

FAO Pledges M88 Million Grant to Boost Lesotho Agriculture

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FAO Pledges M88 Million Grant to Boost Lesotho Agriculture



His Majesty and FAO DG at the WFF bilateral talks in Italy

By Lerato Matheka

In a promising development for Lesotho's agriculture sector, FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu has committed a USD \$5 million (M88 million) grant to the country. The announcement was made during a meeting between Dongyu and His Majesty King Letsie III at FAO headquarters in Rome, on the side-lines of the 2024 World Food Forum (WFF), where they discussed ongoing and future initiatives aimed at strengthening ties between FAO and Lesotho.

Director-General Dongyu extended his gratitude to King Letsie III for his active role in the

WFF and World Food Day 2024. The King's ongoing service as FAO Special Goodwill Ambassador for Nutrition was also acknowledged, and his appointment was renewed for the 2024-2026 term, following his initial appointment in 2022. Dongyu praised King Letsie III's leadership, noting that his role symbolises FAO's mission across Africa, as the King's work advocates for improved nutrition and sustainable agricultural practices.

His Majesty expressed appreciation for the continued partnership with FAO, emphasising the potential for Lesotho's agricultural and economic growth through initiatives such as the

Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum. He highlighted the importance of leveraging resources and FAO's technical support to reduce hunger and malnutrition across Africa. The King reaffirmed his commitment to advocating for nutritional improvements, calling for action to exploit opportunities to benefit both Africa and the global community.

Director-General Dongyu described the grant as a clear reaffirmation of FAO's support for Lesotho's agricultural development and its ambition to transform Lesotho's agrifood systems in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This support comes at a critical time for Lesotho, which is focused on achieving the "Four Betters": better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life for all.

In an interview with *Seahlolo*, Lesotho's Agriculture Minister expressed his gratitude for the FAO's substantial contribution. "This announcement was unexpected and very fulfilling, as it underscores FAO's recognition of our efforts. The Director-General commended Lesotho's commitment and acknowledged those representing our country, including myself and our ambassador, in Rome," the Minister stated. He further shared that the ministry is ready to strategise on implementing agricultural investments that prioritise Basotho's food security and agricultural resilience.

"We have ambitious plans to diversify, commercialise, and expand various agricultural areas," the Minister added. "This grant enables us to bring our vision closer to reality."

Notably, this M88 million grant is distinct from Lesotho's separate M2.6 billion investment request presented at the Hand-in-Hand Forum during the 2024 World Food Forum.

M2.6 Billion Investment Needed to Boost Local Food Security

By Lerato Matheka

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, led by Minister Thabo Mofosi, recently took to the global stage in Rome, Italy, to attract a groundbreaking M2.6 billion investment in the country's agricultural sector.

Mofosi presented at the Hand In Hand Investment Forum, which was held from October 15 to 17, 2024.

The Ministry's presentation outlined detailed plans for a M2.6 billion investment across four key areas of agriculture: piggery, poultry, aquaculture, and seed potato production.

"These areas were selected for their high potential to reduce Lesotho's dependency on food imports, improve the livelihoods of local farmers, and create thousands of jobs for Basotho," Mofosi said.

Piggery: M526 Million to Boost Pork Production

"Lesotho imports more than 8,000 tonnes of pork every year. The Ministry is targeting a M526 million investment to close this import gap by producing 7,488 tonnes of pork annually. This investment will establish feed mills, improve pig breeds, and build abattoirs and processing facilities.

"The piggery investment is expected to create over 12,000 direct jobs, providing Basotho with much-needed employment opportunities in rural areas while increasing local pork production to reduce dependence on imports," the presentation noted.

Poultry (Broilers): M826 Million to Reduce Chicken Imports

"Lesotho imports around 20,000 tonnes of poultry meat each year. The Ministry is seeking M826 million to invest in feed mills, rearing houses, hatcheries, and processing plants to produce over 10,000 tonnes of poultry meat annually. This investment will help reduce reliance on



imported chicken while creating 1,200 direct jobs for Basotho.

By expanding the local poultry industry, Mofosi noted the initiative will enhance food security and provide fresh, affordable chicken to local markets.

Aquaculture: M1 Billion for Trout and Salmon Farming

"Lesotho's cool, clean waters are ideal for fish farming, particularly trout and salmon. The Ministry is advocating for a M1 billion investment to develop large-scale trout and salmon farms in Katse, Mofosi, and 'Muela Dams. This aquaculture project is expected to produce 7,500 tonnes of fish annually, positioning Lesotho as a major fish exporter within the Southern African region," the presentation indicated, citing the aquaculture sector offers significant opportunities for export, targeting markets such as the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the European Union, and Japan.

The ministry noted the project would create

1,100 jobs, primarily benefiting rural communities around the dams.

Seed Potato: M274 Million to Boost Local Production

"Lesotho imports over 18,000 tonnes of seed potatoes annually. To address this, the Ministry is seeking to secure M274 million to develop tissue culture labs, greenhouses, and post-harvest storage facilities. This initiative will enable local production of 16,230 tonnes of seed potatoes each year, reducing imports and enhancing food security.

"The seed potato initiative is expected to create over 2,200 jobs and assist farmers in highland areas such as Semonkong and Thaba-Putsoa. With improved farming practices and infrastructure, Lesotho will be able to produce high-quality potatoes locally, boosting rural economies and decreasing costs for local farmers," the presentation noted.

Opportunities for Lesotho

The M2.6 billion total investment sought by the Ministry of Agriculture will not only provide much-needed infrastructure but also transform Lesotho's agricultural sector from small-scale subsistence farming to commercial-scale production, Minister Mofosi said.

