

## **Moringa Cooperative transforming lives of farmers in Blouberg Municipality**

Sixty farmers from the Blouberg municipality in Limpopo are set to benefit from the Moringa Cooperative project aimed at creating jobs, alleviating poverty and contributing towards the socio-economic development of the local communities within the province.



The project has been made possible through a strategic collaborative partnership involving 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 (BMZ), Old Mutual Limited and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC). Each of the partners in this collaborative project will contribute either towards sustainable development support, infrastructure or funding.

The Socio Economic Assessment of the area conducted in 2016, revealed that there was a need for empowerment in the local communities of Blouberg municipality, where high unemployment and illiteracy levels are prevalent. The need to improve food security was also identified. By empowering small scale farmers, for example, the project can assist in not only eradicating poverty by creating income-generating projects, but can also support the shared value benefit of providing more sustainable and regular food supplies for the local communities.

As a result, the ground-breaking Agricultural Project was established in November 2018. The project is made up of three cooperatives (consisting of 20 outgrowers each) within three local traditional areas in Alldays in the Blouberg municipality. The participating cooperatives are contracted to grow Moringa trees and supply the leaves and seeds to Botanica Natural Products. This is a Limpopo-based, family-owned company which produces organically certified and fairly traded active ingredients for cosmetic and nutraceutical producers in both the domestic and international market.

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 300 jobs overall within the three areas by 2020.

Gregory Petersen, Senior Commercial Manager ESD, De Beers Consolidated Mines, said: “We are pleased to partner in this project because of the difference it is going to make to the socio-economic upliftment of people in our host communities through capacity building and job creation. We are also looking forward to future opportunities this project will create through shared learnings and strategic partnerships.”

Will Coetsee, Managing Director, Botanica Natural Products, said: “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 which we can process and sell. This is also an opportunity for us to attract and retain highly talented individuals from the local communities. Currently, the 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 such as a capacity building programme which will be facilitated by GIZ, as well as running ‘train the trainer’ workshops within the local communities. These workshops aim to prepare 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 SA of the Employment for Sustainable Development in Africa Programme (E4D), said: “It is important from GIZ’s perspective that the knowledge transfer will be based in the community, therefore the capacity building and support of the selected trainers from the communities are of importance. Over the course of the project, we will be reinforcing the training with multiple trainings, workshops and mentorship support.”

The infrastructural phase of the project is currently underway, financed by the IDC, Old Mutual, De Beers Group and supported by Botanica 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.

Dianne Richards, Enterprise Development Manager, Old Mutual Foundation, said: “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.”

Stephen Nel, Senior Local Economic Development Manager for IDC, said: “The IDC is very excited that local people now have the opportunity to create much needed job opportunities in their communities. This will most certainly lead to the social and economic upliftment of their respective communities. The partnerships formed between Botanica, GIZ, De Beers and Old Mutual, will hopefully in the future create a model that we can roll out to many other communities in need of such interventions.”

**Source:** ByDesign Communications, Anglo American’s De Beers