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*Stellenbosch University Food Security Initiative  
- an academic initiative of the HOPE Project*

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HOPE  
PROJECT

[www.sun.ac.za/foodsecurity](http://www.sun.ac.za/foodsecurity)

# Feeding the next generations ...



As part of Stellenbosch University's HOPE Project, the multi-disciplinary Food Security Initiative creates sustainable solutions from science to solve some of South Africa and Africa's most pressing challenges. In essence, it showcases key research and teaching initiatives that serve human need and help build a better future, while developing an academically strong and relevant Stellenbosch University to entrench its tradition of excellence.

The HOPE Project initiatives are grouped into five themes that align with – but are not identical to – the international development agenda: eradicating poverty and related conditions; promoting human dignity and health; promoting democracy and human rights, promoting peace and security, and promoting a sustainable environment and a competitive industry.

[www.thehopeproject.co.za](http://www.thehopeproject.co.za)

## I. Purpose of Project

Stellenbosch University's Food Security Initiative (FSI) aims to reconceptualise the food security challenge to create new models of practice in the food system. Through the integration of in-depth research findings on key issues in the food value chain, collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, capacity building and systematic impact assessment with the aim of benefiting the long term food security of countries, people and communities the Food Security Initiative seeks to have a real impact on people's lives.

The FSI is instrumental in linking agriculture with nutrition and health issues. It investigates the issues of what constitutes "food security" and the rhetoric of how to engage other institutions and governmental bodies in order to transfer this knowledge into practice and policy. As a HOPE Project, the FSI is making a difference in Africa.

## Why Stellenbosch University?

The FSI draws on the research strengths of the University, the strong agricultural, nutrition and health background as well as a community focus. Located in the Western Cape Winelands and intimately linked with this and other agricultural industries, the institution is at the centre of several smaller towns, all with communities, where food insecurity poses a particular challenge, and so the FSI can work with people to help address problems.

The Dean of the Faculty of AgriSciences at Stellenbosch University, Prof Mohammad Karaan, has very strong links with the national Department of Agriculture. Additionally, FSI personnel serve on a number of national and provincial food security task teams to have two-way conversations on how the university's research can inform current debates and policy decisions.



## 2. The work of the FSI

The FSI is currently engaged in the following research:

- Affordable food – reducing costs and the impact on the environment;
- How to attain sustainable production;
- Working with communities to ascertain what their food security and nutritional needs are and how best to address them e.g. Worcester;
- Crop varieties in agriculture, what varieties are appropriate to secure food security in the future;
- How to ensure very big impacts i.e. commercial agricultural yields.

The Initiative's Food Lab ([www.southernafricafoodlab.org](http://www.southernafricafoodlab.org)) brings together role players in the system to discuss the challenges and opportunities in the food system. It invests in drawing together the key role players in the system – from supermarket owners to small-scale farmers. See [www.sun.ac.za/foodsecurity](http://www.sun.ac.za/foodsecurity) for more.

## 3. Famous scholars / publications / milestones

The FSI is fortunate to host experts in various fields, including Food Security, Soil Sciences, Human Nutrition, Agricultural Economics and many more (all presentations and publications are available on the website). Many are world leaders in their fields. Research is focused on three main areas: food access, availability and utilisation, all from a sustainability perspective.

The FSI provides expert input to the government on issues that affect food security. The Initiative is represented on the Western Cape Food Security Task Team and one of its scholars is preparing a policy brief to government on recommendations on sustainable solutions to the food system (to be published this year).

In addition, the Initiative is establishing industry networks that bring together members of business, academia and civil society. The FSI based at Stellenbosch University has set up a network with other institutions in the Western Cape, including three other universities (University of the Western Cape, University of Cape Town and Cape Peninsula University Technology) through the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC). In October 2011, a combined symposium was hosted with government and business to deliberate on food security in Southern Africa.

The FSI is also involved in improving education regarding food security issues. It is, for example, running short courses on how to reduce losses in food chain crops that have been expanded to several African countries.

Professor Jimmy Volmink, academic project leader for FSI and Dean: Faculty of Health Sciences, has published extensively in subjects relevant to food security. He also established the Centre for Evidence Based Healthcare. Professor Milla McLachlan, an academic leader in human nutrition and former nutritional advisor to the World Bank, is also a key scholar in the FSI.

## 4. Donating to the Food Security Initiative

Donors can associate their names to any of the Initiative's projects, achieving recognition for supporting food security and human nutrition and so helping Africans deliver on aspects of the Millennium Development Goals.

As such, the various programmes and projects of the FSI provide donors with non-political, highly marketable opportunities – and the chance to form an alliance with a reputable academic institution.

## 5. Gift opportunities

The following exist as **on-going** gift opportunities for the right investor:

- Bursaries for Masters (R60 000 per year) and PhD students (R100 000 per year);
- Systematic review support (R180 000) - a critical review answering current topical questions;
- Nutrition and food security in Worcester - R500 000 per annum (see Case Study, below);
- Empowering small scale farmers with Biochar technology - R250 000 per annum;
- Developing sustainable farming systems for a food secure Southern Africa (new project) - R500 000 per annum

The following are priorities for funding year 2011/12:

- Southern African Food Change Lab continuation costs - R500 000;
- Publication of “Emerging Farmers in South Africa: A Case study” - R100 000;
- Losses in the food chain - completion of two year study with findings presented to all industry players - R200 000;
- Women in Agriculture farm field days on Biochar in the Cape Flats communities - R250 000



## 6. Case Study

Ndileka Futshani is a field worker for the FSI's Human Nutrition Project in Avian Park settlement just outside Worcester in the Western Cape. She is employed to conduct interviews in households about the buying habits, diets and availability of food in poor to middle income families with one or more children of three years of age or younger.

