



## AGRO-ECOLOGICAL TRAINING & MENTORSHIP

### WHAT IS ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE (PERMACULTURE)?

Agro-ecological practices are techniques such as rainwater harvesting, indigenous seed sources, mulching, compost making, worm farming and designing for minimal environmental impact with maximum output.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Not only do these techniques protect natural ecosystems, but they have proven to be effective in remote and harsh environments, and have shown to increase agricultural yields, produce crops that are more resilient to changing weather conditions, improve water usage and reduce soil erosion.

### WHAT DO WE DO?

We provide a variety of permaculture training programmes, paired with on-going on-site mentorship.





## I. AGRO-ECOLOGICAL TRAINING

We believe fundamentally in helping people to become self-sufficient and our specialist teams offer a wide variety of agricultural training courses to advance agricultural development.

ACT assisted in the development of the Conservation Agriculture Institute at the Dovehouse Organic Farm near Howick, KwaZulu-Natal in 2011 and, with experts from WESSA, the Sector Education Training Authority and Dovehouse, developed a *National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Course* in Agro-Ecological Farming practices in 2012.

ACT has also developed shorter 5-day sustainable homestead gardening and Conservation Agriculture courses, developed specifically for homestead and micro-farmers. The courses generally include a 6 to 12 month mentorship component to guide the beneficiaries through an entire planting cycle.

## II. AGRO-ECOLOGICAL MENTORSHIP

After completing the training courses, we employ a community mentor to visit each of the beneficiaries at their home to help them establish their garden. Frequent visits allow the mentors to work on any problems that the beneficiaries may be having, monitor progress and provide advice.

Where possible, mentors live within the community and offer demonstration gardens and guided tours and information days are offered to the public. Our mentors are selected from the Future Farmers Foundation, or are local unemployed graduates with a passion for agriculture and upliftment.

## WHAT TRAINING PROGRAMMES DO WE OFFER?

- 2 week accredited agro-ecological training programme (requires some high school education)
- 2 week non-accredited agro-ecological training programme (no prior education required)
- 5 day homestead gardening course
- ½ day or 1 day introductory workshops to various permaculture techniques
- 1 - 2 day seed saving workshops
- 2 day nursery care (horticulture) & nursery construction training
- Training for schools or teachers (age appropriate)
- On site garden assessments

