



WAITROSE FOUNDATION SOUTHERN AFRICA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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DEEPENING ENGAGEMENT AND IGNITING MOTIVATION

Foreword by Georgie Hewitt

Education has always been one of the most powerful ways to create opportunity and strengthen communities. Across the Waitrose Foundation in Southern Africa, we see how access to learning - whether through early childhood development, school support, or skills training - can shape brighter futures for workers, their families, and the next generation.

One of the most distinctive strengths of the Foundation is our bottom-up approach. Farm worker committees play a central role in identifying the needs within their communities and decide how funds are invested. Time and again, education emerges as a top priority. From improving school facilities and providing learning resources, to supporting bursaries and after-school programmes, these initiatives are helping to ensure that children and young people have the tools they need to thrive.

Education is not only about classrooms and textbooks. It's about building confidence, developing skills, and opening pathways to opportunity. When communities invest in education, the impact reaches far beyond individual learners. It strengthens families, supports local economies, and contributes to more resilient communities. In this newsletter, we highlight inspiring education projects made possible through the commitment of our growers, workers, supply chain partners, and Waitrose customers. Their collective contribution continues to demonstrate the power of partnership and shared purpose.

Thank you to everyone who plays a part in making these initiatives possible. Together, we are helping to nurture potential and create opportunities that will benefit communities for generations to come.

Country Steering Group Member / Grower - Verdun Estates

WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF OUR NEWSLETTER FOR 2026!

As the first quarter of 2026 draws to a close, we pause to reflect on the steady progress made across our grower communities.

These early months have reminded us that meaningful change is truly built through teamwork, commitment, strong collaboration and genuine care - laying strong foundations for the year ahead.





Global Update

The Waitrose Foundation UK recently launched the new **Global Strategic Fund**, and will invest £1m in **WASH** and **water security initiatives across all Foundation countries**. Water security poses significant risks to our farming and growing communities, with some facing a lack of access to safe drinking water and inadequate sanitation, which can lead to waterborne diseases and chronic illness, time and labour diversions to collect water. Access to clean water and sanitation is fundamental for human health, economic development, and education, particularly for women and children who often disproportionately bear the burden.

Additionally, the Waitrose Foundation is growing into a new category, as all **bananas** will be part of the programme from summer 2026, alongside the existing Fairtrade certified sourcing. Waitrose's commitment to 100% Fairtrade certified bananas and **improved livelihood projects** on the ground, is further complemented by paying the living wage differential on bananas from all its plantations, delivering on its 2027 industry commitment two years early. The existing commitment to Fairtrade certified bananas ensures a Minimum Price and additional Fairtrade Premium goes to the producer groups. The additional programmatic activity, supported by the Waitrose Foundation, will cover four critical areas of work: improving sustainable production of bananas, building the climate resilience of smallholder farmers, improving farm biodiversity to enhance soil health and yields, and supporting smallholders with data management and market access. Find out more by visiting our websites: www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk and www.waitrose.com

Barney Smyth - Partner & Ethics & Sustainability, Waitrose Foundation Specialist



Worker Voice Projects

Mariveni Multipurpose Facility is transformed into a community learning hub in Letsitele, near Tzaneen in the Limpopo Province (Farms: Hardekool & Platlands. Exporter: FruitOne)

Since its launch in August 2025, the Mariveni Multi-Purpose Facility has grown from offering Saturday learning sessions into a fully functional learning centre providing free training to the community five days a week. With support of Waitrose worker voice funds, the team was able to acquire the necessary resources and appoint a full-time facilitator. The learning commenced on 16 February 2026, and now delivers two training sessions per day, focused on enhancing community employability through practical, digital and soft skills-based training.

The programme is progressing well under the leadership of facilitator Nyumani Mathebula, with strong attendance and engagement from the community. Attendance reached 78% in February and increased to 82.8% in March, demonstrating consistent participation and growing interest.

