

M40 million lost on ruminant imports annually



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Lesotho Loses M40 Million Annually on Hybrid Ruminant Imports



By Kabelo Masoabi

Lesotho's agricultural sector is taking bold steps to reduce its reliance on imported hybrid sheep and goats, which cost the country over M40 million annually.

This initiative, spearheaded by the Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association (LNWMGA), aims to boost local production of high-quality livestock, ensuring a sustainable supply of premium fibres and meat.

Mokoentchi Thinyane, LNWMGA Chairperson, highlighted the association's commitment to breeding superior livestock within Lesotho's borders.

"Our goal is to establish a self-reliant agricultural ecosystem where farmers no longer depend on imported breeds. This strategy will enhance the quality of our livestock, boost local economies, and empower farmers to thrive in a competitive global market."

To this end, LNWMGA has mobilised its 40,000 members, launching a specialised breeding program in Quthing.

The program, according to Thinyane, focuses on producing high-grade sheep and goats, renowned for their superior wool, mohair, and meat quality.

"These improved breeds are tailored to withstand our local conditions while producing yields that meet international standards," Thinyane noted.

Recognising the critical role of nutrition in livestock development, the association has dedicated significant resources to feed production.

"We manage 63 hectares in Tele and 48 hectares in Qomoqomong for cultivating specialised feeds through block farming," Thinyane explained.

This, he said, ensures that improved livestock breeds receive the proper nutrition necessary for optimal growth and productivity.

In a move to further support local farmers, LNWMGA has announced an upcoming auction in January. This event will showcase improved breeds of ewes and rams developed domestically.

"The auction aims to make high-quality livestock accessible to all farmers, including King Letsie III, who is an advocate for agricultural development in Lesotho."

The Minister of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, commended the efforts to enhance Lesotho's livestock industry, emphasising the significance of the newly inaugurated Sheep Start Centre in Quthing, which is poised to transform sheep and goat production in the country.

"The centre is equipped with cutting-edge technology, including machinery for long-term sperm storage and artificial insemination. To further strengthen this initiative, the ministry is acquiring a nitrogen plant to support the reproduction process, ultimately increasing wool and mohair production," the minister said.

"Wool and mohair are vital to our rural economy, contributing 60 percent of agricultural exports and supporting over 25 percent of the rural population," Mofosi said, stressing that Lesotho remains the world's second-largest producer of mohair and underscoring its critical role in the global market.

Despite its importance, the wool and mohair sector faces numerous challenges, including climate change, unreliable input supplies, overstocking, and poor land conditions, which continue to hamper production. These issues have led to fluctuating yields and limited competitive-

ness on the international stage.

To address these challenges, earlier this year, the United Nations' International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) signed a financing agreement with Lesotho for the Wool and Mohair Value-chain Competitiveness Project (WaMCoP).

The seven-year WaMCoP initiative aims to foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth by creating private-sector employment opportunities.

Special emphasis is placed on empowering underrepresented groups, with 50 percent of project participants being women and 35 percent being youth.

The project seeks to establish a responsible production certification system aligned with global market guidelines. This system will introduce traceability, allowing buyers to verify and identify wool and mohair produced under specific farming practices.

"Traceability will enhance Lesotho's global competitiveness and ensure that farmers receive fair compensation for their high-quality produce," said IFAD Country Director for Lesotho, Edith Kirumba.

Financial Support and Long-Term Impact

The WaMCoP project is backed by a diverse funding pool:

- IFAD: US\$20.2 million
- OPEC Fund: US\$20 million
- Global Environment Facility (GEF): US\$6 million
- Government of Lesotho: US\$8 million
- Private sector and project beneficiaries: US\$7.3 million

In total, the project boasts a US\$72 million budget, with an additional US\$11.8 million financing envelope for new initiatives.

One of WaMCoP's key objectives is to establish a revolving fund to help farmers access input supplies and in-kind loans. Additionally, a Wool and Mohair Fund and Enterprise will unite all value chain stakeholders, ensuring the sector's sustainability and governance.

