

PRESS RELEASE

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MARKET READY INNOVATIONS BY WOMEN LAUNCHED

The Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) an entity of the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) has launched five market-ready innovations, that have developed by women innovators in South Africa. The five innovations are targeted at various sectors including Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), health, agriculture, security technology. These were supported through the Grassroots Innovation Programme (GIP), a programme of the DSI implemented by TIA aimed at commercialising local innovations from ordinary citizens.

The Kleinskuur Broedery Aquaponics innovation was developed by Annemarie Bremmer from Pretoria. The system is a uniquely designed part of a high production aquaponics system, that is energy and water efficient and is cost effective. It enables big and small farmers to grow fruiting crops more efficiently, for example with the Kleinskuur system, it takes one litre to grow a kilogram of tomatoes. The innovation would be a great tool for organisations such as NGO's and schools.

The high prevalence of human trafficking and abduction of children inspired Ntombizodwa Kepeyi of Centurion to develop the Gabriel innovation. The innovation is a safety tracking security device. The aim was to develop an affordable and accessible technology that will enable parents and guardians to monitor and track children's whereabouts. Several features have been built into the technology, including the 'fall alert' this would be useful for elderly users as the device would alert care givers to come to the aid of the user.

Foi Science established by Nomahlubi Nazo develops and formulates skin care products to treat burns, scars, wounds and other skin conditions. The innovation uses food and marine waste to formulate biopolymers and cosmetic actives that accelerate the healing rate of the skin. In the process of developing her products, Nomahlubi has also trained and skilled women in the Gqeberha, Eastern Cape on how to make similar products.

Pontsho Lelosa from Johannesburg used Indigenous Knowledge Systems to formulate her Yogi Sorghum Juice. Yogi Sorghum Juice is an organic alternative drinking yoghurt made with sorghum, kefir, multigrain with fruit used for taste and as flavouring. It contains no artificial sugars, colorants or preservatives. The sorghum content of the drink helps regulate and balance blood sugar levels, making it easier to manage body weight, and the kefir content support bone density development.

The Honeypod range of products was developed by Holistic Wellness Practitioner, Mandisa Mpalweni from Walkerville, Gauteng. Honeypod is derived from the application of indigenous knowledge, their specialty personal and home care products are made from indigenous South African botanicals, some of which she cultivates herself. Honeypod products are 100% natural, non-toxic, mild fragranced, hand crafted and environmentally friendly. Much effort is put not only on ethical sourcing of raw materials but also on sustainable packaging.

TIA is tasked with scaling up the implementation and growth of the GIP with a dual focus on increasing the participation of innovators and promoting their access to key development, funding and innovation enabling initiatives nationally.

A grassroots innovator is an individual who undertakes innovations to solve local challenges using local resources and capabilities through working outside the realm of formal innovation institutions. Through the programme, innovators are linked to subject matter experts and advanced facilities where their innovations and inventions are further developed to support market entry.

Congratulating the women innovators launching their products, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of TIA, Mr Patrick Krappie, said, “Within TIA’s portfolio there are remarkable women investees who have risen against all odds to develop some exciting innovations. These women make a great contribution towards growing the economy and building a better South Africa, through a wide range of technologies that address both local and international market needs.

“In addition to the Grassroots Innovation Programme, TIA has several other innovation support instruments that these innovators should take advantage of as their product offering grows. We work in collaboration with skilled and experienced entrepreneurs and funders, to give support to innovators in the quest to build new enterprises from the innovations we support.”

Mr Imraan Patel, Deputy Director General for Socio-economic Innovation Partnerships at the DSI, said the GIP can be further enhanced and improved through partnerships with business and industry. Partnerships are an important theme in the Science and Innovation white paper. He congratulated the innovators on their products and encouraged them to grow their innovations.

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About TIA

The Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) is a public entity in South Africa that serves as the key institutional intervention to bridge the innovation chasm (gap) between research and development from higher education institutions, science councils, public entities, and private sector, and commercialisation (beneficiation). TIA was established in 2010 and has a national reach with offices in KwaZulu Natal, Western Cape and Gauteng. The main thrust of the mandate of TIA is funding and supporting innovative technologies that show potential to be commercialised. The organisation also has programmes that provide non-financial support to innovators and SMMEs. Lastly, TIA is a catalyst and enabler of innovation through various partnership initiatives locally, in the African continent and globally.

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