

DALRRD and Land Bank to inject R3,2 billion over three years to support farmers

Mphahlela Rammutla

Commercial agriculture is not cheap and requires the injection of substantial capital; markets for off-take agreements; fighting the onslaught of pests and diseases, as well as hoping that natural disasters do not occur. All of these are enormous challenges, which could deter farmers from remaining in the sector, especially in the absence of a helping hand.

To provide much-needed support, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) has announced a R3,2 billion Blended Finance Scheme (BFS) in partnership with the Land Bank to assist historically disadvantaged farmers.

Minister Didiza appealed to financial institutions, including the Land Bank, to be patient with farmers and not to expect immediate repayments upon lending.

The minister was speaking during the official launch of the Blended Finance Scheme held at Irene in Pretoria on 24 October 2022.

While addressing members of the media, farmers, farmer organisations and financial institutions, the minister said that under this scheme, the Land Bank and DALRRD aim to deploy R1,95 billion over the next three years to enable emerging farmers to participate in the mainstream agricultural economy. The programme will be implemented over a 10-year period with the department investing a minimum of R3,2 billion over the period. The funding will be in a blended finance structure, which is a combination of a loan and a grant, with the focus on commodities as per the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP).

The minister added that the new finance scheme is launched with many lessons learnt from the past years since the pilot of the initial finance scheme, which left many farmers exposed and their businesses at risk. "From the initial Blended Finance Scheme, we saw what improvements needed to be made to the scheme so that we can achieve intended objectives of improving repayment ability from the farmers," said Minister Didiza.

The Chairperson of the Land bank, Thabi Nkosi, who was part of the joint media briefing during the launch, said that the partnerships' mission is to facilitate the development and transformation of the agricultural sector. "The main focus is directed at supporting historically disadvantaged farmers, therefore the resuscitation of the scheme that supplements Land Bank loans to farmers with government grants to make the financing of agricultural transactions more commercially viable and bankable," commented Nkosi.

As the most significant activity of the day, the event did not only mark the launch of the BFS, but it also served as a platform for the Land Bank to report progress on the bank's current performance following the many challenges it experienced over the past few years.

Elder Mtshiza, the Chief Director: Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) and the champion of the BFS said that interested producers will only be able to access the scheme through the processes of the Land Bank, however, DALRRD will perform an oversight role and report to all relevant stakeholders. The scheme targeted commodities such as fruit, nuts and vegetable value chains, grains and sugar cane value chains and poultry, pork, beef and mutton value chains.

Who is eligible for funding?

- South African citizens with a valid identity document;
- Black owned and managed farming enterprises that are commercially viable in commodities prioritised in the AAMP;
- In the case of joint ventures, the non-Black partner should have 40% but not less than 26% ownership in the enterprise;
- Enterprises with 10% farm worker profit sharing: The National Development Plan urges that by 2030, no one should go to bed hungry; and
- Youth (40% targeted), women (50% targeted), persons with disabilities (6% targeted) and military veterans.

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A food garden in every household for better production, better nutrition and a better life

Rony Moremi

The streets of Sharpeville were a hive of activity during the street garden parade on World Food Day (WFD) Commemoration on 18 October 2022 as community members of Sharpeville proudly opened their yards to show their well-maintained food gardens to the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza, the Executive Mayor of Sedibeng District Municipality, Councillor Lerato Maloka, the Director-General of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), Mooketsa Ramasodi and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) representative for South Africa, Dr Mercy Chikoko.

In the true spirit of this year's World Food Day theme, **“Leave no one behind. Better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all,”** the minister and the dignitaries made sure that they left no one behind as they went from house to house encouraging community members to start producing their own food. “Household food production is better for food security, we should not suffer from hunger when we can produce our own food,” said the minister during her keynote address encouraging the community to produce food for themselves.

The street garden parade was part of this year's World Food Day commemoration that was held in partnership with the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Sedibeng District Municipality and the FAO. DALRRD used this year's commemoration to encourage the communities to utilise the spaces they have to plant vegetables.

As part of promoting household food production, ten households that were part of the street garden parade received gar-

dening tools, such as forks, spades, rakes and watering cans. They also received one fruit tree and vegetable seedlings, such as tomatoes, spinach, green peppers, onions and beetroot. The choice of this package is based on a basic food basket for household food security.

Delivering a message of support, FAO representative for South Africa, Dr Mercy Chikoko said, “The FAO is committed to continue supporting government efforts in promoting inclusive sustainable transformation agricultural food systems to improve food security and nutrition so that no one is left behind.”

The minister also introduced legacy projects in the provinces. These projects are supported with agricultural inputs, infrastructure and equipment. Youth projects in the Emfuleni, Midvaal, and Lesedi municipalities received shade-net structures, agricultural production inputs, irrigation systems, water tanks, drilling and equipping of boreholes and fencing. The FAO and the Agricultural Research Council also pledged support to the projects.

Balungile Poultry in Unitas Park, Vereeniging, was one of the projects that were identified for support. This layer production poultry project is run by two sisters, Thokozile and Lungile Mzizi, who inherited it from their late parents. The project currently produces 300 dozens of eggs per day that are sold on the local market. The project will be supported with an egg grading machine and layer production inputs.

The aim of the commemoration is to create awareness around issues of global food insecurity while addressing the plight of many people against poverty, as many countries in the world are still facing the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.



