

COCT, PEDI sign MoA to train Philippi's urban farmers in organic farming

Following the City of Cape Town (COCT) approving funding support in the amount of R 2,6m for the current financial year for the Philippi Economic Development Initiative (PEDI) to continue with its critical work in urban agriculture; the COCT and PEDI have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that sets out key deliverables for the organisation to achieve over the next 12 months.



Image via [PEDI - Philippi Economic Development Initiative](#)

The organisation manages the Philippi Urban Agriculture Academy (PUAA) that trains emerging farmers to become fresh produce suppliers.

The PUAA initiative has entered phase two, with the establishment of an agri-hub for urban and small-scale farmers. This hub is now in its first six months of operation and has formed a network of just under 50 urban farmers. These farmers are drawn from the areas of Khayelitsha, Mitchells Plain, Philippi, Mfuleni and the Bo-Kaap.

"The training academy was launched two years ago with the first phase aimed at establishing the methodologies for producing organic crops in tunnels and open fields. The academy also established a seedling growing tunnel which can grow as much as 130,000 organic seedlings at any one time. This facility is one of only a few organic seedling producers in the Cape Metropole and certainly the only in the Philippi area," said Alderman James Vos, the city's mayoral committee member for economic opportunities and asset management.

The standards and methodologies employed at the PUAA will be shared with this network of urban farmers to bring their farms and crops to a standard that can be traded at the highest price in local, national and even international markets.

Establishing methodologies for organic crop production

The agri-hub is in the process of implementing IT systems to manage the processes of planning crop production with urban farmers, communicating crop availability from urban farmers, client order placements, value-adding processes and distribution and logistics facilities.



"All this helps to bring urban and small-scale farmers to the forefront of trading their crops in a market dominated by large-scale commercial farmers. Never before was there a facility that is able to bring urban and small-scale farmers to a central space to trade, and where value-added processes can change the price points of their crops. This, in turn, will be a catalyst for economic growth and development in the area," Alderman Grant Twigg, the city's mayoral committee member for urban management.

A group of 22 urban farmers will be trained in organic farming methods in the next 12 months. They will further be assisted to achieve Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) status on their farms.

The academy also plans to take in a graduate intern for a year to hone their academic skills at the academy. Additionally, three employment opportunities will be created for unemployed matriculants from the Philippi area and surrounds for those who intend to pursue studies in agriculture.

Strengthening opportunities, communities

"The value of urban agriculture cannot be overstated and can be seen as an important sector in the local economy that helps to ensure food security, stimulate economic growth, and address unemployment," said Vos.

The academy currently operates at the Philippi Fresh Produce Market on Stock Road, Philippi, where 13 local residents are employed under the supervision of farm manager, Zodidi Meke. Two years ago, Meke herself was an unemployed graduate. She has excelled at the academy, and has already been acknowledged with a farmer's award by the Western Cape Department of Agriculture at their *Women in Agriculture* awards ceremony last year. The academy also employs a soil scientist to assist with norms and standards on the farm.

"We have to constantly look at ways to help unlock economic opportunities and strengthen community partnerships. Unemployment remains a huge concern for all of us and we need to do all we can to help create jobs. Our partnership with PEDI holds immense benefits for residents who can train to become food producers. Such partnerships enable us to fulfil our mandate and create an opportunity city that benefits all its residents," concluded Twigg.

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