"With Lesotho's abundant natural resources—clean water, cool climates, and strategic location—these investments present a valuable opportunity to enhance local food security while creating sustainable jobs for thousands of Basotho," Mofosi emphasised.

Risks and Mitigation

The Ministry acknowledged potential challenges, such as high costs of imported feed for pigs and poultry, environmental risks in aquaculture, and outdated infrastructure in seed potato production. However, proposed investments in local feed production, environmental management systems, and modern farming technologies will help mitigate these risks and ensure the sustainability of these projects.



Component 2



Sub-component 2.3. Improved Nutrition

Planned activities.

- Advocacy campaigns on nutrition diets
- Community based dietary knowledge.
- Nutrition Sensitive Grants- Disbursement to 59 Nutrition Clubs consisting of 970 households.

Key achievements

- Four (4) local study tours for Leribe, Qacha, Quthing, Mohale's hoek and Botha-Bothe Nutrition Clubs were undertaken in Mafeteng, Mohale's hoek, Maseru and Leribe with participation of 140 nutrition club members for peer learning and information sharing.
- One international study tour to Durban was undertaken for 25 Nutrition Officers
- In partnership with WFP, disseminated Nutrition messages through public gatherings to 35,694 households and translating to 142,775 people reached.
- 104 Nutrition Clubs have been awarded grants for improving nutrition. To date, 83 have received funding. Shade-nets, drip irrigation kits and 260L tanks installed in 59 Nutrition Clubs and 10 dual-purpose chickens and 10 fruit-trees procured and delivered to the 736 households of the 104 Nutrition Clubs in all districts.

Global Agriculture & Food Security Program (GAFSP) Project Development is an additional financing to the project, its objective is

- To enhance resilience of small-scale agriculture and food systems through increased commercialization, value chain and nutrition development amongst project beneficiaries.
- GAFSP's objective aligns and complements the host project which is Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II).

Sub-component 2.3. Improved Nutrition

Key achievements under GAFSP

- Standardised preservation recipe development compiled, to be edited and printed
- Training of Trainers completed by the fortification initiative of Africa.
- Scoping exercise completed for Millers
- Readiness assessment for fortification conducted for SADP beneficiaries all conducted and completed
- A joint awareness for fortifications and guideline was conducted (SADP, WFP & Health) for SADP beneficiaries.



It's high time to turn the "Right to Foods" for a healthy, nutritious and affordable diet into reality



FAO Director General Qu Dongyu portrait

By Dr QU Dongyu, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

This year the theme for World Food Day is "Right to Foods for a Better Life and a Better Future." It's a timely reminder that all people have the right to adequate foods.

But how do we get from a right to a reality? And why is it so important to think about not just having sufficient food, but also the diversity of diets? That's why I speak of "Foods" in the plural, emphasizing this diversity, as well as food availability, food accessibility and food affordability for all.

Right now, the world's farmers produce more than enough food to feed the global population in terms of calories. Yet around 730 million people are facing hunger due to man-made and natural disasters, including conflict, recurrent weather shocks, inequalities and economic downturns.

Billions lack healthy diets

Another harsh reality is that over 2.8 billion people in the world are unable to afford a healthy diet, which is a leading cause of all forms of malnutrition.

Simply put, almost one third the global population today is not getting the nutrients and micronutrients they need to thrive and, in some cases, survive. This means that the quality of life for roughly half the world is more urgently in need of improvement.

We need a greater diversity of nutritious and affordable foods to be available in our fields, fishing nets, markets and on our tables, for the benefit of all. This is not just about populations' nutritional requirements, but also about ensuring that our agrifood systems are efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable, so that they can be respectful of traditional food cultures and healthy diets based on science and in line with personal preferences.

Another crucial consideration is the long-term health and sustainability of the environment on which we rely to

produce these foods and which needs biodiversity to thrive.

The right to foods will not in itself fill stomachs or put more diverse diets on plates. But it does help frame our collective aspirations for the kind of just and equitable world we want to live in. It creates concrete obligations for governments and key partners to fulfil, and it should encourage all of us to do our part to ensure it is realized.

This is the reason for action. Now.

FAO's role

At the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) we are working hard to turn this right into a reality, even in the face of a range of challenges. In conflict zones, access to foods is being disrupted, leading to malnutrition and hunger. In these and other hunger hotspots, FAO's efforts are focused on rebuilding agricultural infrastructure to ensure food availability and accessibility for long-term food security, with all tools and channels.

Aside from such emergency interventions, key FAO programmes such as the Hand in Hand initiative, One Country One Priority Product, Blue Economy and Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCPs) also target medium to long term food security and nutrition across a wide range of countries.

In many places, dietary changes and market concentration driven by globalization have led to increased health issues, including obesity and diabetes. School feeding programmes supported by FAO play an important role in helping address these challenges, as they source food from local farmers and ensure children receive nutritious meals.

In many countries, across all regions, FAO is working with fishing communities and local governments to expand social protection and economic inclusion of the most vulnerable by helping them diversify their production, build alternative income sources and connect to new markets.

Inflation, particularly during periods of economic instability, can make food unaffordable. In some African countries for example FAO's initiatives include cash transfers to the poorest households, helping them afford food during hyperinflation.

The climate crisis poses a significant threat to global food security. Erratic weather patterns and natural disasters can devastate crops and livestock. For

example, in some countries in Asia FAO has introduced climate-smart agriculture techniques to help farmers adapt to changing climatic conditions, ensuring consistent food production.

Furthermore, by working closely with governments, FAO helps develop legal frameworks and has assisted in drafting national policies towards ensuring food security and nutrition for all.

Collective action needed

But it's not just governments which we call upon to engage in this battle. Collective action can drive substantial change, with global collaboration from all sectors, and all partners - governments, the private sector, academia, civil society, and individuals.

