

Inclusive procurement: New Score beverage empowers rural KZN farming community

South African beverage company Score Energy Drinks has introduced a new variant that includes the local super-ingredient, umhlonyane, sourced from the Kwa-Zulu Natal village of eDakeni. The new flavour introduces a unique home grown offering to the market - made by South Africans, for South Africans, using a unique South African ingredient.



Source: Supplied

Artemisia afra, commonly known as African wormwood or umhlonyane (in Nguni), has a long-standing history of healing properties, playing an important part in traditional medicine. This includes its role in tackling the symptoms of colds and flu, loss of appetite, colic, headaches and intestinal worms.

The ingredient is grown in the remote village of eDakeni in Mandeni, north of Kwa-Zulu Natal, where lies a community that has incorporated sustainable practices to increase the production of indigenous seedlings and medicinal plants.

eDakeni village has an exciting story to tell. The umhlonyane botanical has been a consistent source of income for this remote community that exists without infrastructure such as municipal water, roads, schools and primary healthcare facilities.



Zuplex-Score partnership

A newly developed community nursery project in the village is powered by Zuplex, a South African manufacturer of proven active extracts using African botanicals. Zuplex recently secured a partnership with South African energy drink giant, Score, that allowed the brand to introduce a new variant using eDakeni's crop of umhlonyane.

"The story of eDakeni is the one that really resonates with South Africans," says James Shaw, marketing manager at Score Energy Drinks. "It is a place of hope and hardship, struggle and scenic beauty, and homegrown inventiveness. In partnership with Zuplex Botanicals, we have been able to bring to light the men and women who helped produce our newest flavour and variant."

"As a rural economy catalyst, we aim to create opportunities for the community of eDakeni," says Shaw. "As a proudly South African brand, we wanted to develop a new variant that consists of a truly authentic South African ingredient, while creating jobs and supporting a local community."

Umhlonyane has also presented a new business venture to villagers in Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape.

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A community working together

“Despite that we live in isolation, we love it here,” says Zama Nzuza, a resident of eDakeni village. “This is our home and everything we know we have been taught by those who came before us.”

“The rich soil gives us life,” he continues. “We have found ways to ensure that we preserve indigenous seedlings and medicinal plants through our nursery project, where we propagate and plant back what we reap from our natural environment.”

According to Nzuza, the production of umhlonyane has given his community, which is mostly led by rural women, employment opportunities to feed their families. “Our farming methods ensure that we can secure income for our future generations,” says Nzuza. “Our community has made a choice to break bread together to overcome the obstacles that we face.

“Umhlonyane is the story of a community working together in unity in order to tackle our country’s economic challenges and obstacles,” says Shaw. “It speaks to Ubuntu and we are so proud of our collaboration with this inspiring community.”

Score Umhlonyane is available at leading online shops nationwide such as Takealot and major retail stores.

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