

## **A truly South African recipe for business success: women-led, handcrafted, earth-friendly – and creating local jobs**

A passion for natural ingredients sparked the creation of Antjie's Handmade Naturals - a proudly South African bath and body brand that continues to draw attention for its locally made, handcrafted product, now stocked in 34 Checkers stores across the Western Cape.

Affectionately known as Antjie, founder Nicolene Gericke started making soap in her kitchen to create a gentle, natural alternative for her sensitive skin. "In 2002 I made a New Year's promise to myself to start making my own soap – something I already had an interest in," she recalls. "It was something practical, and something I really enjoyed doing."

Today, Antjie's operates from a dedicated facility on Stanford Hills Estate in the Western Cape, employing a team of 15 across production, packaging, admin, retail, and logistics. Most of the employees are women, trained in-house and involved in every aspect of the business — from design and marketing to shopfront sales.

The business also supports up to 50 women across the Western Cape who crochet, bead, and hand-craft custom packaging using sustainable materials.

"Everything is handmade - from soap cutting to packaging - and that allows us to keep a personal touch in every item, while creating jobs and opportunities for women in our rural community – one of our most important values," says Nicolene.

Antjie's joined Checkers' SMME programme and was initially listed in 10 stores in March 2023. That number has since more than tripled.

"I can say Checkers is a retailer that truly cares about SMMEs and the community at large. We've dealt with many large companies, and none have shown the level of support and guidance that we've received here."

"Ongoing engagement, technical support, and hands-on guidance from the Checkers team have been instrumental in helping us grow our footprint, create more jobs, and explore new product lines," Nicolene adds.

The product range draws on local ingredients and traditional recipes offering a bath and body experience that's kind to one's skin and the earth. This includes artisanal soaps, boerseep laundry bars, bath salts, fizzers, teas, and its signature shower sachets - soap wrapped in a cloth-like pouch for easy use and gentle exfoliation.

Nicolene's son, Christoff, plays a key role in packaging and innovation: "When we created the shower sachet, we saw how innovation could drive sales," he says. "We design everything in-house, right down to the 3D moulds."

"We love what we do, and we love what we've created. We hope others feel that when they use our products," expressed Nicolene.

"We're grateful for how far we've come - and even more excited about what lies ahead".

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