Imbewu Farmer Development Phase II

The Eastern Cape has often been referred to as the "sleeping giant" of South African agriculture, boasting the country's largest livestock population and substantial contributions to horticulture and dairy production.

Smallholder farmers have yet to benefit equally from the region's rich agricultural resources, however. Limited access to credit and financial services hinders the purchase of quality seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural inputs and services. Extension services often fall short in equipping farmers with the knowledge and skills required to adopt innovative practices. Compounding these challenges, farmers' vulnerability to extreme weather events has increased.

In 2022, Tanager partnered with the John Deere Foundation to pilot a program that would transition smallholder maize farmers from subsistence farming to self-sufficient production. The results were transformative: On average, participating farmers achieved 65% higher yields per hectare and 63% greater gross income per hectare over comparable smallholder farmers in the region who had not participated in Imbewu activities.

Building on this success, Tanager and John Deere Foundation are proud to launch the second phase of Imbewu. Derived from the Xhosa word for "seed," Imbewu symbolizes growth and potential – values central to the program's mission. Phase II will expand efforts to **improve smallholder farmers' productivity, minimize post-harvest losses,** and **enhance overall profitability,** driving sustainable agricultural development.

AT A GLANCE

Project:
Imbewu Farmer Development Phase II

Location:
Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Project Years: 2024–2028

Funding Partner:
John Deere Foundation

Project Goal:
Increase agricultural productivity and incomes of smallholder farmers

TECHNICAL APPROACH

Imbewu phase II offers a continuum of services to support farmers as they progress from subsistence to self-sufficient agriculture. Key components include digital extension, on-farm training through demonstration plots, improving access to finance and markets to maximize block farming initiatives, and tailored support to more self-sufficient farmers. Across all activities, the program emphasizes:

CLIMATE-SMART APPROACHES

Monoculture maize farming can exacerbate vulnerability to weather variability. Imbewu phase II will promote crop diversification and crop rotation alongside training in good agricultural practices.

DIGITAL EXTENSION

To expand its reach, the program will integrate a digital extension platform, complementing the hands-on extension services to scale impact and support a broader population of farmers.

GENDER AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Imbewu phase II will promote women and youth leadership in agricultural production and create micro-enterprise opportunities for women and youth in the sector.

FARMING AS A BUSINESS

Transitioning to self-sufficient agriculture requires robust operational and business skills. Imbewu phase II will provide farm management and business development training to equip farmers for success.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

Limited financing opportunities remain a significant hurdle for smallholders. Imbewu phase II will forge partnerships with financial institutions and provide guidance to farmers to access financing solutions.

TARGET IMPACT

Building on its initial work with 2,760 smallholder maize farmers, Imbewu phase II aims to achieve the following outcomes:

6,576
Farmers supported

37%
Increase in farmer yields

68%
Average increases in gross income

Tanager, an affiliate of the AV Group*, is a global development organization that empowers people to realize life-changing economic and social opportunities. We have 30 years of experience implementing gender-transformative and nutrition-sensitive agriculture approaches, connecting actors across the production supply chain, fostering knowledge and access for women and other marginalized groups, and unlocking sustainable, climate-smart economic opportunities for all. tanagerintl.org

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