

Harvesting change: Shoprite's R1-million food garden competition launches

Across South Africa, small pockets of green hope are rewriting the story of hunger, one harvest at a time. From city centres and rooftops, to rural villages and township corners, schoolyards and church plots, neighbours are joining hands to grow food and friendships.

Now, Shoprite is shining a light on community gardens through the inaugural [Act For Change Food Garden Competition](#), a national celebration of these local heroes growing change from the ground up.

With collective prizes of R1 million in the form of support tailored to each garden's needs, this competition aims to recognise community food gardens' contribution to local nutrition, environmental sustainability, and community upliftment. And beyond simply acknowledging their efforts, the competition sets out to join hands with these gardens, helping them grow stronger and make an even greater impact in their communities.

Celebrating the power of community

Over the past decade, Shoprite has invested in almost 300 community gardens as part of its commitment to tackling food insecurity and promoting sustainable livelihoods in the communities in which it operates. Together these gardens produced over 106 000 kg of fresh produce last year. But they do more than put affordable food on the table. They also help people develop agricultural skills and earn an income by selling surplus produce.

"We believe that lasting change starts at the grassroots," says Sanjeev Raghubir, Chief Sustainability Officer at the Shoprite Group. "By investing in community food gardens, Shoprite is not only increasing access to fresh, nutritious produce but also equipping local communities with skills and opportunities."

The [Act For Change Food Garden Competition](#) is open to all community gardens, whether independently run or currently receiving support from any local businesses in SA, like Shoprite, that support food gardens.

Each winning garden will receive tailored support in line with its specific needs – whether it be irrigation systems, shade netting, fencing or training for members.

The first-place winner will receive support to the value of R225 000, second place R200 000, and third place R170 000. The fourth, fifth, and sixth prize winners will each receive R150 000, R130 000, and R120 000 respectively.

Why food gardens matter now more than ever

According to the recently published [South African Food Security Index 2025](#), food access and affordability remain among the country's most pressing challenges. Even though the Index

improved from 44.9 in 2023 to 56.5 in 2025, millions of households still struggle to access nutritious food.

Community gardens offer a powerful solution. They don't just feed people, they uplift them. These gardens increase access to fresh produce, build local skills, and foster shared responsibility, helping communities grow stronger.

Stories of growth and grit

Across South Africa, countless gardens tell stories of determination and hope.

In Orange Farm, Gauteng, Zama Ndlovu and her team of 16 members feed over 200 people. They are also contracted to supply vegetables to hospitals including Chris Hani Baragwanath and Tembisa. With Shoprite's support, the Vukasechaba Massive Fresh Produce Co-op installed irrigation systems, enabling them to expand the garden size and increase the quantity and variety of crops. This transformed the garden into a sustainable business.

"This journey started with a few women and a big dream," says Ndlovu. "We wanted to do more than survive. We wanted to grow."

Nomxoliswa Makhabane founded the Ekuqaleni Genesis Farm in Botleng, Mpumalanga, turning a small lockdown garden into a thriving hub that now feeds over 150 people. Shoprite's investment in shade netting, tunnels, and permaculture training helped her team of six gardeners grow both a livelihood and a legacy.

"Seeing how our produce benefits people and introduces them to healthy, homegrown food keeps us motivated," says Makhabane, a former construction worker now studying agriculture.

These are the kinds of stories the Act For Change Food Garden Competition celebrates – real people driving real change, one seedling at a time.

How to enter

To enter, participants should:

- Be 18 years or older
- Represent a community-based food garden (private home garden, private companies and close corporations are not allowed to enter)
- Include a short description of the garden's history, purpose, and community impact
- Upload photos of the garden as part of the entry

Entries close on 30 November, and winners will be announced early in 2026.

Enter online here: <https://actforchangefoodgardencompetition.datafree.co>

WESTERN CAPE

In Khayelitsha, Cape Town, the Neighbourhood Old Age Homes (NOAH) garden offers nourishment and connection for elderly residents. It produces spinach, carrots, and herbs for daily meals, while serving as a social space for seniors.

“Gardening brings so many benefits – it’s not only about food, it’s about friendship and belonging,” says Anne Dobson, Head of Sustainability at NOAH.

The garden has been supported by Shoprite’s Act For Change programme since 2019 and has received fencing, shade netting, and permaculture training.

FREE STATE

The Dikonyana Community Based Care Center in Mangaung’s Namibia Square is more than a garden – it’s a lifeline. The garden was founded by Selina Majafi in 2004 and then suffered a setback. But in 2012, Majafi revived the project with support from Shoprite and Commonwealth Handling Equipment Pool. The garden now has fencing, shade netting, and a water-harvesting system, feeding over 130 people five days a week.

“The support from the community and partners like Shoprite keeps me going,” says Majafi. “Seeing the joy on people’s faces reminds me that our work truly matters.”

KWAZULU-NATAL

The Siyaphambili Women’s Club in Umgababa on KwaZulu-Natal’s South Coast has become a source of friendship, mentorship, and food security for female farmers in the area. Each woman tends her own plot on the 2.5-hectare site, growing fresh vegetables to feed her family and sell locally.

Through Shoprite’s Act For Change programme, the group received tools, seeds, compost, and 18 months of permaculture training. They also received a new water-harvesting system to sustain their crops year-round.

“Shoprite has given us hope,” says founder Nonhlanhla Mkhize. “Their support proves that what we’re doing matters. It motivates us to keep growing.”

EASTERN CAPE

At Victory Christian School in Tsolo, an unused plot of land has become a thriving community garden and vital food source for learners and residents. With Shoprite’s support and the dedication of six project members, the garden now provides the school’s nutrition programme with organic produce. Since 2020, Shoprite has helped the garden install rainwater-harvesting systems and providing permaculture training. The initiative forms part of Shoprite’s long-term commitment to promoting food security and sustainable livelihoods across South Africa.