The initiative is gradually gaining momentum, and we are encouraged by its impact. There is ample opportunity for further growth to strengthen the academic and skills development of the workers, their children, the youth, and employed and/or unemployed persons in the community.



Reading Gogos in the Northern Cape: Opening Worlds Through Stories

"The Reading 'Gogos' (grandmothers) Project continues to bring joy, learning, and hope to children on **Karsten farms** across the Northern Cape. We currently have five dedicated Reading Gogos who spend every weekend reading to children on various farms including Klein Pella, Kromhout, Mosplaas, Roepersfontein and Green Valley Nuts.

Each session is much more than just reading. Alongside stories, the Gogos sing songs, say rhymes, do creative activities and play games. These half-day gatherings help children develop creativity, imagination, language skills, moral values, and a love for learning. All while having fun in a safe and caring environment.

The project plays a significant role in keeping children off the streets, safe and engaged, while building friendships and a sense of belonging among them. Since November, the project has grown even further at one farm where children from the wider community became curious and joined in the fun.

On one weekend alone, one grandmother read to 52 kids who listened with wide eyes and eager hearts as stories opened new worlds of hope and fun. When it was time to go home, many left reluctantly, already looking forward to the next visit. Dr. Seuss said: 'The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.' Through this project, these children are already beginning that journey. One story at a time. Community Learning in Action - Northern Cape." (Fréda Nowers, Karsten Group)



Geelhoutboom Primary School in George gets an exciting facelift (South Cape Fruit)

Geelhoutboom Primary School is situated on land owned by South Cape Fruit Farm. No rental is charged by the farm for the use of the land. The school accommodates 85 children and only 3 dedicated teachers - most of the workers' children attend the school. It is a no-fee school that is registered with the Department of Education and therefore relies on donations for maintenance and repairs.

The building, now over 170 years old, required urgent refurbishment, with the last major renovation completed more than 20 years ago. Despite these challenges, the school remains a beacon of hope and opportunity for the children it serves.

When the school opened on 21 July 2025 for the new quarter, learners returned to a newly upgraded building, with great excitement! The project included improvements to classrooms, ablution facilities, the exterior, roof, and canteen, creating a more functional environment for both learners and teachers. The upgrade was funded through Worker Voice funds, with workers choosing to prioritise the needs of the school.

As noted by the School Principal Nadia Coetzee, the improvements have made a meaningful difference to the learning environment and will benefit learners for years to come.

This report was received from Granwill Baadjies, Packhouse Manager at South Cape Fruit and Chairman of the Governing Body at Geelhoutboom Primary. (Exporter: BerryWorld SA)

Excelsior farm's United Stars Rugby Club (Exporter: STEMS Fruit)

The workers used their available funds to purchase kit for their team. As the photos show, they are extremely proud of their new look!

The club competes in the **Boland Rugby Union** against teams from the Breederiver, Langeberg, Overberg, Central and Witzenberg regions, amongst others.

"This means so much to **United Stars Rugby Club**. We're not only there to play rugby for our community. We're there for the kids in the community, to build friendships, and so that the youth can look up to us. Thank you, Waitrose. Now we can play together in one team kit. It feels different - like we're even more of a unit."

"Rugby means so much to me. The sport is for me to stay fit, but also to encourage my son as he grows up. I want to thank Waitrose for the jerseys - we appreciate it so much. As a community it means so much to us as we can come together as friends and family. That is why we play the sport - to mean something not just for ourselves, but for the community as well."

"I love rugby. The training I do during the week keeps me active. On weekends I prefer playing rugby than to sit at home. It is also for our community - that they can look up to United Stars Club. We feel proud when we wear our jerseys, representing our club when we compete on weekends, bringing the community together."



"I am **Jeanika Lockett-Brink**. I've been employed on **Môrester Farm** near **Piketberg** since 2005. I am the principal and aftercare facilitator at **Môrester Academy** (creche). Before I was employed at the academy, I worked on the farm during school holidays. I enjoyed dancing and was asked to perform at the creche. The principal at the time, Sophia Booyse, approached me as there was a position available and that is how my journey with Môrester Academy started.

