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BIO DYNAMIGHT

SOUTH AFRICA

GREENSOUTH PROJECT

– A NEW APPROACH TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING

The GreenSouth project is steaming ahead. As it nears the end of its first year, Sheila Bischoff, who is co-ordinating the South African team explains what it is about and introduces the team that is taking this initiative forward.

WHAT ARE THE KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT?

Vocational Education Training (VET) in agriculture in South Africa is very poor.

The GreenSouth project brings together vocational education and training (VET) providers, business partners and biodynamic experts to leverage cross-border learning to establish how best the VET providers can educate people.

It aims to align the capacity and offerings of the providers with the needs of the market and implement innovative VET courses in BD and organic farming.

This includes developing tailored teaching material with a focus on 'Training the Trainers' and identifying and training 20 skilled trainers in the field.

Funded by the EU, it promotes the exchange of best practices and introduces training innovation into the VET landscape.



Green South team chilling after two day workshop in Cape Town

WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT?

While the overall purpose is to grow organic and BD farming in Southern Africa to enhance agricultural productivity, sustainability and climate resilience, the GreenSouth team also believes that teaching people in the informal sector to grow produce and make money from it could shift poverty in our countries.

There is so much information on organic and BD farming available. The challenge is to distil it properly in a way that it can be transferred and used effectively.



GreenSouth team at Cape Town workshop

WHAT CHARACTERISES THE SOUTH AFRICAN GREENSOUTH TEAM?

The South African team is dynamic, energetic, multi-skilled and passionate about using BD for the betterment of South Africa.

There is no hierarchy. My role is to manage the project and build connection with the team. I grew up on a farm and have been involved in many forms of regenerative agriculture and currently belong to a PGS group in Gauteng. My professional career started way back as a primary school teacher and has morphed many times, landing as an IT project manager for most of my formal career. I have completed my Environmental Sustainability diploma, Permaculture Design Course and am on a continuous Biodynamic quest for knowledge and experience.

Kagisho Mashiya is responsible for Finance. She has a B-Tech Degree in Accounting, a Postgraduate Diploma in Corporate Law, as well as 16 years of corporate experience in various roles in small and large corporations that have equipped her to work at both strategic and operational levels. Kagisho is known for her high energy and has this amazing way of finding and filling in the gaps. She loves a challenge and is a passionate, hardworking team player.

Sumaiyah Zalgoanker, has permaculture accreditation, farming experience, including three years helping to run a farm in Stanford in the Western Cape, has attended five All African Anthroposophical Trainings and two Train the Trainer Trainings with Angela Hoffman from Sekem. Sumaiyah has been a BDAASA member since 2022, has completed the two-year training course in biodynamic farming, has participated in numerous workshops and helps with the Harvest Hub markets. She started an online Agriculture Reading Course Group which now has 195 members across 13 African countries and runs a WhatsApp Biodynamic Agriculture channel for online learning. Sumaiyah has a keen eye for detail and supports the team with research, social media and marketing.

Sizo Nsibande is a farmer, entrepreneur and IT boffin who works full-time at ABSA. He has a farm in Atlantis where he has cattle, goats, sheep chickens and grows vegetables that he supplies to the Harvest Hub. He also has horses for people to ride and enjoy the farm experience. He is passionate about BD and its ability to transform the soil into productive land for vegetable growing. He brings farming experience, research and IT skills to the GreenSouth team.

WHAT STEPS ARE YOU TAKING TO DELIVER ON THE OBJECTIVES?

Our first steps have been to identify the market needs and the gaps in VET, as well as to determine an approach that will help us build the required skill set.

A wide range of interviews have been conducted in the three countries amongst training providers, farmers, market gardeners and growers in the informal sector.

When our team was appointed in September, the original South African GreenSouth team had already conducted interviews, mainly with established organic and BD farmers. We then went to the informal sector to broaden the scope. With input from our international colleagues the approach we are using is: What moved the interviewer when conducting the interview?

At the moment we are meeting weekly as we are busy preparing our first year-end report for the EU.

We are grateful to the original team of Avice Hindmarch, Karen Mack, Allen Rosenberg and Janet Gracie who laid a solid foundation for us to build on.

WHAT IS THE TIME-FRAME FOR DELIVERY OF THE GREENSOUTH PROJECT?

There are very specific timelines and guidelines for the project?

We are just nearing the end of year 1, which was to gather the information, identify the skills and the gaps and disseminate possible training approaches.

In year 2, information gathered in year 1 will be used to design the curricula and three unique learning approaches and platforms.

By the end of year 3 the GreenSouth “Train the Trainer” programme will have trained 20 skilled individuals who will be training trainers in BD and organic farming in the three countries.

