

# Sowetan BUSINESS

## Development boon for informal traders

THE government will next month launch a programme that will focus on developing informal traders.

This was announced by Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies during the Incentive Performance report

for 2012/2013 in Pretoria on Friday.

"I am not going to announce the plans now, but all I am saying is that we are going to do it," Davies said. "It is a product to identify support for the entrepreneurs in the infor-

mal sector and how we could upgrade it. We will announce the details of the plan in Port St Johns (Eastern Cape) next month," he said.

Davies declined to divulge more details. - *Mpho Sibanyoni*

# AGRIC GETS BOOST

Rulani Baloyi

**THABELO** Christian Association for Disabled Farmers in Mbvumoni village in Venda has been struggling to efficiently farm its 1.3 hectares of land.

The association's members, who are all physically disabled, plant vegetables which they sell to their communities.

The association, which currently has seven members, started off with 43 members, but most have left because of failure to generate income.

The biggest challenge they face is buying fertilisers for their crops and lack of water.

However, things turned around after an aquaponic system was installed. Aquaponics combines aquaculture, which is fish farming, and hydroponics, which is soil-less crop production.

This was the brainchild of non-profit organisation INMED's Adaptive Agriculture Programme, which is meant to

## New technology turns around farming project

equip farmers with farming skills and introduce innovative farming systems.

Thabelo member Wilson Mphaphuli says the system has made farming much easier.

"There is a lot of work here in this project, but the system makes things easier for us. However, we need a bigger workforce.

"People do not want to persevere, some members have left because we do not have a regular salary ... sometimes we get salaries after six months."

Mulaedza Nemubvumoni, a community member, said the aquaponic system would enable them to do fish farming as well. She said this would save her money by not having to go to town to buy fish.

"This is a great initiative for our community. We used to travel about 60km to town to buy fish. Now we will save transport money, and we're going to buy it at a cheaper price. We have been buying affordable vegetables at this project as well."

INMED South Africa programme manager Khumbudzo Manyaga said the system saved 80% of water, and that as the system was organic, it did not require fertilisers. He said the farmers also supply vegetables to local retailers.

Another project, the Fog Net System, has also been introduced to Tshanowa Primary School in Vondo village.

The school's principal, Patrick Muravha, said the sys-

tem was of great help to the school and the community as the village had water supply problems. He said the school's 181 children did not have enough water.

"We now have safe and clean water, however, we have a challenge of global warming. The Fog works seasonally. If there is no fog then we do not get water. Our school also helps the community with water, especially when there is a funeral. We are able to fill our tanks with water and supply them."

Both projects were launched by the South African Breweries (SAB) last week.

SAB executive director Dr Vincent Maphai said corporates should ensure that needy communities were looked after. "With partnerships that we had, we are not giving you charity, we are giving you recognition to do something for your sustainability. If we work together we can do more."

■ [baloyiru@sowetan.co.za](mailto:baloyiru@sowetan.co.za)



**FRESH PRODUCE:** INMED's Khumbudzo Manyaga looks at crops planted by the disabled in Mbvumoni

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