

# Women-in-Maize celebrates first harvest season

A multi-million Rand investment by South African Breweries (SAB), Department of Small Business Development and the Agriculture Research Council (ARC), Women-in-Maize, which supports the empowerment of women-run maize farms, began its first successful harvest season.



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Harvesting on the 11 participating cooperative farms began at the start of May and will end in mid-June, following the planting season in November 2015.

## Addressing challenges

The Minister of the Department of Small Business Development, Lindiwe Zulu has adopted Women-in-Maize as one her department's flagship empowerment programmes.

Women-in-Maize is aimed at addressing some of the challenges encountered by smallholding emerging farmers in rural and township communities, such as access to market, entry into big business supply chains, access to finance and participation in the formal economy. Participating Women-in-Maize farmers are assisted with skills improvement, financing, training and access to markets, most importantly being included in SAB's supply chain.

"This initiative is an example of how much we can achieve when government and the private sector work together. We are

confident that this partnership will help us defeat the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality on the long-term. My department is determined to empower women-owned enterprises to participate meaningfully in the economic mainstream. The task of ensuring that the Ekangala Cooperative and others across the country grow and thrive, rests on our collective shoulders,” says Zulu.

Minister Zulu commended SAB for its contribution and urged others in the private sector to follow this example.

## **Ekangala Primary Cooperative**

Ekangala Primary Cooperative, a 100% women-owned and run business, is one of the first participants in the Women-in-Maize programme, which saw a total of 11 cooperatives with more than 120 women farmers plant non-GMO yellow maize on a total of 1,800 hectares of land in Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and the North West, in late 2015.

Run by a total of five female members, Ekangala Primary Cooperative initially specialised in poultry and vegetable farming before participating in Women-in-Maize. The cooperative has since planted, for the first time since beginning operations at least five years, on their total 45 hectares of land anticipating a minimum of four tonnes per hectare. Previous to Women-in-Maize, only fifteen hectares of the land was used yielding an average of one tonne per hectare.

It is anticipated that in total the 11 cooperatives will supply SAB with approximately 9% of its total maize requirement, or 13,000 tonnes of maize. This result has been achieved despite the widespread drought experienced by farmers across the country. “We understand and recognise that while agriculture provides the livelihood of thousands in our rural communities, it can be a great challenge for the smallholder farmer to advance beyond basic subsistence farming and enter into the commercial supply chains of big businesses. We work with small-scale farmers to overcome these challenges while ensuring land is used responsibly, food supply is secure, biodiversity is protected and crops can be accessed at reasonable prices,” says Monwabisi Fandesio, SAB executive director corporate affairs and transformation.

## **SAB’s strategic sustainable development framework**

The Women-in-Maize initiative forms part of SAB’s strategic sustainable development framework, Prosper, introduced in late 2014. Prosper takes a targeted approach towards building strong South African communities and highlights tangible targets to be achieved by the company over the next five years in the areas of responsible alcohol consumption, securing water resources, reducing waste and carbon emissions, supporting small enterprises, including emerging farmers, and the support of responsible and sustainable land use for brewing crops.

Through Prosper, SAB is committed to accelerating growth and social development through its value chains by supporting more than 30,000 small enterprises, including within the agricultural sector. Further to this, the business will support the responsible, sustainable use of land for brewing crops by creating secure, sustainable supply chains and by helping small-scale farmers increase profitability, production and social development through its sustainable agricultural initiative, Go Farming, of which Women-in Maize is a part.

Prosper and its underlying socio-economic development initiatives are well positioned to make a meaningful contribution towards national government’s Nine Point Plan, specifically its goal towards “Unlocking the Potential of SMMEs and Cooperatives”. Additionally, SAB’s focus on growth and development of agriculture as a means of creating sustainable jobs supports government’s National Development Plan’s Vision 2030 seeking to create one million jobs within the sector, most especially in rural areas and townships.

“Over recent years, SAB has up-weighted its investment in the local agricultural sector, with a particularly focus on developing, through several support streams, emerging black farmers and women farmers as seen through the Women-in-Maize programme.

“By sourcing raw materials directly from farmers in South Africa, SAB is establishing local supply chains which help reduce costs, improve efficiencies, create jobs and ultimately, strengthen local economies,” says Fandesio.

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