Through GreenSouth, we aim to create a lasting impact in strengthening VET activities in the Biodynamic agricultural sector by fostering resilience and sustainability.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL BIODYNAMIC RESEARCH CONFERENCE IN LONDON

Khotso Thatso and Liesl Haasbroek recently attended the 3rd International BioDynamic Research Conference in London. We asked them to provide feedback on their experiences, emerging trends and how they planned to use the learnings.



KHOTSO

I attended workshops and talks focused on biodynamic preparations, farm rhythms of nature, and Goethean science. These were very important as I think they relate directly to the challenges in South Africa, where this knowledge is still not widely known. The research and practical examples shared

showed clear proof that biodynamic preparations work with positive results for soil health, plant growth, and farm resilience.

A highlight for me was meeting youth from different parts of the world. We exchanged contacts, ideas and experiences, creating new relationships that can support our work.

There is a growing amount of scientific research on biodynamics across different countries. Many participants presented published studies that prove the benefits of biodynamic methods for soil fertility, and plant health. The idea of combining biodynamics with modern research is helping biodynamics gain

more recognition worldwide, and some universities are becoming part of the movement as well.

The range of knowledge, the diversity of participants, and the research shared were very inspiring. It motivated me to keep promoting biodynamics in our communities.

New possibilities for collaboration came up, especially through youth networks and shared interest in community-based biodynamic projects.

NEXT STEPS

I brought back notes from key sessions, references from research presented, and new contacts for further learning and exchange.

I plan to use what I learned by:

- Sharing insights at team meetings, local conferences, and farmer workshops,
- Applying the knowledge on biodynamic preparations and natural rhythms in our fields,
- Sharing the conference proceedings with the biodynamic farmers and community in South Africa, and
- Following up with international peers to explore possible joint activities.

I highly recommend attending this conference in the future as it offers valuable inspiration, knowledge, and connections that can strengthen biodynamic farming in our regions.

LIESL

I attended and contributed to the All Africa Anthroposophical Training in Namibia, the 3rd International Biodynamic Research Conference and the Foundation for Water and Flowform Association meetings in the UK.

At the BD Conference I attended and supported my international water colleagues at the following sessions:

- Water and air as mediators of the diversity and unity of our biosphere,
- Entering the conversation with water and
- Water dynamisation and its role in agriculture.

I have realised again that water is the carrier of the bio in biodynamics and the vortex is its dynamo. This element and our relationship with its beingness is becoming increasingly significant.

I learnt about using flowform technology in baking, brewing, wine making, improving the drinking water quality for animals, sewage conversion, compost tea production, preparing water for stirring horn manure and more.



I would be honoured to share Water phenomena with members of BDAASA. The work of Dr David Martin, Eduardo Rincon, Dr Marjolein from the University of Basel and Shyh-Maw Tsay from the BD Association of Taiwan (biodynamic.tw), Raphael Balbani touched me deeply for different reasons.

Keynote speaker, Binita Shah from India, shared that they make 150 tons of cow pat pit annually and have made 1,5 million biodynamic compost heaps in the last 20 years in three states of India involving 50,000 farmers.

INITIATIVES AND WEBSITES OF INTEREST

The following initiatives and websites may be of interest to members:

- consciousfoodsystems.org
- Society for Formative Force Research
- Biodynamic Network
- portable copper chloride crystallisation - which could be a valuable process in the African context - Dr Marjolein will keep me informed.
- Medical-agricultural study year (MeLaS) - Witten/Herdecke University The medical-agricultural academic year (MeLaS) A Pre/Inter/PostMed with nature and health expertise in cooperation with the Dottenfelder Hof in Bad Vilbel and the Professional Association of Preventologists e.V.

EMERGING TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES

- The Conference was opened and closed with public fire and water ceremonies. Ceremony and research are meeting in biodynamic agriculture. I love the idea that we are flowing together in karmic streams and preparing ourselves and our Mother Earth for next incarnations
- Empathetic Food Tasting is now a quality assessment process - Agriculture - Mindful Tasting.
- There was a clear request to use the word 'biodynamic' in research papers so that it can be traced more easily.
- A number of speakers showed how chromatographs were used over time to reflect the biography of the farm and its beings, not just a single chroma to capture a moment.

RECOMMENDATION

I was surprised by how many people mentioned the lack of government support for biodynamic agriculture in their countries. Yet I found farmers to be courageous, committed and visionary – just as in South Africa.

Anyone who feels called to attend a future BD Research Conference should not only listen deeply

NOTES FROM LIESL'S DIARY

- When you research a farm, record the biography of the farmer as well as chromas over time to tell the full story of the land and show the evolution of the soil. Create an image bank with living stories.
- If the doctors of yesterday do not become the nutritionists of today, then the nutritionists of today will become the doctors of tomorrow.
- Farmers are natural scientists. On a biodynamic farm the 'researcher' is part of the system that he/she is studying. In this way an agricultural revolution becomes a scientific revolution.

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but also seriously consider actively participating by contributing to the event. This will spread the word and work of Africans meeting Anthroposophy.