Deputy Minister highlights role of rural women in food production as key to food security

DALRRD COMMEMORATES THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN



Deputy Minister Capa addressing women in Mzinti, Mpumalanga

Rural women are key drivers of economic growth in rural areas, and it is crucial that Government creates a conducive environment for them to prosper and grow in the agricultural sector. This was the message by Deputy Minister Zoleka Capa at the commemoration of the International Day of Rural Women in the Nkomazi District in Mpumalanga on Saturday, 15 October 2022.

Celebrated under this year's theme, "**Rural Women, cultivating good food for all**", the International Day of Rural Women commemoration took place in the rural town of Mzinti in the Nkomazi District, more than 100 km from Nelspruit.

This event, which included a dialogue session with over 500 rural women engaged in farming and the handover of a mini packhouse by the deputy minister, was attended by the MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development Land and Environmental Affairs, the local mayor and various other dignitaries.

Deputy Minister Capa was greeted in song and dance upon arrival by the colourful Lutsango LwaseMzinti Cultural Group comprising Swati women traditional dancers and singers. They gifted the deputy minister with a Sidwaba, a traditional dress to welcome her to the community.

During the dialogue session Zodwa Sibiyi, who represented the Nkomazi Farmer's Cooperative and poultry farmers, said their biggest challenge was a lack of space to farm. She added that they desperately needed land so that their businesses can grow to the next levels, and she further appealed to the deputy minister to ensure that the department assists with the provision of suitable agricultural land.

Other speakers representing backyard garden farmers and subsistence producers complained of theft of their produce as one of the most disturbing challenges. They said that they lose thousands of rands in produce because of theft and the problem is getting worse, with the local police not assisting them adequately. One poultry farmer said her prize chickens were stolen just days before they were ready for the market, which severely impacted her profit margins and her business in general.

In her response, Deputy Minister Capa told the women that the government is committed to providing support through the various programmes of the department. The deputy minister added that the challenges they have indicated, which include access to land for production, have been noted and efforts are underway to address them where possible. She encouraged the women to be productive, grow their businesses and support one another.

One of the highlights of the day was the handing over of a mini packhouse to the Nkomazi vegetable producers. The packhouse, which includes a cold storage facility, was constructed by the department to support small-scale producers in the area.

Established by the United Nations in 2007, the International Day of Rural Women, which is observed on 15 October, seeks to recognise the crucial role played by rural women in enhancing food production and eradicating poverty in their communities.

Most of the women in the Nkomazi Local Municipality are engaged in agricultural activities as a primary source of income; this was evident in the many market stalls along the main street where fruit and vegetables are sold to shoppers, including residents from neighbouring countries, Mozambique and Eswatini, which border the town.

The women expressed their excitement about the department choosing their community to celebrate this important day and said that they hoped the department would continue to support them in the future.



Deputy Minister unveiling the plaque at the mini packhouse



The National Biosecurity Hub fights against agricultural pests and diseases

Rony Moremi

The outbreaks of locusts and foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) had hit the agricultural sector hard, causing damage to crops and forcing the department to impose bans on the movement of cattle in an effort to curb the spread of the disease. These unfortunate incidents have adversely affected the economy and the farmers. The department had to develop a system to minimise the effects of the outbreaks and mitigate their recurrence in future.

When it comes to matters of biosecurity, an effective biosecurity system is important because pests and plant and animal diseases know no borders. The biosecurity system, therefore plays a significant role against the introduction, establishment and spread of pests, plant and animal diseases, as well as protecting against food-borne diseases and food safety risks.

“A simple introduction of an apple into South Africa can lead to the establishment of a particular disease if that apple carries a particular pathogen that is not present in South Africa yet,” said Dr Julian Jaftha, Chief Director: Plant Production and Health in the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).

As part of the efforts toward strengthening the country's biosecurity system, the DALRRD and the Department of Science and Innovation in collaboration with the University of Pretoria launched the National Biosecurity Hub on 11 October 2022 at the Future Africa Auditorium, University of Pretoria. This multi-stakeholder Biosecurity Hub will be coordinated through Innovation Africa at the University of Pretoria.

The focus areas of the hub will be on plant health, animal health and food safety. This will be done through collaborative efforts in the national system of innovation to support the prevention, reduction and management of crop and animal diseases and other matters relating to food safety in South Africa.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), biosecurity is “a strategic and integrated concept that encompasses the policy and regulatory frameworks that analyse and manage risk in food safety, public health, animal life and health, and plant life and health, including associated environmental risk.” Biosecurity has a direct impact on food security, food safety and the economy.

“The Biosecurity Hub has come at the right time as the task team has been set up to understand the prevalence of animal and plant diseases in the country,” the Minister of Agriculture,

Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza, said. She added that the hub should be able to consolidate initiatives that deal with animal health.

In agreement with the minister regarding to the importance of a national biosecurity hub, Prof. Sunil Maharaj from the University of Pretoria added that, “A strong biosecurity system ensures safe trade in plant and animal products and protects our country and other countries against the entry and spread of plant and animal pests and diseases in addition to sanitary and phytosanitary threats.” He added that the hub will strengthen the country with monitoring and early detection of biosecurity issues. For example, in terms of animal diseases, the hub will be able to strengthen surveillance on FMD, while in terms of plant diseases, the hub will assist with surveillance for the Fall armyworm (FAW) and early warning to respond to disease outbreaks.

One of the research projects that is already underway at the hub is research on the development of an Avian influenza vaccine. Other projects are improved blue tongue and African horse sickness vaccines.

