

# Development programme empowers small-scale farmers with agricultural knowledge

Mavis Hlatshwayo, talking about the success of Farmer Development Programme (FDP) which empowers small-scale farmers to yield a better harvest and thus escape poverty, says: “No one in this community goes to bed hungry.”



Hlatshwayo is one of the beneficiaries of the programme, initiated by Grain SA in partnership with Monsanto and several other sponsors, which is aimed at developing sustainable black farmers, including black commercial farmers so that they can contribute to food security.

“I am so grateful for the programme, because in a country where millions of people go to bed hungry, I’m able to produce enough maize to feed my family. I can then sell the surplus to make some money for myself,” she said.

## Empowering farmers with knowledge

According to Magda du Toit, Monsanto’s communications manager, the programme aims to provide all farmers in rural South Africa with agricultural knowledge regarding good planting practices, sustainable

farming, business plans, planting techniques and the use biotechnology to achieve top yield. “It’s a great privilege for us to be part of FDP because we are passionate about emerging farmers. This is an opportunity for us to help change the lives of communities where the need is so high. We also bring hope into their lives,” says Du Toit.

Monsanto was one of the initial partners in the project together with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), and helped farmers with the latest technology in high-quality seed and chemical input.

Much of the success of the programme is due to demonstration trials which provide farmers with practical training and a step-by-step approach to crop production. This includes how to select the correct seed to plant and advice on the right time to plant, how to take soil samples to determine which fertilisers to use for the type of soil, how to plant the correct plant population and to spray the correct amount of water and chemicals to control worms from damaging the crop.

## The Developing Grain Farmer of the Year competition

Farmers can also be nominated for the Developing Grain Farmer of the Year competition. The competition is a measure to determine the cream of the crop based on their successful harvest whilst still part of the programme.

Several categories exist in which developing farmers can participate. These include:

- Subsistence category – farmers who are producing maize on less than ten hectares
- Smallholder category – farmers who are producing grain on more than ten hectares, but not yet reached the 250-ton mark
- New Era Developing category – farmers who are producing 250 tonnes or more.

Hlatshwayo has been nominated for the subsistence farmer category. She is hopeful that she will win because of her hard work and dedication to the programme.

*The competition is set to take place in October 2017 in Bloemfontein.*

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