

# Thebe investment is playing a catalytic role in supporting farmers



Thebe Mochokoko, the CEO of TAP Foods, a food distribution and processing company based in Free State, shares with us the impact Thebe Investment Corporation's support has had on his business. Mr Mochochoko is one of the agroprocessors that Thebe Investment Corporation (TIC) supported to be included in the procurement and value-chain of one of its subsidiaries, COMPASS Group (now known as EMPACT Group).

Besides supplying Empact group, one of Thebe's subsidiary, TAP Foods is contributing to job creation in the community. TIC assisted this business with a secured market, a springboard for the business to grow and much-needed support to farmers. TIC has played that catalytic role for TAP Foods, this is a role TIC hopes to play in uplifting other smaller companies to grow their businesses, contributing to transformation in the sectors it operates in.

## What inspired you to get into Farming? Has farming always been your passion?

My father an Agricultural/Civil Engineer was my main inspiration in my decision to become involved with agriculture. When I was young barely 10 years old my main duties and chores were on the farm. My weekends and holidays consisted of a lot of farming experience.

That is where I learnt to appreciate the planting and growing of plants and rearing of livestock.

## Tell us more about your farming enterprise

TAP Foods is in the foodservice business as a Food Distribution and processor. At the moment we primarily focus on vegetable commodities and to a lesser extent other dry goods. We supply hospitals, schools, restaurants and prisons. We also do primary production on the farm which assists with supplementing the capacity for required commodities and by this improves our profit margins since it's our own produce. We would actually like to expand this so that it can also be a training farm for students coming from the universities and colleges that require experiential training (on the job training).

## What's the outlook for your business going forward?

There are current plans to scale the business by improving our business processes and adding the requisite systems in place. There are human resource requirements and technology required to improve the efficiency of TAP Food. Vegetables have a lean profit-margin and therefore in order to hedge business risk and also create more opportunities for local economic development in all its facets we do indeed have plans to expand the business both on the production and on the agro-processing sides.

The plan is to upgrade our production capacity both on the field and in the processing facility by introducing effective mechanization. In addition, the plan is to introduce other lucrative commodities such as eggs and those with greater profit margins like Red Meat on TAP Food's distribution portfolio.



We started development discussions with the Thebe Foundation in 2014 and subsequent to those discussions the company assisted us with securing a vegetable supply contract with Empact Group, one of Thebe's subsidiaries. Under Empact Group there are a number of facilities that TAP Food is contracted to supply. This was TAP Food's breakthrough contract and still remains one of our main contracts and foundational pillar of our business. From this business TAP Food has been able to build an agro-processing facility according to best practice standards and is currently in the process of HACCP compliance certification. Our clients now vary from prisons, schools, hospitals and private households.

We need more markets that are stable and sustainable like the Empact Group service contract is with us. We also have to diversify our product supply portfolio with commodities with better profit margins. Capital is a big challenge especially with respect to scaling the business but we are hopeful and with the support TIC has afforded us through their procurement programme, the future can only look brighter, not only for the business but also for the many in our community who look up to us for jobs and inspiration to also start their own businesses.

