

Naspers Labs boosts agriculture skills with SA Harvest

A group of 10 post-graduate individuals, formerly unemployed, have recently embarked on an extraordinary venture from Lusikisiki, Eastern Cape, to Tzaneen, Limpopo province, courtesy of food rescue and hunger relief organisation, SA Harvest entrepreneurial incubator initiative. The initiative, backed by Naspers Labs, is dedicated to providing young talents with the essential skills and knowledge required to emerge as self-sustaining agri-food entrepreneurs.



Source: Supplied

These 10 students have taken an incredible step towards transforming their lives and making a significant impact on their local community. Their week-long training programme, facilitated by Agricolleges International, focused on providing them with a National Certificate in Plant Production, a crucial step toward agricultural management and entrepreneurship.

Addressing systemic causes of hunger

SA Harvest's founder and CEO, Alan Browde, emphasises the importance of integrating charity feeding with practical solutions. Browde says: "To achieve SA Harvest's mission of ending hunger, it is essential that the charity feeding concept is integrated with finding practical solutions to the systemic causes of hunger, and our Lusikisiki branch does this in action."

Since February 2023, the 10 youths, all post-graduate students who were previously unable to find employment, have been working at the Lusikisiki branch of SA Harvest, receiving hands-on training and experience in logistics, warehouse management, and other aspects of SA Harvest's food rescue operation, along with practical training on plant production.

The second phase in their educational journey was their participation in the officially accredited National Certificate in Plant Production programme delivered by Agricolleges in Tzaneen. After a year of hands-on experience at SA Harvest, these students will be equipped to start their agri-food businesses. This initiative aims to create a sustainable cycle by continually training new cohorts of students and expanding into other provinces and areas.

Gaining hands on experience

The National Certificate in Plant Production programme provides students with a comprehensive understanding of

agricultural management, team supervision, quality assurance, and decision-making. Graduates of this programme will have the skills necessary to specialise in plant production, maintain high standards, and contribute to the agricultural sector while accessing various markets.

Sarie Espach, course facilitator and QMS manager at Agricolleges, highlighted the practical aspect of the programme as a significant highlight for the learners. They gained hands-on experience in farming on a larger scale than they were used to, and also benefited from life skills training, improving their ability to communicate and collaborate effectively.

Espach adds: "These students were unbelievably grateful for the opportunity they received, and their humble approach to things will enable them to go back to their own environment and implement what they learned and hopefully transfer that knowledge in an impactful way to the community they work and live in."

Nomsa Nombiba, one of the Lusikisiki graduates enrolled in the SA Harvest entrepreneurial incubator, shared her experience and ambitions, emphasising the motivation she found in the diverse group of young people dedicated to taking agriculture in South Africa to new heights. She says: "Most of us are motivated to start our own farms, give back to the community, and make a difference."

A life-changing journey from Lusikisiki to Tzaneen

Victor Mpofu, Johannesburg operations and HR manager, who accompanied the students on their journey, expressed their newfound knowledge and determination to apply what they've learned in Lusikisiki. He noted that they are eager to take their new skills and experiences back to Lusikisiki, an area in desperate need of intervention.

The initiative is not only transforming the lives of these ten young individuals but also promises to have a lasting impact on the agricultural sector and the communities they serve. By equipping young entrepreneurs with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in agriculture, the initiative is making significant strides toward ending hunger and unemployment in South Africa.

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