

AfriSam brings food sustainability to rural community

A year ago, women from Rethabiseng, outside Bronkhorstspuit in Gauteng, were struggling to make a living off the sales of their chickens to the local community. Today, just twelve months on, a multi-million rand enterprise development initiative from AfriSam will see these women's dream of having a good income from sustainable farming come true.

This innovative project is aimed at providing sustainable economic development and diversification in the communities where AfriSam operates and forms part of AfriSam's investment into community enterprise development under the mantle of their Social and Labour Plan.

AfriSam is working together with social enterprise Food & Trees for Africa (FTFA) to develop this commercially viable organic farming community project. FTFA's programme, Farmer Eco-Enterprise Development (FEED) Africa provides farmers with training, mentorship, operational support and marketing assistance nurturing successful long-term social enterprise development from farm to local market, supermarket and hopefully the international market as well.

Economic impact is staggering

The produce from this inspiring initiative is already being sold, some of it still in the ground, resulting in earnings of around a million rand for the co-op members in their first year of operation. The social and economic impact on the whole area, once so poor and food insecure is staggering, particularly when considering the short time frame involved. The dedication of the co-op members, as well as their clever market sense to grow produce such as five varieties of gourmet lettuce, makes this project a space worth watching.

Under the partnership, FTFA is working with the Rethabiseng local subsistence farmers to develop farming co-operatives to deliver organic yield at the required volume and quality of production necessary to establish a commercially viable agricultural enterprise. In addition, the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, impressed with what they saw, installed pack house and cooling facilities on the premises.

Time is ripe for transformation

FEED Africa programme manager, Quinton Naidoo says the time is ripe for a new agrarian transformation. "The need for food security and sustainable livelihoods among the poor is crucial. FEED enables emerging farmers to join the mainstream agricultural economy and the opportunity to replicate similar projects across South Africa can have a significant impact on poor communities and their sustainability."

With the corporate investment of organisations such as AfriSam, FEED Africa not only has the ability to change the lives of emerging farmers across South Africa today, but with the long-term sustainability of the projects, these lives remain changed indefinitely.