

Eco-entrepreneurs look to legumes to build thriving food business

Plant-based eating is all the rage these days, but two young entrepreneurs knew the potential four years ago, when they developed a legume pasta in their home kitchen. At the time, they realised they didn't have a rolling pin and reached for an empty red wine bottle. After a happy dance to celebrate their new creation, the duo plotted to grow their business.



Taleszia Pillay & Candice Perkins from Happy Earth People.

A foodie with an innate calling to contribute to a better future for the planet and its people, Taleszia Pillay (30) says that Happy Earth People – now a local company producing a range of wholesome, superfood products – was born one night while she was meditating. “The why existed before the how. I just knew it was intended to be a platform for wholesome living on a healthy planet,” says Pillay.

Approaching school friend Candice Perkins (30), the duo set out to create a new health product offering legumes as their core ingredient.

“You cannot function at your best without the correct nutrition, so we wanted to make natural, whole foods more accessible and versatile to encourage more people to experience the benefits of good nutrition in a way that is sustainably responsible,” says Pillay.



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20 Feb 2019



She adds that legumes (or pulses) – including the dried pea, bean and lentil families – soon became an obvious choice.

“Not only are they a fantastic source of protein and fibre, full of iron and loaded with antioxidants, but we also believe pulses

are the nutritious superfood of the future. They may even be the answer to climate change-related food security concerns, as they need very little water to grow and are nutritionally jam-packed. Plus, they're soil enriching, leaving land even healthier after harvest," says Pillay.

After developing their recipes, Happy Earth People launched their chickpea and red lentil pasta in 2015.

The road to retail



The first to create these pastas commercially in South Africa, the duo set out to educate local consumers about the benefits of their then unheard-of new products at local farmer markets across Cape Town.

Retailers began to catch wind of their products and Happy Earth People grew as their products began to land on selected local and niche retailers' shelves.

This allowed them to start using bigger machinery and up-scale their capacity.

Having recently joined forces with one of SA's largest retailers, Happy Earth People products will now be available on the shelves of selected Pick n Pay stores.

On their ecopreneur journey, Pillay says, "There have been a few bumps in an otherwise beautiful road with a whole lot of lessons that we have learned along the way, some extremely tough but they have made us stronger and grown us as individuals and strong business women."

Primed for growth

The duo joined the Pick n Pay Enterprise and Supplier Development programme in 2019. The programme provides guidance navigating the retail world, mentorship and access to a larger market.

"This has been an absolute game-changer for us, and we are excited that through this we will be able to grow even more, employ more incredible staff and add real value to your local economy," says Perkins.



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Lauren Hartzberg 21 Jan 2019



By combining Pillay's creative skills and Perkins's driven business sense, they increased their turnover by R800,000 in year one and this year they forecast to increase this even further through their new partnership with Pick n Pay.

With the plant-based eating trend set to continue, the duo is excited for the future.

"We are two determined, female eco-entrepreneurs who do not compromise on sustainable business journeys and offering the best legume-based products. We will always go to the ends of the earth to create the most delicious, wholesome, meat-free, organically grown legume products for families to enjoy," concludes Pillay.