

South Africa

When the world went into lockdown, Tanya started farming in her backyard and quickly realized her passion in growing food. In 2021, she started Seeds for Life Farm Primary Cooperative in Kuilsriver, Cape Town where she now grows and sells organic microgreens and fresh produce to her local community, the hospitality industry, and retailers. Her business, which started as a small backyard project, currently supplies a restaurant in Stellenbosch, the Food Lovers Market (Paarl) and a local speech therapist, Gillian Adonis.

"I am a child of the soil. I grew up in a farming community in Stellenbosch and from there, learned the ins and outs of farming and how to grow and cultivate crops. My family all worked on farms in the community," Tanya said.

In South Africa, organic fruits and vegetables are expensive and impoverished communities in South Africa have little or no access to them. According to the latest World Bank report, 55.5% of the South African population live in poverty. Food Forward South Africa, a non-profit addressing hunger in the country, estimates that 30 million people in South Africa are experiencing food insecurity every month. The rising costs of basic food due to inflation has also increased food insecurity in the country.

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Tanya, who sees the struggles of her community, is passionate about providing them with healthier food options, education, and more job opportunities. Tanya has hopes of growing her business and teaching locals from the community to grow and harvest their own fresh fruit and vegetables. She also wants to address the environmental impact of farming.

"We will only use organic farming techniques and methods to ensure that the environment in which it operates is not negatively impacted. Solar panels will power the greenhouse tunnels and low carbon emission vehicles will be used for deliveries," she said.

Tanya's goals for her business does not stop there. She wants to open a High Tech Mega Agri Tourism Mix Commercial Farm on 40 hectares of land. This expansion would create ±100 permanent jobs and ±244 seasonal jobs. Tanya wants to create a local market where people from the community can sell their fresh produce and products and put Kuilsriver on the map as an Agri Tourism Hub.

However, there is a steep hill to climb. Tanya has struggled to get the funding she needs to expand. She has viewed all available funding options, but without owning her property, she struggles to get funding because she has no collateral. She is in a Catch-22 situation that most small businesses in South Africa have to deal with.

The requirements to qualify for funding are roadblocks that entrepreneurs face – they are complicated and tedious application forms slow the process down or stall it completely. It does not help that the expansion from urban farming to commercial farming is not seen or understood by government institutions or funders. Commercial banks don't provide an easier route either where red tape is known to be rampant.



Tanya grows and sells organic microgreens and fresh produce to her local community.

Tanya contacted the City of Cape Town (CCT) to find more available funding options. An official who visited her home to perform an inspection was impressed with the urban farming systems and activities she used. Tanya was then advised to apply for the Department of Agriculture (DoA)'s Subsistence Farming Fund. However, the application process was tedious and difficult and she had to apply more than once because she couldn't meet the criteria.

Tanya, not one to give up, knew that she had to do everything in her power to increase her chances of getting access to finance and land. There is no Kuilsriver urban farming community, so she

joined the urban farming community of Gugulethu. This area is known as a high risk crime area and is known for its gang violence. Tanya had to attend meetings in Gugulethu with the DoA, National Development Agency (NDA) and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) to be visible within the community and to impact the people of the community in a positive way by providing agricultural advice.

Tanya was expected to put herself in potentially dangerous situations to be considered for business funding. South Africa has one of the highest rates of gender based violence in the world.

Tanya's determination paid off. Her application for funding was approved and Seeds for Life Farm Primary Cooperative received the maximum funding of R170 000. But Tanya knows she has an advantage. Her husband and brothers-in-law's academic backgrounds in agriculture helped her. The Future Female Business School also provided Tanya with the necessary and essential skills needed in her business venture. Attending meetings with the Future Females programme allowed Tanya to find her confidence and the power of her own voice and determination, something she wants to teach other women in agriculture.

She intends to share her knowledge and experiences with other farmers, especially women, looking to start out and provide them with guidance and support when applying for funding.

"Agriculture is a male-dominated space, and I want other women in the field to know that they have a place at the table," Tanya said.

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