

Institute of Natural Resources (INR) multistakeholder innovation meeting.



Introduction

This report serves to give detail of the innovation meeting that took place in Mbhava on the 13th of September 2023 held by the Institute of Natural Resources (INR). The purpose of the meeting was for the multistakeholders present at the meeting to showcase different innovations they have come up with and share with the rest of the group present at the meeting.

The day started off with breakfast upon arrival of the stakeholders present at the meeting. We were welcomed by the Induna Mr Ngubane and Brigid briefed us on the purpose of the day. Brigid then introduced other projects then the INR is currently engaging on namely EliFANS which supports local innovations by farmers and the JNCC Springs project which supports setting up of springs in the area. We then moved on to the introductions of the different stakeholders involved present at the meeting. Amongst the stakeholders that were present at the meeting we had the INR, Mahlathini Development Foundation team and farmers, the Department of Agriculture, the king Gcumisa, the iNduna Mr Ngubane, the University of KwaZulu Natal masters' students, and the innovators of Mbhava.



Figure 1: group of innovators from uMbhava.

The programme went on to showcasing the different innovations by the farmers that were present. Amongst these innovations we had the following:

Gas stove stokvels (Andiswa)

The stokvel group currently has four members, but more people want to join in. Basically, the group developed this stokvel to collect monies from the members and then buy gas stoves for all the members in the group. They have managed to buy everyone in the group these gas stoves. The group decided on this because of the issue of loadshedding in the area, which has become an everyday issue. These gas stoves would assist them in their families for warming and cooking purposes whenever there is no electricity.

Processing of Amadumbe (Gugu Zondi)

This farmer said she plants a whole lot of amadumbe then mashes them to make fat cakes and uphuthu. She said she thought of this idea to make the amadumbe more appetising to her kids, add value to what she plants and not let it go to waste and lastly to ensure food security in her household.

Sweet potato juice (MaGida Magwaza)

This farmer also plants a whole lot of sweet potato in her fields and has a limited market to distribute to, so her sweet potato ends up being rotten because it is not being sold and it cannot all be eaten. She then thought of an idea to process her sweet potatoes and make sweet potato juice. She said the juice is very healthy and a great supply for nutrients in the body.

Peanut butter (Londiwe and Hlalisile)

These farmers plant nuts in their households/gardens and process them to make peanut butter. They decided upon this idea because of the price fluctuations of food in

supermarkets, they thought they should try to make their own food at home instead of spending a lot of money buying from supermarkets. They also said that since they have been planting nuts before and used to sell them as raw as they are ripe, it would be a good idea to process them into something they could use in their homes, for instance they now use this peanut butter to make sandwiches for their children.

Rabbit manure (Mam Gumede)

Mam Gumede said she came up with the idea of using rabbit manure as crop fertilizer and soil amendment because she wanted to eliminate the use of chemical manure which is the main cause of human diseases that we now face as humans. She said that the rabbit manure diluted in water (with a ratio of 1:5) helps in the formation of earthworms which improves soil fertility. She further moved on to say that rabbit urine is good for repelling pests and disease control. It should be kept for 6 weeks and then diluted in water with a ratio of 1:5 and then sprayed on the plants.



Figure 1: rabbit manure production.

Market (Mahlathini Development Foundation Farmers)

The Ozwathini farmers brought their produce to the meeting for sale. The produce they brought includes spinach, cabbages, beetroot, beans, oranges, lemons, and they also brought eggs. The farmers did not manage to sell much of their produce since the people present at the meeting already had their own produce in their households. In total the farmers managed to make a total of R290.



Figure 2: Mahlathini farmers showcasing and selling their produce.

UKZN presentation (Drones)

The UKZN masters' students presented on the research they are currently busy with which is on the use of drones in farms. Basically, this will assist farmers in measuring water available and its scarcity on their crops and collect data to identify the best place to build a dam, determining areas of low yield and predict expected yield, identify weed infestations or any geographic issues, keeping close eyes on herds to keep animals safe, spotting diseases on crops to help farmers spray pesticide only at the time and place it is needed, and helping farmers see all their land at a geographical point of view.

In conclusion, the meeting went well although there were shortcomings such as the group of the Mbhava innovators arriving very late leading to the meeting starting an hour late. The group of innovators did not explain how they came up with the innovations and the method of making these products in respect of innovation. The innovations would have been more informative if there was a session of questions and answers and the innovators had different stations to answer the questions and clearly explain their method and procedures when making these products. There were also long conversations by iNduna during his presentation that were not relevant to the purpose of the meeting whereby he was addressing the issues of the youth in the community not willing to go and further their studies in agriculture so that they would come back and work for the community. The meeting ended up being more of a community-issue based meeting rather than a meeting of showcasing different innovations.