

Eastern Cape learners taught the joy and benefit of gardening

Learners at three schools near Tsolo, in the Eastern Cape, are gaining hands-on experience about how to start and manage a food garden, with support from Shoprite.

Victory Christian School, Mount Frere Community School and Uloyiso Christian School all started their sustainable food garden projects in 2020.

“Our school yard was in a bad state before Shoprite came on board,” explains Harrison Sarfo, garden coordinator at Victory Christian School. “They gave us tools, manure, seedlings and helped to teach us about raising our beds when we first established the garden.”

Sarfo, who is also a teacher at the school, says that by the end of 2020 the outgoing Grade 9’s had learnt so much from their time spent in the garden. “They actually said they never thought that we could use the space for farming. They really enjoyed seeing the transformation and got to take some of the harvested vegetables home. The learners were so encouraged, that some of them wanted to start their own food gardens at home. We’re looking forward to involving this year’s Grade 9’s in the garden.”

At Uloyiso Christian School the Grade 6 learners tend to the food garden, while at Mount Frere Community School there is a gardening team which consists of teachers and learners.

Faced with the challenge of water scarcity in the area, Shoprite equipped Victory and Uloyiso Christian Schools with rainwater harvesting systems which consist of two 5 000 litre water tanks which are connected to the schools’ gutters.

The retailer has also provided all three schools with 18 months of intensive permaculture training. “We have gained a lot of knowledge on managing the food garden, and we’ve learnt about sales and record keeping. We’ve since been selling some spinach and we’re slowly generating income to reinvest in our garden,” says Sarfo.

The Shoprite Group has a robust programme in place to address the food security challenges faced by so many people across the continent on a daily basis. Through its support of more than 145 community food gardens, and 1 429 home-based gardens, the Shoprite Group fosters long-term food security and generates livelihood opportunities.

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