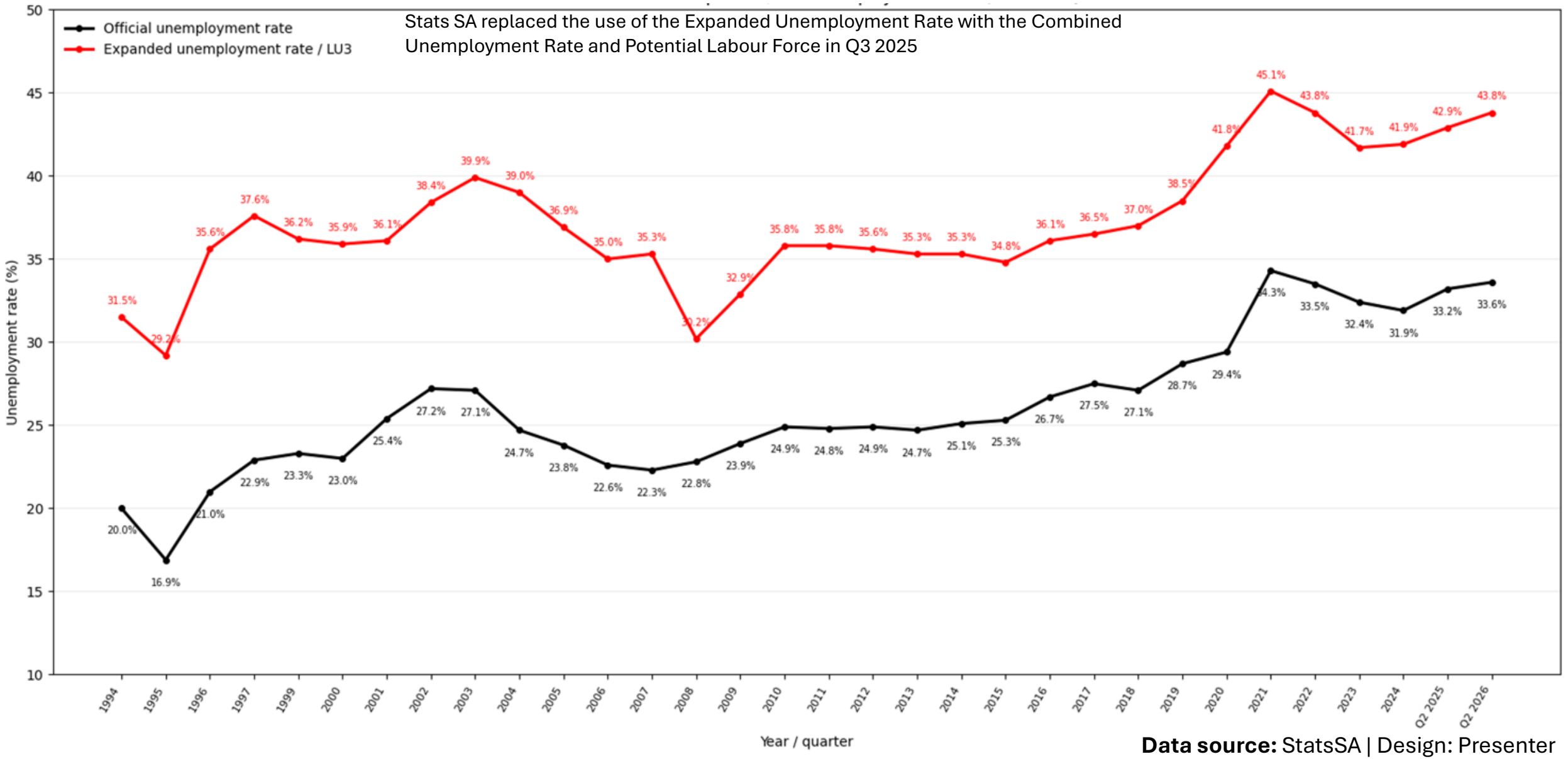
Karl Marx | Capital, Volume I, Chapter 25, Section 4 | Moore–Aveling English translation

Core implication: livelihood insecurity is reproduced through the same accumulation process that concentrates wealth.

