

Andries van Zyl: The agricultural company Afgri today announced a school outreach programme in conjunction with the Gauteng Department of Education for the development of food gardens at certain schools. On the line is Afgri's Executive Head, Chris Venter. Good afternoon, Chris.

Chris Venter: Good afternoon, Andries.

Andries van Zyl: Chris, where did the idea for the project originate from?

Chris Venter: You know Andries, it was the Department of Education in Gauteng's idea to create food gardens for the learners. These gardens will benefit 18000 learners; we got involved and play a supporting role in conjunction with the Department.

Andries van Zyl: Give us an indication of what the project entails; how does the project work?

Chris Venter: What we do Andries is we provided sponsorship of various equipment such as gardening equipment and irrigation supplies, and of course we support them to create physical gardens at schools. We will be involved in this as well as the Department of Agriculture for Gauteng; and each school has a coordinator; and it is the responsibility of the school principal, but we support it and the idea is to provide children of those particular schools with food every day.

Andries van Zyl: How does this work in practice? Does it mean the learners work in the gardens? What happens to the crops that are produced there?

Chris Venter: The crops are used by the schools themselves and the project is an extension of the Department's food programme for learners they feed at school. What we create at schools is additional to what the Department is doing already; it's about creating gardens to produce food; provide food that is used by that school itself; to provide in their daily needs.

Andries van Zyl: Some listeners might argue and say that it's a reasonably small set-up/scale; but it is not about the numbers here; Chris it's more about the concept you are using to help people to produce food; and it sounds like a project, the kind of concept that can be taken to other parts of the country. Are you considering that possibility?

Chris Venter: We at Afgri are concerned about the children; they are close to our hearts; children in South Africa suffer a lot; our focus is to support the children. We are already involved in other school projects in areas where we operate such as Delmas and Northern Natal; it's not a new thing for us to get involved, but in this case a need was identified. And it's exactly like you say if we can only provide one plate of food to each learner on a daily basis we have achieved a lot; this is a concept that we can take further but we are proud that we could work with the Department and Department of Agriculture to make this work.

Andries van Zyl: Thank you for the talk. That was Chris Venter, executive manager of Afgri.