And especially the youth - because a food secure future is their right.

They design and decide the future. All calls from the UN Summit of the Future are determined by their actions.

Farmers can make a difference by practising sustainable agriculture that enhances biodiversity and manages natural resources responsibly. Businesses can make nutritious and diverse foods available more affordably. Academia and civil society can hold governments accountable by collecting data, identifying areas for improvement, implementing scientech solutions and measuring progress towards targets.

Science and innovation including IT, Biotechnology, AI and Digital Agriculture, and others, will be a decisive force for agrifood systems transformation.

Finally, all of us as consumers can and should play our role in reducing the "foodprint", practicing healthy lifestyles, raising our voices to influence decision-making, reducing food waste, and promoting food diversity.

This World Food Day let us renew our commitment to build more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient and more sustainable agrifood systems that honour everyone's right to varied and nutritious foods.

Together, we can get back on track to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - our collective pledge to take action for people, planet, and prosperity. We can accomplish this by transforming global agrifood systems to ensure the Four Betters: better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life - leaving no one behind.

Our Actions are our Future.



A Call to Action for a Sustainable Food Future

By Staff Reporters



The 2024 World Food Forum (WFF) opened its doors to a global audience with a powerful message from the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Dr. Qu Dongyu, who set the tone for an event focused on “Catalysing Sustainable Investment in Food Systems.”

The annual forum, which brings together policymakers, young innovators, scientists, and activists from around the globe, emphasised the

urgent need for transformative solutions to address the growing challenges of food insecurity, malnutrition, and climate change.

In his opening speech, Dr. Qu Dongyu delivered a sobering reminder of the current state of global food systems. He noted that while great strides have been made in reducing hunger over the past few decades, recent years have seen a reversal of these gains due to conflict, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The world is facing a complex web of crises that threaten our ability to provide enough nutritious food for all,” Dr. Qu remarked. “We must invest in innovative, sustainable agricultural practices, ensure equitable access to resources, and build resilient food systems capable of withstanding shocks.”

“This year’s theme, ‘Good food for all, for today and tomorrow,’ reflects the core of FAO’s mission and underscores the importance of the Four Betters,” said FAO Director-General Dr. Qu Dongyu, officially kicking off the event.

He also emphasised the critical role that youth and innovation must play in this transformation, highlighting the forum’s focus on empowering young people to take the lead in designing solutions. “Young minds hold the key to unlocking the innovations we need to transform food systems. We must invest in their potential, provide opportunities, and ensure they are at the forefront of global conversations on agriculture and food security,” he said.

Throughout the forum, attendees participated in dynamic discussions on pivotal topics, including climate-smart agriculture, digitalisation in farming, and the role of local communities in creating sustainable food systems. The WFF also saw the launch of several high-profile initiatives aimed at mobilising investments in food systems, particularly in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, where agricultural productivity remains low and climate vulnerability is high.

One of the highlights of the week was the introduction of the Regional Investment in Poultry and Irrigation Initiative, designed to promote

targeted investments in Southern Africa’s food production systems. The initiative seeks to boost regional food security by scaling up sustainable poultry farming and irrigation projects, a priority investment area for Lesotho as outlined in the country’s National Investment Plan (NIP).

In his closing remarks, Dr. Qu Dongyu reiterated the importance of collaboration, noting that the challenges faced by food systems are global and require coordinated efforts from all sectors. “No single nation or organisation can solve the world’s food challenges alone. We must work together—governments, the private sector, civil society, and youth—to build a better, more sustainable future for food and agriculture.”

He also emphasised the need for continued financial and political commitment to food security, reminding leaders that without sustained investment, the world would fail to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, particularly SDG 2, which calls for zero hunger.

“As we leave this forum today, let us not lose sight of the fact that the world’s most vulnerable populations depend on our actions,” Dr. Qu urged the global audience. “Let us move forward with urgency and purpose, transforming words into action and ensuring that no one is left behind.”

The 2024 WFF served as a vital platform for driving change in global food systems, inspiring hope that with collective effort, the goal of a food-secure world is achievable. As the forum concluded, the message was clear: “The time for action is now, and the world cannot afford to delay in addressing the pressing issues of food insecurity, malnutrition, and climate resilience.”

His Majesty Calls for Urgent Action on Global Hunger

By Staff Reporters

His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho, a renowned advocate for food security and nutrition, delivered a powerful and heartfelt address at the 2024 World Food Forum (WFF), calling for decisive global action to eradicate hunger and malnutrition. As a key speaker at the event, King Letsie III emphasised the urgent need for international collaboration in building sustainable and resilient food systems, particularly in Africa, where millions still face food insecurity.

In his speech, King Letsie III reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to the cause of nutrition, highlighting the role of global leaders, governments, and civil society in addressing the root causes of hunger and promoting agricultural innovation. As the FAO’s Special Ambassador for Nutrition, he has long been recognised as a beacon of hope in Africa’s fight against hunger and malnutrition, and his presence at the forum underscored his impact on global food security issues.

A Call for Global Unity in the Fight Against Hunger

King Letsie III addressed the ongoing global food crisis, which has been exacerbated by climate change, conflict, and economic disparities. He urged world leaders to unite in their efforts to combat hunger, pointing out that despite significant advancements in food production, millions of people—especially in developing countries—continue to suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition.

“The time for words is over; we must act now,” said King Letsie III. “Hunger and malnutrition are robbing our people of their dignity, and we cannot continue to tolerate a world where access to nutritious food is a privilege rather than a basic human right.”

