

# 2019 IMPACT REPORT

## (4 of 4) Organic Farming



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# Impact Report Overview

## (4/4) ORGANIC FARMING

2019 was an incredible year for our **Organic Farming Initiative** as our farmers continued to work tirelessly with their mentors to increase their crop yields.

This is the fourth of four publications that make up our 2019 Impact Report. This publication explores the farms and introduces you to one of our farmers, **Mr Mbatho**. It also shows the great success experienced across the farms as they increased their output dramatically, making **2019 a record year of production**.

If you have not yet read the first three 2019 Impact Report publications – Early Learning, Education and Creative Learning Curriculum – we recommend looking there for a fuller picture of what we achieved in 2019 at Thanda.

If you have any questions or would like to get in contact with us, please email [info@thanda.org](mailto:info@thanda.org) or visit our website [www.thanda.org](http://www.thanda.org)

### (1 of 4) Early Learning

Through **inquiry-based learning** and **imaginative play**, our **Early Learning** Initiative gives children the foundational skills necessary for a positive start in life.

### (2 of 4) Education

Through after-school programmes, extracurricular activities, and workshops/ events, our **Education** Initiative aims to empower children and youth with **Game-changing Skills** that are necessary for becoming resilient, **lifelong learners** who understand interconnectedness, can rebel against the crowd, and take responsibility for how their actions **impact the environment** and others.

### (3 of 4) Creative Learning

Our **Creative Learning** Initiative aims to create systemic change in education. By sharing our programme **curricula**, **lesson plans** and **resources** with other organisations, as well as providing additional training and mentoring, we guide trainees through experiences that will help them build **Game-changing Skills** among children and youth in their own classrooms or education programmes.



# ORGANIC FARMING



**Christopher Mkhize - Organic Farming Manager**

Mdex obtained a qualification in agriculture from Mangosotho University of Technology but when he began his job at Thanda, as the very first mentor for the Nisela Organic Farming Programme, he felt way out of his depth.

For one, he'd only ever learned standard farming practices so the whole concept of organic farming was new to him. His other challenge was that all of the farmers enrolled in the programme (the ones he was supposed to be mentoring) were much older than him. In fact, most of the farmers were gogos (elderly women) who had been farming for many years and were reluctant to take advice from someone so young and fresh-faced, but Mdex persevered.

Through the training he received at Thanda, he knew that there were methods and strategies that could be implemented by the farmers to increase their yields, but he also realised that the only way the programme was going to

work was to cultivate strong relationships.

Slowly, he passed these lessons on to the farmers and, as the results started to show and personal bonds started to strengthen, the programme began to blossom into the success that it is today.

His highlights for 2019 are the massive growth that was seen in production volumes (production increased by 43% from R1 518 376 in 2018 to R2 180 935 in 2019) and the strength of his mentor team. While he started off as a lone mentor, he now oversees a group of 14 mentors and he has the utmost faith in their skills.

“Even if I’m not out there, work can continue.” He beams with pride when discussing how far his team has come in just one year. “These guys are quality and we have a good programme.”

# OVERVIEW

Our Organic Farming initiative supports over **350 rural small-scale farmers** (primarily women) by providing **farm-based training in organic growing methods, infrastructure support, and market access**. Thanda employs individuals from within the community and trains them to lead in-depth training and individualised mentoring that enables farmers to grow successful yields.

The Nisela Organic Farming Programme empowers people and creates positive change by increasing organic produce yield to:

1. Help generate income
2. Supply nutritious food to farmers, their families and the community.



## Why?

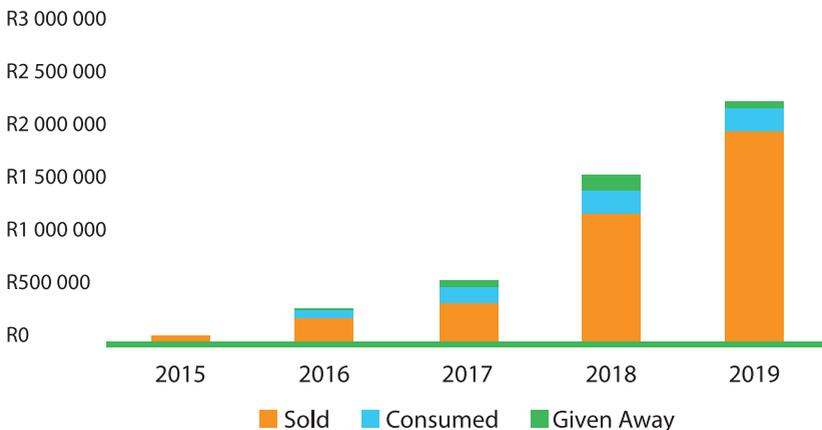
Below **12%**  
of the community  
are employed

Average annual  
household  
income is

**R14 600**

Farming presents an opportunity for individuals living in economically depressed communities to improve **household nutrition** and **begin generating an income**. Beyond those obvious benefits, it gives farmers a sense of empowerment and decreases their dependency on social grants. It instils a sense of responsibility and strong work ethic among younger generations as children come home from school to see the adults working to **produce food for the table**. For many households, it is a pathway out of poverty.

