



CASE STUDY

FOOD SECURITY THROUGH LAND CARE

Tongaat Hulett's commitment to creating value for all stakeholders through an all-inclusive approach to growth and development is being demonstrated through an innovative project that applies numerous SDGs. The pilot project demonstrates climate smart urban farming's potential to address the multiple challenges facing urban development in eThekweni Municipality, including pollution, unemployment and poverty.

As a result of coastal topographies, around 40 percent of land remains undeveloped as unmanaged open spaces, a site for pollution and informal settlement with limited access to services, resulting in increased pollution risk to open spaces, rivers, estuaries and the ocean. Urban farming is already widespread in these open space areas, but is generally done unsustainably, and often in wetland areas which are environmentally sensitive. The contaminated rivers mean that river water used in irrigation threatens safe and secure food supply for these communities. The model affirms the importance of looking after the land in order for the land to produce safe food.

Communities living in neighbourhoods along river catchments are assisted to form cooperatives and trained in land care through practical work, clearing alien vegetation, pollution, recycling, and propagating indigenous plants for restoration. Upon mastering this skill, they are then trained in organic farming, graduating as climate smart farmers, who are allocated a large open space area to manage as a concession for farming a limited footprint area for their benefit. To ensure that they are successful, unemployed environmental and agriculture graduates are appointed as extension officers to

provide technical support and links to the local commercial markets (hospitality and supermarkets) are facilitated. These climate smart farmers are producing to supply and not to sell, thus ensuring that they are protected from price competition with volume commodity producers. The initiative results in a win-win as the environment, neighbouring communities and graduates all benefit.

The AgriHub is run as an enterprise, responsible for managing both supply and demand for a specific area. It provides technical skills transfer and inputs to these farmers. A 12-month internship programme, guided by an agricultural scientist mentor, trains agricultural graduates in extension services while environmental interns are mentored by environmental consultants. Upon completing internships, graduates feed into government's land reform programmes which will benefit from this new breed of climate smart farmers supporting land reform beneficiaries.

The pilot project addressed oHlanga river pollution in a seven kilometre area, from the estuary to inland Ottawa/M41, resulting in the collection of 300 tons of waste, and established the Ottawa AgriHub. The project was implemented by Tongaat Hulett in partnership with eThekweni Municipality under the Department of Environmental Affairs' National Resource Management Programme.

The project is now being rolled out as part of the Government Radical Agrarian Socio-economic Transformation (RASET) programme where each river catchment will have several river valley small organic farming cooperatives all linked to an AgriHub.