

Rural development

Growing from a humble start to success

Situated 5 km from Ladybrand in the Manyatseng area, you will find a vibrant Agricultural Co-operative. From humble beginnings, a group of dedicated women who were farming vegetables in a small yard grew their project into a successful co-operative.

When the Mantsopa Agricultural Primary Co-operative was founded in 2001, their primary focus was using the hydroponics system of planting vegetables in sawdust as opposed to soil.

The trust's mission is to keep running an efficient and successful co-operative by growing good quality vegetables, generating enough income for its members and creating jobs for people of the Manyatseng community.

Funding

From 2005 to 2010, the co-operative received funding from the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CSAP), the National Youth Development Agency and MTN.

The funds received over the years enabled members of the co-operative to buy equipment that made their day to day operations easier and more efficient.

Office furniture donated by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development contributed towards finalising the implementation of the co-operative.

Land

The local municipality gave the Mantsopa Co-operative four hectares of land. This enabled them to move away from small-scale farming, as the demand for providing their markets with vegetables was rising. This also helped them to be on par with their competitors.

They are currently using 6 x 10 m x 30 tunnels and 1 x 10 m shade net to produce a variety of vegetables.

The members of the trust have received training from the Agricultural Research Council, MTN and the Department of Agriculture for various skills.

Future plans

With their newly acquired skills they hope to empower members of their community by sharing their knowledge and helping them to become better farmers, which will develop their skills and make them more employable.

"We hope to expand our co-operative by selling chickens and eggs and we plan to start an atchaar market. We are currently making vegetable atchaar, but would like to grow our output," said Maria Nkhokhe, chairperson of the Mantsopa agricultural Co-operative.

"Having started the co-operative with my own funds in 2001, I am really proud of what we have achieved and the dedication of all the members."

-Sekgabo Kedijang