Dear Friend/s- **INVITE** to the **ABALIMI & Harvest of Hope** Fact Finding tour for interns, volunteers, researchers, journalists, community farmers and Friends of Abalimi below.

**First, the story in short:**

in 2008  Abalimi Bezekhaya (est 1982)  launched a now profitable Community Supported Agriculture (CSA),  and 100% social, ethical and carbon neutral business,  called Harvest of Hope [www.harvestofhope.co.za](http://www.harvestofhope.co.za) .

This is the first of its kind, so I am led to believe, where  ‘peasant micro-farmers’,  on tiny bits of wasteland,   supply world class un-poisoned fresh produce to the open market,  with all profits going back to Farmer Support and Development via Abalimi Bezekhaya [www.abalimi.org.za](http://www.abalimi.org.za) .

**The way it works:**

Abalimi has 5000 micro-farmers on its Farmer Register (March 2013),  approximately  3500 of whom are home based gardeners, the majority (around 60%) being women, mothers and grandmothers from the Eastern Cape .

Harvest of Hope (HoH) , as a social business unit within Abalimi,  currently signs production contracts (via Abalimi) with around 20 community gardens annually, involving some 100 micro-farmers, and also buys ad-hoc “filler crops” on a regular basis from another 50 micro-farmers in  a further 10 community gardens, with yet another 20-30 community gardens (at any one time) in the line up to  join.

Around 100 micro-farmers currently earn a reliable income of (on average) R500/m per 500m2 plot,   up to (for periods) around R2000-R3000 p/500m2 plot per month, and they supply 350 weekly box members in Cape Town.  Demand far exceeds supply and HoH could have 600 – 1200 box members signed up right now if the micro-farmers were able to keep pace.

We are documenting both the Harvest of Hope “business value chain” and the Abalimi “farmer development chain”  so as to make them available as  part of a social franchise package, replicable in any town or city where there are people who eat and buy vegetables and others who are willing to produce them on scraps of marginal land.

Part of the magic of this model is that no  special formal education among the farmers is needed, and only tiny scraps of marginal land – and it is thus possible for ‘peasant farmers’ to run the whole show with assistance from only a few dedicated (and modestly paid)  professionals.

All are welcome to come and see , not just the business value chain in action, but also the farmer development chain.   The two need to go hand in hand unless there are already farmers able to carry the organizational and farming disciplines and systems necessary to supply a demanding market .

**Invite to a fact finding tour for Friends of Abalimi :** Tours go out every Tuesday , usually from 9am-12pm, except for public holidays,  VERY heavy weather, taxi riots and popular uprisings :-)  , or if overbooked and if no one is available to conduct them.

 The tour is for fact finding and is “no frills”.  Please bring own snacks and refreshments,  and make sure to bring hats and all-weather gear as well. It can be boiling hot one moment and  rainy and cold with gale force wind the next.

We normally meet at 9am outside the BP shop,  at the BP garage, corner Wetton Rd and Rosmead Ave, Wynberg and finish by 12pm.  We combine cars as much as possible and go in convoy- there is secure parking for surplus cars.  **NOTE: I DO NOT HAVE A BUS. If you need a lift**, I have space in my car for up to three people, and it might be possible to get lifts with other visitors, but this needs to be negotiated ahead of time if possible. We visit a community garden in Gugulethu, then the Abalimi -Harvest of Hope office & pack shed in Phillipi and finish up at the “place where all our work begins” - at the Abalimi People’s Garden Centre,  in Nyanga.  It is also possible for people coming from Stellenbosch side to start at 10:30am at the Abalimi pack shed (map available) and finish by 1pm after visiting the Peoples Garden Centre and the community garden

Some visitors (especially those who live in or near Gugulethu) may want to rather meet us at 9:30am at the Fezeka Muncipality in the parking lot, from where we walk 20m to the community garden, which is sited under power-lines on municipal land. Please, however, refer to the note about transport above.

To get an idea of what you will see:

1. **the Soil is a Diamond** [**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nqKrrxNuHA**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nqKrrxNuHA)   by Green Renaissance for WWF-the Green Trust & Nedbank
2. **2.**  view a **CNN clip** about Abalimi ‘s work, as explained by our farmer leader Christina Kaba – its lovely!!  [**http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/03/29/community.farming.cape.town/index.html**](http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/03/29/community.farming.cape.town/index.html)
3. check out a **more detailed video** made by American volunteer Matt Miller and his good friend Travis Blue on [**http://vimeo.com/19360310**](http://vimeo.com/19360310)
4. Matt and Travis are professional photographers and IT-media folks, who came specially to make the video and give it to Abalimi as a gift !   Amazing.
5. **A wonderful video made in 2009**, a year after we launched HoH :  [**http://vimeo.com/4700322**](http://vimeo.com/4700322)

**And read** article/s & or newsletter/s **on our websites** listed below to get an idea of who we are and what you will see.

These tours are for Friends of Abalimi,  and are free of charge, although ***donations are always needed*** and very welcome.   Please **see the donations form in the newsletter** which is also on the website and will be handed out after the tour,  to see the options to donate.

Please let me know if and when you are wanting to come…  I will confirm with you if its OK.   
    
My emergency contact number is 082 3319133.     
    
Best regards   
    
**Rob Small**   
Resource mobilization for ABALIMI   
[www.abalimi.org.za](http://www.abalimi.org.za/)   
[www.harvestofhope.co.za](http://www.harvestofhope.co.za/)   
[www.farmgardentrust.org](http://www.farmgardentrust.org/)