

# Agriculture lends a helping for Mandela Day

Mandela Day, celebrated on 18 July, is synonymous with caring. Food security and the well-being of rural communities are aspects that farmers care about and attend to on a daily basis. Continuing on this, OVK, the Red Meat Producers' Organisation in the Free State (FSRPO) and Free State Agriculture (FSA) as well as the local farming association will be reaching out to the Feed a Child project in Wepener on 17 July 2015.



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The project started in 1988, and it provides nutritious meals to about 500 children in the community three times per week. Bettie and Johan Meiring, a mother and son combination from the town, originally started the project to make a difference in the poverty of the local community. Most of the children, who receive assistance, are orphans, children from single parent homes or who are raised by their grandparents. Many of them were born in Lesotho, and as such they were not registered in South African at birth. This means that they do not qualify for grants.

OVK has supported the project since the beginning of 2014. They've also helped the project managers, Meiring and William Wessels, to erect nine vegetable tunnels where the children are taught to grow their own food so that they are able to help themselves and possibly their communities in future. "We find tremendous joy in aiding Feed a Child to supply a decent meal to a hungry child," says Manie Botha, chairperson of the OVK Board of Directors.

The day's initiative will include a hot dog braai with all kinds of treats to be shared with the children. OVK will sponsor the bread, the FSRPO the boerewors and FSA the treats. Neels de Villiers, chairperson of the FSRPO, says it is a great privilege to lend a helping hand. "We also want to expose the children to red meat, as it is our product and our pride. To reach out to the less fortunate is an obligation and privilege that we realise on a daily basis and that we want to live by."

"It is great to see farmers and the sector's caring embodied in such an initiative. I think our farmers give so easily despite challenging seasons and uncertainties, because they know hardship and want to help," says Henk Vermeulen, chief executive officer of FSA.

Roelf Jacobs, chairperson of FSA's Social Welfare Committee, says when it comes to the well-being of a child, you cannot distinguish between my child and yours. "We all cherish our country's children, because they are South Africa's future." According to him a child needs love, acceptance and food in his or her tummy. "If we can tend to one or all three of these aspects on a day like this, we've made a difference in a child's life."

Anyone with enquiries about the Feed a Child project, is welcome to call them at 051 583 1889.

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