

Neighbour Roots named top social enterprise in Food Lover's Market's 2023 Seeds of Change Partnership

Neighbour Roots, a forward-thinking hydroponic farming business, has been announced as the top social enterprise supplier to Food Lover's Market after a tough boot camp and a day of pitching to senior Food Lover's Market executives in Cape Town.



Zandile Kumalo was the standout business. Source: Supplied.

The Food Lover's Market Seeds of Change Supplier Development Partnership, an initiative launched in April this year for the third consecutive year, was created as an opportunity for social enterprises to join the fresh produce retailer's network as a supplier. Buttercup Farmhouse placed second, and TC Women in Action placed third.

Boot camp

The top eleven businesses attended a week-long boot camp, culminating in a final "Fertile Ground" pitch to the Food Lover's Market panel on 23 June 2023, with the top three applicants announced on the same day. In a break from the norm, the panel decided that while there were three clear winners, all the social enterprises were strong enough to be listed by the retailer in a surprise announcement from Travis Coppin, CEO of the Food Lover's Market retail division.

Terri Coppin-Harris, culture and communication manager for the Food Lover's Market Group, says, "The announcement that we would be listing all of the finalists is a true testament to the quality of the applications we received this year. The room was electric with excitement from all the businesses. Congratulations to our top eleven, especially our stand-out social enterprises - Neighbour Roots, a hydroponic farming business; Buttercup Farmhouse - butternut coffee and TC Women in Action, a fresh produce business farming tomatoes and peppers."

"We're excited that we've had two fresh produce social enterprises in our top three this year. It's fantastic to meet these courageous innovators who are breaking barriers through business ideas, creativity and investment in their communities. Buttercup Farmhouse is also hugely innovative, tastes great and is a wonderful addition to the Food Lover's Market family."

Growing bigger

Zandile Kumalo from Neighbour Roots completed her qualification in analytical chemistry from the Vaal University of Technology before embarking on her farming journey by planting crops in a 2000m² space in her backyard to create

awareness of zero hunger in her community.

Says Kumalo from Neighbour Roots, “Winning the Seeds of Change Supplier Development Partnership means that we will be able to grow healthier food for those who need it, as well as create strategic partnerships to grow a bigger system of hydroponic farms. It also means we can upskill the next generation of agripreneurs to this style of farming so that they can return to their townships and create these growing systems. In 30 years to come, we want to be able to say that a township has enough food to sustain itself and everyone around it through hydroponic farming.”



Cofounder Brian Coppin reflects on 30 years of Food Lover's Market

Lauren Hartzenberg 23 Mar 2023



The four-day boot camp exposed the top eleven applicants to a macro view of the global and South African retail landscape, including trends, challenges and opportunities within the sector. During this time, applicants had face-to-face workshops with buyers, were offered guidance by specialists across the Food Lover's Market business, and attended workshops to learn the necessary skills to market their business.

The top eleven businesses pitched to the Food Lover's Market panel on the fifth day. The panel consisted of Travis Coppin (CEO of Food Lover's Market retail division), Andrew Millson (Group HR and Sustainability executive), Stephen van Vuuren (Managing Executive: Buying), and Terri Coppin-Harris (Food Lover's Market Culture and Communication Manager) and Raquel van Graan (Food Lover's Market Store Manager).

Top Eleven

- Gudgu Sugar-Free Concentrates
- Nutri-Vita Fresh Juice and Smoothies
- Neighbour Roots Rooftop Hydroponic Farm
- Gogo's Moroga Traditional Food (traditional tinned food)
- Mahlasedi (NPO focusing on food security in impoverished communities)
- TC Woman in Action (Farmers, producing Tomatoes, Red Peppers, Green Peppers and Yellow Peppers)
- Precious and Pearl (Ginger-based drinks)
- Buttercup (organic vegetable coffee)
- Matawi Gin (mead-based Gin)
- Marty's Spiced Tomato Juice
- Mtswako Immune Booster

"The Seeds of Change Supplier Development Partnership is an opportunity to create employment and social impact across South Africa. We are looking for suppliers that mirror these socially focused values, are passionate about retail and are

motivated to deliver the best quality product or service."

"We wish to thank our partners who have come on board to help us grow these social enterprises. The top three social enterprises will receive a free brand consultation with Hamiltons Advertising – the creative agency for Food Lover's Market. Christoff Oosthuysen from Social Enterprise Academy will coach Zandile from Neighbour Roots, and all the finalists will get preferential trading agreements with Food Lover's Market," concludes Coppin-Harris.

The Seeds of Change Development Partnership, a Food Lover's Market Earth Lovers initiative, was facilitated by the Social Enterprise Academy (SEA), a specialist learning and development organisation supporting social change organisations in South Africa.

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