King Letsie III emphasised that hunger is not just a humanitarian crisis but a moral issue that demands collective global responsibility. He

called for bold investments in sustainable agricultural practices, viewing them as essential to overcoming the challenges posed by climate change and resource depletion.

Focus on Africa and the Role of Youth

His Majesty’s address also underscored Africa’s pivotal role in the global food security agenda. As a continent with vast agricultural potential, Africa holds the key to feeding not only its population but also contributing to global food supplies. However, King Letsie III noted that to unlock this potential, Africa must invest in innovation, infrastructure, and, most importantly, its youth.

“We must empower the next generation of African farmers, innovators, and entrepreneurs,” said King Letsie III. “It is the youth who will lead us toward sustainable and resilient food systems. We must equip them with the tools, knowledge, and resources they need to succeed.”

This vision aligns with ongoing efforts by African countries, including Lesotho, to attract young people to agriculture through targeted investments in technology and education. King Letsie III emphasised that youth involvement in agriculture is crucial for addressing food security challenges and revitalising rural economies.

Lesotho’s Efforts to Tackle Malnutrition and Food Insecurity

King Letsie III drew attention to his home country, sharing the strides Lesotho has made in fighting hunger despite its challenges. He spoke about Lesotho’s National Investment Plan (NIP), which prioritises critical areas such as poultry farming and irrigation systems to boost agricultural productivity and ensure food security for its population.

His Majesty also acknowledged the role of international partners in supporting Lesotho’s journey toward improved nutrition. He expressed gratitude to the Rome-based agencies and other development organisations that have collaborated with Lesotho in promoting climate-resilient

agricultural practices and advancing nutrition-focused initiatives.

In particular, King Letsie III lauded the Regional Investment in Poultry and Irrigation Initiative, launched at the World Food Forum, as a key program that Lesotho hopes to leverage to improve its food systems. The initiative aligns with Lesotho’s NIP and could help the country scale up sustainable poultry farming and irrigation projects, contributing to long-term food security.

King Letsie III’s Global Impact

Over the years, King Letsie III has earned international respect for his tireless advocacy in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. As an African Union (AU) Champion for Nutrition and a UN Special Ambassador for Nutrition, he has used his influence to raise awareness about the need for policies that prioritise nutrition and ensure equitable access to food.

His leadership and advocacy have inspired not only policymakers but also grassroots organisations across Africa and beyond. Under his guidance, Lesotho has become a strong voice in regional and international discussions on nutrition and food security, positioning itself as a country determined to make significant strides toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

During his address at the WFF, King Letsie III reminded the audience that Africa’s battle against hunger cannot be fought alone. “Africa needs the world, and the world needs Africa,” he said. “The fight against hunger is a global challenge, and it requires a unified global response. Let us work together, not as separate nations, but as a single humanity.”

King Letsie III’s Vision for a Hunger-Free Future

In his closing remarks, King Letsie III called for renewed commitment to creating inclusive food systems that prioritise the most vulnerable populations. He outlined several key actions that



His Majesty addresses World Food Forum

need to be taken to achieve this goal, including:

Strengthening Agricultural Systems: Investments in sustainable agriculture, particularly in climate-resilient crops and modern irrigation techniques, are critical for improving productivity and ensuring food security in the face of climate change.

Fostering Public-Private Partnerships: King Letsie III urged greater collaboration between governments, the private sector, and civil society to drive innovation and scale up solutions to combat hunger.

Investing in Nutrition Programs: He emphasised the importance of focusing on nutrition-specific interventions that address both the immediate and underlying causes of malnutrition, particularly in women and children.

Empowering Farmers: By supporting small-holder farmers with access to resources, technology, and markets, King Letsie III believes that local communities can become more resilient and self-sufficient.

Advocating for Policy Reform: His Majesty called on governments to enact policies that prioritise food security and nutrition, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has access to healthy, affordable, and sustainable food.

FAO Mobilises USD 15 billion of Investment Opportunities for African

By Lerato Matheka



The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) played a critical role in the investment discussions, mobilising over \$15 billion to support projects worldwide, with a substantial portion directed toward African countries.

This funding is expected to fuel transformation in agrifood systems, addressing critical gaps in infrastructure, technology, and sustainable farming practices across the continent.

This happened at the 2024 World Food Forum (WFF) which significantly focused on investment opportunities for African countries, showcasing

the continent's potential to drive food security, sustainability, and economic growth through strategic partnerships and innovative projects.

Held under the banner of the Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum, the event spotlighted over 115 investment projects, collectively aimed at transforming agrifood systems worldwide.

Africa's Agrifood Systems in the Spotlight

African nations took centre stage, presenting a range of investment opportunities across diverse sectors, such as poultry farming, irrigation, sustainable agriculture, and agro-processing. These projects align with the Hand-in-Hand Initiative's

goals of fostering resilience and enhancing productivity in food systems, particularly in regions prone to food insecurity. Investors from both public and private sectors were encouraged to explore partnerships that would scale up these critical projects.

Key Areas of Investment Focus

Poultry Farming and Irrigation Initiatives: Several African countries, including Lesotho, highlighted poultry farming and irrigation as priority sectors. These investments aim not only to improve local food production but also to stimulate economic activity by engaging smallholder

farmers and rural communities.

Sustainable Agricultural Practices: African nations emphasised the importance of adopting sustainable farming techniques. These include climate-resilient agriculture, agroecology, and the use of digital tools to improve efficiency and productivity in the agricultural value chain.

Infrastructure and Agro-Processing: Investment opportunities in infrastructure, particularly in the development of storage facilities, transportation networks, and agro-processing plants, were also highlighted. These are crucial for reducing post-harvest losses and ensuring that farmers can access markets more efficiently.

