



OFFICIAL STATEMENT BY

**THE MAYOR OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF
WINDHOEK**

COUNCIL MEMBER NDESHIHAFELA LARANDJA

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE 8th WINDHOEK MAYORAL BUSINESS FORUM
(WMBF)**

25 June 2025

8:30

**Namibian Institute of Public Administration and Management
(NIPAM) Campus - Paul Nash Street, Olympia, Windhoek**

- **Your Worship Council Member Clemencia Hanases, Deputy Mayor of the City of Windhoek;**
- **Councillor Shaalukeni J Moonde, Chairperson of the Khomas Regional Council;**
- **Honourable Councillors present;**
- **Mr. Moses Matyayi, the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Windhoek;**
- **Strategic Executives of the City of Windhoek and other staff members present;**
- **Esteemed representatives from government ministries;**
- **Representatives from AFRIFOODLINKS and Youth Ambassador;**
- **Esteemed private sector leaders;**
- **Agricultural experts;**
- **Urban farmers;**
- **Youth and women's groups,**
- **Members of the media;**
- **Residents of Windhoek;**

Good morning!

It is both an honour and a profound responsibility to address you today as we gather to chart a sustainable way forward for urban agriculture in our beloved city.

The challenges we face, namely, water scarcity, food insecurity, and economic inequality, are not insurmountable. They are opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and decisive action. The Municipal Council of Windhoek, in alignment with the City of Windhoek's vision of becoming a Sustainable and Caring City by 2027, wish to promote and implement food security and nutrition projects within Windhoek. One focus is the promotion of urban agriculture, as per Council Resolution 264/10/2017.

Council has long recognised that economic development must be inclusive, resilient, and forward-thinking. This vision was formalized in the *Windhoek Economic Development Strategy*, that was approved as per Council Resolution 292/10/2022. Central to this strategy is the establishment of the *Windhoek Economic Development and Investment Forum* - a first-tier advisory body that plays a very important role in shaping recommendations to the Windhoek Mayoral Business Forum, which ultimately guides Council decisions.

Today's engagement is a testament to this collaborative framework, as we tackle pressing issues raised during the inaugural City of Windhoek Agricultural Forum which took place on 19 March 2025, where stakeholders came together under the theme "*Urban Agriculture in Windhoek amid Water Scarcity.*"

Ladies and gentlemen,

The insights from the Agriculture Forum brought us to this critical juncture: a moment to translate recommendations into an Urban Food and Nutrition Policy White Paper and actionable, tangible progress for our communities.

My task today is to reflect on the Agricultural Forum and the action items, key lessons and urgent priorities that came out of it. The City of Windhoek (COW) Agricultural Forum was a clear call for systemic urban food systems change. Allow me to highlight the key issues and recommendations raised so as to set the tone for our deliberations this morning:

1. Policy and Legal Reform: Recognising and Reforming Urban Agriculture

One resounding message from urban farmers, experts, and residents alike was the need to look at the *Local Authorities Act 23 of 1992* and

to investigate how local authorities can formally recognise and support urban agriculture.

Our laws need to speak to the importance and coordination of all the necessary mechanisms that create and sustain urban food systems whether it is backyard gardening, water provision and conservation, transportation and storage of food, hydroponics, aquaponics, permaculture, or the provision of farm land. There was a call that this stance has to change. Why does it matter? Without legal recognition, urban farmers face unnecessary barriers from land access to funding.

Speaking to the City's value of Communication: To realise this we heard the call for better collaboration and the need for multi-stakeholder coordination. Council will prioritise lobbying for necessary changes, ensuring urban food systems are supported by the law as a pillar of food security and economic empowerment for our ever-growing urban population.

2. Water Scarcity: Innovating for Sustainability

Water is life, yet Windhoek's arid climate demands innovative solutions. At the Agricultural Forum, our experts elaborated how technologies like drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and greywater recycling can transform water usage in urban farming.

The suggested key actions identified were as follows:

- Rainwater harvesting: We have taken it upon ourselves to clarify existing misunderstood bylaws. You will hear today that, contrary to popular belief, household and community rainwater harvesting and storage is not being discouraged by Council and that we provide targeted support for tank installations;
- Smart irrigation: Council heard the call to set up structured partnerships with, for example AgriBank, and the Ministry of

Agriculture, Forestry, Water and Land Reform, to lobby for water-efficient systems for small-scale farmers; and

- Water conservation methods such as reuse, recycling and usage of greywater for irrigation.