Initially I looked after the babies. I learnt so much from the principal. I started growing in my knowledge. Due to circumstances, I was unable to complete my matric and decided to enroll for evening classes at Steynville Secondary and then to college in 2007. It was a challenge to work, do my matric and study, but I loved it! Early Childhood Development (ECD) is so important, and it is a privilege to be part of a child's foundational growth in that phase. I wanted to learn more.

The Department of Social Development played an important role in my growth. I attended many training courses including ECD management, substance abuse awareness, safety, and first aid. Our creche had an aftercare class. It was in a church building near the entrance to the creche. I didn't know at the time that the Waitrose Foundation contributed to establishing a beautiful aftercare centre on the farm. The team started walking a road with me, giving me more opportunities for training. Encouraged and supported by the Foundation, I also enrolled for various computer training courses and eventually successfully completed my Bachelor of Education (BEd) qualification.

I encountered many challenges but didn't give up. At the academy I could apply what I was learning and in a way the children became part of the various milestones I reached. I learnt determination. Through the tiredness of working and studying as well as anxiety around exam time, I pushed through. I was also blessed with a daughter and realised that it was not just about myself anymore – I had to take responsibility for her.

My BEd means so much to me. I'm not just seen as 'the woman on the farm looking after the kids anymore'. Now I have a qualification. I can make an even more meaningful contribution and discuss matters around education with management. I immerse myself fully in my work with the children, completing daily tasks and preparing for each week. My message to others: *Follow your passion if you love working with kids. It truly is a calling. It is not about the money. You will face many challenges, but your passion and faith will sustain you. I took up the challenge and succeeded. The kids call me 'teacher', not aunty. That is my treasure!"*



Simonsvlei (BerryWorld SA), situated between Stellenbosch and Paarl, recently launched their **Recycling project**. The launch raised awareness within the community and provided a clear explanation of how the project will work. They are recycling paper, plastic, and bottles. Recycling material is collected on the farm and from the workers' homes. Workers and their families will participate in the recycling.

The aim is to keep the **environment clean** and **generate income** that can be used on other community projects. Three people will be trained and employed by the farm to work on this project and as it expands, they anticipate eventually employing more people. The project coordinator, worker committee and all of the workers on the farm, are very excited about the new project and committed to taking action.





Central Programmes are designed to address and strengthen socio-economic development in agri-worker communities, fostering leadership, youth development, wellness and economic empowerment. These programmes are based on regional needs. **Programmes for 2026:**

- **Leadership & Management Development**

- Worker Committee Development
- Project Coordinator Development

- **Youth Development Programme**

- Bursary Project
- Personal and Professional Development
- YearBeyond

- **Partial Care Services**

- Registration of Partial Care Facilities

- **Information, Communication and Technology**

- Computer Software and Hardware (eg CAMI)
- Internet Connectivity

- **Community and Family Wellness**

- Substance Abuse Mentorship
- Resilient Men in Agriculture

- **Economic Empowerment**

- Emerging Farmers

Resilient Women in Agriculture: A trauma-informed approach to community mental health and wellbeing. Kaleo Farm, Koue-Bokkeveld
January 2026 | 13 participants (age 22 - 54) | Report by Uné Conradie

The **Resilient Women in Agriculture workshop** was a 2-day, trauma-informed, arts-based psychosocial intervention facilitated by Sp(i)eel Arts Therapies Collective. The workshop brought together women working and living in agricultural contexts to engage in embodied, creative processes that supported connection, reflection and repair within the realities of their daily lives. Designed to be a co-created safe space, the workshop recognised the layered personal, relational, and structural challenges women face, and intentionally created time and permission for participants to focus on themselves, their stories, and their lived experiences.

