

More people, more hunger

As the global population continues to grow, so do the hunger pains. But this can be addressed.

July 11 has been set aside as World Population Day, following on a decision by the United Nations Development Programme in 1989. This was done in order to underline the urgency and importance of population issues and its profound implication for the environment and development.

Over 90 countries, organisations, governments and civil society organisations commemorate the day and strive to find solutions to population issues. South Africa is one of these.

Food security is a major concern, and particularly when populations continue to grow at the present rate. This is especially so in developing countries where the majority live below the poverty line, with little or no access to food.

This is a problem in South Africa too. Millions of people still go to bed hungry despite countless efforts by government and private organisations to provide aid.

In light of the alarming state, Monsanto SA has taken a stance to actively contribute to food production and security.

"We understand how important food is, especially maize, which is the staple food for many families. Whether planting for profit or sustenance, we urge every farmer to use agriculture to escape poverty," said Magda du Toit, Monsanto's communications manager.

This is done mainly through programmes with partners aimed at empowering small-holder farmers in rural communities to use agriculture to improve their lives.

The programme provides farmers with a step-by-step approach to crop production, including selecting the correct seed to plant and advice on the right time to plant, how to take soil samples to determine which fertilisers to use for the type of soil, how to plant the correct plant population and to spray the correct amount of water and chemicals to control worms from damaging the crop.

"Farming is not something all people consider to help provide food for their families. We are trying to change this by showing communities how it can be done - and they don't need to have big farms – just one hectare is enough to produce enough food for a family and have some left over to sell," said Du Toit.

"Our products and technologies are equally suited to benefit both large-scale commercial farmers or those farming on a small piece of land. It is also important for us to acknowledge the important part all farmers play in providing food to a growing world population."

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