Policy lens: pair resilience with redistribution, decommodified basic services, secure access to productive assets and ecological limits.

Why the right of all to work and sustainable livelihoods?

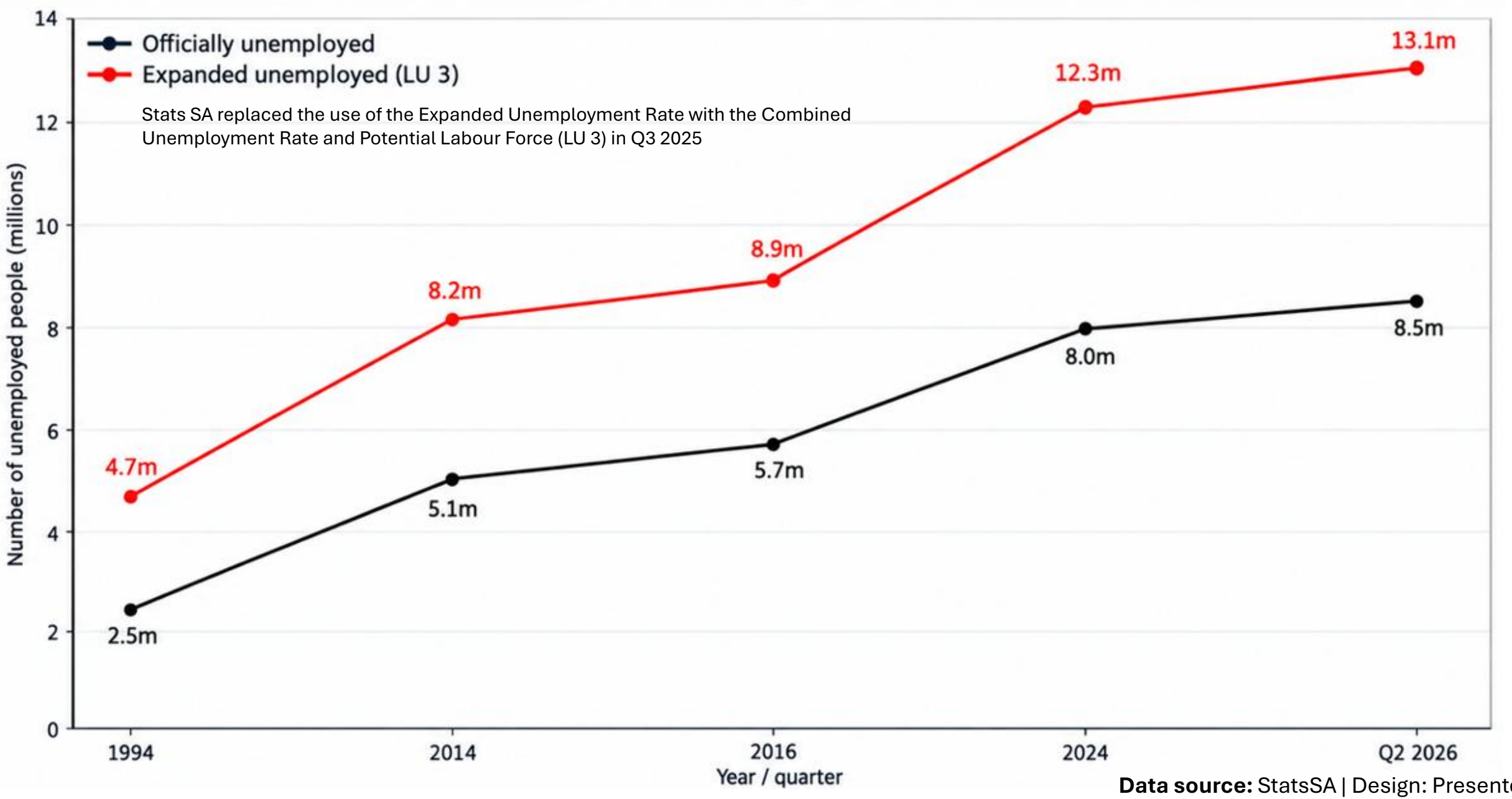
Context: Persistent structural unemployment crisis and long-term policy failure



