

Shoprite keeps small suppliers afloat during hard times

(7 December 2020) In a year punctuated by an economic meltdown, the Shoprite Group's commitment to its small suppliers have enabled these businesses to access new consumer markets and to retain much-needed jobs.

The Group works closely with SMEs to give them important access to the market. It continues to prioritise its support for black, woman-owned suppliers and create jobs.

For Portia Mngomezulu, the creator of Portia M skincare and cosmetics, the relationship with Shoprite has helped her grow her business significantly, from supplying a few stores in 2017 to 600 stores currently.

"What I like about Shoprite is that most of their stores are close to my target market, and my customers don't have to struggle to find my products."

"It has been such an advantage, as a woman, and as a SME, to be associated with them. It has been a great journey, and I know that what they did for me they do and can do with other entrepreneurs."

Bilqees Essa, the CEO of Comessa Foods, which makes a variety of flatbreads, says her company has had an amazing journey since the partnership started with Checkers in 2012.

"We have been honoured to have the opportunity with one of the biggest retailers in Africa, not just because we are a small supplier or a BEE company, but because of what it says about our quality. We also supply the Group with private label products and they would never take that leap of faith if they didn't feel our quality very good."

"We have been able to capacitate people who might not have been given the opportunity and we are giving them baking skills for life."

The relationship with the Group was critical during the coronavirus crisis. "If it wasn't for the retailers, I don't know what we would have done, as the hospitality and food service industry shut down."

Mpumi Motsabi's Toys With Roots, which supplies an exclusive range of African dolls, has gained access to market through its relationship with the Group.

"Without a relationship with a big retailer like Shoprite, we would be stuck in a space trying to do online sales. But with them being on board, we have been able to access new markets, and able to go to other parts of the African continent we wouldn't have been able to otherwise."

She says that the relationship has enabled the company to carry its message of self-love and affirmation "to many more people than it would have reached."

The Group cultivates its relationship with suppliers by:

- Visiting supplier operation sites and farms and meeting and corresponding with them regularly;

- Finding ways to ease logistical arrangements;
- Investing directly in their business; and
- Supporting small enterprise development initiatives.

The Group prefers to build long-term relationships and help suppliers build their businesses in line with its own growth, strengthening supply chains across its areas of operation.