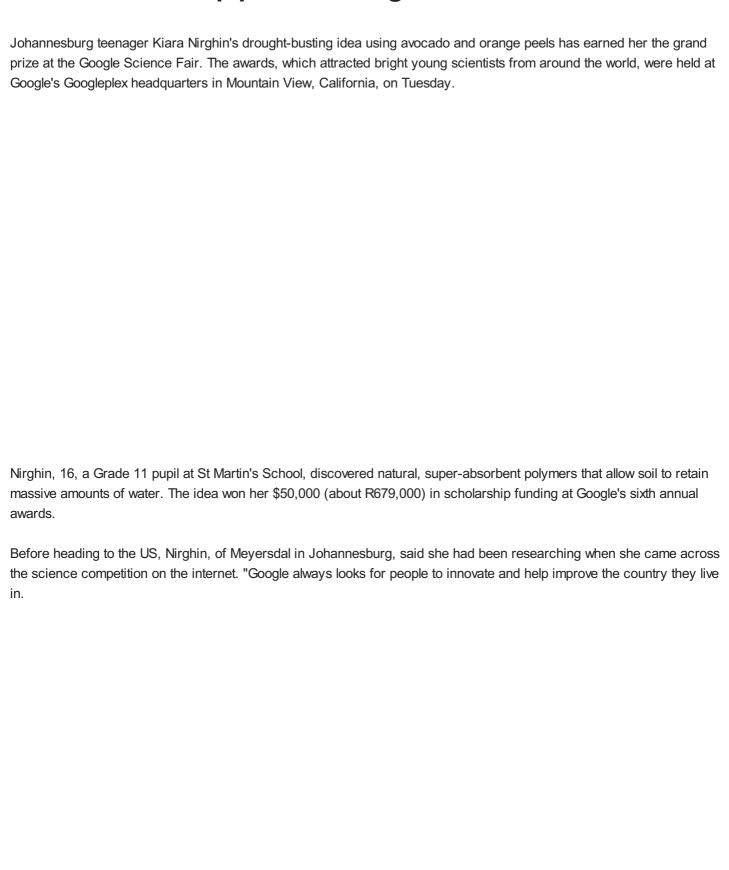


impressed by it," Nirghin said.

Jozi teen wins top prize at Google fair



She found that most citrus fruit contained naturally occurring polymers. Orange peel contains 64% polysaccharides,

"We are experiencing a drought and I thought it was something we should address," the pupil said. She studied the idea for about two months. "I entered because I thought it was a good idea, and so did my family. I didn't expect everybody to be so

making it a candidate as a biodegradable polymer.



Klauspoechhacker via Wikimedia Commons

Nirghin experimented with ultraviolet light and heat and added the natural oil found in avocado and boiled orange peels. After 45 days her experiments showed that the mixture could absorb 76.1% of water, supporting her hypothesis that it could increase soil moisture.

Chemical absorbents are not biodegradable and sell for R28,000 a ton. Nirghin's orange peel and avocado mix can be produced at R848 a ton.

She is expected to arrive back in Johannesburg from the US this afternoon. The Google Science Fair is a global online science and technology competition open to individuals and teams from ages 13 to 18. Earlier this year, Nirghin's research won her the Africa regional Google Science Fair Community Impact Award and R14,000 in prize money.

Source: The Times

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