**FNB and RMB heed the call to improve food security in Mpumalanga**

**12 August 2020:** In a bid to help alleviate the scourge of hunger in South Africa which has been further exacerbated by COVID-19, RMB and FNB have donated R3m from the FirstRand SPIRE fund to assist FoodForward South Africa (“FFSA”) set up operations in the Mpumalanga province.

FFSA is widely respected for the impactful work it does in redirecting quality, edible surplus food, which would have gone to waste, to vulnerable communities in order to sustainably eliminate hunger by feeding thousands of vulnerable South Africans that go hungry daily.

The R3 million committed by RMB and FNB will be utilised towards the initial infrastructure costs of FFSA expanding into Mpumalanga. Once at scale, FFSA would be able to feed approximately 20,000 to 25 000 people per day in this province.

“FNB and RMB commend FFSA for the important work they do to improve food security in the country, which has been further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The FFSA’s mandate is aligned to our immediate objectives to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, and broader economic challenges through valuable partnerships between governments, foundations, and the financial and operational capacity within the private sector. As responsible corporate citizens, it is essential that we continue to do whatever we can, especially during this difficult time, to give back to communities that continue to contribute to our growth,” says Dawie Maree, Head of Communication and Marketing at FNB Agribusiness.

“RMB was inspired and humbled to learn about the innovative and sustainable way in which FoodFoward is combatting hunger in South Africa. We’re grateful to have supported this dedicated and determined organisation in expanding their reach across SA and feeding thousands of vulnerable people daily - now and into the future,” says Jo Maharaj, Head of Loan Syndications at RMB.

Andy Du Plessis, Managing Director at FoodForward SA, says we are grateful for the contribution made by RMB and FNB, and look forward to further collaborations on initiatives aimed at easing hunger. This donation will help us to efficiently set up operations while laying the foundation for a sustainable program that will enable us to reach more people in the province. Without the support of our individual and corporate partners, food and financial donors, FFSA wouldn’t be able to support a network of around 1,000 registered beneficiary organisations that collectively feed over 400,000 people daily.

“Food security continues to be a growing crisis across South Africa. Despite distributing over 5,000 tons of food enabling the provision of 20 million meals last year, unfortunately the reality is that there are millions of people in vulnerable and rural communities that still go hungry for days without food, as is the case in Mpumalanga. As a result, every contribution made by our partners is important, and goes a long way to help feed those who are unable to provide for themselves,” adds Du Plessis.

Mpumalanga is one of our country’s most productive and important agricultural region, yet poverty and hunger persist as problems, similar to the rest of South Africa.

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