

## Community Extension senior lecturer collaborates with Let's Food Cities

The National Development Plan (NDP) is South Africa's blueprint of what the country wants to achieve by 2030 and how this will be achieved. One aspect is addressing food insecurity through agriculture and rural development. The Department of Community Extension at MUT has long been working with the community through various agricultural projects aimed at capacitating members of the Umlazi Township in correct agricultural practices that will aid in growing crops for food.



*Xoli Mkhize, second from left, with French researchers*

To continue these efforts against food insecurity, Xolile Mkhize, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Community Extension, hosted a delegation from the Let's Food Cities organisation as part of their visit to Durban to conduct a study on the Durban food system. According to its website, Let's Food Cities is a French NGO which works to "raise awareness for and support local governments around the world as they pursue a shift to sustainable, territory-based food systems, using international cooperation between cities as leverage".

The study in Durban is part of a bigger project by the French NGO. Let's Food Cities has paired seven French cities to seven cities from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East in an effort to reinforce international partnerships with local governments on the subject of food and to share experiences. Durban is paired with the French city of Nantes.

The delegation from France was studying the Durban food system in order to compile an assessment report on how cities around the world are looking at addressing urban food security in a time of rapid urbanisation. Mkhize was identified as one of the stakeholders who are part of the City's programme in addressing food insecurity. She contributed her knowledge and expertise to the research, and also took the delegation on a field tour around various food

stakeholders in Umlazi Township who play a major role in ensuring food access within the township.

Mkhize also led the delegation to the informal settlements to conduct a situational analysis on food consumption patterns in relation to strategies for providing access to food production. "The gap between the rich and poor is growing, affecting food security in the city. Access to income is a major factor," said Mkhize. "Street vendors are key in accessing food, as opposed to fresh produce markets. Student food access is also influenced by those markets, including the fast food industry."

The eThekweni Municipality has a responsibility to address challenges faced by an urbanising society whilst ensuring the regional food system is functional and promotes urban agriculture. Umlazi Township is key to these efforts because a significant part of the overall municipal population resides in it; and since the majority of the Umlazi Township population lives below the poverty line, there is a high level of food insecurity on the MUT's doorstep.

Mkhize's participation in this research collaboration between Let's Food Cities and eThekweni Municipality will ensure that as a major anchor of the city, Umlazi Township benefits from the City's efforts.