The Director-General of the Department of Science and Innovation, Dr Phil Mjwara, delivered a speech on behalf of Dr Blade Nzimande, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology and said the Biosecurity Hub is part of the DSI Decadal Plan 2021 — 2031. The plan aims to create an inclusive economy by transferring technology to the poor and increasing household food security. The biosecurity e-journal, which documents all the work to be done in the national biosecurity system, was also signed during the launch of the Biosecurity Hub.



Women's Symposium recognises roles of 27 female farmers in RSA food value chain

Matsepo Malatswane



Minister Didiza on a walk about at the tables of exhibitors

The 2022 DALRRD Women's Symposium awarded successful female farmers certificates of recognition for their valuable roles in contributing to South Africa's food value chain, food security, job creation and the sector's growth. While addressing the symposium, the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Ms Thoko Didiza, noted the increasing number of Black female farmers who are making their presence felt in the traditionally male-dominated commercial farming.

Minister Didiza further indicated that the Agricultural and Agro-Processing Master Plan, a blueprint guideline for success in the agricultural sector, will become handy in elevating farmers to higher levels of farming and operating in the mainstream commercial agriculture.

Crucial stakeholders in attendance with greater potential to aid women farmers' success were Thabi Nkosi, Chairperson of the Land Bank, CEO of Whiphold, Gloria Serobe and Dr Mercy Chikoko, the acting Country Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. The Women's Symposium roundtable discussion also focused on agriculture and agro-processing, the African Free Trade Agreement and market access, both local and internationally.

Minister Didiza delivered the keynote address with the purpose of encouraging women farmers to increase active participation in agriculture, agro-processing, and agribusinesses for the sustainable social and economic well-being of the country's economy, their households, job creation, food security and growth in the sector.

It is estimated that women produce 60% to 80% of food in the world as labourers, however, they contribute a small percentage as farmers to the mainstream agricultural sector. This is a picture that the DALRRD and FAO would like to see change soon. Furthermore, they produce, process and prepare most available food, and are therefore key to food security in their families and communities.

"Presidential advice on agriculture will develop a policy for women to have first preference in accessing land," said Minister Didiza. The Land Redistribution Policy suggests that 50% of the land redistributed should go to women and 40% to youth. The National Development Plan (NDP) states that land reform will unlock the potential for a dynamic, growing and employment-creating agricultural sector.

This symposium for women in agriculture and agro-processing took place on the heels of the Women Economic Assembly (WECONA) where Government pledged to tackle issues of access to land as it is the biggest barrier to women participation in agriculture.

The gathering noted that women's participation in agriculture, land reform and rural development is generally unequal to that of men in many ways, such as access to land, commercial farming, inheritance, finance, technology, training, infrastructure, water, production inputs, extension support and markets. African women tend to be at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder because of these obstacles.

All speakers agreed that new platforms should be created to enable women in the sector to showcase their work and share capabilities, thereby changing the agricultural environment forever.

All over the world, statistics show that women, as primary caregivers, play vital roles to thriving rural economies across all sectors. They are responsible for 60% to 80% of food production by rearing poultry, small livestock and growing food crops in developing countries. In many farming communities, women are the main custodians of knowledge on crop varieties.



MEC Desbo Mohono was among the delegates at the symposium



Delegates at the Women in Agriculture and Agro-processing Symposium in Birchwood

DALRRD LAND REFORM PROGRAMME BRINGS PROSPERITY FOR EASTERN CAPE FARMER

Innocent Mhlanga

The Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) has made significant progress in efforts to address the challenge of access to land for smallholder farmers to improve their production capacity and growth.

Thokozile Parkies of the farm Vlakfontein in the Joe Gqabi District in the Eastern Cape is one such smallholder farmer who has benefited from the department's Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS). She was allocated the farm in 2016 by the department following her successful application to lease the property located in the small town of Dordrecht in the Walter Sisulu Local Municipality.

The farm, which produces maize, comprises 184 ha of arable land and 750 ha of natural pastures, which is a total of 934 ha.

Support from the department did not end with the allocation of the farm to Parkies, it continued with the approval of more than R8 811 692,00 to support the implementation of a business plan through the South African Grain Association, which will ensure the growth of the Vlakfontein farm to commercial status.

The department further supported the farm with production inputs in the form of seed, fertiliser, lime, weed control, fuel, maintenance and insurance, contractor fees, payment for harvesting costs, marketing costs, electricity, agronomical services, soil rehabilitation, and services for planting on 184 ha of land. In addition to this, the department provided infrastructure support with the erection of a 12-km fence, the building of a new 400 m² shed, construction of a new farmhouse for workers and water reticulations (boreholes drilling and equipping).

Mrs Parkies praised the department adding that she hopes the additional support will help her to create more jobs for the community. She said that the project has managed to create two permanent jobs so far, and her vision is to create about 20 temporary jobs and more during planting and harvesting seasons.



DALRRD SUPPORT LEADS TO SUCCESSFUL MULTIPURPOSE FARM KRANSPOORT ASHLEIGH HOLDINGS FARM

Ndivhuwo Thenga

The farm Kranspoort is a sprawling 421 ha in size and is situated in the Thembisile Hani Local Municipality, 40 km from eMalahleni (previously Witbank) in Mpumalanga. The farmer is Jabu Mabena, a qualified Information Technology (IT) specialist whose love for animals forced him to abandon his IT career to pursue agriculture. His journey in farming started in 2008 when he was just 24 years old. He rented a small piece of tribal land in Langkloof Village where he ran his poultry and piggery business.

