

## Rural Jozini Farmers Working Together

Rural communities are home to 75 percent of the world's poorest people ([www.foodtank.com](http://www.foodtank.com)). Most of these people rely on farming for food and income. Heifer International South Africa's (HPSA) mission is to help lift these rural farmers out of poverty and hunger, whilst enabling them to improve food security, their general livelihoods and development. The vision, improve food access, income and general livelihood's for rural families in the most poverty stricken parts of South Africa. HPSA's aim is to ensure suitable rural livelihoods for rural farmers through; introducing rural farmers to improved farming methods, encouraging group formation and knowledge sharing while ensuring environmental integrity.

HPSA has already taken into consideration that many poor rural farmers are faced by problems such as gender imbalance/inequity, low productivity of crops and livestock, land tenure system the people often own very little or no land at all, disease of livestock and rural farmers with HIV/AIDS and those in the community that are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and lack of knowledge and information- most cannot read or write. With the above mentioned problems, rural farmers must be approached in a way that will sensitize them about changing their mind set as in regards to improving farming methods to ensure sustainable rural livelihoods. It is important to ensure environmental integrity whilst ensuring sustainability.

HPSA works closely with rural farmers providing them with training and knowledge such as with the farmers of the Jozini Agricultural Model project funded by the European Union.



Goat farmer training in Jozini Agricultural Model Project

This project started in May 2015 and covers four areas in the Jozini Municipality. The aim is to reach 1000 rural households in the first year and 2400 by the end of three years. This is done through the provision of livestock and training with a focus of job creation and improved livestock productivity. Additionally, the project will provide an opportunity that will enable youth empowerment socially and economically. Farmers come together in groups to discuss issues and share innovations that are supporting their farming activities. This enables them to target larger markets such as regular goat auctions. Transport costs getting to the market can also

be shared, as well as group savings. In a group and farming together they hold more bargaining power and this reduces exploitation along the value chain.

The unity of sustainable agriculture in rural areas helps bring families' together by working towards a common goal that's beneficial to all. The projects allow the poor have direct links to food production and the land is more productive. Rural farming makes people stronger by putting their food security into their own hands, making them more independent and empowered. They learn life skills such as being more self-sufficient, create jobs, income and food. This helps HPSA come closer to achieving its goal by helping combat hunger through providing families with the knowledge and tools to help themselves.



A farmer's day at Jozini demonstrating block making and stover processing