Lesotho's Presentation at the Forum

Lesotho, in particular, outlined its National Investment Plan (NIP), which prioritises poultry and irrigation projects as avenues for boosting food security and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. The country's presentation emphasised the potential for these investments to uplift smallholder farmers and enhance the country's agricultural output. By participating in the Hand-in-Hand Forum, Lesotho aims to attract both financial and technical support from international partners to drive these key initiatives.

FAO's Financial Commitment

Lesotho Poised to Benefit from Regional Poultry and Irrigation Investment Initiative

By Lerato Matheka

The World Food Forum 2024 has set the stage for transformative growth in Southern Africa's agricultural landscape with the introduction of the Regional Investment in Poultry and Irrigation Initiative, a bold new project aimed at boosting regional food security through sustainable farming practices.

Unveiled during the global forum, the initiative seeks to direct targeted investments into poultry farming and irrigation projects across Southern Africa, with a particular focus on countries like Lesotho, where agricultural productivity remains low and climate vulnerability is high.

The poultry and irrigation sectors have been identified as key priority areas within Lesotho's National Investment Plan (NIP), a strategic framework designed to bolster food production, improve livelihoods, and promote sustainable agricultural development. With the launch of this initiative, Lesotho envisions reaping significant benefits that could address some of the country's longstanding challenges in food security and rural development.

Lesotho's Opportunity for Growth

As a landlocked nation facing climate-related threats such as droughts and erratic rainfall, Lesotho's agricultural sector has struggled to meet the food needs of its population. Poultry farming, which offers a relatively quick turnover and consistent income, has the potential to alleviate some of these food security concerns, particularly for rural households. Similarly, irrigation projects are critical for enhancing agricultural productivity, especially in regions that experience water scarcity.

The Regional Investment in Poultry and Irrigation Initiative, launched at the World Food Forum, promises to inject much-needed capital into these sectors. It will not only support smallholder farmers but also attract private sector investments that could drive technological advancements and infrastructure development in farming.

Priority Areas in Lesotho's National Investment Plan (NIP)

Lesotho's NIP clearly outlines poultry farming and irrigation systems as high-priority investment areas. The plan seeks to scale up climate-smart agriculture practices, improve food availability, and strengthen local value chains. This initiative aligns perfectly with these goals, offering an opportunity for Lesotho to increase poultry production and expand irrigated land, ultimately creating a more robust agricultural sector.



Through poultry farming, Lesotho hopes to diversify its food production base, reducing reliance on imported poultry products and providing a locally sourced alternative that could lower food costs and boost rural economies. Irrigation, on the other hand, will be essential for unlocking the full potential of the country's agricultural land, ensuring that farmers can produce more consistently throughout the year, regardless of weather conditions.

Boosting Regional Food Security through Collaboration

The Regional Investment in Poultry and Irrigation Initiative highlights the importance of regional collaboration in tackling food insecurity. By focusing on Southern Africa's shared agricultural challenges, the initiative aims to foster

partnerships among governments, financial institutions, and the private sector. These partnerships are expected to generate investments that not only enhance agricultural productivity but also promote the region's sustainable development goals.

In Lesotho, where over 70% of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods, the initiative's impact could be transformative. Investments in modern poultry farming techniques and advanced irrigation infrastructure are anticipated to provide local farmers with the tools they need to boost yields, reduce food waste, and create more resilient farming systems.

The initiative is also expected to attract capacity-building programs that will train local farmers in efficient poultry and irrigation practices,

empowering them to adopt sustainable methods that are environmentally friendly and financially rewarding. By improving access to water for irrigation and increasing poultry production, Lesotho can significantly reduce its food import dependency while enhancing the resilience of its rural communities to climate shocks.

A Vision of Sustainability and Prosperity

As the initiative takes shape, Lesotho's participation is envisioned as a critical component of the country's journey toward sustainable food production. Minister of Agriculture, Thabo Mofosi, who spoke at the World Food Forum, expressed optimism about the initiative's potential to make a lasting impact on the country's agricultural landscape.

"This initiative presents a tremendous opportunity for Lesotho to improve both our food production systems and the livelihoods of our farmers. With targeted investments in poultry and irrigation, we will be able to tackle some of the core challenges we face in agriculture—especially in enhancing productivity and ensuring that our farming practices are resilient to climate change," Mofosi said.



Mohau Lakeng and SADP II Officers

Farmers prepare!

...as SADP II gears to Open Grant Applications for Smallholder Farmers in November

By Ntsoaki Motaung

The Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II) will soon open its next call for grant applications, giving smallholder farmers across Lesotho a valuable opportunity to access financial support.

According to Project Field Officer Relebohile Khathibe, the official announcement for applications is expected before the end of November, encouraging farmers to begin their preparations to ensure timely submissions.

Khathibe shared this news during a recent field visit by representatives from the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), who fund SADP II.

During the visit, IFAD and World Bank delegates evaluated project progress, examined successes and challenges, and offered recommendations for future improvements.

Empowering Farmers with Skills and Resources

SADP II provides comprehensive support to smallholder farmers, including training, access to new farming techniques, grants, and resources to improve product quality and resilience amid climate challenges. The project's outreach includes a range of beneficiaries—lead farmers, nutrition clubs, livestock farmers, and irrigation schemes—all contributing to a stronger agricultural sector.

Among SADP II lead farmers is 66-year-old Mohau Lakeng, a seasoned crop farmer who mentors others in his community.

Known as a champion among his followers, Lakeng expressed gratitude for SADP II's support, which he said has enabled him to share his extensive farming knowledge and market access strategies with aspiring farmers.

While some believe Lesotho's agricultural market is limited, Lakeng sees untapped potential and highlights the importance of improving access and production techniques to meet market demands.

