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Title: ARC facilitates agro-processing of indigenous fruits in rural areas

Agricultural Research Council (ARC) researchers, Dr Chris Hansman and Rosemary du Preez are running joint projects in the Vhembe district and the Eastern Cape. The projects deal primarily with agro-processing of indigenous fruits in the rural areas.

In the past ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij and the ARC Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Crops (ITSC) have collaborated in the Eastern Cape and elsewhere. The current projects will continue these initiatives. One of the first requirements was a hygienic environment for producing fruit conserves.

The logistics of building or modifying an existing building in a rural environment is massive so they decided to implement a modified container. The ceiling and walls are insulated chromadek (a powder coated steel plate) with two tornado extractors added in the roof.

Although the focus in the Vhembe district is on indigenous fruits, normal jams like marmalade, melon and tomato will also be produced in the off-season to improve sustainability.

The container was placed earlier this year with some training already taking place. The logistics of running a project so far from our base is enormous but ITSC in Nelspruit and even closer ITSC's Levubu Experimental Farm have been a great help along with stakeholders that have really bought in!

Currently, the learning curve is extremely steep but we are collaborating with ARC ITSC and the ARC-Roodeplaat Vegetable and Ornamental Plant Institute (VOPI) on the Rural Development and Land Reform project. The knowledge gained in the Vhembe district will be applied directly in that project as well.

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