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USA EMBASSY HONOURS PRETORIA FOOD COOPERATIVE

On Wednesday, Agbiz attended a reception hosted by the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of the USA, Ms Catherine Hill-Herndon, in honour of the Pretoria Food Cooperative.

Hill-Hendorn encouraged the adoption of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in South Africa as another avenue of supporting the country's emerging farmers. She said CSAs are a new concept in South Africa. It is like farmers' markets, but the difference is that they deliver fresh produce straight to the consumer's door.

"CSAs are also known as subscription farming, because consumers are paying a weekly or monthly fee to join a cooperative in exchange for regular delivery of fresh farm produce," Hill-Herndon said.

"The CSA concept of direct marketing of farm goods to consumers is well established in many countries throughout the world. The USA currently has more than 12 000 farms marketing their produce through CSA arrangements. This number grows every year, mostly because consumers are interested in getting fresh products directly from farms."

Hill-Herndon said although CSAs take many forms, all have at their centre a shared commitment to building a more local and equitable agricultural system, one that allows growers to focus on land stewardship and still maintain productive and profitable small farms.

"The subscription farming arrangement emphasises the economic benefits, for both the farmer and the consumer. The farmer gains a guaranteed market for farm products and the consumer is assured of a steady source of healthy, local food. CSAs enable farmers to develop a personal relationship with their customers and to cultivate, so to speak, consumer loyalty," she said.

Mr Daniel van Boxel, director of Pretoria Food Cooperative, said the cooperative obtains food as close as possible to the source on behalf of the members and delivers these in baskets to member's premises. It therefore cuts out the middleman, assures high quality and reduces the costs and inconvenience factor for the purchasing, processing and packaging of the food. Currently 35 farmers are committed to the cause, and are mainly concentrated in the Limpopo province serving the Tshwane and Gauteng market.

The Pretoria Food Cooperative is, amongst others, committed to support local communities, to create employment, to empower members through education and skills, and to reduce wastage of food. More information is available on www.ptavoedsel.co.za. For more information send email to admin@ptavoedsel.co.za or admin@boereprodukte.net