NEW LIFE FOR KWAZULU

Story and pictures:

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Some years ago, Mr Walter Myanda of the Biyela district in KwaZulu was eking out a livelihood from his taxing job as a travelling salesman. Despite owning a large enough portion of land in one of the most fertile agricultural regions of South Africa he barely managed a good living for himself and his family.

But that was before he met the people of the University of Natal's Institute for Natural Resources in 1982. Since then his life has changed completely.

The Institute has for the past few years been developing a project in the land of the Zulu people to help save the fast deteriorating agricultural and forestry potential of KwaZulu, and to help people like Mr Myanda to become successful farmers on the land they own.

Today Mr Myanda is back on his farm — a progressive farmer. Last year the egg-producing unit which he erected with the help of the Institute, earned him a profit of R2 500.

The unit houses 500 hens and produces about 35 dozen eggs daily. The hens are kept in production for 50 weeks, after which they are replaced by younger ones. The old hens are sold and they bring in an additional profit of 50c per hen.

Mr Myanda has already cleared the loan he took in order to erect the unit and stock it with hens.

Apart from his chicken farm, Mr Myanda has also become a successful maize and cattle farmer.

"I am not a Mercedes-Benz farmer yet," said an optimistic Mr Myanda, "but I shall soon be one."

The local population's lack of knowledge concerning conservation and discriminatory use of the soil and vegetation has been the main cause of the decline of KwaZulu's agricultural potential and natural resources.

Natal University's Institute for Natural Resources is trying to remedy this, says Dr John Erskine, the leader of the project.

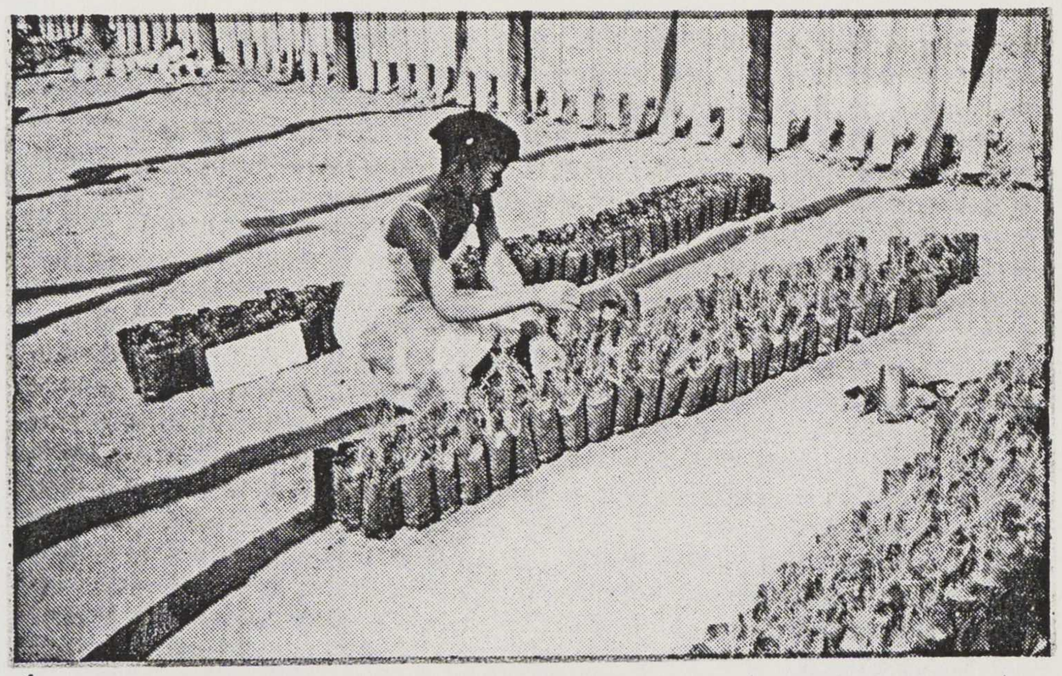
Their Biyela project is multi-faceted and aimed at rural development. It includes a large irrigation and forestry project as well as an extensive vegetable garden on the banks of the Mhlatuzi river, where 64 women produce enough food for their families and the local market.

The success that the Institute is having with its training and guidance programmes in drought-stricken KwaZulu, will eventually benefit the population of this area as well as the rest of Southern Africa where similar problems are being experienced.

