



MEDIA RELEASE

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NATU WELCOMES THE DISCONTINUATION OF INCAPABLE SCHOOL FOOD SUPPLIER

The National Teachers' Union (NATU) noted and accept the announcement made by KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education on the 26th of April 2023, that the contract of the incompetent school nutrition service provider, PACINA Retail (PTY) LTD is terminated.

Earlier on the day, NATU noticed the email communication from the CEO of PACINA Retail (PTY) LTD, Mr Zungu, advising the Head of Department (HOD), Mr Nkosinathi Ngcobo about their decision to 'opt out of the NSNP Contract, subject to the payment of costs incurred in the provision of NSNP services'. In this regard, we take it that PACINA is referring to the 'poor' service which resulted in no deliveries in the first week of school reopening as well as expired and rotten food they supplied to schools afterwards.

The Department issued KZN NSNP Circular 60 of 2023 confirming the withdrawal of PACINA Retail from NSNP and advised that they are now reverting to the original system of supply and delivery of food items to schools. The Circular provides that 'service providers are advised to procure, supply and deliver food items to the cluster of schools where they are awarded with effect from Tuesday, 2nd of May 2023.' They further advised the service providers to approach Ithala bank for financial assistance.

Over the past three weeks, NATU has come guns-blazing in condemnation of the centralized procurement system and demanded full-blown investigation into the awarding of this multi-million rand tender. We called on the Ministry of Basic Education to intervene and ensure consequence management. We wanted accountability on the Executive authority about the rationale for changing the decentralized procurement system. Successful bidder, PACINA failed to provide food for more than 2 million poverty-stricken pupils across the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Our call for accountability was premised on continued disturbance of schooling programme and violation of children's right of access to food and nutrition. The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) was introduced to alleviate hunger, malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Through this initiative, the system of education has managed to reduce learner absenteeism and drop-out. School nutrition programme enhances learner focus and active participation in learning activities.

During this crisis, on the 20th of April 2023 MEC Mbali Frazer tabled the budget vote for her department wherein she presented that they have budgeted R2,089 Billion for NSNP in 2023/2024. We expected the MEC to address outstanding issues including unpaid 30% Other LTSM to schools for 2022/2023 as well as unpaid Grade R Fund allocation for 2022/2023. Until today there are qualifying educators who have not received their 1,5% pay progression. Today, 28th April 2023 is the pay date for Grade R practitioners, it is disheartening that we have received reports that they were not paid on time, again. The MEC was pictured visiting schools 'monitoring the nutrition programme in her desperate attempt to display that the programme is functional and that schools were receiving food items, instead of dealing with incapable supplier.

"NATU appreciated the intervention of the Minister of Basic Education. Whilst we welcome the preliminary findings into the irregularly awarded contract and the subsequent termination of same, we demand consequence management. The authorities in the Department of Education can't deprive poor children food for three weeks, disturb teaching and learning and temper with the children's right of access to food, and get away with it. This is taxpayers' money and we expect that it be used prudently within the framework of legislation. Reinstatement of old system is welcome and for the sake of our children we plead with school principals to cooperate and be available to receive food items despite deliveries being done over the weekend. NATU will monitor if deliveries of food items are made timeously and that all children have food from the 2nd of May." NATU President, Mr SV Malinga commented.

**ISSUED BY NATIONAL TEACHERS' UNION
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