Thanda Agriculture Production Value Data (2015 - 2019)



# How is it done?



## • Ongoing Farming Support and Mentorship

At Thanda, farmers aren't taught the theory and then sent out to fend for themselves. Our mentors are in constant contact to support and help farmers with trouble-shooting as challenges arise.

## • Integration of Self-development Activities

At Thanda, we recognising farmers as people.

*"What struck me about my time at Thanda was that it was about developing competencies for being and thinking differently in the world... not just about practical skills. There was space for playful alternative thought to take root that naturally supports tangible practical work... I remember seeing, for example, a focus on dealing with jealousy. All the international literature says peer-to-peer sharing is a foundational pillar of innovation. Helping people deal with jealousy so they collaborate better is quite a radical departure from teaching compost making and assuming everyone will live happily ever after."* Margaret Stride, NGO Consultant



## • Farm to Market Support

Thanda provides farmers enrolled in our programme with market links to sell their produce such as **school feeding scheme brokers, local spaza shop owners, and larger retailers such as Boxer**. However, farmers have the freedom to decide whether or not they want to sell their produce, share it with their neighbours or have Thanda assist with the sales of their produce.



## • Infrastructure support

Each farm has different needs but common obstacles include water inaccessibility and crop devastation due to roaming animals. Thanda assists by providing infrastructure like fencing and irrigation systems to combat these challenges. Since the programme's inception in 2015, we have assisted a total of 25 farms with infrastructure.

Kethokuhle, one of the mentors in our farming programme stated:

*“Here at Ekthuleni farm, we’re always busy. This side (gesturing in one direction) we have farmers using the grass slasher to open up land, here (gesturing in another direction) we have farmers using the water pumps for their crops. I always encourage the farmers to use these things because they will help them achieve their goal of having the whole farm planted with crops.”*



Kethokuhle Mkhize, Organic Farming Mentor

## • Individual Farms in Communal Plots

Farmers share equipment and infrastructure but are responsible for their own plots of land so they have the flexibility to choose what they want to grow and whether or not they want to scale their production. This model holds individual farmers responsible for their **actions and inactions, increasing self-reliance**. At the same time, it encourages working together as it requires farmers to communicate with and support one another as they work in a communal setting.

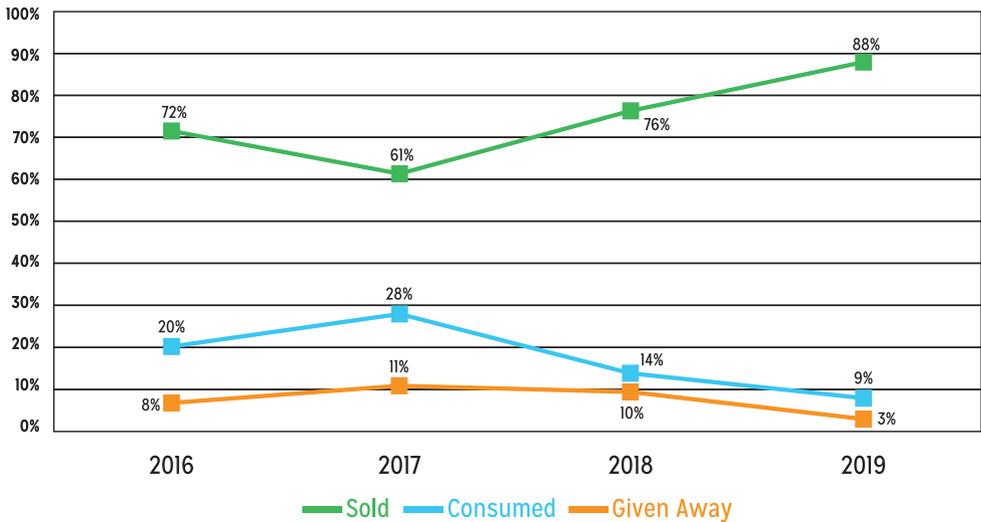
- **Dedicated resource centre**

At our **Agri-Hub** (located at our solar-powered Community Centre), farmers can receive additional **training and mentoring**, **reserve a tractor**, and **purchase various inputs** (seedlings, chicken feed, etc.).



The Agri-Hub also houses surplus vegetables and processing equipment such as a **hammermill** and **dehydrator**. Farmers and community members can bring maize and pay a nominal fee to have it milled into maize meal, which is the common form in which it is consumed. We are also beginning to experiment with using the dehydrator for drying various goods - banana, potato and mango.