Through the arts, participants were supported in slowing down, expressing themselves, and connecting with others in ways often unavailable in their everyday environments. Participant feedback and practitioner observations indicate that the workshop functioned as a space for emotional release, recognition, and renewed awareness, where participants felt seen, heard, and held. The processes introduced in the workshop laid the foundation for deeper self-awareness, strengthened relational capacity, and an expanded understanding of resilience as an ongoing, collective practice rather than an individual measure of endurance.

A **key learning** from the workshop is the extent to which women are living with compounded, ongoing trauma within contexts shaped by gender-based violence, economic precarity, and sustained social pressure to endure and hide the impact of these realities. Participants' reflections and practitioner observations highlighted how dominant models of healing can intensify despair, particularly when women continue to experience flashbacks, nightmares, or emotional overwhelm despite accessing professional services. The workshop reinforced the importance of naming ongoing rupture as a structural and relational reality, and reframing healing as cyclical, relational, and collective rather than as an individual achievement or endpoint.



Bursary Programme

Education is a powerful tool for transformation in Southern Africa, yet geographic isolation and financial barriers mean that only a small fraction of youth from rural farming communities access higher education.

Recognising the importance of investing in young people in the farming communities we serve, and building on the success of previous bursary recipients, the Bursary Programme was reintroduced in 2024. We now support a total of eight students.

Bursaries can be life-changing, opening doors to education that might otherwise remain closed. One such example is Berilize Swart from Karsten in the Northern Cape, who was able to come to Cape Town to pursue her studies in Social Work.

"The bursary is an opportunity to become what I have always wanted to be in life. It is a chance for me to make a difference to my family and my child through hard work, even if it is tough. It teaches me perseverance and patience, and I have had to adapt to doing things for myself, standing on my own feet, and being away from home. Since coming to Cape Town, I have grown so much. It was very difficult at first because I knew no one, but I have had to make friends, and now I have two new friends. The lecturers are also very kind and they help us where they can. I am grateful for the chance I have been given."

We wish everyone a successful year!



Abredene



Franzille



Sinethemba



Ashwin



Vincent



Denovan



Berilize



Tsakani

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
Nelson Mandela

Berilize Swart	Karsten, Northern Cape	Bachelor's Degree in Social Work, Huguenot College
Ashwin Janse	Kalos Farm, Western Cape	Bachelor of Accounting, Boston City Campus
Sinethemba Khoza	Komati Fruit, Limpopo	Diploma Crop Production, Tswane University of Technology
Denovan Fourie	Green Marketing, Western Cape	Occupational Certificate: Early Childhood Development, Huguenot College
Franzille Geduld	Graaff Fruit, Western Cape	Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase Teaching, SANTS Higher Education Institution
Abredene Smith	Verdun Farm, Western Cape	BEd Foundation Phase Teaching, Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Tsakani Mashele	FruitOne, Limpopo	Diploma in Operations Management, University of Johannesburg
Vincent Kavura	Namibia Grape Company, Namibia	Certificate Farm Machinery & Infrastructure, Rundu Vocational Training Centre

Community Voices

Monteith farm, Dennegeur, Auldearn and De Rust-Paul Cluver hosted a 3-day **Youth Camp** at Kogelberg Farm Hostel in Grabouw (15–17 December 2025). Designed to support and empower young people, the camp focused on building essential life skills, creating space for reflection, and encouraging thoughtful preparation for the year ahead. Through shared experiences, learning and connection, these young people were given the opportunity to build their confidence, broaden perspectives and envision positive pathways for their future. This initiative reflects the heart of the Waitrose Foundation's commitment: investing in Youth, fostering collaboration across partner farms, and helping to build resilient communities. The camp was attended by 45 learners (grades 7 - 10) and the overall theme focused on **Personal Growth and Navigating Life's Journey**.