Through patience and hard work, Mabena became part of the Animal and Veld Management Programme (AVMP) of the former Department of Rural Development and Land Reform where he secured his tenure on Portion 1 of the Kranspoort Alias Blackwood Camp 255 JS through a caretaker agreement. He later signed a 30-year lease agreement with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development.

Kranspoort is subdivided into livestock production (cattle and goats), vegetables and tomato production, game and trophy hunting, timber production, and tourism. There are five boreholes on the property that supply water to the farm.

DALRRD has supported Mr Mabena with 104 Angus and Brangus heifers and bulls. Brangus is a crossbreed of Angus and Brahman species, and it is known for its superior quality meat. He wants to expand before he can begin to send his cattle to the feedlot for fattening and thereafter to the abattoir for slaughtering. Mabena says livestock farming is a time-consuming activity that requires patience before one can generate income from it.

DALRRD has injected more than R4 million (R4 871 000) into Kranspoort for purchasing farm implements and 104 cattle. There are four hydroponics tunnels for vegetable and tomato production on the farm. In July this year, DALRRD purchased a tractor, a Massey Ferguson 275, for the farm. Mabena is repairing the old tractor to complement the new one that the department has bought for him.

The farm supplies vegetables and tomatoes to SPAR supermarkets in eMalahleni and Phola and it sells timber (gum trees) to the PG Bison wood processing company. The farm also boasts with a variety of game that include blesbok, blue wildebeest, hartebeest, impalas and leopards. Hunters visit the farm in winter for trophy hunting. The Mpumalanga Tourism Board has just approved the development of six chalets to accommodate tourists and hunters visiting the farm.

The farmhouse is currently undergoing renovations and will be converted into a guest house to accommodate families visiting the farm. Mr Mabena is also leasing 450 ha of the neighbouring farm from the Thembisile Hani Municipality, which he uses for grazing his livestock.

The future looks bright for the farm and Mabena says he intends to build his own feedlot where he will fatten his cattle before they are sent to the abattoir for slaughter. He is also accredited with AgriSeta and trains and runs an incubation programme for young people. Students placed by DALRRD on the farm as part of the department's graduate programme say Mr Mabena told them to work and run the farm as if it was their own business.



Some of the 104 Angus and Brangus cattle that the department bought for the Kranspoort Ashleigh Holdings farm.

Farming implements the department bought for Kranspoort Ashleigh Holdings farm.

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Mr Jabu Mabena in one of his grazing camps on Kranspoort Ashleigh Holdings farm.



Agricultural trainees working on tomato plants inside a hydroponics tunnel at Kranspoort Ashleigh Holdings farm.



Mr Jabu Mabena and his trainees posing with the Massey Ferguson tractor bought for the farm by DALRRD in July 2022.



Kranspoort Ashleigh Holdings farmhouse that was converted into a guesthouse.



Farming skills transfer leads to a successful multipurpose farm in Senekal, Free State

Keitumetse Moticoe

The Farm Astoria located outside Senekal in the Setsoto Local Municipality, Free State, measuring 517 hectares (ha) in extent, is an award-winning enterprise which is successfully run by the Mthimkulu family. The farm was allocated to Koos Mthimkulu, by the former Department of Rural Development and Land Reform through the Pro-Active Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) in 2008, a programme through which the department acquires and re-distributes land to deserving applicants.

Managed by the second-generation farmer, Clifford Mthimkulu under the guidance of his father Koos, the farm boasts close to 90 cattle, 350 ha non-GMO maize which is sold to the South African Breweries, 300 ha sunflowers, 400 chicken layers and 400 boilers. In addition to this, the farm has eight permanent employees, four interns, seasonal workers and leases about 500 ha from neighbouring farms to ensure that it grows its operations.

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) has been instrumental in the growth of the business by providing support through its various initiatives, including funding from the Recapitalization and Development Programme (RADP), which it used to buy additional farming equipment and plants. Koos and his son credit Grain SA for the mentorship they were given, which helped them to succeed.

Narrating his journey, Koos said at the time of the farm allocation he had 30 years of farming experience and was leasing a farm from neighbouring farmers. He said his son Clifford is currently the head of operations, under his guidance and he has since introduced the minimum tillage practice, where soil disturbance is kept to minimum level.

“It is any parent’s wish to see the realisation of a dream where a project of this magnitude grows from strength to strength and seeing my son being hands on, bringing developments and taking the lead under my guidance, is a legacy that I hope will live onto other generations,” said Koos.

Clifford is just as pleased to have his father as his mentor. “My father is an experienced farmer who grew up working on the farm in Paul Roux, here in the Free State. He eventually worked as a foreman for his former employer, who used to render services to farmers who did not have farming equipment,” he narrated their family journey into farming.

“When his employer stopped operating the business, he sold the equipment to my father so that he could continue with the business as he knew the operations and enabled my father to pay it off in lump sums annually and further helped him develop a business plan,” said Clifford.

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Clifford is determined to make his father proud and grow the family business. He is currently an ambassador of FarmSol and started planting 50 ha sunflower with the company in 2019, on a trial basis, and in 2020 followed with 100 ha non-GMO yellow maize for South African Breweries.

Clifford has received recognition through nominations and awards such as the Free State Commercial Farmer of the year in 2021 for the Youth in Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Awards (#YAFF Awards) and hosted the 2022 event at the farm. He was a finalist in the 2020 Grain SA/Absa/John Deere Financial New Era Farmer of the Year competition and won third position in the Toyota New Harvest of the Year competition.

