



**For Immediate Release**

**To: All Media**

**Date: 11 April 2024**

## **AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL COLLABORATES ON A FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY PLAN FOR THE EASTERN CAPE**

According to recent data, a staggering 768 million people worldwide suffer from undernourishment, with Africa shouldering a significant burden, accounting for 282 million of those affected. Closer to home, the Eastern Cape has witnessed a concerning trend, with almost 1,087 children diagnosed with Severe Acute Malnutrition between April 2021 and March 2022, tragically resulting in the loss of 116 young lives. This distressing cycle of malnutrition is deeply intertwined with poverty, as many households struggle to afford adequate nutrition, healthcare, and sanitation. Shockingly, nearly 59% of South Africa's children live below the upper-bound poverty line, which fails to cover their basic nutritional needs.

Subsequently, prompted by a report published by the Human Rights Commission highlighting the plight of communities in the Eastern Cape, and inspired by previous efforts, the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) will be launching a food security drive focused on schools and early childhood development centres in poverty-stricken areas of Flagstaff, Lusikisiki, and Port St. Johns. These areas have been identified by the Human Rights Commission as among the hardest hit by poverty within the district. Community members are also encouraged to participate in the sessions, as this DARLLD-funded project aims to address the grim situation they are faced with, representing our commitment to tackling the pressing crisis in these areas. Our vision

extends beyond a one-time intervention; rather, we aim for continuous efforts that will positively impact lives in the long term.

During the two-week programme, ARC researchers and experts will tackle numerous challenges. They will engage in training activities such as soil preparation, seedling production, vegetable planting, and the practical implementation of the bag system. The sessions will also encompass additional topics such as pests and diseases, climate-smart agriculture (CSA), and the selection of cultivars suitable for the area. Additionally, researchers will concentrate on value-adding and marketing strategies for agricultural produce in the province.

The Provincial Food and Nutrition Security Plan will act as a strategic roadmap for addressing malnutrition through targeted interventions and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Participants, including students from grade R to Grade 7, educators, School Governing Bodies (SGB), Ward Councillors, and community members, will receive a variety of seedlings as part of the initiative.

"We recognise the urgent need to address malnutrition in the Eastern Cape and are committed to working collaboratively with our partners to develop sustainable solutions. Through the Provincial Food and Nutrition Security Plan, we aim to empower communities, improve access to nutritious food, and ultimately, save lives." - Dr Lerato Matsaunyane, Research Team Manager: Farmer Support, Commercialisation and Enterprise Development, ARC.

The ARC encourages all stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, community leaders, and the private sector, to join hands in this vital endeavour. Together, significant strides can be made towards ensuring food and nutrition security for all Eastern Cape residents.

**Members of the media are invited to the launch as follows:**

**Part 1**

**Date: 15 April 2024**

**Venue: Port St Johns Community Hal, Eastern Cape**

**Time:9h00-12h00**

## **Part 2**

**Members of the media are invited to attend the actual training and planting sessions with ARC scientists and researchers.**

**Venue: Butho Primary School, Port St Johns, Eastern Cape.**

**Time: 12h00-14h00**

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About the ARC

### ***Notes to the Editors***

#### **About the Agricultural Research Council**

The Agricultural Research Council is a premier science institution that conducts research with partners, develops human capital, and fosters innovation in support of the agricultural sector. The ARC provides diagnostic, laboratory, analytical, and agricultural engineering services, post-harvest technology development, agrochemical evaluation, consultation, and advisory services, food processing technology services as well as various surveys and training interventions. For more information visit the ARC website at: [www.arc.agric.za](http://www.arc.agric.za)