The programme included a mix of physical and emotional activities such as soccer, water games, a night walk, hammer throw, group discussions, and self-reflection exercises. Positive outcomes included strong learner engagement and emotional growth; positive group integration; development of self-confidence and friendships; good balance between fun and meaningful activities; support by adaptable and caring facilitators, and identification of future leaders. Learners felt inspired, more confident, and grateful for the experience. The camp was very successful and there is consensus that it should be repeated in the future. Below are some of the feedback received from the learners (translated from Afrikaans):

"I will always remember this camp, because we didn't only make new friends, we could share so much with one another."

"I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend the camp. I realised that I have so much potential to reach my dreams. I just need to believe in myself."

"Initially I was very shy at the camp, but I still enjoyed myself so much during all the activities. I realised that it doesn't help hiding away in my own little corner, while there are so many opportunities waiting out there through which I can grow and become a better person."

"I didn't know what to expect from the three days, but it all worked out so well. I learnt that one has to make some difficult decisions in life, even if that means losing friends in the process. My future is important and I will have to work hard."



"Two Days of Insight"

Two days passed, a journey begun,
Through minds of many, beneath the sun.

Psychometrics taught me to see,
The hidden paths of humanity.

Each skill, each thought, a story untold,
Each measure, each test, a piece of the soul.

To understand, not just to know,
How people rise, and sometimes slow.

Safeguarding called, a duty so deep,
To guard, to watch, to vigilantly keep.

The vulnerable hearts,
the voices unheard,
Protection spoken, not just a word.

I leave these halls with eyes anew,
Aware of the strength in what I do.

Two days of learning, two days of heart,
A journey of knowledge, a mindful start.

**Written by Abriam Louw - 2026 YearBeyond Data
Intern who attended Psychometric Test Training**



Inspirational Stories

Our Youth Development Programme inspires young artists to follow their dreams!

Katelynn Matthews (23) grew up on Jamacajo, JS Jordaan Boerdery in De Doorns where her parents, Martin and Alana Wyngaardt, are still employed. From a young age, Katelynn was exposed to arts and production activities on the farm under the guidance of her father. It was here that she discovered her passion for the arts, attending sessions where she observed how her father led and guided his groups.

She went on to study Drama at the University of the Free State up to her second year and continues to aspire to complete her degree in Drama. In 2024, as part of the annual kykNET Fiëstas awards, Katelynn was nominated for Best Upcoming Artist for 'Khanya and her Golden Dream' at the Free State Arts Festival.

In 2025, she joined the Waitrose Foundation Youth Development Programme. Katelynn notes that her participation in the programme made a significant contribution to her personal growth. She highlights a psychosocial session she attended in June 2025 as particularly impactful - an experience that renewed her inspiration and hope and helped her get back on track.

We are so proud of Katelynn pursuing her dream and working very hard at reaching it. During the month of March this year, Katelynn was involved in the Baxter Theatre's Zabalaza Festival. Well supported and highly successful, the production of 'Kinnes van Somers' (also attended by our General Manager, Faith Brown), received rave reviews. Congratulations to the whole cast!



A Story of Support and Dedication - Kopano Nyokana (Past Bursary Student)

"Growing up in South Africa, I was always drawn to the land and the idea of cultivating it. Mr. Robert, a seasoned farmer and respected mentor in Buffelskraal Wes, noticed my passion and took me under his wing. He shared his expertise, teaching me the ins and outs of sustainable farm management and he also encouraged me to pursue formal training.

I applied to Elsenburg Agricultural College, and from 2017 to 2019, I had the opportunity to hone my skills and knowledge. The Waitrose Foundation, which supports initiatives like mine through the dedication of team members like Hilda Links and Raymond Engelbrecht, came through with a bursary that made it possible. It allowed me to focus on my studies, attend workshops, and gain hands-on experience.

Throughout this journey, my mom was my rock, offering many words of encouragement and supporting me every step of the way. Her unwavering belief in me gave me the confidence to keep pushing forward.

After completing my studies, I started as a Production Assistant Manager at Riverfresh, where I gained valuable experience and honed my skills. I later joined Suiderland Plase as a Production Assistant, where I've been able to apply my knowledge and contribute to the team's success.

