

Homestead gardens benefit many in Eastern Cape

Despite the crippling drought in the Eastern Cape, the Shoprite Group supports 82 homestead gardens in the province, benefiting 320 people.

Through the Group's extensive community food garden programme, enthusiastic members are identified and provided with a "garden in a bucket" starter kit which contains seedlings, hand tools, organic fertiliser and a training manual. Individuals are also invited to attend monthly training workshops presented by the retailer.

This offering, combined with the visible success of the Shoprite-supported food gardens in various communities, has resulted in more than 350 homestead gardens now producing fresh organic produce for households across South Africa.

"Our food gardens are increasingly generating additional benefits for the broader communities in which they are based - we call it the multiplier effect," explains Lunga Schoeman, the Group's CSI Manager. "We could never have anticipated this level of interest and growth in the satellite gardens."

The Group supports 15 community food gardens and 82 home gardens in the Eastern Cape, benefiting more than 2 500 people. A major success story is that of Paulina Ntontela from Goshen Village, near Cathcart, where the retailer distributed 20 "garden in a bucket" starter kits during 2019.

Utilising her kit, Ntontela started a nursery which has since blossomed into a flourishing small business. She now supplies fellow gardeners as well as Shoprite's implementation partner, Food & Trees for Africa, with seedlings and herbs.

"My herb garden is my pride and joy. Nothing makes me happier than working in it and now this garden not only feeds my family, but also provides us with an extra income. I'm very grateful to Shoprite for creating this opportunity for me," says Ntontela.

Another beneficiary is Fikile Khiva, a project member of the Checkers-supported garden run by the Varhoyi and Mgodleni Co-op in Nkageni Park near King William's Town, where 10 homes benefitted from "garden in a bucket" kits.

"It is a great initiative which has had a profound impact on our main garden," says Khiva.

"Having other gardens springing up around us was a great confidence booster for the co-op members. It showed us what we as a community are really capable of. The fact that we were doing it for ourselves drew the attention of government officials, which resulted in further support for the co-op's garden," he explains.

The Shoprite Group supports 108 community food gardens and more than 350 homestead gardens all over South Africa, benefitting more than 23 600 people as part of its hunger relief programme.

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