

The project creating chicken feed for the circular economy



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Tebogo Bathebeng is the founder of the Montsho Sustainable Project, which harvests Black Soldier fly larvae to produce chicken feed.



Tebogo Bathebeng, founder of the Montsho Sustainable Project.

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With a carefree childhood spent in Soweto, Tebogo Bathebeng studied Industrial Psychology at the University of Johannesburg after which she worked for one of South Africa's largest insurance companies. Through the company, she completed a foundational leadership course at GIBS Business School, sparking her interest in entrepreneurship.

Her first introduction to entrepreneurship was through her father, who worked for an engineering company, but who also had small projects, such as farms, going on on the side.

This #EntrepreneurMonth, we chat to Tebogo Bathebeng to find out more about the project that creates chicken feed for the circular economy...

■ Can you tell us a bit about Montsho Sustainable Project?

Montsho Sustainable Projects is an ecological company that provides products produced by Black Soldier Fly larvae. With the use of processes already available in nature, we produce animal feed high in protein for chickens, pigs and fish as well as compost for crop application.

By using the flies' larvae, we assist the earth's natural balance and flow by recycling waste and pushing nutrients back into the earth and into the agricultural system.

■ ***When, how and why did you get started?***

Montsho was birthed in 2018 as an answer to a number of the problems that bothered me - greatly being waste, the degrading agricultural system and unemployment in rural areas.

Having come across a tweet about the amount of food waste ending up in landfills and the dire consequences, I decided to research the possible options of tackling the problem and discovered how fly farming can be used to resolve this matter and financial benefits that came with it. Using my savings, I left my job, bought a cage and my first batch of larvae and built my colony.

■ ***What is the core function of Montsho Sustainable Project?***

Our core function is animal feed production; that can be fed to chickens, fish and pigs.

■ ***What are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome since starting out?***

The biggest obstacle we have encountered was a huge dip in our production during winter, this prompted us into finding innovative methods of rearing our larvae whilst still keeping our plant lean for the rural conditions we operate in.

“ Every mistake we have made we used as a lesson and has helped us develop better systems and processes for optimum production. ”

■ ***What advice would you give to other aspiring entrepreneurs?***

Stay optimistic. Optimism is the friend that makes you see everything from a different perspective and opens you up to a whole new world.

■ ***What has been your proudest achievement thus far?***

My proudest moment thus far is being part of the 2019 class of The Red Bull Amaphiko programme, being at the early stages of my business it was amazing having such a big brand believe in me and the potential of my business, their support has been pivotal in my entrepreneurial journey.

■ ***What does the future of entrepreneurship look like to you?***

I am very excited about the future of entrepreneurship especially in Africa, we are seeing a number of young people come up with ideas, concepts and innovations that are solving some of the biggest challenges we have.

“ I truly believe the best is yet to come and there will be a number of new industries that will be birthed from our continent and young people will be in the forefront of it all. ”

■ ***What do you think is the importance of startup accelerator/incubator programmes?***

I believe programmes such as Red Bull Amaphiko are important because they look at the bigger picture and focus on developing the entrepreneur; believing that for any great idea or business to grow it needs to have a well-developed individual driving it.

■ ***What would you like to see changed in the South African startup landscape?***

At the moment the start-up landscape is strangling the life out of businesses. To achieve a thriving start-up culture I believe starting a business should be made easier, government organisations that established to support entrepreneurs and small

businesses should have less hoops put in place for individuals who approach them for funding or any other help. I also think penalties (i.e taking off BEE points off the scorecard) have to be put in place for organisations that fail to pay start-ups on time.

■ ***What do you believe are the traits an entrepreneur needs in order to succeed?***

Purpose-driven, optimism and resilience.

■ ***Tell us about your biggest struggles as an entrepreneur, as well as some major highlights.***

The biggest struggle in my entrepreneurial journey has been overcoming self-doubt and the imposter syndrome that sometimes prevents me from taking on opportunities and spaces I am asked to be in.

Major highlights for me are the moments I get to sit in front of anyone and educate them about my business, once they get over the initial shock and their interest is sparked in this great wonder, I get to have great conversations about the infinite potential of nature.

■ ***Would you encourage someone to become an entrepreneur? Why?***

Yes, entrepreneurship is an amazing journey with great benefits beyond financial rewards. It is also important to note that we all take on entrepreneurship differently and everyone defines the type of entrepreneur they would like to be making entrepreneurship personal and easy for the individual.

■ ***Where would you like to see Montsho Sustainable Project in the next five years?***

In the next five years I would like to see young people running Montsho plants in their rural villages, producing products for agrarian communities, contributing to the rural bio-economy in a meaningful way.

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