"While there's a perception that there's no market for agricultural produce in Lesotho, I see ample opportunity. SADP II has equipped me to pass on these skills and show others how to reach this market," Lakeng explained.

Mentorship Drives Success

One of Lakeng's mentees, Molefi Mabaleha, has transitioned into a successful potato farmer in Matsieng thanks to this mentorship.

"Before meeting Lakeng, I didn't see farming as a viable income source, but he has helped me understand innovative cropping methods and shown me how to access farming inputs that enhance production."

Similarly, Bataung Morakabi, a member of the Chebelopele Maqhaaka Commodity Group, applauds SADP II for supporting their cooperative approach, which has enabled year-round production and consistent market access.

"Working alone, I couldn't meet demand year-round, but now, as part of a group, we supply our market on a rotational basis," he noted.

Commitment to Climate-Smart Agriculture

SADP II's mission extends beyond grants, focusing on the adoption of climate-smart agricultural technologies, enhancing commercial opportunities, and improving dietary diversity for beneficiaries. The project stands as a pillar of support in Lesotho's agricultural landscape, fostering sustainability and growth for smallholder farmers.

With the upcoming call for applications, SADP II continues its dedication to building a resilient and market-ready agricultural sector in Lesotho.

Quthing to Host National World Food Day Celebration

By Kabelo Masoabi and Katleho Mohanoe

The 2024 World Food Day celebration in Lesotho will take place on November 8 at the Ha Koali Resource Center in Quthing.

Originally established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1979, World Food Day aims to raise awareness and promote action to end hunger and malnutrition. Although the event is globally observed on October 16, Lesotho's celebration was postponed due to King Letsie III and Agriculture Minister Thabo Mofosi attending the main celebration in Rome.

This year's theme, "Right to Foods for a Better Life and a Better Future," underscores the importance of universal access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food.

In Rome, FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu highlighted the urgent need for efficient, inclusive, and resilient agrifood systems, warning that "there is no time to lose" with 730 million people facing hunger worldwide.

His Majesty, King Letsie III, FAO's Special Goodwill Ambassador for Nutrition, reinforced this commitment by advocating for legislative measures to ensure food security in Africa, including a new model law on food security developed by the African Union in collaboration with FAO.

An Agricultural Showcase in Quthing

District Agricultural Officer Mabusetsa Makau revealed that this year's celebration, organised with the Quthing Farmers Forum and Lesotho National Farmers Union, will be Lesotho's largest agricultural showcase to date.

"The event will offer networking, skill-sharing, and trading opportunities, while showcasing climate-smart farming techniques, block farming, and conservation agriculture practices used in Lesotho," Makau said adding the event would also feature livestock displays and new crop cultivation methods, allowing visitors to observe innovative farming techniques.

Highlights, the DAO said, will include displays of livestock such as rabbits, chickens, and improved breeds of sheep and goats, as well as machinery demonstrations.

"We are ready to show the world what Quthing farmers can produce," said Monnapeli Maqolo, a local livestock farmer.

Makau added that attendees will visit a nearby 19-year-old farmer who has successfully turned a rocky landscape into productive farmland, exemplifying resilience and innovation in agriculture.

Addressing Hunger Amid Global Challenges

Lesotho's celebration takes place at a critical time, when the country faces a national food insecurity disaster affecting 70,000 people.

Recent findings from the World Food Programme highlight that poverty is widespread and persistent in Lesotho, particularly in rural areas. Nearly half the population lives in poverty, with about a quarter facing extreme poverty.

"The celebration will focus on districts like Quthing,



which is among the hardest hit by hunger and poverty," Makau said, emphasising the urgent need to support and promote sustainable agriculture to alleviate these issues.

The event, sponsored by FAO, will bring together government bodies, farmers' associations, non-governmental organisations, and agribusinesses, all committed to eradicating hunger and poverty in the region.

The event promises a blend of educational activities and practical demonstrations, positioning it as a platform for exchanging knowledge and promoting agricultural resilience.



King emphasises right to food

... as hunger reaches alarming levels

By Ntsoaki Motaung

The right to food encompasses ensuring that everyone has access to a diverse range of nutritious foods that contribute to a full, healthy, and dignified life. His Majesty King Letsie III stated during the recently concluded fourth annual World Food Forum (WFF) 2024 in Rome, Italy.

The King emphasised that this right fundamentally involves enabling healthy diets.

"Regrettably, we find ourselves in a situation where a staggering one-third of the world's population cannot afford a healthy diet," he noted, adding that this crisis demands immediate attention and action.

He pointed out that as the world reflects on the current state of food security, we must confront the harsh reality that globally, one in eleven people—and one in five in Africa—faced hunger in 2023.

His Majesty stressed that the issue extends beyond mere hunger.

"Without access to healthy diets and the realisation of the right to food, we face dire consequences. Children will suffer, and boys and girls will not reach their full potential. The health and well-being of women and men will be compromised, leading to deficiencies in many contexts and contributing to the growing epidemic of overweight and obesity worldwide," he said.

However, he indicated that despite these challenges, the world has the power to reverse this trend. "We can transform our agrifood systems to enable everyone, everywhere, to enjoy healthy diets. This is our right to adequate food. Achieving good nutrition is not just an aspiration; it is an achievable goal that we must strive for collectively," said King Letsie III.

According to the King, who also serves as the African Union (AU) Nutrition Champion, a well-nourished child is more likely to survive and thrive in their

growth and development. This, in turn, contributes to their learning and employment outcomes, shaping the future for their families and communities, and ultimately driving the economic growth of nations.

"The importance of nutrition cannot be overstated; it is the foundation upon which the world can build a prosperous future," he added.

