

The beauty of moringa changes farmers' lives

The Moringa Cooperative project is set to benefit 60 farmers from the Blouberg municipality in Limpopo. It is aimed at creating jobs, alleviating poverty and contributing towards the socio-economic development of local communities.



One of the farmers from the Blouberg municipality who will benefit from the project

The project is a strategic collaborative partnership between the De Beers Group, Botanica Natural Products, the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, which implements projects on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development), Old Mutual Limited and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC). Each of the partners is contributing towards sustainable development support, infrastructure or funding.

A ground-breaking agricultural project was established in November 2018. It is made up of three cooperatives, each consisting of 20 outgrowers, located within three local traditional areas in Alldays, Blouberg. The participating cooperatives are contracted to grow Moringa trees and supply the leaves and seeds to Botanica Natural Products, which produces organically certified and fairly traded active ingredients for cosmetics and nutraceutical producers.

The power of uplifting communities

Gregory Petersen, senior commercial manager ESD, De Beers Consolidated Mines, comments: 'We are pleased to partner in this project because of the difference it is going to make to people in our host communities, through capacity building and job creation. We are also looking forward to the future opportunities of the project, such as shared learnings and strategic partnerships.'

Will Coetsee, MD, Botanica Natural Products, adds: 'We designed this project to source better quality raw materials, which we can process and sell to our clients locally and globally. To date, we have imported Moringa seeds and leaves without having full traceability of the products we process. Through the success of this project, we will be able to have high quality, fully traceable ingredients to process and sell. This is also an opportunity for us to attract and retain highly talented individuals from surrounding communities. Employment opportunities in our communities are limited. By creating a successful and lucrative supply chain, Botanica will also be able to attract and retain better equipped and qualified personnel.'

Critical to the project is not just the provision of financial or infrastructural support but also the empowerment of the outgrowers through non-financial support programmes. These include a capacity building programme facilitated by GIZ, as well as 'train the trainer' workshops hosted within local communities. These workshops aim to equip the outgrowers with the necessary business development skills, acumen and agricultural training required. The cooperatives will also be assigned a mentor from De Beers, who will coach them on business and financial matters.

Gavin Watson, project lead South

Africa of the Employment for Sustainable Development in Africa Programme, explains: 'It is important from the perspective GIZ that knowledge transfer occurs within the community. Over the course of the project, we will be re-enforcing this with multiple trainings, workshops and mentorship support.'

A good plan for the future

The infrastructural phase of the project is currently underway, financed by the IDC, Old Mutual, De Beers Group and supported by Botanica Natural Products, to provide the participating farms with fencing, soil preparation and effective irrigation systems. The first set of Moringa trees are expected to be planted by March 2019.

'Old Mutual is an organisation that is driven on the mutually beneficial shared value principle of operating as a responsible business and ensuring that our interventions are sustainable, impactful and beneficial to all involved. We are delighted to play our part in this collaborative and exciting venture with our partners and look forward to once again demonstrating how through partnerships, collaboration and the benefit of economies of scale can enable us all to Do Great Things Every Day,' says Dianne Richards, enterprise development manager at Old Mutual Foundation.

Stephen Nel, senior local economic development manager for IDC, comments: 'The IDC is very excited local entrepreneurs now have the opportunity to create job opportunities in their communities. This will most certainly lead to the social and economic upliftment of their respective communities. Hopefully the partnerships formed between Botanica, GIZ, De Beers and Old Mutual will create a model we can roll out in future to many other communities in need of such interventions.'

DID YOU KNOW?

The project aims to initially create **100 jobs for every 20 hectares of Moringa trees planted**, with the intention to grow in scale, potentially creating a total **300 jobs by 2020**.