A Sustainable Future for Lesotho's Farmers

As Lesotho continues to strengthen its wool and mohair industry, local farmers stand to benefit from improved livestock breeds, better market access, and increased incomes. The combined efforts of LNWMGA, the government, and international partners like IFAD signal a brighter future for Lesotho's agricultural sector.

"Through these initiatives, we aim to not only sustain our ranking as a leading mohair producer but also ensure that our farmers enjoy the full benefits of their hard work," concluded Thinyane.

This ambitious push for self-reliance and innovation marks a turning point for Lesotho, demonstrating that local farmers can thrive on both domestic and international fronts with the right support and vision.

Lesotho Takes on Co-Chairmanship in Global Nutrition Initiative

By Lerato Matheka

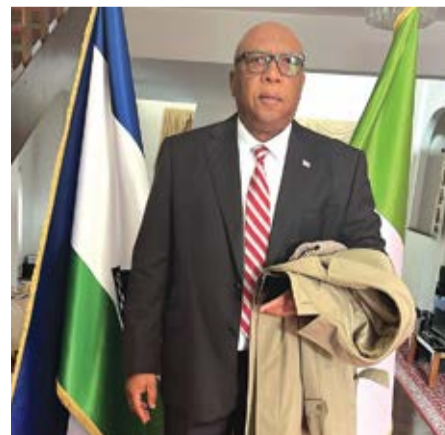
Lesotho's commitment to combating global malnutrition has taken a significant step forward as His Excellency Thesele Maseribane, Lesotho's Ambassador to Italy, accepted the co-chairmanship of the Rome-Based Agencies' (RBA) Group of Friends of Nutrition.

This prestigious position, shared with Switzerland, marks a critical moment for Lesotho as it positions itself as a global leader in nutrition advocacy.

Speaking to a distinguished audience that included Directors of the RBA, ambassadors, and representatives from member states, Maseribane expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to lead alongside Switzerland.

He extended special thanks to the United Kingdom and the United States, whose previous leadership laid the foundation for addressing global nutrition challenges.

"Nutrition is more than just a health issue; it is a matter of dignity, equity, and justice for



Thesele Maseribane, Lesotho's Ambassador in Italy

every child. Our King, His Majesty King Letsie III, has consistently demonstrated Lesotho's dedication to this cause through his role as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's Goodwill Ambassador for Nutrition."

King Letsie III's tireless advocacy has been instrumental in Lesotho's national approach to improving nutrition, Maseribane remarked.

"His Majesty's work reflects our national dedication to ensuring that every child, regardless of their circumstances, has access to the nutrition they need to thrive."

He acknowledged the invaluable leadership of the United Kingdom and the United States, who previously held the co-chairmanship.

"I extend our heartfelt gratitude to our predecessors, the United Kingdom and the United States, for their exemplary leadership. Their commitment to advancing this critical agenda has laid a strong foundation for us to build upon with renewed vigour and resolve."

As Lesotho and Switzerland embark on their co-chairmanship, the ambassador outlined the Group of Friends of Nutrition's key strategies to address global malnutrition.

He emphasised the importance of collaboration between governments, the private sector, and civil society to create lasting solutions.

"Without ad- **Continues Page in 5**



**Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP II)
Matching Grant Programme**

Call for Applications

Background: The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security of Lesotho, with the support of the World Bank has established within the SADP II a Matching Grants Programme (MGP) to support investment by small and medium agriculture-related businesses, farmers, farmer groups and cooperatives and rural youth seeking to increase climate resilience, raise productivity, improve commercialization and increase production and consumption of high nutrition food products.

