

Skills development project makes a big difference

The ongoing partnership between Checkers and a rural community in the Eastern Cape's Amathole District led to the establishment of 58 homestead gardens, thus ensuring food security for the wider community.

The supermarket chain took hands with members of the Empumelelweni project in Goshen in 2017 by supporting their efforts to improve the community food garden at the Goshen Primary school.

Initially produce from this garden only benefited the 45 Empumelelweni project members of the project. But once the garden started providing food security for more community members, villagers requested support with planting homestead gardens using permaculture techniques.

Training workshops for the wider Goshen community commenced earlier this year at the community hall, with the practical application of new skills taking place in the food garden at the primary school. The training was offered by implementation partner Food & Trees for Africa (FTFA) and support from Checkers also included providing gardening tools as well as marketing and sales training.

The homestead gardeners who reached their six-month goals were rewarded with items such as water tanks, seedlings and mesh fencing at a recent prize-giving event.

Mxolisi Mankunti won the first prize which included a 5 000-litre water tank, five bags of builders mix, five bags of concrete and guttering. "I am very happy with my prize. I used to work at the school garden, but now I'm retired and I need the equipment to start my own garden. I still help at the school and I'm still going for the workshops. We are learning so much about permaculture and I want to teach the children at the school," he said.

Permaculture involves the development of agricultural systems that are sustainable and self-sufficient. They reflect the ecosystems found in nature and take water management into consideration.

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