



S.E.T. for socio-economic growth

National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF)

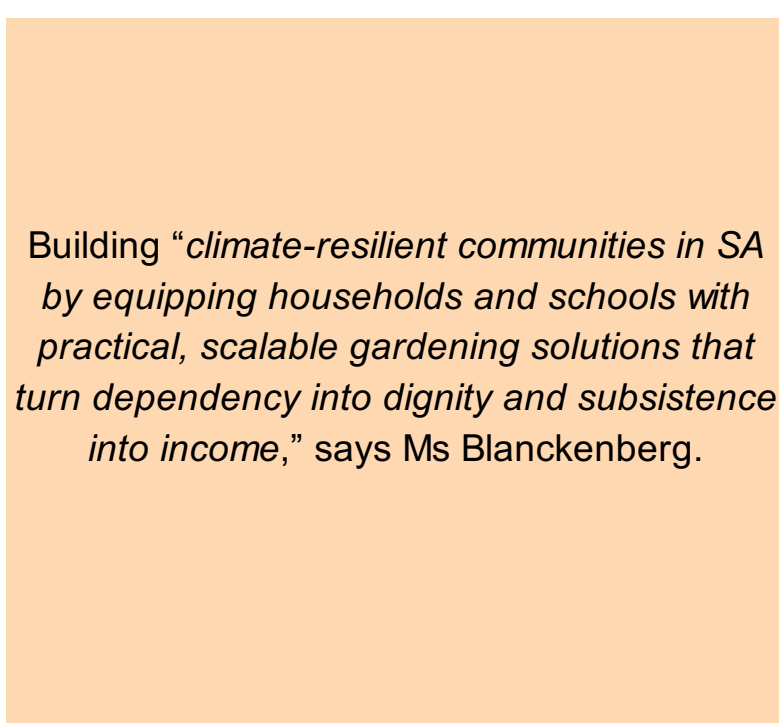
media release

Growing food security one community at a time

Celebrating Reel Life NPC South Africa on World Food Day, 16 October 2026

Food security remains a challenge for many households, particularly in vulnerable communities affected by climate change, water scarcity, and economic pressures. As the world marks World Food Day on 16 October, attention is focused on the challenges of hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition. This provides an opportunity for the [National Science and Technology Forum \(NSTF\)](#) to celebrate those who improve food security through innovative, climate-smart agricultural solutions that enable communities to produce more food using less water.

On this day, the NSTF proudly honours the **Reel Life Food Security Programme**, of the Reel Life Non-Profit Company (NPC), recipient of the NSTF-Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Award (ARC is the sponsor) at the 2026 **NSTF-South32 Awards**, known as the 'Science Oscars' of South Africa (SA). Ms Claire Blanckenberg leads the award-winning team as the Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Reel Life, which supports household food security.



Left to right: Dr Litha Magingxa, President and CEO: ARC, Ms Dineo Mahasha, Managing Director: Reel Life NPC, Ms Claire Blanckenberg and Mr Nqaba Nqandela, Ministerial Advisor: Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation

About Reel Life NPC: Reel Life is a registered Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) that works to improve food security, nutrition and livelihoods. It believes that food insecurity is not simply a food supply issue. Many communities face barriers that limit access to nutritious food, including poverty, limited resources and climate-related challenges. The organisation addresses these challenges by making food production simple, accessible and affordable.

Its flagship Household Garden Programme launched in 2021 under Reel Gardening (Pty) Ltd designs and manufactures patented seed tape and educational kits. Reel Life then provides beneficiaries with patented *Garden-in-a-Box* kits. These kits are packed according to location, seasons, and crop type, making it easier for beneficiaries to grow vegetables successfully.

The patented growing system reduces water consumption by up to 80% while increasing productivity. On average, it saves 11.3 litres of water per square metre planted and produces a harvest yield of 10.13 kg per square metre. Reel Life NPC also implements [School Nutrition Education Programmes](#). These programmes integrate productive 400 square metre food gardens into school environments. Learners gain practical experience in food production while developing a better understanding of nutrition, sustainability and future livelihood opportunities.

The organisation measures its impact across economic, health, education and environmental outcomes. Households are able to spend less on food and redirect savings towards other essential needs. Families gain improved access to fresh vegetables, while school gardens help strengthen nutrition education. One of the organisation's successes is seeing beneficiaries progress from growing food for household consumption to generating an income.

"Reel's contribution to SA's broader development is building the foundation of a climate-resilient, food-sovereign population, one household, one garden, one community at a time."