Koos said he is proud to be working with his son on the farm and that his legacy will live on through his son and future generations to come. He added that they still have plans to grow their operations, such as creating a feedlot on the farm and increasing their planting hectares.

The Mthimhulus said they were pleased with the contribution they are making, not only towards food security, but also the creation of employment for others and skills transfer, especially to the youth doing practicals with the vision of one day running their own operations.



Owners and managers of Ashleigh Farm, Koos and Clifford Mthimkulu

FORMER NARYSEC PARTICIPANT WINS GOLD IN GERMANY

Thabile Mehlomakhulu



Sinovuyo Mboniswa showcasing her skills in technology and science at the World Skills Competition

Sinovuyo Mboniswa, a former NARYSEC participant who hails from Dimbaza township in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in the Eastern Cape, has made history by winning first prize in the World Skills Competition, which took place in Durban in July 2022.

The competition was organised by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), wherein students from institutions of higher learning in all provinces of South Africa gathered to compete and showcase their skills in a variety of fields, such as technology and science, among others.

The journey of the 25-year-old began when she enrolled with the NARYSEC Youth Development Programme of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in 2017. Through the programme, she completed the National Certificate in Environmental Practise at Ikhala TVET College in Queenstown. She further studied Water and Waste Water Treatment with same institution, which is where she was selected and entered into the World Skills Competition.

Sinovuyo competed under the Water Technology category representing the Ikhala TVET College. In this category, competitors were showcasing their skills on how to use technology to purify water. Her presentation was voted the best and she emerged as the overall winner, which qualified her to represent South Africa at a similar competition in Germany. In Germany, her efforts were recognised with a gold medal, a testimony of hard work, being innovative and a valuable problem solver for the future.

“Never in my wildest dreams have I dreamt of what has happened, I am excited for the opportunity and have learnt a lot from this life-changing experience,” Sinovuyo exclaimed.

She added that was grateful to the NARYSEC programme which gave her a baseline. She also said that competing at an international platform is overwhelming because developed countries have all the resources and developing countries like South Africa are lagging behind as a result of having limited resources.

“I may not have won in Germany; however, I am a winner and happy that I was a contender at an international platform, to me that is a win,” said concluded.



DALRRD agency, ARC, to revive the Culture of RSA Indigenous Food Crops

Rony Moremi

Every nation around the world gains its uniqueness from traditional and cultural practices and food inevitably plays a pivotal role in that. Native or endemic food crops differentiate one country from the other because of the existence of fewer, if any, universal food crops.

The planting and consumption of unique South African food crops has been on the decline and this has prompted the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) agency, the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) to begin conducting the feasibility of reversing this scenario by making the food crops thrive once again.

Indigenous food crops are divided into three categories, namely grains (pulses and cereals), vegetables (leafy and tubers) and fruit crops.

Examples of grains are, *Sorghum bicolor* (Sorghum, mabele thoro, amazimba, amabele) and *Vigna unguiculata* (Cowpea, dinawa, dinaba, munawa, imbumba, koertjie).

Leafy vegetable crops are *Amaranthus* spp. (Thepe, vowa, umfino, imbuya, hanekom, umbuya) and *Cleome gynandra* (Cleome, spiderplant, lerotho, murudi, amazonde vingerblaartee, ulude) are consumed as morogo, other indigenous tuber and root crops are, *Manihot esculenta*, commonly known as cassava (Muthupula, mutumbula, umdumbulu, ntjumbulu) and *Colocasia esculanta* (Amadumbe, amadoemie, marobe).

Fruit crops are *Ximenia caffra* (Sourplum, grootsuurpruim, amanumbilo, letshidi), *Englerophytum magalismontanum*, (Stem fruit, mohlatswa, munombelo, amanumbela, umnubela, stamvrug) and *Sclerocarya birrea* (Marula, iganu, morula, mufura, umganu).

DALRRD has developed a National Strategy for Indigenous Food Crops with the objective of promoting sustainable production practices of indigenous food crops and supporting their research and technology development.

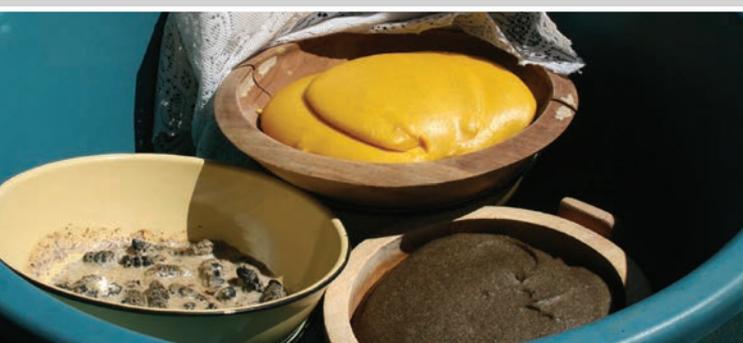


Unfortunately, consumption and production of indigenous food has been decreasing leading to crops such as sorghum and millet to lose their status as staple crops and being replaced with other exotic crops, such as wheat and rice. Owing to the decline in consumption and the production of these foods and crops, studies are being conducted to develop cultivation practices that are sustainable, improve cultivars and analyse nutritional composition.

Indigenous foods have good nutritional value and have the potential to address food security challenges because they have always been part of subsistence food production. These crops are adapted to diverse conditions, including dry climatic conditions. According to a study conducted by the Agricultural Research Council, Vegetable and Ornamental Plants Institute (ARC-VO-PI), indigenous leafy vegetable crops, such as *Amaranth* spp, *Corchorus tridens* (commonly known as Jew's mallow, ligusha, thelele) and *Cleome gynandra* (Cleome, spiderplant, lerotho, murudi, amazonde, vingerblaartee, ulude) are important sources of food and nutrients. A key finding of the study was that these indigenous food crops have more nutritional value and contain significant levels of calcium, iron, protein, fibre and vitamins A and C than exotics.

