



DALRRD news

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Editor-in-Chief: Linda Page, Email: LPage@dalrrd.gov.za,
Cell number: 083 460 4482

Editor: Moses Rannditsheni Email: Moses.Rannditsheni@dalrrd.gov.za Cell number: 083 337 5869



Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development



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World Food Day Commemoration

By Ndivhuwo Thenga

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) virtually commemorated World Food Day on Friday, 15 October. World Food Day is an international day celebrated worldwide every year on 16 October to commemorate the date of the founding of the FAO in 1945. The theme for this year's World Food Day is "*Our actions are our future – better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life.*" According to the FAO, the food we choose and consume affect our health and that of our planet. It has an impact on the way agri-food systems work and people need to be part of the change. World Food Day has been commemorated since 1980 to heighten public awareness of the world food problem and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

While speaking on behalf of MECs of Agriculture, Desbo Mohono of North West said that poverty and unemployment remain stubbornly high in the country and that 1,7 million people in her province live below the poverty line. "We introduced a food security programme in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to alleviate hunger amongst the citizens of the province. We appreciate the support we received from the national department. The Solidarity Fund also came in handy for us by supporting our food security programme," she said.

Mr Domingos Gove, Director of Food Agriculture and Natural Resources at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat said the region continues to work hard towards SADC Vision 2050 and African Union 2063. "We should aim for a transformed agricultural sector and sustainable management of agricultural resources and the environment," Gove said.

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According to Gove, 48 million people in the region are food insecure, malnutrition amongst children below the age of five remains a challenge and stunting and obesity also remain high. Climate change is a serious challenge for the SADC region and there is a need to build capacity on national level to implement mitigation strategies and adopt Climate Smart Agriculture practices.

FAO country representative, Dr Brave Ndisale said World Food Day is one of the most celebrated international days with 115 countries observing the day. “This year’s theme is a call for stepping up our actions to fight poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Covid-19 had a devastating impact on food security around the world. Before Covid-19, we were on course to reduce hunger in the world by 2030. Millions now depend on food banks. 40% of the world’s population, or 3 billion people, cannot afford a healthy diet. The world’s population is estimated to reach 10 billion by 2050 and this will require us to build resilient food systems to feed the people. 70% of the food produced globally is consumed in the cities.

Smallholder farmers produce between 70% and 80% of food but they suffer from the impacts of climate change. 30% of greenhouse gas emissions are linked to food production. Collective efforts are required to transform agricultural food systems to ensure better production, better nutrition and a better environment,” Ndisale said.

When the Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Thembu Nkadimeng, delivered the message of support during the event she said that World Food Day provides us with an opportunity to pause and reflect on all of government’s efforts to ensure food security for all. Nkadimeng said, “Food security is a constitutional imperative in South Africa and its importance cannot be downplayed. Food insecurity is linked to poverty. As local government, we need to plan for food needs of our local communities. We should assist our farmers to link with agriculture value chains.”

***For the rest of the article contact
Ndivhuwo Thenga at email: Ndivhu-
woTH@dalrrd.gov.za.***

Agriculture's contribution to SA's economic recovery path

Ms Thoko Didiza, Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development started her address by saying that it was a great honour to be joining Agri SA's 2021 Congress as it is an important event to interact with all major stakeholders in the agricultural sector.

The collaboration between the private sector and government ensured the continued operation of the agriculture and food value chain which enabled the country to have stable food supplies during the heights of various Covid waves. The decision to exempt agriculture and make sure that it was an essential sector allowed the sector to operate and thereby provide much-needed food security to South Africa.

"This period was not without difficulties though," Ms Didiza acknowledged. "Some regulations at the onset of the pandemic did cause disruptions, and more so to the logistic challenges at our ports and railway lines. When such glitches happen, there is a cost to farmers. We sympathise with you and try to improve on such situations as soon as possible," Ms Didiza said. Over the past year, the continuous interactions between Ministry and the Agri SA executive have ensured that there were

swift responses to such challenges.

This collaboration, along with farmers' confidence in South Africa's agriculture, which is displayed through investment and increased plantings, has ensured that agriculture grew by 13,4% in 2020.