It is a dream come true and I'm grateful to Mr Robert, the Waitrose Foundation (thanks to Hilda and Raymond's support), and my mom for their role in getting me here."





Knowledge Hub - Useful Resources - Sharing is Caring

Read to Lead: How Parents and Caregivers Can Support Literacy

Reading is a foundational language skill essential for children's learning and long-term academic success. By nurturing a love of reading from an early age, caregivers help children develop the curiosity and confidence needed for lifelong learning.

Nal'ibali is a national reading-for-enjoyment campaign in South Africa (isiXhosa for 'here's the story') that encourages children and caregivers to engage meaningfully with stories. The campaign promotes literacy by offering multilingual reading materials, supporting community reading clubs, and training caregivers to create reading-rich environments at home, in schools, and within communities. Nal'ibali provides accessible reading resources across the country, delivering bilingual stories in all 11 official languages through print media, digital platforms, radio, and community initiatives. Ways to access Nal'ibali resources:

- **WhatsApp:** Text the word 'stories' to 060 044 2254 to receive up to ten stories.
- **Digital & Mobile:** Visit the Nal'ibali mobisite at www.nalibali.mobi or follow @nalibaliSA on Facebook and X (Twitter).
- **Radio:** Story sessions are broadcast on various SABC radio stations, including Ukhozi FM, Umhlobo Wenene, and SAfm.
- **Print:** Weekly supplements are available in publications such as the Sunday Times and TimesLIVE.
- **Reading Clubs:** Community-based reading clubs operate in all nine provinces, supported with resources for volunteers.



The **Start Up Tribe** and the **Next Step Exchange** offer young people a powerful platform to grow, connect, and take action. Through access to practical skills development, free learning opportunities, and real-life entrepreneurial insights, participants are equipped to build confidence, explore income-generating ideas, and navigate the path to employment or self-started ventures. Together, these initiatives foster a supportive community that inspires ambition, unlocks potential, and turns next steps into tangible progress. Visit: www.thestartuptribe.org



In Closing

As we come to the end of this quarter, I am reminded that our work is about the people we serve and the deep connections we build along the way. One such connection that is very personal to me is the story of Marco Rooi.

Marco was one of the first recipients of the Foundation's bursaries, and I vividly remember interviewing him on Lushof, a Graaff-Fruit farm. He studied financial management and went on to complete an auditing qualification, working hard to support his family. Last month, I returned to the same farm in Ceres, but this time it was also about Marco in a very different way. I sadly attended his funeral, where he was laid to rest from the community hall that proudly carries the Waitrose Foundation name. I was deeply moved by the words of the preacher, who said: "Your name matters."

It reminded me that the Foundation's legacy is built on this simple truth: each person matters. We honour Marco's life, and the lives of so many others in our farming communities who have passed on. They mattered, and we are committed to building on their legacy. This stayed with me during my recent visit to Waitrose and the John Lewis Partnership in the UK. At the Newbury store, I was struck not only by the beautiful displays, but by how visible the Waitrose Foundation is. Seeing our farms' products on the shelves always means something to me, because behind each one are real people and real stories.

Following the energy and success of last year's conference, we step into this year with a clear focus on deepening engagement and igniting motivation across our communities and partnerships. I look forward to what we can achieve together, and to a year of meaningful and lasting impact.

Faith Brown - General Manager

WE ARE MOVING!

After six and a half wonderful years in our Technopark office, we're excited to announce that we're relocating to a new and inspiring workspace. In early April, we'll be settling into the Sustainability Institute near Spier Wine Estate, just off the R310. Our new home in the Drie Geuwels Building offers a beautiful environment that supports our work and values, and we look forward to welcoming you there soon.

New Address:

Drie Gewels Building
Sustainability Institute
Lynedoch Road, Lynedoch, Stellenbosch
Our phone numbers remain the same.



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