



UVU Africa

Indigenous Knowledge Innovation Platform launched to support inclusive bioeconomy growth

UVU Bio, in partnership with the Regional Innovation Support Programme (RISP), hosted by the [Council for Scientific and Industrial Research \(CSIR\)](#), has established a new Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Product Development Regional Innovation Platform spanning the Western and Eastern Cape. The platform, based on an innovation enablement model, is aimed at supporting indigenous knowledge holders and early-stage bioeconomy entrepreneurs seeking to transform traditional practices into regulated, market-ready products.

The initiative responds to the rapidly growing global demand for natural health, wellness and bio-based products. The global herbal supplements

and remedies market alone was valued at USD 168 billion in 2023, with continued growth expected over the next decade. Even modest participation in this market represents a multibillion-Rand opportunity for South Africa's biodiversity-based economy.

Despite this potential, many Indigenous knowledge holders remain excluded from formal value chains due to limited access to laboratories, regulatory expertise and commercialisation pathways. This IKS Innovation Platform is designed to close this gap by connecting community-held knowledge with modern science, product development infrastructure and markets, while ensuring ethical benefit-sharing and protection of cultural heritage.

"Indigenous Knowledge Systems are not informal or peripheral, they are a foundational pillar of South Africa's bioeconomy," said Dheepak Maharajh, CEO of UVU Bio. "This platform enables IKS holders to move from non-standardised and informal practices into standardised, science-backed, market-ready products trading in the formal economy. In doing so, we are able to unlock new income streams, strengthen inclusive value chains, and position communities as active participants in the African bioeconomy."

Selected IKS entrepreneurs will receive access to UVU Bio's specialised laboratories and technical teams, supporting product formulation, testing, prototyping and regulatory readiness. Participants will also receive guidance on intellectual property, benefit-sharing frameworks, branding, packaging and market access.

The platform is designed to enable broad and inclusive participation, with focused outreach to Indigenous knowledge holders from historically underrepresented communities, including black innovators, women, youth and persons with disabilities, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas across the Western and Eastern Cape.

Through hands-on hackathons, demo days and community roadshows, the platform aims to make innovation tangible and accessible, enabling Indigenous knowledge holders to participate in higher-value stages of production rather than remaining confined to raw material supply. A call for applications will be announced on [UVU Bio's social media channels](#) and [website](#) in March.

– UVU Africa (via ITWeb.co.za)

UVU Bio, ka tšebeliso-mmoho le Regional Innovation Support Programme (RISP), e tšhelitsoeng ke Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), e thehile mokhatlo o mocha oa boithamelolo oa nts'etsopeleng ea lihlahisoa tsa mahlale a setso (Indigenous Knowledge Systems - IKS) o akaretsang Kapa Bophirimela le Kapa Botjhabela.

Mokhatlo ona, o thehiloeng holim'a mohlala oa ho nolofatsa boithamelolo, o reretsoe ho tšehetsa beng ba tsebo ea setso le bo-rakhoebong ba bacha ba moruo oa mahlale (bioeconomy) ba batlang ho fetola mekhoa ea setso hore e be lihlahisoa tse laolehang mme li itokiselitse mmaraka.

- Translated into SeSotho by Gemini 3