In October last year, President Ramaphosa launched the country's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan. Agriculture was one of the sectors to contribute to the recovery path and job creation. Over the past few months the department has been focusing on several interventions to position agriculture as a critical sector for economic recovery, which includes:

- Releasing land to new beneficiaries
- Creating an Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan
- Structuring a blended finance programme
- Deploying 10 000 Extension Officers to enhance farmers' technical skills.

Minister Didiza concluded by thanking the Agri SA leadership and the broader organised agriculture community for collaborating over the past year.

DALRRD visits LandCare-funded projects in Northern Cape

By *Samuel Kgatla*

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) embarked on verification visits to LandCare-funded projects in the Northern Cape. These site visits took place in September. The purpose of these visits was to conduct the verification of Conservation Agriculture (CA) projects and see their readiness. DALRRD officials were accompanied by officials from the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries

and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

These projects were selected by the DARD working together with DALRRD. CA is part of the department's LandCare programme under the Directorate: Land Use and Soil Management (LUSM).

The department is funding six projects involved in CA in the province. So far, these projects have received products and inputs such as no-till plant machines.

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From the left are Frans Makgati, Victor Mohlabe and Tshiamo Moncho at Motswedi Farming in Hartswater.

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For the current financial year, these projects will receive R552 000 and shall continue to receive more funding for five years until the department is certain that they understand Conservation Agriculture. The Agriculture Research Council (ARC) is also going to do trials on the projects.

The visited projects in the province include Motswedi Farming Enterprise and the Pure Mercy Project in Hartswater under the Phokwane Local Municipality; Fairfield Farm under the Dikgatlong Local Municipality and the Rietrivier Research Council. These projects deal



Mr Frans Makgati looking at the lucerne crop at Rietrivier Research Council in Kimberley.

with wheat and maize. They supply their products to Senwes in Hartswater. The department assisted these projects with four row no-till planters and 600 l boom sprayers.

Some of the challenges faced by the farmers include farmers that have still not started to use the four row planters due to unavailability of tractors and some are still waiting for training on how to calibrate the implements; the farmer at the Pure Mercy Project using flood irrigation which has a major impact on soil erosion, salinisation and amount of water use; theft, which is a major concern to farmers because surrounding communities are stealing farmers' produce and funding to repair the irrigation systems. The provincial department is expected to assist these projects to speed up the process of repairing the irrigation system so that they can commence with Conservation Agriculture practices.

Benjamin Beukes of Fairfield Farm said he loves farming and expects to learn more about Conservation Agriculture. "I have been living on the farm for the past 16 years and I am ready to learn more about CA from the department's officials," he said.

Mercy left teaching profession to pursue farming

By **Samuel Kgatla**

Mercy Itumeleng quit her job as a full-time teacher to pursue her farming dream. She is now the owner of Pure Mercy Farm in Hartswater under the Phokwane Local Municipality in the Northern Cape. Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) officials together with the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development visited her farm during September. The purpose of this visit was to see how her farm was doing and its readiness to start applying Conservation Agriculture (CA). Mercy is one of the six farmers who are going to be part of the DALRRD's CA programme in the province. She used to be a teacher and had left the profession in 2018 to concentrate

on farming. Mercy is dealing with wheat, maize and vegetables on a 25,5 ha farm, all of which were planted through conventional farming practices. Unfortunately, she is still using the flood irrigation method and it consumes a lot of water compared to the centre pivot irrigation system she currently considers acquiring. She is definitely looking at the government to help her with this sophisticated pivot irrigation system. Mercy has received a four row no-till planter from the DALRRD.

Mercy currently employs five people and hires five more temporary workers when there is a need to. She also works closely with one of her sons so that he can understand everything about farming. This farmer supplies wheat and maize to Senwes in Hartswater.

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Officials from government departments visited Pure Mercy Farm in Northern Cape.

Mercy left teaching profession to pursue farming

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Senwes is one of the leading agricultural companies in South Africa and has a rich and proud history, which extends over a period of 107 years. It provides financing, input supplies and insurance; storage and handling services, logistics and grain trading to grain producers and financing to grain off-takers as well.

Mercy said she is excited to be part of the CA programme and she plans to learn a lot from these departmental officials who are going to offer her training and farming implements. “With

the assistance from government, I can really grow as a farmer and become one of the best in the area. I love farming, and that is why I had quit my job as a teacher to pursue it. I want to make a mark in farming,” she said.

