

The agricultural sector plays a key role in a green economy, it impacts on the environment, local economies and people's well-being. During Covid-19 strict lockdown levels Tim Nectar Farms was one of the collaborators in fulfilling the Ubuntu Project to supply food to the needy in the Orange Farm region. Tim Abaa of Tim Nectar Farms is a key figure and agroecologist in this community. Abaa is instrumental in educating the community, adults and youth, in food sustainability by growing their own food using environmentally sound principles.

Tim promotes Agroecology and Bio intensive agriculture through training Community members from kids aged 3yrs old to 100yrs old and employs Permaculture as a design system to boost production and promote resource efficiency.

Key to his mission is fighting poverty and hunger by starting sustainable farming enterprises in both urban regions and townships. Tim's efforts are aligned to promoting growth in the green economy through resource efficiency in the Water-Energy-Food nexus.

What is your motivation to go into organic farming?

The idea of having over 6.5 million people suffering from High blood pressure, 6 million from Diabetes, and 5.8 million suffering from Cancer in South Africa makes me have sleepless nights. Having lost many family and community members gave birth to an appetite of helping shape and address issues with the food system. For me to go the Organic route is help create an alternative food system that is ethical and conscious about people's health and also promotes ecological balance and helping mitigate climate change.



What is the size of the farm and what are you growing?

Currently I am farming on a 3Ha piece of land. I am growing different varieties of vegetables: spinach, beetroot, lettuce, spring onions, cabbage, kale, onions, peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkin. Herbs: rosemary, lavender, oregano, fennel, basil, comfrey, borage and celery. Berries: strawberries and goose berries. Fruit trees: pear, nectarines, peach, grapes, granadilla, avocado and plums.

What do you do with the produce / products that you grow?

The fresh produce is sold to the local Community, some sold to restaurants in Joburg and some sold to NGO's running feeding schemes and some is donated to the needy and poor people in the Community. Excess produce is processed to add value in case of market instability or as per client's recommendation.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tim holds training and educational workshops in South Africa across 9 provinces.



Combining the youth and elderly during his training promotes skills transfer related to traditional farming methods, modern science and Innovation/technology. The two groups complement and supplement each other. The older generation is rich in traditional knowledge, but lack technology and modern, innovative skills. They get to share their farming experiences and generate solutions from their past experiences for modern problems. This entices the older generation to share information freely and at the same time Tim adds more information to their existing knowledge.

The youth are challenged about modern social ills in their respective communities like unemployment, drug abuse, hopelessness, crime and how farming activities exposes them not only to new opportunities, but also helps them start their own sustainable farming enterprises to add value to their local economies and their personal lives. Comments Tim: "I like showing them the disturbing statistics of how many millions of

people go to bed on empty stomachs and how they can contribute towards addressing food security and promote good health through food.”

The young kids are taught the value of growing their own fresh organic vegetables and herbs from seeds to seedlings before they end on their plates as ready food to eat. Farming traits and behaviours are introduced like watering: how to water, when to water and why we water, the value of water towards plants which is similar to human life. Also included are the benefits of soil as a medium to grow food, what to do with food wastes – for example composting, the different planting seasons and their relevance towards climate change. Tim adds colour to the cuisine by showing different vegetable colours, even edible flowers and what the different parts of a plant are, from roots to flowers. The youngsters also learn the benefits of eating healthy food and more.

COLLABORATION WITH UJ PEETS

- In partnership with UJ PEETS and Resolution Circle, Tim trained 150 people on the EPWP (Expanded Public Works Programme) for the Department of Infrastructure and Development on Permaculture and Biogas
- Installed a food garden and conducted two weeks Permaculture training for UJ PEETS and Schneider Electric at Isiboniso primary school that won the best CSI project of the year in 2019 at the Lewis Foundation.
- Established a food garden and conducted Permaculture training for UJ PEETS and Schneider Electric during Mandela Day in 2019.

Comments Zelda Rasmeni, senior engineer at UJ PEETS: “we are inspired to be working with an agroecologist and enthusiast of the calibre of Tim Abaa, working towards a greater sustainable supply of healthy food and improvement of the green economy in South Africa.”

THE FUTURE

Says Tim: “My big needs are a Biogas installation to help train the Community about waste management and the benefits of making compost from biowaste to boost production in the farm and maintaining healthy soils. In the whole of Joburg South there is not a single biogas plant. This will be a big chance to help create more awareness about Biogas to light and cook in the homes, especially during this difficult time of load shedding. And the installation of a water harvesting plant to harvest water and a ware pump for efficient irrigation.”

Tim Abaa’s philosophy: “all about planting a seed of Tim in every community across South Africa.

UJ PEETS is funded by the Technology Innovation Agency to enable technology innovation support for SMEs promoting circular green technology solutions.