

## **How one Mpumalanga women's passion is supporting over 150 people**

The Ekuqaleni Genesis Farm, founded by Nomxoliswa Makhabane, is transforming lives in Botleng, Mpumalanga, by providing fresh food to over 150 community members and supporting the local economy by also supplying nearby vendors and businesses.

Makhabane's journey into agriculture began with a small home garden during the COVID-19 pandemic, sparking a passion for sustainable food production and prompting her shift from construction to farming.

In 2021, she established Ekuqaleni Genesis Farm, a venture rooted in her commitment to improving food security and enriching her community. The following year Makhabane enrolled in agricultural studies to deepen her farming knowledge.

"Seeing how our garden's fresh produce benefits the community and introduces them to a variety of fruits and vegetables is deeply rewarding," explains Makabane. "It reinforces the importance of our work and motivates me daily."

Makabane's hard work was recognised by Shoprite's [Act For Change programme](#), that supports over 250 community food gardens in Southern Africa. From February 2023 the supermarket retailer supplied the garden with essential infrastructure – including shade netting, a horticultural tunnel and a water harvesting system.

Garden members have also received 18 months of hands-on permaculture training (a design approach that aims to create more natural and therefore sustainable living spaces), along with training in working with seeds, seedlings and fertilizer – strengthening the farm's ability to provide high-quality produce.

The garden is maintained by a dedicated team of six local community members, providing these gardeners with a source of income and purpose. Looking to the future, Makhabane aims to implement a profit-sharing model, providing each member with a percentage share in the garden's success.

"Community gardens like Ekuqaleni Genesis Farm play a vital role in helping vulnerable communities alleviate hunger by improving food security and self-sustainability," says Sanjeev Raghubir, Chief Sustainability Officer at Shoprite.

"They are an essential part of our commitment to addressing hunger and food security which are the Act For Change programme's core focus, enabling communities to cultivate self-reliance through food gardens."

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