Conservation Agriculture aims to achieve sustainable and profitable agriculture through the application of the following three CA principles: continuous minimum mechanical soil disturbance; permanent organic soil cover and diversification of crop species grown in sequences and/or associations.



Ms Mercy Itumeleng planted wheat on the 25,5 ha farm in Hartswater.



Ms Mercy Itumeleng of Pure Mercy Farm standing at the no-till four row planter bought by DALRRD.

AFMA introduces a new affiliate membership category

The Animal Feed Manufacturers Association (AFMA) introduced a new Affiliate Member category.

This new Affiliate Member category aims to provide an opportunity for registered companies that do not manufacture or trade in animal feed products but are providing a service to the feed industry to be affiliated with AFMA. These businesses include consultation services in nutrition, manufacturing, IT-systems, analytical services (laboratory services), manufacturing equipment services and other related industry associations or non-profit organisations (NPOs) that are reaching out to partner strategically with AFMA.

This new membership category will not increase the contribution of AFMA feed produced in South Africa per se but will create a stronger collaboration within the agricultural industry and in particular, the feed industry to promote safe feed across all sectors. In addition, this new category also enables AFMA to focus their Code of Conduct audit scope on member facilities where the manufacturing, handling and storage of registered animal feed products take place, such as at Full Member and Associate Member facilities. Affiliate Members of AFMA are therefore not

required to verify compliance to the feed safety programme (Code of Conduct) since they do not manufacture or trade in animal feed products. Affiliate Members of AFMA will enjoy the same membership benefits and will have the same annual membership fee as Associate Members, and they will be issued with an AFMA Affiliate Member logo as a unique identifier. This new membership category of AFMA is bridging the gap towards a more inclusive, representative, and dynamic industry feed association.

For more information on AFMA Affiliate Membership, including benefits and requirements, visit the AFMA website at www.afma.co.za and complete an online application form to submit a request for affiliate membership.



South Africa's citrus fruit enters US market

South Africa's citrus fruit has been steadily entering the US market since June. With harvest of all varieties now having finished for the season, the last shipments of easy peelers, Navel oranges, and also Midnight oranges are on their way to the Philadelphia Port. "Arrivals of Navels will soon finish, but arrivals of Midnights and late season mandarins will continue throughout October," says Suhanra Conradie, CEO of Summer Citrus from South Africa.

Easy peeler volumes have increased by 34%. The number of oranges shipped this season is slightly less compared to last year's total. The easy peeler category, on the other hand, is expecting a total volume growth of 34%. The question is if the US market was able to absorb this significant number of extra volume. "We execute a business model of managing supply and demand," Conradie explained. "With the continued support of our loyal importer and retail partners, we are able to grow and ship fruit sustainably each year. This demand-driven business model assures a supportable and consistent amount of fruit for the US market," she added.

Although South Africa's citrus fruit showed high quality, the season didn't

come without challenges. Globally, the supply chain was under a lot of pressure, which dominated the season. "Despite the shipping challenges, we have had frequent arrivals of fruit to fulfill the needs of the US market," Conradie commented. "Our open communication and sophisticated shipping plan is an imperative part of our success as we are able to meet demand with the right amount of supply." These challenges have shown a lot of resilience from all parties involved. "We had to make changes and become more flexible with the state of the world, but we gained a lot of momentum with our collaborative approach and intend to keep it going."



The last conventional vessel that was loaded in Cape Town Harbour has an estimated arrival time of the third week in October.

SA will remain net importer of wheat

The National Crop Estimates Committee has released its update on South Africa's 2020/21 summer crop production forecasts and the 2021/22 winter crop production. The summer crop figures did not introduce any surprises, aside from the 1% downward revision in the maize production estimate to 16,2 million tons, which is still the second-largest maize harvest on record.