3. Capacity Building: Training the Farmers of Tomorrow

As it was emphasised at the Agricultural Forum, knowledge is power. To be sustainable, urban farmers in Windhoek need training, coaching and mentoring in sustainable, environmentally-friendly practices (for example composting and pest management), financial literacy and market access, and climate-resilient crops. My pledge is to push for the development of innovative win-win ways to expand partnerships with the University of Namibia, AgriBank, and private sector companies, as well as local training institutions, to deliver hands-on programmes at hubs like the City's Farm Okukuna.

4. Financial Inclusion: Breaking Barriers for Small-Scale Farmers

A recurring theme I heard during our meeting on 19 March 2025 was the struggle to access funding. AgriBank outlined loan challenges, while farmers highlighted gaps in microfinance. The solutions recommended at that meeting included, amongst others:

- To engage financiers, such as AgriBank, and have financiers look at revising loan requirements to accommodate micro-farmers; and
- To establish grants and subsidies for women, youth, and marginalised groups, working with development agencies, Central Government, as well as the Khomas Regional Council.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today is not just about dialogue, it is about action. Here is how I would like to see the 8th Windhoek Mayoral Business Forum be used to move urban agriculture forward in Windhoek:

1. Policy Implementation (short-term: 2025–2026)

- Finalise the Windhoek Urban Food Systems Strategy by November of the 2025/2026 Financial Year; and
- Identify, tariff and allocate underutilised land for community gardens and small scale commercial urban agricultural schemes by October 2025.

2. Stakeholder Collaboration

- I agree that we establish a multi-sector Urban Agriculture Task Force (led by the City’s Department of Economic Development and Community Services) to be set-up by November 2025; and
- Strengthening ties with the Namibia Agronomic Board to streamline local market access and see how we can make space available, free of charge, at our Economic Development month-end markets, by September 2025.

3. Community Empowerment

My office is excited to launch my Mayoral Legacy Project - the “*Windhoek Grows Campaign*” - a city-wide initiative to promote household backyard gardening, and where the Mayor’s Office will award urban-farmers with certificates of recognition on a quarterly basis.

Esteemed participants,

Windhoek, like many urban centres, faces challenges related to food insecurity, rising food prices, and a lack of access to nutritious, fresh produce. Despite these challenges, there is a significant opportunity to enhance household food self-sufficiency through backyard gardening. Many residents have unused or underutilised spaces that can be converted into productive garden plots.

However, awareness and knowledge about backyard gardening techniques remain low. My legacy project aims to increase awareness, provide practical and theoretical skills and promote sustainable gardening practices among our residents, through training, community outreach, and demonstration gardens. The project will kick off in July 2025 with strategic partners such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform and the University of Namibia, who pledged technical support for training, awareness campaigns, and technical assistance.

The City of Windhoek intends to train between 200 and 300 backyard gardeners from the various constituencies in areas such as composting and soil health, water-efficient irrigation, raised plant beds, vertical gardening and container gardening, as well as crop selection and seasonal planning. Not only will this project aid in improving gardening skills and build capacity, but it will, most importantly, contribute to enhanced food security and nutrition whilst potentially creating opportunities for entrepreneurship and income generation through produce sales.

I would like to see the City's Department of Economic Development and Community Services work on securing a sponsor and offer up to 20 urban farmers some space at our month-end-markets, free-of-charge, to promote urban agriculture and connect producers with consumers.

In closing,

I am reminded of the words of Ms. Shirley Mambadzo at the Agricultural Forum: "*Urban agriculture is not a hobby – it is a lifeline.*" To our farmers, your resilience inspires us. To our partners, your expertise guides us. To Council - our resolve must match the urgency of this moment.

My wish for today is to see us discuss innovative ways and establish a road map to encourage residents to individually and collectively farm so that they are able to access healthy and affordable food that grows in their own backyards. Let us complete today's assignment by hearing how we can suggest practical amendments to the law and align policies to grow a resilient urban agriculture farming community and ecosystem. The future of Windhoek's food security rests in our hands and together, we must cultivate it.

I thank you.

Council Member Ndesihafela Larandja
Mayor of Windhoek