Percentage of Produce Sold, Consumed and/or Given Away Annually



# What happened in 2019?

There was a decrease in the percentage of produce consumed and given away.  
**Why?**

Yields increased in 2019 but the needs of individual households and the community stayed the same. Our farmers gave away around R70 275 and the community consumed around R199 835 of the produce. This means that there was more produce available after the families and community had eaten their full, to sell on at stores and markets.

South African National Development Goals by 2030 - *“to achieve inclusive food security, where one-third of food consumed in South Africa is produced by small-scale and homestead farmers.”*

## ROI Analysis

Farming Period	Funder Investment Example	Total Value of Vegetable Production	Return on Investment
2019	ZAR 500 000	ZAR 2 180 935	872%
2018	ZAR 500 000	ZAR 1 518 376	607%

ROI = Total value of annual production / 50% of the investment due to long term nature of skills development and infrastructure.



# What sets our Organic Farming Programme apart from others?

Dr Luke Metelerkamp is a post-doctoral fellow at the Environmental Learning and Research Center at Rhodes University, an associate researcher at the CST and an extraordinary lecturer within the School of Public Leadership at Stellenbosch University. He speaks about the issues that face many small farming programmes:

*“A big problem across the board is that we are trying to push small scale farmers in the big value chains... This is ideologically and practically a terrible fit. Why do we want to try and fit small-holders into a model which has been failing all but the biggest commercial farmers for decades? If South Africa wants a successful small-holder farming sector, we’ll need to radically redesign our retail model to allow farmers (or their families) to sell the majority of their produce directly to consumers at a local level.”*

*“There is a need to prioritise short, on-demand training and support to existing farmers over the long and detailed training programmes to full-time students which are typically found in formal institutions. The cycles between knowledge acquisition and application should be as short and direct as possible.”*

At Thanda, we do exactly this! Produce is kept within the community as far as possible, in order to stimulate the local economy. It is only if there is excess produce available, that it is sent further afield to neighbouring markets and grocery stores.

In addition, our mentorship programme is not about sitting in a classroom all day. Rather, we meet farmers where they are at and help them with the specific problems they are facing with their plots. In this way, their knowledge grows organically and because it is relevant and contextual, the information sticks. We do also host workshops in specialised areas but these are usually aimed at mentors and focus on the social-emotional process mentors and farmers need to go through in order to build grit and resilience.



Our most successful farmers are making profits in the vicinity of R3000-4000 per month. Sanele Mavundla, our most productive farmer from Shinga Farm, produced almost R40 000 in vegetables in 2019.

*“There are a lot of things I have gained from farming with Thanda. I have managed to make money from it and managed to save cash from other sources and live off the farming money. Last week, my son was graduating and I was able to use the farming money to buy him graduation clothes and gown. Again, using the farming money, I was able to buy two goats recently, which I am going to rear at home. Farming has come with a lot of benefits, but money is the main benefit. Hence the money I get from the farm is able to assist with other household stuff.”* - Phumelela, Shinga Farm

*“The Thanda Organic Farming Programme has enabled me to save money this year. With the money I was able to save, I bought cement block to build a rondavel house. My husband then was able to buy other material that was required like cement, sand, stones, and other little things.”*  
- Duduzile, Vuisisizwe Farm

*“At home, I have dishes and a big pot I bought with R600 I got from the plot. There are many other things I have bought with the farming cash. Additionally, we consume the produce from the plot and now even eat salads made from cabbages and beetroots from the plot. The past years, I haven't been buying beans or cabbages. It's been five years since I bought beans – I take it from my plot, consume at home and sell some.”* - Agnes, Ndunge Farm



# MR MBHUTHO

Farmer at Thembabantu Farm, Mr Mbhutho, describes the benefits of belonging to the Nisela Organic Farming Programme and his hopes for the future.

“Back when we started farming in 2012, our garden was fenced with only thorns, sticks and twigs and our long hours in the sun each day gave us a small number of vegetables to feed our family with. When we enrolled in the Thanda Organic Farming programme, we were provided with real fencing and a mentor who comes to our garden to teach us farming methods which we had never seen before and support us when we may be suffering from drought or floods. We see a greater yield of vegetables from our crop each season which encourages us to keep farming!

Thanda helps us sell our vegetables at markets and that aspect is so valuable to us farmers. If Thanda wasn't helping us in that way, our crop would likely end up decomposing in our gardens. With Thanda helping us, we have food security and financial certainty.

The money we get from selling our vegetables through Thanda is a tremendous help. We are able to buy necessities for our grandchildren like school uniforms and school shoes, and we can buy food we don't plant here on our farm and other cooking items. My hope is that in the future, we can have more youth involvement in organic farming to close the gap when we decide to retire.”





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within 24 hours!)



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