The project has employed 32 field workers and six security officers (in addition to academic staff from Stellenbosch University and the FSI) on a contract basis to collect quantitative and qualitative data on 400 infants and their mothers, from households in Avian Park and in Zwelitemba, settlements near Worcester, where the Stellenbosch University Rural Clinical School is based.



*Name:* Ndileka Futshani

*Age:* 26

*Occupation:* Field Worker

*Education:* Grade 11

*Previous employment:* cleaner / oil processing plant worker

*Personal:* Married, two children

### *What do you do for the FSI Human Nutrition Project?*

“It depends on what kind of family. Some will give the go-ahead [to talk about nutrition issues] but will talk about their problems. Parents want interviewers to be interested in them. Crime is a big problem here. There are no activities for young people. Unemployment is a big problem as most people are dependent on farms. Rain destroys the shacks. Drugs are also becoming a big problem.”

### *How has this employment affected your everyday life?*

“From the first day it has been exciting. Now I'm getting used to it. I have food in the house and I can pay school fees and buy clothes and shoes for the children. I have money so that I can distribute bread and clothes to others.”

### *How have your skills grown as a result of the position?*

“I have learned to eat vegetables – and feed them to my children. I have learnt more about what to eat. We enjoy the job and help each other.”

### *How have the researchers from the university assisted you?*

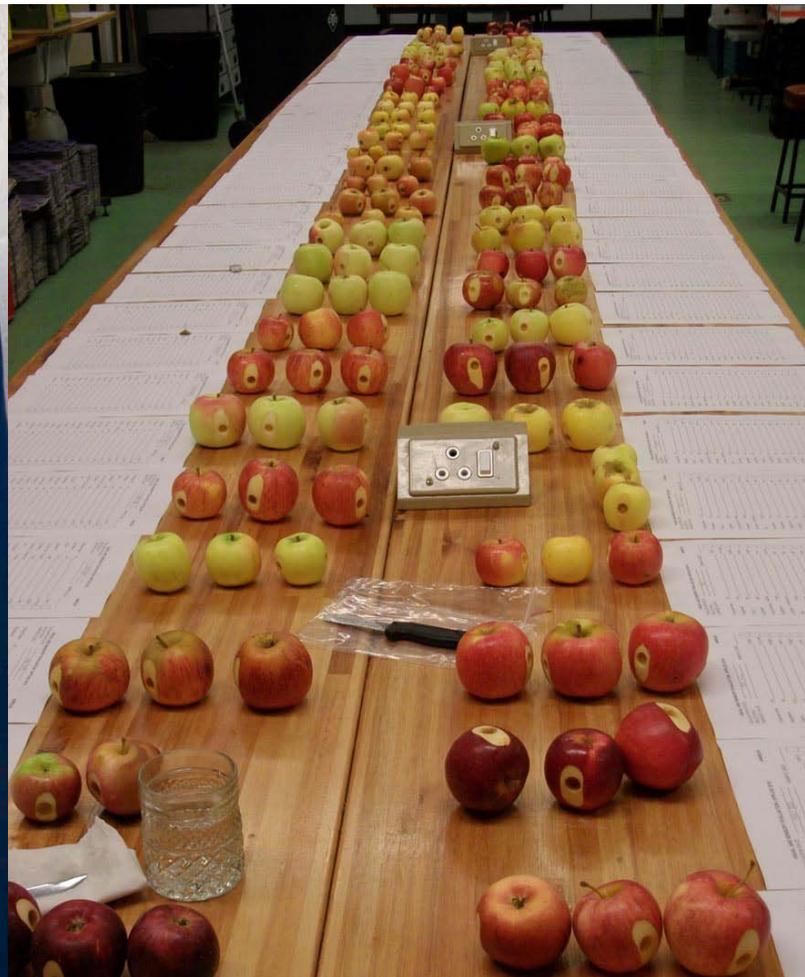
“They have taught us how to be a researcher, how to understand. They want us to understand everything that we are doing here [in the project]. This is something to learn and understand, not just do for money. There is pressure but they are very warm. I never worked with people like this who understand your problems and treat you with respect.”

### *How has the community perceived the Human Nutrition Project?*

“At first they wanted to know why we were doing it [the research]. They didn't understand everything. They wanted to know what they would get for it. It was not a done deal that they would understand. In time, they all understood [the benefits].”

*Where do you see yourself going from here?*

“I would like to continue as a researcher/interviewer on a follow-up project. I would be grateful if Stellenbosch University can bring more work [to the area]. They can teach skills from grade nine on. A grade twelve certificate is worth nothing these days. We need computer, sewing, cooking and driving licence courses so that we can teach others or run our own businesses. They know how to take a person from the bottom up step-by-step.”



# Contact details

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Give online or become an activist:

*[www.thehopeproject.co.za/fsi](http://www.thehopeproject.co.za/fsi)*

Read more about the FSI:

*[www.sun.ac.za/foodsecurity](http://www.sun.ac.za/foodsecurity)*

**Donations & sponsorships:**

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