Priorities: The MGP invites applications for investment projects, with a maximum duration of one year and 4 months, which focus on the adoption and use of appropriate technologies and business initiatives by smallholder farmers and small and medium-scale private agri-business enterprises in Lesotho. These investments should: increase climate resilience, raise farm productivity and improve commercialization among smallholder farmers; increase competitiveness and profitability, increase value-added to local products among agri-business enterprises and increase market opportunities for smallholder farmers; and increase the production, consumption and availability of high nutrition food products. Eligible investments include: (i) improved seed and seedling varieties for crops, vegetables and fruit; (ii) improved livestock breeds; (iii) shade nets, tunnel houses, drip irrigation, water storage equipment, boreholes and pumps; (iv) equipment for cultivation, harvesting and weed and pest control; (v) product collection, storage, post-harvest handling, processing, grading/sorting, marketing, packaging, labeling, brand development, presentation and promotion of agricultural products; (vi) improvement of product quality and standards, food safety management practices and product certification; (vii) diversification and introduction of high value-added and niche products; (viii) better linkages and development of contractual arrangements among smallholder farmers, processors, traders and service providers; (ix) marketing intelligence including information, test marketing and studies when associated with concrete actions for specific products; and (x) improvement of accessibility by small farmers to various services and input supply. Sectors could include meat production, poultry (broiler), fruits and vegetables, fish production, and products and activities such as mushrooms, aromatic and medicinal herbs and organic products. This list is not exhaustive and other innovative topics may be considered.

Grant financing: Two grants windows will be available to applicants: (i) grants for smallholder farmers and farmer groups to support investment in climate smart agricultural technology and other productivity enhancing technology up to a maximum of \$US 30,000; (ii) grants for small and medium size agri-businesses of \$US 30,000 to \$US 100,000, to support investment in value added activities including small-scale processing and marketing as well as provision of inputs and services.

Eligible Applicants: Applicants with farms and/or agri-business activities operating in all ten districts of Lesotho are eligible for grants. Eligible applicants include a) farmers or farm groups; b) registered cooperatives or associations; c) registered small and medium size agri-businesses; d) registered local, district and national associations and cooperatives; e) sub-groups of registered associations and cooperatives; rural youth; and f) partnerships between the above categories and registered processing/trading businesses in Lesotho. Smallholder farmers, members of farm households, rural youth and small and medium-scale

agri-business enterprises will receive priority for grant support but non-farm applicants with demonstrated farming experience and a strong knowledge of the proposed investment will also be considered. Eligible applicants may also submit joint proposals up to the maximum grant stipulated above. Youth under 35 and women are particularly encouraged to apply. Employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food security are not eligible.

Partnership with Service Providers: The potential applicants will be required to form partnerships with a qualified service provider(s). The service provider(s) will (i) provide technical and financial assistance and advice to the applicant to develop the business idea and prepare the application, (ii) work with the applicant to clarify different technical and financial aspects of the activity and prepare an activity implementation plan; (iii) provide technical and financial assistance to the applicant during project implementation and provide the products and services to be delivered according to an agreed schedule; (iv) support the applicant in managing grant funds, including keeping the necessary accounts and collecting contributions from beneficiaries; (v) supervise the inputs of beneficiaries/applicants and sub-contract technical assistance as necessary; (vi) monitor the progress of activities; (vii) support the applicant in the preparation and submission of the required financial and technical reports. Eligible service providers include a wide range of specialists engaged and already trained by SADP on development of the proposals and list available at SADP offices in each district. Employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security are not eligible to work as Service Providers. Service providers will be contracted directly by the applicants, with their responsibilities and rights clearly spelled out in the service contract, and their services would be funded through the grant.

Service Providers will need to show that they have successfully completed a training program on the preparation and technical and financial analysis of investment projects approved by the PMU or the MGC.

