

[Innovation of the Week: From the Township Garden to the City Table](#)

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Suggested Photo:

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Around 1 million people in South Africa—the majority of whom are recent arrivals from the former apartheid homelands, Transkei and Ciskei—live in the shacks that make up Khayelitsha, Nyanga and the area surrounding the Cape Flats outside Cape Town. Just under half, or 40 percent, of the population is unemployed, while the rest barely earn enough income to feed their families.

While Abalimi Bezekhaya is bringing food and wild flora into the townships, it is also helping the townships to bring fresh produce into the city. (Photo credit: Bernard Pollack)

In Xhosa, the most common language found in the area, the word *ablabimi* means “the planters”. Through partnerships with local grassroots organizations, the aptly named, [Abalimi Bezekhaya](#), a non-profit organization working with the people living in these informal settlements, is helping to create a community of planters who can feed the township.

Abalimi Bezekhaya is helping to transform townships into food—and income—generating green spaces in order to alleviate poverty and to protect the fragile surrounding ecosystem. Providing training and materials, Abalimi Bezekhaya helps people to turn school yards and empty plots of land into gardens. Each garden is run by 6 to 8 farmers who, with support and time, are soon able to produce enough food to feed their families. Abalimi Bezekhaya encourages community members to plant indigenous trees and other flora in the township streets to create shade and increase awareness of the local plant life, much of which is endangered due to urban sprawl.

But while Abalimi Bezekhaya is bringing food and wild flora into the townships, it is also helping the townships to bring fresh produce into the city.

With support from the [Ackerman Pick n'Pay Foundation](#), and in partnership with the [South African Institute of Entrepreneurship](#) (SAIE) and the [Business Place Philippi](#), Abalimi Bezekhaya founded [Harvest of Hope](#) (HoH) in 2008. HoH purchases the surplus crops from 14 groups of farmers working in Abalimi Bezekhaya's community plots, packages them in boxes and delivers them to selected schools where parents can purchase them to take home.

For families in Cape Town, HoH means fresh vegetables instead of the older, and often imported, produce at the grocery store. But for families of the farmers working with Hope of Harvest, it means much more. “To grow these vegetables here for me, first, is a life,” said Christina Kaba, a farmer working with HoH in a video about the project. “Second, is how you can give to your family without asking anyone for a donation for money or food. Here you are making money, you are making food.”

To read more about innovations that bring produce to cities, see: [Vertical Farms: Finding Ways to Grow Food in Kibera](#), [Growing Food in Urban “Trash,”](#) [Creating a Market for the Taste of Home](#), [Looking for an Answer in the Private Sector](#), and [Reducing Wastewater Starts with a Conversation](#).