Data source: StatsSA | Design: Presenter

Context | Why the right of all to work and sustainable livelihoods?

Context: millions of people affected by the unemployment crisis



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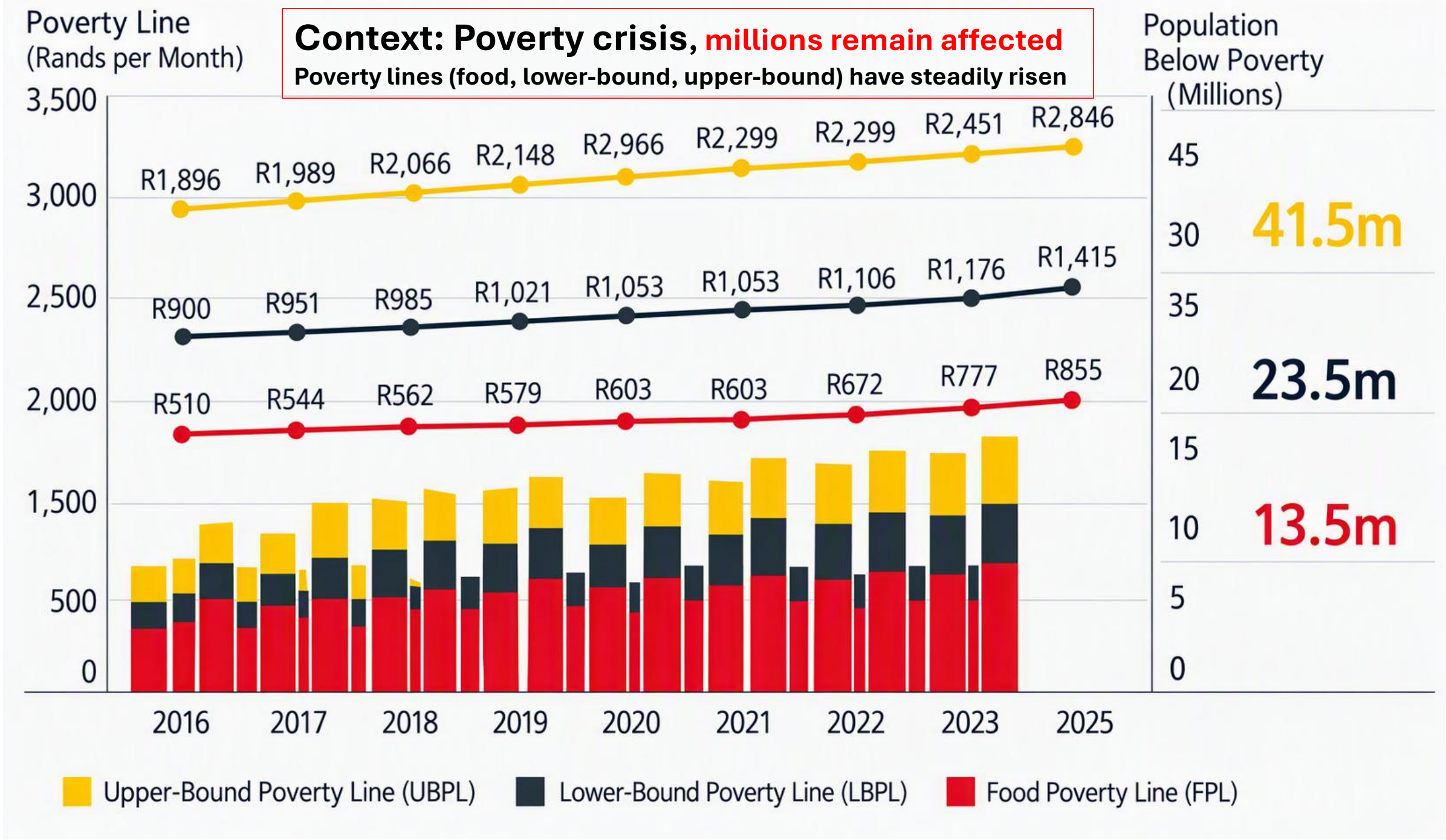
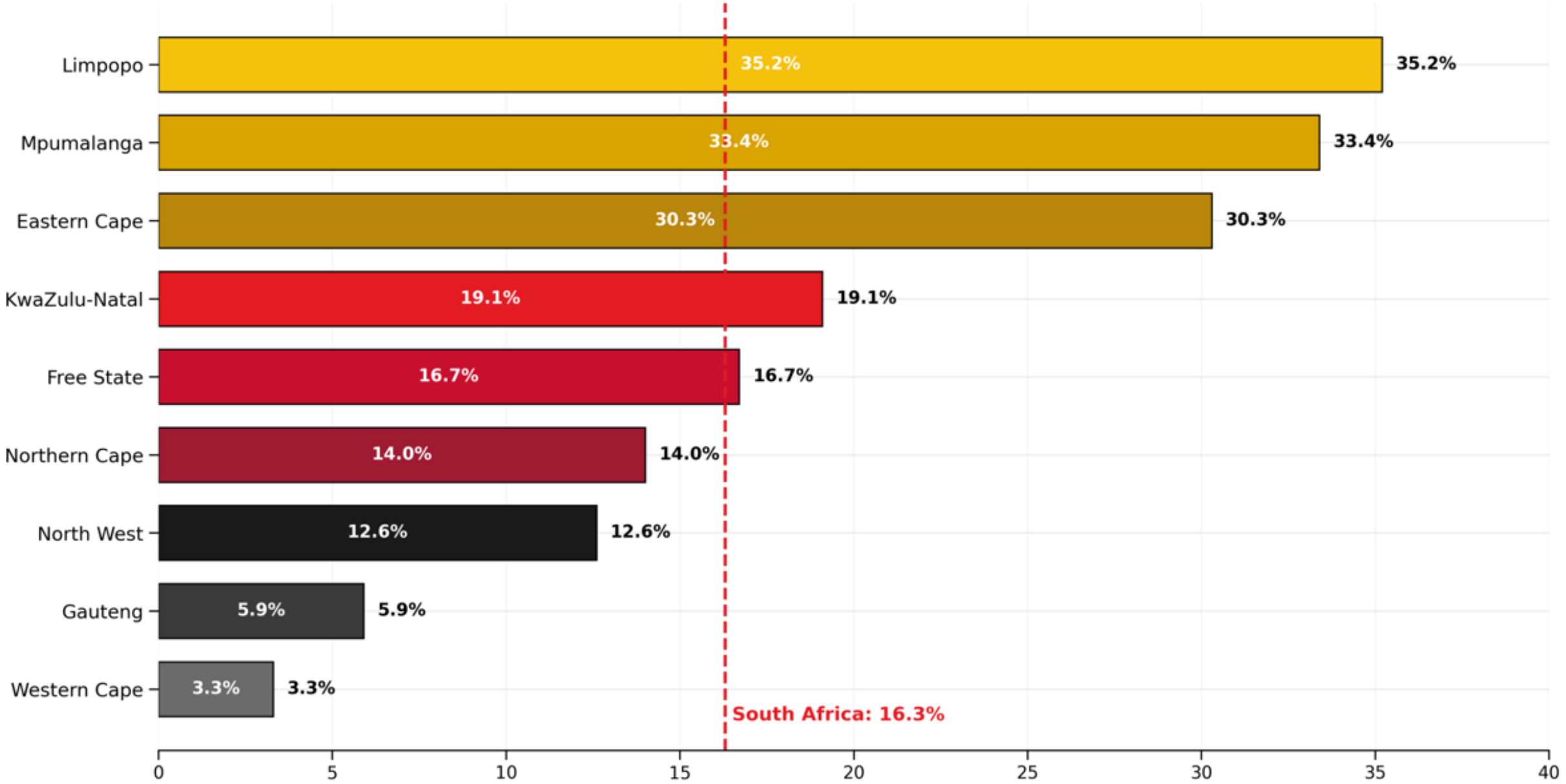


