

Africa Green Media

Could small scale vegetable production contribute to a green economy in South Africa?

Dr Constance Musvoto, Researcher: Natural Resources and Environment, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research

Abstract: South African agriculture is dominated by the large scale commercial sector. However, the government of South Africa recognises the potential role of small scale farming in the economy of the country and in job creation. South Africa has adopted the principle of a green economy, and is in the process of transitioning to a low carbon, resource efficient economy. The green economy - a response to the challenges of sustainable development, integrates social, economic and environmental objectives. It also endeavours to improve human well-being and social equity while protecting the environment. One of the essential elements of human well-being is food security, and this places agriculture at the core of a green economy. Agriculture is well placed to contribute to a green economy as many agricultural activities potentially offer solutions to the social, economic and environmental challenges that South Africa and the rest of the world face. Rural communities in different parts of South Africa practise small scale farming, and some produce a variety of vegetables for sale. A case study of small-scale vegetable production in Tzaneen highlights that this activity provides employment, contributes to food security, uses water efficient irrigation methods and produces for sale. Some of the practices on these farms are compatible with a green economy, and with interventions that improve alignment with green economy principles, small scale vegetable production could contribute to a green economy and open up options for people who currently have very few opportunities for participating in the economy.