In terms of the winter crops, the September release was the second 2021/22 production estimate, which brings minimal changes from August numbers. For example, only wheat and oats production estimates were lifted by 0,5% and 4,0% from August to 2,09 million tons and 82 223 tons, respectively. For wheat, this production estimate is roughly in line with the previous season's crop of 2,12 million tons, while for oats, this is the largest crop on record. The Western Cape, which is the region that grows more than two-thirds of South Africa's winter crops, has received favourable rainfall since the start of the season and that supported the planting activity and crop-growing conditions. The only winter crop that experienced a decline in planting is barley; farmers reduced its planting area sharply by 33% year-on-year to 94 730 ha. The production figures are

also down, in line with the reduction in plantings. This is partly because of lower demand following temporary bans in alcohol sales at various intervals since the pandemic started and a large harvest in the previous season.

Importantly, the wheat production estimate of 2,09 million tons, which decreased by 1% from the 2020/21 season, is primarily underpinned by a decline in area plantings and lower yields in the Free State. The Western Cape registered an uptick from the 2020/21 production season.

Still, given the overall increases in area planted and the positive reports on crop conditions, the National Crop Estimates Committee continues to receive from farmers in the Western Cape and other regions of the country. The Committee is inclined to believe that this particular estimate could be further increased in the coming months.

South Africa will nevertheless remain a net importer of wheat even though the 2021/22 harvest is larger than the previous season. The Supply and Demand Estimates Committee has maintained its view at 1,52 million tons of imports for 2021/22, unchanged from the previous season.¹

Dragon fruit becomes sought-after fruit

Even though the South African dragon fruit industry is relatively young, the fruit as we know it today has been produced commercially in Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, China, Israel, California and Central America since 1990.

Grown in tropical and subtropical regions of the world, dragon fruit plantings are increasing in South Africa, where producers are quickly establishing a growing export industry. Pioneers in South Africa's dragon fruit sector recently established the Southern Africa Dragon Fruit Association.

The Produce Marketing Association (PMA) South Africa live broadcast in partnership with Beanstalk Global at the end of September brought together a panel of experts who discussed the potential of the dragon fruit industry in South Africa. On the panel was Michael Muller, from the Muller Family Boerdery Trust; Fred Steyn, newly-appointed Chair of the Southern Africa Dragon Fruit Association; CT van der Merwe, CEO of AL 3 Boerdery; Laura Strever from the Amorentia Estate and Nursery and Jason Sampson from the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences

at the University of Pretoria.

The Amorentia Estate and Nursery based in Tzaneen, Limpopo, is just one of the nurseries making the new sweet cultivars available. Strever said the Amorentia Estate and Nursery started propagating dragon fruit under the trademarked name, Amorentia Sweet Dragon Fruit, after they caught a glimpse of the potential of the tasty new varieties. She described the fruit as exotic, vibrant, exciting and enticing. Moreover, it is versatile; you can eat it fresh, drink its juice and use it in more complex recipes with other products.

"These features make dragon fruit marketable, and consumers have already started adding it to their shopping baskets. Not so long ago, one did not find people putting blueberries in their shopping baskets. With the way it was marketed, blueberries became a staple food for many people," said Strever.

Van der Merwe and Sampson agreed that dragon fruit could become one of the most popular fruit worldwide if one has the right influencers and educate

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Dragon fruit becomes sought-after fruit

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consumers on the health benefits of this super fruit.

The fruit is harvested from around December/January until April/May and provides huge export potential to European and US markets during their off-seasons.

The cold chain is vital in delivering good

quality fruit to consumers, especially for producers who are farming far away from marketing facilities. “At this stage, most of the dragon fruit worldwide are exported by ship, while South Africa can export by airfreight to reach markets in a much shorter time. With efficient packhouse operations, the fruit could be harvested and delivered to global markets within a week,” said Steyn.





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Director	Moses Rannditsheni	083 337 5869	Moses.Rannditsheni@dalrrd.gov.za
Subeditor	Lerato Mofokeng	012 319 7927	LeratoMOF@dalrrd.gov.za
Reporters	Samuel Kgatla	066 084 6653	SamuelK@dalrrd.gov.za
	Innocent Mhlanga	063 693 0353	InnocentM@dalrrd.gov.za
	Rony Moremi	066 084 6192	RincertM@dalrrd.gov.za
	Mercia Smith	060 973 3816	MerciaS@dalrrd.gov.za
	Ndivhuwo Thenga	073 815 0345	NdivhuwoTH@dalrrd.gov.za