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Sowetan-Page 15

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Changing youths' view of farming

Working the land a viable career

By **Thango Ntwasa**

Andile Ngcobo wants to change the way people view agriculture to ensure more young people see farming as a viable career choice.

The 22-year-old is the manager of Tusokuhle Farm in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, which supplies produce to a number of charities based in Durban. The farm also sells produce at the Pietermaritzburg Fresh Produce Market as well as to a number of Shoprite stores in KZN.

Inspired by the people and work done at Tusokuhle Farm, Ngcobo began to share images of their work at the farm on his social media accounts.

"Due to the comments I received, I realised that a lot of people aren't actually exposed to this kind of thing, so I started to share things that happen daily to try to change perceptions," says Ngcobo.

Ngcobo recently sat as a panellist at the Durban Business Fair. His farm will also be launching a website which will allow more consumers to shop online

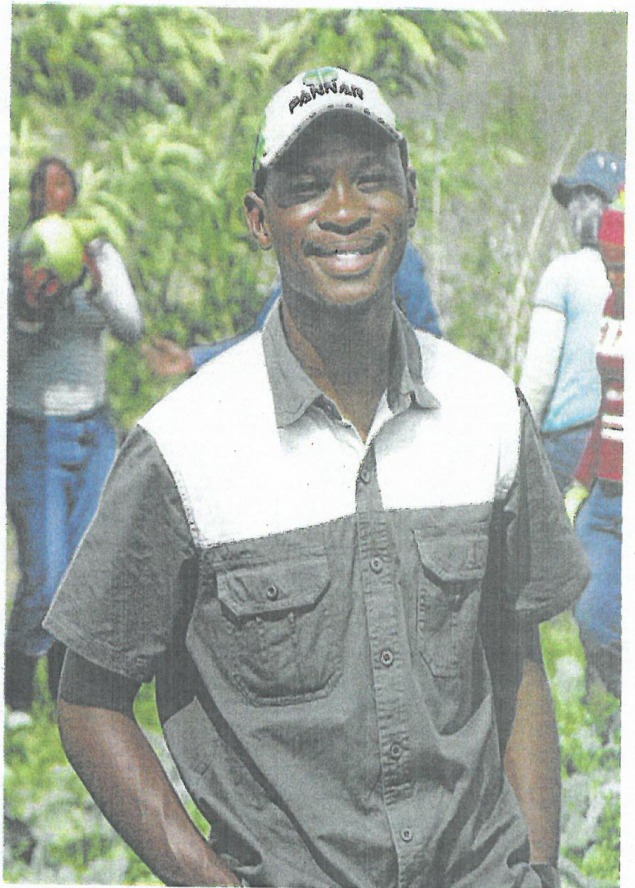> **You may have theoretical experience, but nothing surpasses practical experience**

He says he has noticed that younger people in managerial positions – like himself – often struggle with working with an older or more experienced team. The best way to deal with that is to listen and learn.

"You may have theoretical experience but nothing surpasses the practical experience that the elderly have from consistency, failures and breakthroughs."

Ngcobo bemoans the lack of support for local food producers and that international companies offer produce at a higher mark-up, which he says pushes local farmers to up their prices too.

To change this, more young black farmers need to be included, he says. There also needs to be a regulated funding model and vigorous marketing.

"Mentorship and skills development platforms are lacking terribly and these would be beneficial for the support of smallholder farmers."

Andile Ngcobo is the manager of Tusokuhle Farm in Pietermaritzburg, KZN, which supplies produce to local markets. /SUPPLIED