

# Spend Mandela Day on a farm in Cullinan

Vergenoeg Mining Company (VMC) and the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) are hosting a volunteer day with emerging organic farmers in Onverwacht, Cullinan on Thursday, 18 July 2013, marking Mandela Day.



Nelson Mandela once said, "I dream of the realisation of the unity of Africa, whereby its leaders combine in their efforts to solve the problems of this continent. I dream of our vast deserts, of our forests, of all our great wildernesses".

The event, in keeping with the spirit of the day, will allow for the community and its partners an opportunity to work together to experience planting, harvesting and the packaging of organic produce for market.

## Power of an individual

VMC, part of the Minersa Group from Spain, is a Fluorspar mine that has been in existence for 60 years. Through its social investment in the Onverwacht Communal Farming Association (OCFA), it has put into practice the ideas held by Mandela concerning the power of a single person or even a company to impact the lives of those who need it most. The project has been in existence for over a year now.

The farm is located just west of Pretoria in the settlement of Onverwacht which has a current population of approximately 1,500 people. The village has an unemployment rate of approximately 65% with the majority of people being unskilled. The 800 hectare farm is owned by 200 community members and employs and impacts a large number of people from the surrounding community. An 11 hectare vegetable farm with half a hectare under tunnels, produces vegetables for sale to local formal retail markets.

## Developing emerging farmers

The farm is managed by Food & Trees for Africa's Farmer Eco-Enterprise Development (FEED) Africa programme. FEED develops commercial organic vegetable farmers and farms taking unskilled and unemployed people through extensive training, providing on-site support and mentorship, and supporting them with sales and marketing services. Over a two to five year period the emerging farmers are developed to manage the farms entirely from maintaining good soil, water and plants, as well as infrastructure and equipment, through to getting their produce onto the shelves and managing their finances.

The challenge of addressing poverty is becoming urgent. The government has made this a critical priority to improve service delivery to the poor.

"Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings." - Nelson Mandela.

The private sector has joined forces with the government to address this critical issue through their corporate social investment programmes, and in the case of the mining sector, their social and labour plans aimed at improving social and community infrastructure and sustainable local economic development. This can reduce the dependence and vulnerability of the local population to the expansion and contraction of mining operations in South Africa. FTFA is working with the DMR and mining companies to implement emerging farmer programmes throughout South Africa.

Mandela's humanitarianism was a key motivation in the formation of FTFA.

"Back in 1990 when I founded FTFA to address greening, food security, climate change and sustainable livelihoods, Nelson Mandela's determination, focus and humanity inspired me to realise that we could achieve healthier people on a healthy planet," says Jeunesse Park, FTFA's founder.

For more information on this and or any of the other Nelson Mandela Day events FTFA is facilitating, go to [www.trees.co.za](http://www.trees.co.za) or call +27 (0) 11 656 9802/3.

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