

Press release – Monsanto

Investing in youth is like planting a seed

Investing in youth is like planting a seed which will grow into a tree that will benefit the whole society. That is how Kobus Steenekamp, business and commercial manager of Monsanto South Africa, explains why this foremost seed development company is so heavily invested in the youth of the country.

Monsanto has a youth development thrust which includes bursaries, internships, learnership programmes, assistance for students who want to attend agricultural congresses, boosts interest in biotechnology at schools and universities, sponsors agricultural clubs at universities, assists with the building of bathrooms at schools and maintaining of school buses. And much more.

Madelein du Plessis, Monsanto human resources manager, has a “great sense of fulfilment” when she is able to help with bursaries and link these with internships “to enable preparation for the world of work and see the successes they can achieve”.

There are two other major ventures that Monsanto is closely connected with – the Buhle Farmers’ Academy (BFA) and a high school in Bonnievale in the Western Cape.

The BFA trains new and aspiring farmers from across South Africa to run profitable and sustainable businesses by exposing them to technical, production, managerial, financial and marketing skills. Monsanto has been involved since 2000, inter alia, by donating a research farm to start the campus on.

It is also involved with Khulisa Social Solutions. Here Monsanto has supported a scheme which aims to empower 120 post-matric girls by putting them through programmes focusing on personal development, IT knowledge, health, financial literacy and agriculture. Of these 28 entered BFA in 2017. At the end of their studies they will have set up cooperatives from which they can run businesses.

In Bonnievale there were pupils but no school. So the local community opened its hearts – Philip Jonker from Weltevrede donated 12 ha, also stepping in pro bono was an architect, engineers, attorneys, a land surveyor, an earth-moving company. Monsanto donated R2 million.

At the beginning of this year the Jakes Gerwel Entrepreneurial and Technical School opened its doors for grade 8 and 9 learners. The school is a partnership between the provincial education department and the Jakes Gerwel Entrepreneurship School Funding Trust – the former contributing 40% of the costs and the latter 60%.

Monsanto’s support meant that a state-of-the-art agricultural facility could become part of the school.

As CEO Steenekamp says: “We invest in the youth of today, to ensure the future, not only of this generation but of generations to come.

END