The King's remarks sharply contrast the submissions made to the High Court earlier this year by Prime Minister Ntsokoane Samuel Matekane, who argued that there is no right to food and that the government has no duty to provide food for its citizens.

"It is denied that there is a right to food. I further deny that the right to life is inclusive of emotional, intellectual, or spiritual needs. The right to life literally pertains to non-deprivation of one's life, which may be deprived, as captured in Section 5 of the Constitution," Matekane stated in an answering affidavit.

He was responding to a constitutional challenge initiated by the Christian Advocates and Ambassadors Association, which aims to compel the government to implement food subsidies following recent price increases for maize meal.

According to the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the right to food, people indeed have the right to food. The right to food is defined as the right to have regular, permanent, and unrestricted access—either directly or through financial means—to adequate and sufficient food that corresponds to cultural traditions and ensures a fulfilling and dignified life.

This definition aligns with General Comment No. 12 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which states that "the right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman, and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement."

The committee further emphasises that "the right to adequate food should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense equating it with a minimum package of calories, proteins, and other specific nutrients."

"The right to adequate food will have to be realised progressively. However, States have a core obligation to take the necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger, even in times of natural or other disasters," the Special Rapporteur explains. States have an obligation to fulfill (provide) the right directly when individuals or groups cannot, for reasons beyond their control, enjoy the right to adequate food.

This also applies to victims of natural or other disasters.

In his affidavit, Matekane denied that the lack of food poses a threat to life. "Life is not dependent only on food, as there are other contributory factors," he said. "I vehemently deny that a person who has access to food leads a healthy life. One can have access to food and still live an unhealthy life," he added.

Matekane also "vehemently" denied that the government has a duty to provide food for its people.

On 12 July 2024, he declared a state of National Food Insecurity Disaster after a historic drought, triggered by El Niño, led to the lowest crop yields since the 2018/19 agricultural season.

According to the government, about a third of the population—approximately 700,000 people—will face hunger in the coming months. In rural areas, more than 400,000 people are expected to experience crisis levels of acute hunger through March 2025.

Vulnerability assessments indicate that an additional 296,049 people are expected to become food insecure in urban areas. The drought has resulted in severe water shortages, with wells drying up.

PPP Elevates High-Performing Farmers to Leadership Roles

By Pheello Mosesi

The Potato Production Platform (PPP), one of Lesotho's largest potato association, hosted a seminar at El Legado Complex on October 26 to celebrate and train newly appointed lead farmers.

The event, moderated by agriculture expert 'Mankuebe Nkuebe, follows PPP's recognition of exceptional farmers who have shown outstanding performance and dedication within the association.

According to Nthethe Ralitapole from PPP, lead farmers are those with advanced skills and a commitment to sharing knowledge.

"We selected these farmers based on their high yields and dedication to helping others succeed," Ralitapole explained citing lead farmers are tasked with implementing the latest training techniques and spreading valuable insights throughout the PPP network to foster growth.

Knowledge Sharing and Regional Impact

Nkuebe emphasised the role of lead farmers as pioneers who can drive quality improvement in Lesotho's potato industry.

"Our goal is to empower farmers who will carry forward best practices and support sustainable growth," she said.

With seminar attendees coming from districts such as Mole's Hoek, Quthing, Maseru, and Leribe, PPP aims to see the lead farmers contribute to Lesotho's food security and sustainable development goals.

One of the attendees, Mpokanyo Mabula, daughter of Farmers Pitso award winner Selemo Mabula, highlighted her ambition as a young woman in agriculture.

"Being a lead farmer is not just a title; it's an opportunity to inspire other young women to see farming as a career," Mpokanyo said adding that her father's influence fuelled her passion for potato farming, which she now hopes to pass on to the next generation.

Overcoming Challenges Through Leadership

In addition to farming techniques, the seminar covered leadership qualities, emphasising self-awareness, effective communication, and community engagement.

Mpokanyo shared insights from the training, noting, "A leader must first lead themselves with integrity and show readiness to guide others through challenges."

Another standout participant, Ticho Manare, demonstrated resilience and perseverance despite using a wheelchair. After losing mobility, Manare found purpose in potato farming, now employing workers and supporting multiple families through his enterprise.



"Farming is hard, but even harder with limited mobility," he said. "Yet, with passion and support, I am able to make a positive impact."

Building a Sustainable Future in Potato Production

The PPP is committed to advancing Lesotho's potato industry by promoting the adoption of best practices, pest management, and sustainable production techniques. By equipping lead farmers with these skills, PPP aims to position Lesotho as a competitive player in the agricultural market.

"As Lesotho's agricultural landscape evolves, PPP's lead farmers will play a critical role in bringing innovative farming methods to communities, bolstering food security, and inspiring a new generation to invest in agriculture," Ralitapole said.

Lesotho Should Invest in Digital Agriculture for Climate-Smart Farming

By Matsilo Nkabane



Agriculture is the cornerstone of Lesotho's small economy, contributing to better livelihoods and food security. In recent years, global economies have faced recession due to the impacts of the novel COVID-19 pandemic and worsening climate change challenges.

Lesotho is not exempted from these socio-economic issues, which contribute to poverty and hunger, leaving vulnerable groups such as youth, women, and children deeply affected.

According to the National Strategic Development Plan, the government of Lesotho aims to reverse the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation by formulating policies and frameworks that address these challenges.

Adopting climate-smart agriculture (CSA) in Lesotho is one of the best ways to respond to and mitigate the harsh effects of climate change. CSA encompasses productivity, adaptation/resilience, and mitigation, leading to food security and sustainable development. In short, climate-smart agriculture = Sustainable agriculture + Resilience - Emissions. Unlike in the past, when farmers in Lesotho would predict seasons through indigenous knowledge, climate change has gradually shifted these paradigms. Furthermore, both climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the digital divide in technology. The majority of the population in Lesotho still lacks basic services such as electricity and faces high data costs.

