

**INANI StartWell Foundation-plant to serve 200 000 meals daily**  
***First of its kind in combatting childhood stunting in SA***

In a ground-breaking initiative, the first of its kind in the world, INANI StartWell Foundation launched a not-for-profit food processing plant in Springs, East Rand. At pioneering low costs, the plant will sustainably manufacture and sell nutrient-rich morning meals to feeding scheme projects and institutions. At full capacity, the plant can serve 200 000 toddlers and pre-schoolers from poverty-stricken communities a daily meal portion. This initiative established the INANI StartWell Foundation as a leading role player in the fight against chronic malnutrition and childhood stunting amongst South African children.

Few South Africans are aware that almost one in every three children in South Africa suffers stunting due to lack of nutrition.

Org van der Wath, executive director of INANI StartWell Foundation is passionate to play an integral role in combatting this phenomenon. "Although only about 100 000 of our under 5-year old children are considered hungry or wasted (under-weight-for-age), UNICEF indicates that 1.7 million of the 6.5 million South African children in this age group suffer from chronic malnutrition (under-height-for-age) also referred to as silent hunger. These 1.7 million children have access to food but not to nutrients," van der Wath explains. "Their diets are energy-rich but nutrient-poor. Their tummies are filled, but the food does not carry the nutrients required to build their immune systems and develop them physically and cognitively to fulfil their full potential."

It took about three years to design and pilot the StartWell™ nutrient-rich cereal to find the right balance between nutrient integrity, texture, taste, flavour and costs. As a result, the meals are delicious and desirable for the children. Various private food scientists and dietitians worked on refining the recipe over this period. Academics at the University of Stellenbosch, the University of Cape Town and the North-West University also assisted with ensuring the nutrient profile of the meal supports child growth.

Bio-available proteins with the correct amino-acid profile are the building blocks for growing healthy bodies. If we are serious about addressing stunted growth in poor communities, it is vital to address protein deficiencies in growing children's diets. There are just no shortcuts for this important biological fact. At a cost of R2-00 for a 35g portion, the StartWell™ nutrient-rich cereal will deliver around 85% of a toddler's daily protein needs. The meal also carries the precise vitamin and minerals required to support child growth. Fortifying with specific vitamins and minerals is relatively easy and inexpensive to do.

Government and many private feeding schemes provide food to more than nine million children daily. They address hunger and try to provide nutrients to children in poor communities. However, their limited budgets don't always allow them to address the high demand for nutrient-rich food. They often just duplicate the same cheap and regularly available staple foods used by households in vulnerable communities.

"We aim to play a crucial role in the food manufacturing value chain by serving underprivileged communities in South Africa. We are excited to partner with institutions focussing on early child development and feeding schemes supporting our country's toddlers through their early development stages," continues Van der Wath.

“To stop the silent hunger epidemic in the country, government, donors, corporate CSI offices and feeding scheme operators must demand that growing children receive growth nutrients daily during their first five years of life. There are no shortcuts. This is basic biology,” advocates Van der Wath.

We need to improve the nutritional safety nets available in crèches, pre-schools and Early Child Development Centres (ECD’s). Van der Wath calls on Corporate South Africa’s CSI initiatives and feeding scheme programs to support this unique not-for-profit food processing project.

As a not-for-profit organization, we are committed to expand our footprint and establish more plants in order to eradicate stunting in South Africa over the next decade. We hope to achieve this through substantial collaboration with local and international businesses, investors, private feeding schemes and other partners.

To celebrate this exciting accomplishment, the Inani StartWell Foundation is having the **Factory Grand Opening and Project Launch** on the **19<sup>th</sup> of October 2021**. This will include a short presentation, a factory tour and the Village project launch. For more information, or to attend the proceedings please contact Yolandi van der Wath: [yolandi@inanicfs.org.za](mailto:yolandi@inanicfs.org.za) or 082 325 3053