

The Farmers' Chronicles

BLOG

29 October 2025



South African Community Celebrates World Food Day 2025: Empowering Gqeberha through Sustainable Food Production

The KwaZakhele community gathered at the Lilian Ngoyi Community Sports Centre in Gqeberha on 16 October 2025 to celebrate World Food Day 2025 (WFD), but what transpired was so much more than an ordinary meeting. A dark grey cloud filled the sky and threatened to bring rain, however, the passion of the KwaZakhele community's dedication to ending hunger was more visible than the potential rain. Together, residents, farmers and local leaders were demonstrating their collective intent to work toward one goal: ending hunger. The event represented a convergence of hope, collaboration and energy as it demonstrated how hunger can be defeated within communities like KwaZakhele, and not just as an abstraction.

World Food Day, which is celebrated every year on 16 October, has been commemorated in South Africa since the country's re-admission to the United Nations in 1994. This year's WFD was hosted by the national Department of Agriculture in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The theme, "Hand in Hand for Better Foods and a Better Future", emphasises the importance of collaborative action among Government, civil society and local communities in developing fair, sustainable and resilient food systems. Before the commemoration took place, officials from the national Department of Agriculture and the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture and Rural Development visited the KwaZakhele community to assist the residents with establishing backyard gardens, and to share practical skills to enable them to grow their own food in a sustainable way. Resident Ms Zoleka Mbananga stated: "I never thought I would be able to grow vegetables at home." However, after receiving assistance from the departments, she now says: "I am confident that I will be able to provide healthy food for my family and also assist my neighbours."

The establishment of backyard gardens forms part of the national Department of Agriculture's overall strategy to empower households, improve local food security, and decrease dependence on external food supplies. As the weather threatened to rain, the community demonstrated that it was



agriculture

Department:
Agriculture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



A NATION
THAT WORKS FOR ALL



MEC NONCEBA KONTSIWE

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determined to develop a food-secure future, and it is here, in gardens and demonstration plots, where the seeds of that future are being planted, one household at a time. As the world recognised the forty-fifth anniversary of World Food Day and the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the FAO in 1945, the commemoration of World Food Day 2025 was especially meaningful. Since the country's re-admission to the United Nations in 1994, South Africa has used the opportunity to focus attention on food security, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, rural development and community empowerment.

Ms Lebogang Botsheleng, Acting Director-General of Food Security and Agrarian Reform, reflected on the current status of food security during her opening address. While she referred to some of the successes that have been achieved since the beginning of the 21st century, she also expressed concern about the fact that hunger continues to be experienced by many South Africans daily. "There may have been progress," she said, "but we are not there yet. Our parents, our brothers, our sisters and our children continue to go to bed hungry." Her words set a reflective tone for the rest of the day and served to emphasise the continued need for actions to be taken, and for community participation to ensure a better future.

Dr Babagana Ahmadu, the FAO representative in South Africa, spoke internationally, referring to the global challenges of climate change, water scarcity and economic exclusion facing many communities in Eastern Cape, yet he also highlighted the remarkable resilience and innovative potential displayed by these same communities, offering hope for a better future. His reference to the important role played by international partnerships in supporting national actions to combat hunger, promote

and transform food systems was a significant aspect of his comments.

The Eastern Cape MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ms Nonceba Kontsiwe, called upon households to act by growing their own food. In her opinion, backyard gardens represent much more than just small plots of land, they represent powerful tools for empowering households, improving nutrition, and increasing resilience. "It is not solely the responsibility of the government," she stated. "Everyone must play their part and collaborate to achieve a food-secure South Africa."

She reinforced the idea that sustainable food security is developed through collaboration, sharing of knowledge and active community participation. Mr Mooketsa Ramasodi, the Director-General of the national Department of Agriculture, expressed sincere gratitude to the many contributors who ensured the successful commemoration of World Food Day 2025. His appreciation was extended to those whose generous sponsorship and donation contributions were fundamental to the success of this year's World Food Day. Mr Ramasodi reiterated that partnerships are the foundation upon which sustainable and resilient food systems can be developed.

As evidenced by the collaborative nature of the 2025 World Food Day celebrations, where the government, civil society and the private sector collectively came together to build strong and empowered food systems in South African communities, the power of collective action is evident. Contributors, including Fruit South Africa, ZZZ, the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), Kellanova, Ocean Group, Macadamia South Africa, Shoprite and



DR BABAGANA AHMADU



MS LEBOGANG BOTSHELENG

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Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) were instrumental in the success of the event. In addition to addressing multiple objectives, the World Food Day celebration in Gqeberha emphasised the importance of raising awareness regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the African Union Agenda 2063. These two frameworks are to be used as guides for eliminating hunger and malnutrition. Additionally, the celebration focused on how climate change is impacting agriculture and promoting climate smart farming practices and disaster risk reduction methods. Migration, water shortages and social economic issues related to food systems were discussed during the celebration and an opportunity was provided to include the participation of women, youth and rural communities.

In addition to focusing on the nutritional aspects of food, the World Health Organization's five keys to safer food were outlined, and a focus was placed on diversifying agricultural production to improve nutrition and strengthen community-based food safety nets. Therefore, through the combination of educational elements, demonstration projects and policy messaging, the World Food Day celebrations provided a comprehensive approach to achieving food security.

As part of South Africa's approach to celebrating events like this, the celebration centred around the community. The KwaZakhele community experienced local produce exhibitions, food safety demonstrations and showcases of innovative agricultural techniques. In addition to these educational components of the celebration, households and cooperative members also received agricultural equipment, inputs and food parcels to assist them in implementing sustainable farming

practices. The fact that they received tangible assistance demonstrated that creating food security will require support and action from the local community. Since October has been recognised as Food Security Month in South Africa, it coincides with the national Department of Agriculture's seven strategic priority areas that include enhancing food security, reducing food waste, developing partnerships, and providing farmers with the necessary resources and infrastructure. One of the key messages from the celebration in Gqeberha was that ending hunger is a collective effort.

The success of this endeavour depends on the collaborative efforts of farmers, government agencies, non-governmental organisations and each citizen. The celebration served as a strong reminder that by working together, South Africa can build a future in which there is access to healthy and nutritious food for everyone.



-Prince Mtsweni-



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