Data source: StatsSA | Design: Presenter

Census 2022: Households Producing Food by Province



Data source: StatsSA | Design: Presenter

A people's economy built where people live

Municipal power connects productive assets, skills, democratic ownership and resilient infrastructure

YOUNG PEOPLE AS PRODUCERS

Youth Affairs Centres; co-operative development; technical and vocational training; apprenticeships; innovation support; financial education; access to procurement and productive assets.

CLIMATE WORK

Repair stormwater systems; reduce leaks; protect rivers and wetlands; rehabilitate land; plant trees; recycle; build climate-resilient infrastructure; expand public and community-owned renewable energy.

LOCAL VALUE

PUT PUBLIC ASSETS TO WORK

Publish asset registers; review leases; protect strategic public property; use suitable idle land, farms, markets and workshops for food production, markets and social purposes.

BUILD THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Support worker, consumer, agricultural, housing, transport, energy, recycling and care co-operatives. Connect them to land, buildings, water, energy, equipment, finance, skills and markets.

Decent work is key to sustainable livelihoods

The manifesto defines work as livelihood, dignity, participation and collective development

THE RIGHT TO DECENT WORK

Every person willing and able to work should be able to access decent, productive and socially useful work.

- Fair pay
- Safe conditions
- Social protection
- Freedom to organise and bargain collectively

Sustainable livelihoods mean income and work that support households and communities over time, not temporary survival.

A MUNICIPAL DECENT WORK PLAN

Identify socially useful work in infrastructure maintenance, cleaning, greening, food production, recycling, care, early childhood support, community safety and public services. Include persons with disabilities through reasonable accommodation and equal access.

TOOLS MUNICIPALITIES CAN USE

Public employment • insourcing • procurement • land • infrastructure • municipal enterprises • co-operatives • apprenticeships • training

PATHWAYS, NOT DEAD ENDS

Expand public employment linked to visible community work; publish fair recruitment criteria; create pathways from temporary work into skills, co-operatives and permanent employment; link apprenticeships and artisan programmes to municipal technical needs.

A SOCIAL GUARANTEE

The right to work must never be used to deny social protection or basic services to unemployed people, those unable to work, or people carrying unpaid care responsibilities.

Protect workers and keep wealth circulating locally

The manifesto extends sustainable livelihoods to informal, platform and organised workers

RECOGNISE EVERY WORKER

Informal traders, waste pickers, home-based workers, transport workers and digital platform workers sustain local economies.

Provide secure trading space, water, sanitation, storage, lighting and transparent permits. Protect workers from harassment, unlawful confiscation and arbitrary platform deactivation. Ensure fair pay, safe conditions and the right to organise.

BUILD COLLECTIVE POWER

Establish municipal labour forums and Trade Union and Worker Support Centres.

Defend collective bargaining and fair access to municipal facilities for worker education. Act against labour broking, casualisation and disguised subcontracting. Protect basic leave benefits and intervene early when workplaces face closure or retrenchment.

THE WORKING-CLASS TEST

1. **How much decent work will this create or protect?**
2. **What wages, rights and conditions will workers have?**
3. **Will workers be free to organise?**
4. **How will it strengthen local productive capacity?**

The results must be published before approval.