

Shoprite takes hands with Limpopo community to grow livelihood opportunities

Born out of the need to fight hunger and poverty in the Mamothinthane area of Limpopo, the Ratanang Agricultural Cooperative Limited is made up of 27 community members from neighbouring villages.

Shoprite recently partnered with this community food garden to foster sustainable food security and employment opportunities through the project.

“We focus on growing field crops on some of the land, like mealies, legumes, and ground nuts because we can depend on rainwater for these. But for our vegetable crops, like beetroot, tomatoes, spinach, cabbage, and others, we rely on borehole watering,” said Linah Mashangwane, one of the cooperative’s members.

Most of Ratanang’s income – from the sale of surplus fresh produce – was being spent on the borehole, but Shoprite stepped in to assist with their water infrastructure. The 18 months of training and mentorship offered by Shoprite has also been very beneficial, and equipped the cooperative to budget for expenses, adjust their product prices and ultimately increase their income.

“They gave us a business workshop about how to handle sales, which included record-keeping and how to generate a profit. This was very helpful because at first, we weren't making a profit and our expenses were more than our income,” explained Mashangwane.

“Community food gardens around South Africa have played an important role in food security and they have a significant socio-economic impact on communities, not only by empowering them to sustain themselves and their families, but also by creating independence,” said Judy Maluleka, CSI Manager for the Shoprite Group.

“Our priority is to ensure sustainability, therefore our support extends beyond just meeting the immediate food security needs of communities - it also helps people to generate incomes and transfer skills within the community,” added Maluleka.

Mashangwane says that they really enjoyed the [Shoprite and Checkers market day](#) opportunity at their local Shoprite store in March this year: “The market day was very profitable for us and we dream of being able to supply a supermarket on a more regular basis.”

Hunger relief and food security are at the core of the Shoprite Group’s corporate social investment programmes. The retailer started supporting one community garden in 2015 and now supports [more than 160 community food gardens](#) – like the Ratanang Agricultural Cooperative – and over 2 500 home gardens, which impacts almost 17 000 beneficiaries. In the past year, more than 570 community members were trained in sustainable food gardening, assisting them to generate an income while growing nutritious and organic food.

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