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Will Coetsee

Managing Director of Botanica Natural Products

INTERVIEW WILL COETSEE: "BOTANICA IS READY TO ENGAGE IMPACT INVESTORS"

Topics: [BoP as customer](#), [Employment](#), [Environmental Impact](#), [Inclusive business models and strategy](#), [Innovation](#)**Sectors:** [Agriculture or Food](#), [Health](#)**Country:** South Africa**Region:** Sub-Saharan Africa**Published:** 7. Jan 2016

We had a chance to catch up with Will Coetsee, Managing Director of [Botanica Natural Products](#). Botanica from South Africa is one of the businesses that participated during the [SEED/IBA Investor Forum](#) in Nairobi in September of last year.

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Hello Will, please pitch your Business?

"Botanica is an award-winning natural skin care business with double-digit growth since inception. Botanica is the first and only company to develop an extract from the indigenous South African plant, *Bulbine frutescens*. In 2015, Botanica launched an organic Moringa production facility. The company's products are sold to cosmetic producers in South Africa, West Africa and Europe."

What inspired you to start this?

"Coming from a remote, rural area of Limpopo Province in South Africa, where the unemployment and HIV rates are the highest in the country, and where 80% of people live below the poverty line, we decided to establish a triple bottom line business which could enhance the lives of everyone involved."

We realised that South Africa has a vast amount of untapped potential in its abundant medicinal plants and traditional knowledge. So, Botanica sought to identify and cultivate an indigenous plant, which could have a significant positive effect on the community, the local economy and all stakeholders involved in the project."

What problem are you solving?

"Globally, skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis and acne are the fourth leading cause of non-fatal disease burden (World Health Organisation, 2001). Skin diseases have a significant impact on quality of life and although mortality rates are generally lower than for other conditions, there is a real need for effective, affordable and organic remedies for skin conditions. Botanica's mission is to improve skin health by promoting the use of medicinal plants and traditional knowledge."

What is the innovation you bring about? What is the impact opportunity?

"Botanica produces innovative active ingredients, which have proven effects when applied to the skin or hair. The active ingredients are added into formulations of existing products as well as new product ranges.

Botanica provides a sustainable source of income to 25 staff from a remote, rural part of Limpopo. Seventy percent are previously unemployed mothers who earn a good living wage, receive access to medical care and family planning support. This positively impacts more than 120 people in the local community. Botanica has minimised its carbon footprint by planting 250,000 Spekboom trees, which capture carbon dioxide and converts it to oxygen 24 hours a day. Botanica's organic production methods ensure the preservation of biodiversity. By scaling the business, impact initiatives will be scaled accordingly."

What do you feel needs to happen to spur more innovation in 'green'?

"Green innovation requires a culture that encourages people to think in unusual and creative ways. Greater community awareness is necessary as is a more open dialogue between the public and private spheres about the problems and factors affecting different environments and sectors of the community. It is only when we start talking about the problems that we can find solutions."

Last year you've been part of the Green Pioneer Accelerator and the SEED Accelerator. How have these programmes helped you so far?

"Being part of the Green Pioneer Accelerator and the SEED Accelerator programmes has been an invaluable experience. Both programmes have expanded our professional network to include like-minded social and environmental entrepreneurs; raised Botanica's profile in the agri-processing sector; exposed us to a large group of potential investors; and provided us with practical skills on how to scale-up our business.

Through our involvement in the Green Pioneer Accelerator, we have carefully examined our company's vision and value proposition and developed exciting and aspirational goals for the next 3 years. As a direct result, we have received interest from more than 10 South African investors and potential business partners who heard about Botanica's work through the programme. Botanica has also been featured in national newspapers and magazines as a sustainable company to watch in 2016!

Although Botanica is still part of the SEED Accelerator Programme it has already proved to be an insightful and practical programme. The first one-on-one sessions with our SEED appointed business consultant have already helped to further shape the future of our company by breaking down the vision which was generated in the Green Pioneer Accelerator, into practical actions. As we expand and scale-up our business to new international markets over the next 12 months, we look forward to engaging with a wider network of clients, investors and stakeholders in order to implement sustainable solutions to local challenges. This has already yielded results in that Botanica has been invited to attend the largest cosmetic trade show in Europe through the Dutch Government's CBI Export Coaching programme.

The SEED Africa Symposium which was held in Nairobi in 2015 offered Botanica an opportunity to learn from network partners and to engage with impact investors that are interested in becoming involved with a social enterprise which is poised to make a quantum leap in achieving social and environmental objectives, and generating a healthy financial return to investors."

How have all these interactions helped you to grow the business?

"After completing the first SEED programme, Botanica grew our revenue by 2000% in 2014. During the Green Pioneer Accelerator and SEED Accelerator we have evaluated our company critically to ensure that we can achieve our social, environmental and financial objectives. Therefore, we are now ready to engage impact investors knowing that we have a unique product as well as an inspiring business model."

Visit the [venture profile of Botanica Natural Products](#) to learn more about the company. [Register as investor](#) on the IBA.ventures platform to get access to the fundraising information of Botanica Natural Products: Investment amount, self assessment quickscan, business plan and financial forecasting.

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