Organisations such as Indiza Foods/House of Indiza, promote South African indigenous foods, they also sell South African indigenous teas, such as *Artemisia* herbal tea (lengana, umhlonyanne), buchu herbal tea and honey bush tea.

To find indigenous food recipes, Indiza foods has two cookbooks on South African indigenous foods. Visit their website at <https://www.indizafoods.co.za/indigenous-food/> to get some of the indigenous food recipes collected from various provinces in South Africa.





INSPECTION VISITS ON FARMS AND FACILITIES INTENDED FOR EXPORT OF AVOCADOS FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO INDIA

Innocent Mhlanga

A delegation from India visited South Africa for on-site inspections on avocado farms and facilities intended for export of avocados from the country to India. The delegation was welcomed by departmental officials from the Directorate: Plant Health and the Directorate: Inspection Services at the department's offices in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

A meeting was held before the actual inspection commenced and a discussion on outstanding technical and phytosanitary issues relating to this visit was held between both National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPOs), and the itinerary was adopted mutually.

After the first meeting, it was time for both NPPOs and the Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB) officials to visit the Everdon Estate Farm in Howick, Pietermaritzburg for orchard and packhouse inspection and the delegation

observed the sorting, grading, sizing and packaging of the Hass variety with a keen eye.

While this process was taking place, it was explained that all avocados that were found with blemishes during sorting were used for oil processing, and the PPECB officials elaborated on the process of quality inspection and explained the process until it reaches the issuing of the export certificate.

Once that was done, the delegation and the teams from the department, PPECB and NPPOs visited the Waterford Farm and Richmond packhouse. At the Richmond packhouse, the inspection was conducted on issues relating to the fruit receiving area; the pre and main points for sorting, grading and the packaging were all conducted thoroughly by the Indian delegation.

The Fresh Produce Terminal (FPT) cold

treatment facility was the next stop. This was mainly for the delegation to inspect the temperatures that the facility uses to maintain the standard required to be able to export to India and a demonstration was conducted by the DIS inspector on phytosanitary inspection, and the probe demonstration within the container was also observed.

On the last day of the visit, a closing meeting was held at the departmental offices and the NPPO of South Africa thanked the Indian delegation for their visit to the country and their transparency during the engagement. Moreover, the Indian delegation reciprocated by appreciating the NPPO of South Africa for their cooperation throughout the on-site inspection process and they indicated that the report will be prepared and submitted to their Ministry within 15 days for the final decision regarding the export of avocados from South Africa to India.





DG Mooketsa Ramasodi speaking on the Integrated Rural Development Sector Strategy

DALRRD HOSTS WORKSHOP ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Samuel Kgatla

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) hosted an informative workshop on the Integrated Rural Development Sector Strategy (IRDSS) and the Agri-Parks Service Delivery Model on 27 September 2022. The main intention of the workshop was to build on and strengthen the existing IRDSS. The IRDSS serves as a framework for the coordination and management of sectorial rural development interventions and catalytic projects addressing challenges facing rural communities in line with the District Development Model (DDM).

The IRDSS is designed to realise a vision that will “attain socially cohesive and stable rural communities with viable institutions and sustainable economies and universal access to social amenities able to attract and retain skilled and knowledgeable people”. The prevalence of rural poverty provides major challenges for governments, organisations of civil society and developmental agencies.

During his keynote address focusing on integrated and inclusive rural economy, Director-General Mooketsa Ramasodi men-

tioned that out of 20 million rural people in the country, only 10% are farming. “Statistics SA shows that unemployment affects the majority of youth in the country. South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world. More people are pushed into poverty. Any concentration of our efforts on the rural space through a well-crafted IRDSS will provide a change for the population of South Africa,” he said.

The department is expected to consolidate the inputs from the consultation workshop and submissions. They will report this to the Ministerial Technical Committee (MINTEC) and the Ministers and Members of Executive Council (MINMEC). Other departments have also submitted their inputs on the strategy.

DALRRD will present to the joint cabinet committees and Cabinet for approval of the publication for public comments. Finally, the strategy is expected to be approved by Cabinet in March 2023 after going through all the processes. Implementing the coordination programme of action will take place after Cabinet’s approval.



DDG Spatial Planning, Mr Clinton Heimann reporting on the status of Agri-Parks



DDG for Rural Development, Ms Thandi Moyo during the IRDSS workshop

Mpumalanga Poultry Harvest, a key economic player

Ndivhuwo Thenga



Poultry Harvest co-owner, Ms Gugu Mkhathshwa, responding to questions from Nkangala Community Radio and Highveld Chronicles journalists during a media tour of the farm on 26 September.

Delmas — The Pro-Active Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) of the Department has made significant progress over the years in Government efforts to address inequalities in the allocation of land as an economic resource. Through the programme, beneficiaries are allocated agricultural land acquired by the department for redistribution. Emmanuel Mnisi and Ms Gugu Mkhathshwa are two such beneficiaries who were allocated Portion 7 of Grondfontein 206 IR located in Delmas, Mpumalanga.