1. A pine plantation in the making. This nursery is one of the wide variety of experiments which is being undertaken to establish which industries will do well in KwaZulu

2. One of the 64 Zulu women working in the communal vegetable garden on the banks of the Mhlatuzi river in KwaZulu

3. Mr Walter Myanda in his egg-producing unit, a project which is yielding a profit of R2 500 annually



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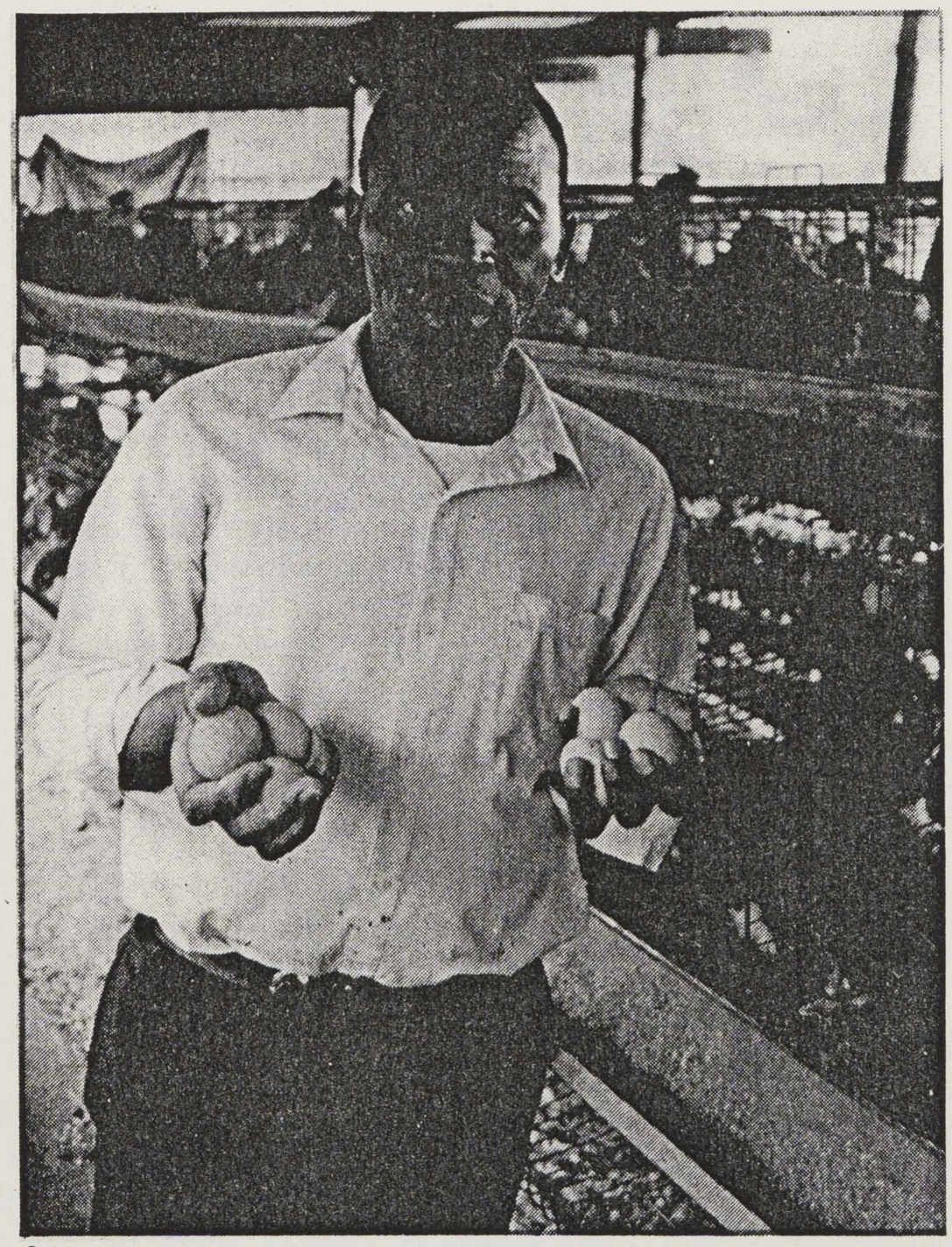

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