

Shoprite equips Lenasia community with small scale farming skills

Mlungisi Mathebe, a horticulture lecturer, started the Zitshalele Outreach Programme in Lenasia to create awareness about caring for the environment and the benefits of planting crops and growing trees.

He believes small scale farming is key to addressing food security and as such a partnership with Shoprite, who has been supporting food garden programmes since 2015, was a natural fit.

Mathebe explains how Zitshalele's food garden training programme came about. "I wanted to get the community members to learn these skills, instead of them being dependent on government and handouts."

Shoprite's support includes 18 months of hands-on permaculture training, which includes soil preparation, making compost and mulch, seed saving techniques and more. Around 15 community members involved in the Zitshalele Outreach Programme have benefitted from these workshops.

"Initiatives like this empower people and more can come from these small projects that will ultimately help our environment," says Mathebe. "Our climate is in trouble."

Registered as an NGO, the Zitshalele Outreach Programme has been given an additional two hectares of land in Meyerton, where they are planning on sharing their knowledge and skills with the community. "We've identified around 20 people who we believe we can upskill and who can work in that food garden with us."

"Shoprite acknowledges that community food gardens can play an important role in food security and hunger relief in our communities. We help community members to sustain themselves and their families, by providing seeds, seedlings and water infrastructure in addition to the food garden training. We know that these food gardens also provide communities with some resilience against a changing climate," said Sanjeev Raghubir, Sustainability Manager at the Shoprite Group.

Hunger relief and food security are at the core of the Group's corporate social investment programmes. The retailer currently supports more than 175 community food gardens and over 3 400 home gardens, which impacts almost 53 000 beneficiaries. In the past year, more than 2 700 community members were trained in sustainable food gardening, assisting them to grow nutritious and organic food.

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