



March 2021



This month has been a spectacular time for INMED South Africa, as we launch the first INMED Aquaponics® Social Enterprise (INMED ASE) in Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng. How fitting to announce this initiative during Human Rights Month. It honours the enormous sacrifices made by generations that have come before us—and reminds us of our responsibility to protect and preserve the freedoms, dignity and equality of all South Africans.

The INMED ASE was designed to act as a powerful catalyst in transitioning historically disadvantaged populations—including people with disabilities, women and youth—from subsistence to commercial agricultural production using climate-smart aquaponics.

A very big thank you goes to Mondelēz Global LLC and the Mondelēz International Foundation. They are the first to invest in the INMED ASE under their new *Sustainable Futures* impact investing platform to incubate, finance and support self-sustaining ventures that address key challenges in the world.

INMED has worked in partnership with Mondelēz in South Africa and Brazil for more than a decade to foster meaningful and sustainable change for the people who need it most. The INMED ASE takes this partnership to the next level, allowing us to scale the impact globally. We have a wonderfully experienced and committed team working this project, and over the next couple of months we will introduce you to the team. The INMED ASE is a revolutionary and evolving initiative for our country, and we're excited to invite you to join us on this journey.

Unathi Sihlahla
 Director, INMED South Africa





INMED SA Launches 1st Aquaponics Social Enterprise

Transforming struggling communities into thriving climate-smart hubs of self-reliance

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened awareness of the critical need for local food production that can be adapted to local conditions. The INMED Aquaponics® Social Enterprise is INMED's solution to addressing the intertwined causes of poverty, including food insecurity, climate change and lack of sustainable income opportunities.

Mondelēz International is the first to invest in our social impact venture through its new Sustainable Futures initiative, which seeks to co-invest in projects addressing climate change, as well as making seed investments in social ventures that aim to improve livelihoods and build healthy communities—something INMED Partnerships for Children has been working toward around the world since 1986.

"It gives us the opportunity to work with others in supporting environmental and social projects that can help drive meaningful, long-term change," says Alisdair Sinclair, Managing Director, Mondelēz South Africa. "We don't have all the answers, but we do know that alone, we can never achieve significant progress in the fight against systemic issues like climate change."

Incubating Climate-Smart Entrepreneurs

The INMED ASE is a new type of incubator of entrepreneurial agro-enterprises for climate-smart food production. The first INMED ASE hub in Vanderbijlpark houses commercial aquaponics systems that will be used for food production and training.

It also will serve as a consolidation center for the growing number of aquaponics farmers to sell their harvests at higher market rates as well as purchase high-quality inputs, such as seedlings and fingerlings, at bulk prices.



"What makes the INMED ASE unique," says INMED South Africa Director Unathi Sihlahla, "is that it is designed to facilitate the entire value chain of technical and business training, access to financing and links to markets to help small-scale farmers and traditionally marginalised populations overcome the barriers to entry, sustainability and scale."

A Sustainable Solution for Scaling



Sustainability is key to scaling the INMED ASE by generating revenue from the sale of crops and fish from its own aquaponics systems and earning reimbursements for training and consolidation services. Its business model also establishes satellite centers for localised training, resources and production to scale the venture nationally and internationally. INMED SA has already launched satellite centers run by farm co-ops, schools and communities in three provinces.

"The INMED ASE addresses 15 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals to end global poverty by 2030," notes Dr. Linda Pfeiffer, founder and CEO of INMED Partnerships for Children, the parent organization of INMED South Africa. "It's what the world needs right now."

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We've Come a Long Way in a Short Time

We have had a busy three months getting the INMED ASE off the ground—quite literally. Over the next six years, the project aims to train over 60,000 people, create 1,200 job opportunities and positively impact over 300,000 individuals in vulnerable communities. Here are some of the highlights of our progress so far:



Our team has completed the first phase of development of the INMED ASE central hub, which involved refurbishing a school-based system we implemented a few years ago. We also repurposed a former packaging facility into a microgreens production area and an office for our farm manager, Karah Mashava.



Our new seedling nursery (above left) has the capacity to produce 5,000 seedlings every two weeks, which we'll transplant into the INMED ASE systems and sell to aquaponics farmers. The seedlings are a much higher quality and significantly less expensive than other inputs on the market. We just sold our first seedlings to an aquaponics farming co-op in Hennenman, which is a participant in our project with USAID to support farmers with disabilities in Free State. We also installed a small demonstration system to grow fingerlings for sale (above center) and are in discussions with retailers and restaurants to develop local markets for the high-quality produce our refurbished system is already yielding (above right).

Finally, we have conducted meetings with senior representatives of Gauteng Department of Agriculture & Rural Development to discuss the potential for collaboration in training farmers. Stay tuned for more information about our training programme in the next issue of this newsletter.

In Capable Hands—Introducing Kararegra Mashava

Taking care of an enterprise as big as the INMED ASE is no mean feat and requires a highly qualified farm manager. INMED SA is fortunate to have enticed Karah Mashava to fill this key role.

Karah holds a B.Sc. Honours degree in Natural Resources Management and Agriculture (Agronomy). He started his career in 2013 as a field technician at a tobacco research lab. Since 2017, he has served as a farm manager in a number of commercial agricultural enterprises in Eastern Cape.



Karah's previous work involved intensive organic and nonorganic crop production in a climate-controlled environment and open field. The main crops included peppers, beans, and eggplants. It also involved management of more than 40 employees in different departments.

Unathi Sihlahla, Director of INMED South Africa, notes that this experience has been invaluable in preparing Karah for the INMED ASE. "He has in-depth knowledge of crop protection, soil mineral nutrition and fertility, as well as hydroponics," he says. "Karah is also a strong manager and problem solver with excellent communication and project management skills. His unique ability to understand problems and formulate appropriate solutions will be a

huge asset for the INMED ASE. We warmly welcome Karah to the INMED SA team and are already so impressed with what he has managed to achieve in just a few months.”

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