Poultry Harvest is a successful broiler chicken farm which the pair co-own and run. It comprises 10 chicken houses, each with a capacity to accommodate 40 000 broiler chickens and a total capacity of 400 000. There are 14 full-time employees and two students from the Tshwane University of Technology who are doing experiential training on the farm.

The farm was acquired in 2013 through PLAS and leased to Agriculture and Environment Management Consultants South Africa. The company registered an operating entity called Poultry Harvest (Pty) Ltd, which has Mkhathshwa and Mnisi as the directors.

In 2015, there were eight chicken houses, however in 2018, DALRRD provided financial support to the amount of R11 744 000 for the construction of two environmentally adaptable broiler chicken houses. These state-of-the-art broiler chicken houses have emergency alarms and heating and ventilation is controlled through switches on the control panel in each house's control room.

Poultry Harvest has a contract to supply broiler chickens to the Daybreak Farms factory where chickens are slaughtered and packaged for the retail market just outside the town of Delmas. Daybreak Farms supplies the poultry producer with broiler

chicks and chicken feed. This off-take arrangement is viable for the business because all broiler chickens produced on the farm have a secure market.

Load-shedding is a major problem facing the company's poultry operations. To alleviate this challenge, Poultry Harvest has two diesel-powered generators that are used as back-up power during load shedding. Due to high fuel prices in the country, the farm is spending about R90 000 on diesel. The directors of the company intend to invest in solar panels and batteries, but the cost of the project is high and prohibitive. In winter, the company's energy costs increase because the company uses coal to provide heat to chicken houses.

When asked about their future plans, the directors revealed that they would like to build their own hatchery and abattoir so that they can produce their own broiler chicks and slaughter and package chicken to sell to members of the public and government facilities such as hospitals, prisons and schools.



Daybreak Farms hatchery employees offloading day-old broiler chicks for placement in the Poultry Harvest environmentally adaptive chicken houses.



Environmentally adaptive chicken houses at Poultry Harvest. There were eight broiler chicken houses when the farm was bought but in 2018 DALRRD injected funds for the construction of two additional broiler chicken houses.

Korema Farm's Operational Excellence Wins Another Competition

Mercia Smith

Korema Farm bags another recognition award for their excellence in the farming sector for Gauteng New Entrant to Commercial Farming from the Agricultural Writers Association. The regional candidates for the Agricultural Writers SA North (AWSA North) were officially announced on 14 October during an awards event in Pretoria. The event's main sponsors were Corteva Agriscience, New Holland Agriculture, NWK and Rijk Zwaan.

The candidates were nominated by AWSA North's members in the Farmer of the Year, Agronomist of the Year and New Entrant to Commercial Agriculture categories and will now compete during the national awards event against the candidates from the !Xhariep region (West, East and Northern Cape).

The farm is situated in the Winterveldt agricultural holdings for Gauteng. Here Kobela Mokgohloa produces cucumbers. He currently has 5 ha undercover for commercial production. This area started out small but has expanded over the past 15 years — growing steadily into a fully commercial enterprise. He recently received the award.

The latest venture at Korema Farm is expanding into the value chain by producing a cucumber juice range. The country's electricity supply problems necessitated an alternative power supply and, over time, they have invested in solar energy, which enabled them to go totally off-grid and continue to run their farm

operations with uninterrupted power supply from their wise investment.

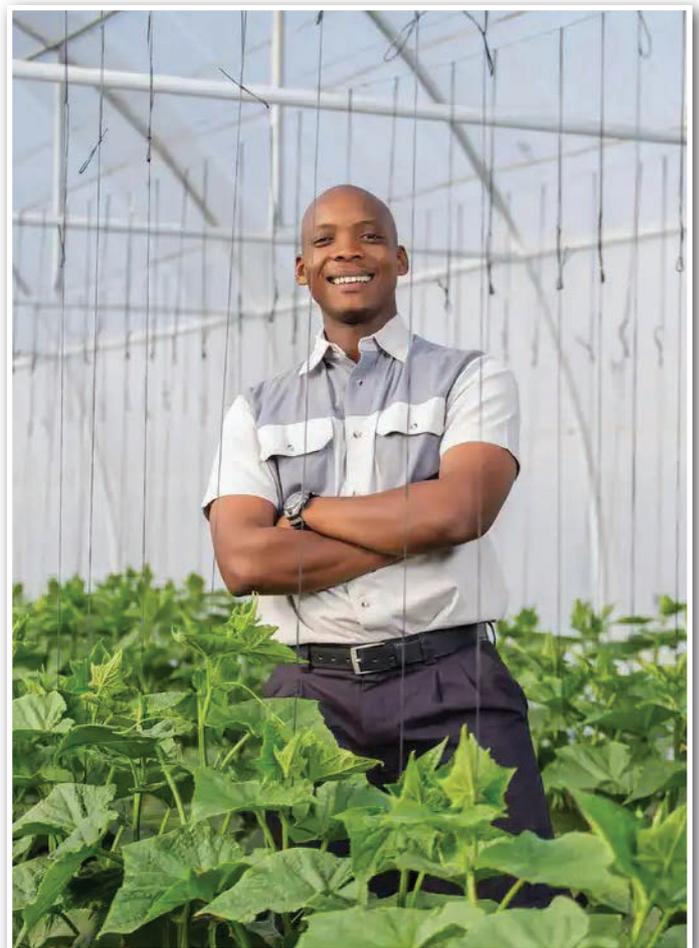
Korema Farm was established in 1995 with the focus on growing cabbage and spinach. In 2002, they expanded into a more diverse operation and started planting tomatoes and peppers. In 2009 they decided to plant the entire farm with cucumbers.