A social return on investment analysis shows that every R1 invested in the Household Gardening Programme generates R38.83 in social, economic, health and educational value. This translates into real benefits for households, including improved nutrition, reduced food costs and increased economic opportunities.

Reel Life NPC continues to work towards a future where food insecurity is no longer a defining feature of poverty. The organisation envisions a SA where growing food at home becomes normal and accessible practice, strengthening food security, climate resilience and economic empowerment one household at a time.

Reel Life combines innovative seed technology, water-efficient farming methods and skills development. Through this approach, the organisation is helping build a more food secure country. Every school food garden contributes to a positive change. The organisation believes that communities are better able to feed themselves when they have access to the right tools and support. They are also better positioned to improve their livelihoods. This helps them withstand environmental and economic challenges and build a more sustainable future.

"Success, for me, will look like a SA where food insecurity is no longer a default condition of poverty, where growing your own food is as normalised in a township household as it is on a smallholding," says Ms Blanckenberg.

World Food Day: Recognises the critical global challenge of hunger and food insecurity. This year's theme, '*Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow*' highlights the importance of using science, technology, innovation and traditional knowledge to strengthen agrifood systems. The goal is to ensure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food while protecting natural resources for future generations.

Although the world produces enough food to feed everyone, millions of people continue to go hungry. Approximately 645 million people experience hunger while 2.69 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet. Conflict, economic instability and climate-related challenges continue to place pressure on agrifood systems. As a result, ensuring access to affordable, reliable and nutritious food remains a global priority.

This year's World Food Day highlights the important role of innovation in transforming how food is produced, stored, transported, and marketed. Innovation takes many forms. It includes improved seed varieties, biotechnology, digital advisory services and information systems. It also includes cooperative models, traditional land and water management practices, and new approaches to production, financing, marketing and distribution. These innovations help communities become more resilient and better prepared for future challenges. They also contribute to food systems that are more inclusive, stable and capable of feeding present and future generations.

Read more: [Mail & Guardian news supplement](#) on the **NSTF-South32 award winners**: Reel Life on p9.

Call to action: The NSTF calls on the government, the Department of Agriculture (NDA), businesses, civil society organisations, and policymakers to continue supporting innovative and sustainable approaches to food production and build a more food-secure and climate-resilient future for our country amid current climate challenges. We call on farmers to employ sustainable, waterwise practices.

Young people: The NSTF also encourages aspiring young people to explore opportunities in agricultural engineering, agronomy, crop production, and as agricultural technicians. See the [NSTF careers booklet](#), particularly p 4-5, where the relevant careers are described. Also see NSTF's online learning platform, [STEMulator.org](#):

- <https://stemulator.org/Agriculture.php>

About the NSTF and the NSTF-South32 Awards: NSTF is an independent non-profit [stakeholder body and network](#) – a civil-society forum of over [150 member organisations across six membership sectors](#), involved in science, engineering, technology (SET) and innovation in SA. The **NSTF-South32 Awards** (the 'Science Oscars') recognise excellence in SET and innovation in SA across [16 categories](#). The [gala dinners](#) to announce this year's [winners](#) took place in two cities simultaneously (Cape Town and Johannesburg) on 16 July 2026.

Join the NSTF's conversations on social media:

- LinkedIn: [National Science and Technology Forum \(NSTF\)](#)
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- Instagram: [@nstf_sa](#)
- YouTube: [National Science and Technology Forum \(NSTF\)](#)
- TikTok: [nstf_sa](#) (listen to [science career talks](#) on this platform)

References

- [About | World Food Day| Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#)
- [Current Winners – NSTF](#)
- [Home | World Food Day | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#)
- [Reel Gardening](#)
- [The Agricultural Research Council is a premier science institution that conducts research with partners, develops human capital and fosters innovation to support and develop the agricultural sector.](#)

About the NSTF

The National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF), established in 1995:

- is a broadly-representative stakeholder body for all science, engineering and technology (SET) and innovation organisations in South Africa
- gathers stakeholders around burning issues of national and global interest, across the public and private sectors, including matters of public policy
- includes a network of professional societies in SET and STEM education (STEM = science, technology, engineering and mathematics) - the NSTF proSET membership sector.
- recognises, awards and profiles the outstanding contributions of individuals and groups to SET and innovation through the prestigious NSTF Awards
- runs and supports collaborative projects and youth outreach, including recognition of top performance in mathematics and science, role modelling, bursary and STEM career information
- runs and supports the STEMulator.org which attracts youth and educators to Explore>Discover>Learn the world of STEM including careers. (Established by NSTF proSET)

For more information
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