Combining climate-smart agriculture with ICT/digital technologies can positively impact farmers, making farming more sustainable and efficient in Lesotho. CSA can help smallholders increase productivity and resilience to climate change while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, implementing CSA can be challenging in many African countries, including Lesotho, which faces significant human development challenges such as a lack of infrastructure, a digital divide, and environmental vulnerabilities like land degradation, soil erosion, and water scarcity.

Lesotho needs to unlock the economic potential of CSA, which will create employment opportunities, enhance food security, improve rural livelihoods, and conserve biodiversity while promoting sustainable development by eradicating hunger and poverty.

In today's world of digital technologies, social media has proven to be one of the fastest and most effective ways to disseminate information and impart knowledge to the farming community. Therefore, it is important for farmers to harness digital technologies for effective communication of messages and ideas related to climate-smart agriculture. More effort is needed to develop robust educational awareness and training programmes and to build capacity for integrating technology in agriculture to mitigate climate change impacts across the country, especially for small-scale farmers and other relevant stakeholders. Training farmers to adopt ICT technologies such as smartphones and drones will not only mitigate the adverse effects of climate change but will also increase agricultural output.

The government of Lesotho should engage with relevant stakeholders in both the private and public sectors, civil society, and farmers while promoting CSA for sustainability. Mass media plays a crucial role in agriculture by disseminating information to farmers. Information can be easily spread to isolated areas through print media, radio, and television, providing necessary details related to farming, fertilizers, soil fertility, pests, and diseases.

Agric Players Demand Inclusivity in CAADP's Kampala Declaration

By Katleho Mohanoe

A coalition of entities and non-governmental organisations, including the Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF) and Lesotho's Hope of Rural Women's Assembly (HRWA), has united in urging for broader inclusivity in the upcoming CAADP (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme) strategy and action plan for 2026-2035.

African leaders have long prioritised agricultural transformation through CAADP, launched in 2003 and reaffirmed by the Malabo Declaration of 2014.

Currently, they are working toward the CAADP Kampala Declaration for 2026-2035, aiming to address critical challenges facing African agriculture.

On October 3-4, 2024, representatives from civil society, smallholder farmers, environmentalists, researchers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, women, youth, and faith-based institutions gathered in Kampala, Uganda, to review the draft CAADP strategy and action

plan.

Concerns were raised over the exclusion of agroecology and food sovereignty—principles central to Africa's small-scale producers and rural communities.

The joint coalition is advocating for a CAADP framework that truly reflects the interests of all farmers, civil society organisations, and marginalised voices.

The National Coordinator of ESAFF, 'Mathabiso Khechane, stressed the urgency of inclusive, agroecological strategies to address Africa's food insecurity, with 278 million Africans currently facing hunger.

Khechane noted that the failure of previous frameworks has underscored the need for approaches rooted in the unique needs of smallholder farmers and rural communities.

"Existing frameworks have fallen short. It's time for a radical shift towards inclusive, agroecological solutions that empower smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and fisherfolk," Khechane stated.

She pointed out promising aspects of the draft plan, such as promoting indigenous crops, African

heritage, farmer-managed seed systems, and a circular food economy.

However, she also highlighted discrepancies where key objectives like farmer-managed seed systems and climate-resilient indigenous seeds are present in the draft but omitted from the action plan.

In a collective statement, the coalition expressed alarm over the inclusion of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the increased reliance on synthetic inputs, which pose risks to biodiversity, food sovereignty, and the resilience of Africa's ecosystems.

The coalition called on the African Union Commission (AUC), member states, and all stakeholders to adopt a genuinely transformative vision for African agriculture—one that centres on the needs and aspirations of Africa's farmers and communities.

They stressed that the Kampala Declaration should serve as more than just another policy document. Instead, it must be a turning point that prioritizes people, communities, and the environment at the heart of Africa's agricultural and food systems.

Agric minister calls for global support

By Ntsoaki Motaung



During the recent World Food Forum 2024 in Rome, Italy, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition Thabo Mofosi urged the

secretariat to support the capacitation of stakeholders in strengthening and coordinating policies to tackle the food crisis in Lesotho.

Mofosi emphasised that Lesotho has prioritised the agriculture sector as a key area for investment in response to the ongoing food crisis.

"We seek support for policy development by inviting the secretariat to help capacitate all stakeholders in strengthening coordinated policies to address the food crisis in Lesotho," he stated.

He noted that from the 2020 to 2023 seasons, Lesotho faced significant challenges due to drought and floods, which severely damaged crops across many regions, resulting in the lowest yields since the 2018/2019 season.

"As a result, socio-economic shocks, including job losses, reduced opportunities for casual labour, rising costs, and high inflation, have significantly diminished household income and weakened the already fragile purchasing power of families," Mofosi explained.

In light of the current situation, the minister

stressed the need for an immediate response to mitigate the impacts and prevent the depletion of productive livelihoods, implementing strategies that alleviate malnutrition rates.

Mofosi highlighted findings from the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis, indicating that approximately 700,000 people are currently food insecure.

"A significant proportion of the rural population, particularly small-scale farmers and households dependent on agriculture, is most affected and is already experiencing food shortages. This is a direct result of decreased production and rising prices, which further exacerbate the risk of food insecurity and malnutrition," he stated.

He also pointed out that urban populations are severely impacted by price hikes, given that their primary food source is affected.

"Urban vulnerability is significantly heightened by high unemployment rates and already compromised purchasing power," he concluded.