The business was established by Kobela's grandfather and later handed over to his father and now, in the third generation, Kobela is handling the farming operation. He feels he has an obligation and responsibility to grow Korema as a brand, and by focussing on building the business, he has also managed to create employment for many people in the area.

The farm currently supplies three big fresh produce markets, namely, Springs, Johannesburg and Tshwane.

Over the years, Kobela's entrepreneurial skills and dedication to his profession have been recognised by the industry and he has received the following recognition awards: SAB Entrepreneur Kick-start Competition: Regional winner (2009) and National finalist (2010). New Farmer of the Year and Young farmer of the year in 2012 and 2013.

Kobela says the secret is simple: "Give the consumer more than they expect."



Gauteng New Entrant to Commercial Farming award winner, Kobela Mokgohloa

TSHEPISO GETS REWARDED FOR HER HARD WORK IN FARMING

Samuel Kgatla

Tshepiso Mametja was one of the winners during the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development's (DALRRD) inaugural Recognition Awards for Women in Agriculture and Agro-Processing. The awards were held on 7 October 2022 at Birchwood Hotel in Gauteng.

Tshepiso was one of the 27 women rewarded for their hard work in the categories of smallholder, agro-processing and commercial farming by the department. She was recognised for her hard work in the smallholder category. She is one of the passionate farmers contributing a great deal to the food security in South Africa. DALRRD managed to visit her Matswele Farm at Ga-Sekororo in Limpopo on 27 September 2022. The purpose was to see how this 36-year-old was doing after receiving assistance from the department. It was also to showcase food production taking place on distributed farms.

With the support of her parents, Ms Mametja farms with cattle (mixed breeds) and vegetables like tomatoes, green beans, baby corn, baby gems, baby marrows and yellow and green peppers. They supply Spar supermarkets, Woolworths, Checkers and Johannesburg and Tshwane Fresh Produce Markets. This 287 ha farm was acquired in 2014 through the Pro-Active Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) under the land redistribution programme with a whopping R8 million. The farm received a further R3,6 million in 2015 for infrastructure development, mechanisation and inputs. They have employed 55 permanent workers and almost 150 seasonal workers.

Ms Mametja said she was pleased to receive the Recognition Award from the department. She added that she was really happy with the award and the overall support from the department. "I appreciate the support and guidance from the department. Farming needs lots of support, commitment and partnerships. You can have capital but you will not go anywhere without the support of others and the people you work with. Our vision is to go global in the next five years," she said.



Tshepiso Mametja receiving her Recognition Award for Women in Agriculture and Agro-Processing



Tshepiso Mametja boasting her fresh produce



The success of Mpumalanga LandCare Programme

Matsepo Malatswane

The National LandCare Programme is a community-led and government-supported programme created with the purpose to promote the sustainable use and management of natural resources. It is implemented with the active involvement and participation of the communities, a factor which has been proven successful for development initiatives that enjoy strong foundational support for sustainability (social, economic and environmental), leading to greater productivity, food security, job creation and better well-being for all.

LandCare projects are implemented in all nine provinces through the LandCare Conditional Grant. The programme implements its approved projects through the provincial departments of agriculture (PDAs) under five themes, namely, WaterCare, VeldCare, SoilCare, Conservation Agriculture and Junior Care.

Officials from the Directorate: Land and Soil Management (LSM) within the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), led by Messrs Victor Mohlabe, Frans Makgati and Shobathe Mohlahlana, recently conducted a monitoring and verification process in Mpumalanga with the aim to verify the implementation of projects as outlined in the approved business plans and to address any related challenges that are unique to these projects.

The first project visited was the Lupisi LandCare Project in Mbombela, which is a community-based farming project established in 2006 with 62 community farm workers. This project stretches between two villages, Msogwaba and Spelanyane. The total project area is 2 700 ha in extent and only 601 ha need to be fenced. Construction of firebreaks to protect the fence during unforeseen fire outbreaks was underway, which will cover 10 km along the fence.

Chemicals for firebreaks were purchased and distributed by the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Agriculture. The ma-

majority of the beneficiaries in this project are females and they mentioned that they will continue to work hard for the success of this project as they want to see the fruits of their hard labour.

The provincial department conducted LandCare awareness campaigns and training in a scheduled quarter prior to the implementation of the project on sustainable management of agricultural resources. Training such as fire awareness, veld management, construction of fences, and application of herbicides, amongst others, were offered by the provincial department.

The National LandCare Secretariat further conducted a verification process at the Arthursstone Farming Project in Bushbuckridge, in Bohlabela District. The project consists of 99 direct beneficiaries, with a total natural grazing area covering approximately 1 900 ha. The aim of this project is to protect the natural resources and improve land use management for better productivity through fencing and managing bush encroachment in the grazing lands.

Arthursstone has proven to be a success story for the department as it has a committee that manages the project's affairs and challenges with regular meetings taking place. It provides partnership between the community and Government in addressing bush encroachment within grazing lands. The project has been funded for two financial years, with one financial year remaining. During 2019/2020, the former Department of Rural Development and Land Reform assisted the project by constructing a 10-km boundary fence and they continue to give extension and advisory support to the farmers. Mr Maphanga, one of the beneficiaries, commended the department on a job well done under the LandCare Programme. He pointed out that the department is doing a remarkable job in assisting farmers like him and wished the department to continue doing a sterling job.



Arthursstone Farming Project LandCare beneficiaries



LandCare officials conversing with community of Bohlabela District