Beneficiary contribution: In all cases successful applicants will be required to make a co-finance contribution in cash to engender ownership and demonstrate commitment. The larger grants for agri-business enterprises will also be conditional on their willingness and ability to generate employment and build effective supply agreements with smallholder producers. Co-finance cash contributions will vary according to the grant sub-program as follows: (i) grants for smallholder farmers and farmer groups to support investment in climate smart agricultural technology and other productivity and post-harvest enhancing technologies to a maximum of \$US 30,000 will require a 20% co-finance contribution; (ii) Agri-business grants for registered agriculture-oriented and privately-owned enterprises, associations and cooperatives will receive a grant of \$30 000 to \$100 000 : grants in this program will require a 30% co-finance contribution.

Service providers may also contribute to the co-finance. The participation and contribution from different partners should be confirmed by written agreement reached between the principal applicant, the service provider and/or other partners.

Eligible Expenditures under Grant: Of the grant amount, the indicative types of financial support are: a) Provision of technical assistance by the service providers: This category may not be more than 20% of the grant amount up to a maximum of US\$ 3,000 equivalent, to be spent as an honorarium to cover

the costs of staff, travel, allowances and overheads of the service provider(s). Although not a requirement, co-financing proposals from the service providers (especially in the case of NGOs and other projects and various development programs serving as service providers and wanting to co-finance the project) could be sought, provided they are made in cash.

b) Investment Acquisition, Installation and Operation: This category must comprise at least 60% of the grant amount and may include costs associated with the purchase of improved seedling and livestock varieties; the purchase and installation of equipment for cultivation, harvesting, post-harvest handling, processing, preservation, storage, grading, packaging etc; the construction of necessary buildings for livestock production, storage, processing, marketing; the purchase and installation of tunnel houses, shade nets, irrigation equipment, pumps, boreholes, tanks etc; product development; alignment with national and international food and safety standards; and marketing campaigns. Where the investor is making substantial physical investments, the costs of land surveys will be covered for smallholder farmers in order to ensure that they have secure land ownership as a means to secure the benefits of investment. Agri-businesses will not be eligible for support for land surveys. Land survey costs may not be more than 10% of the grant amount, up to a maximum of \$US 2000 equivalent. The costs of land purchase, land lease or land rental will not be covered for any grants.

Furthermore, the project will consider applications which show that the applicant has part of infrastructure and needs to have a full package. As such, a grant window will start from a minimum M200 000.00 to up to the highest value of M1 500 000.00.

Non-Eligible Expenditures under Grant: The following items would not be covered out of the grant amount: (a) Salaries or payment for works and services provided to the project by the grant applicants or its members; b) any expenditures made prior to the date of signature of the Grant Agreement or after closure date of the project; c) purchase, rent or leasing of land and existing buildings; d) any expenditure related to operating costs, which are expected to be the direct responsibility of the applicant; e) any expenditure made in territories of any country that is not a member of the World Bank for goods produced in or services supplied from such countries; f) any expenditure with a hazardous impact on the environment.

Deadline and Place for Submission of Applications: The deadline for submission of applications is not later than **30th December 2024 at 4:30 p.m. Applications should be submitted in four copies (one original plus three photocopies) and delivered by hand at the office of the SADP II located in Districts Agricultural Offices in all the ten districts. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.**

Evaluation of the Applications: All applications received within the deadline will be screened by the MGP Secretariat for compliance with the above rules. The successful applications will then be evaluated by specialized Technical and Financial Reviewers and submitted to the MGC for approval. The list of successful applicants will be widely published in newspapers and through public posting at the MGP Secretariat's office. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed by letter and their original project documents could be returned to them on request.

Application Documentation: The official application forms and further necessary information on drawing up the application may be obtained from the Service Providers who will lead the development of the proposals in each district.



Shepherding a Dream, Building a Legacy



By Lerato Matheka

Lesotho's wool and mohair industry has long been a cornerstone of its economy, sustaining rural livelihoods for generations. The country is one of the world's largest mohair producers, a luxury fibre prized globally for its softness and durability.

Wool and mohair contribute significantly to Lesotho's agricultural exports and serve as vital income sources for thousands of smallholder farmers. However, this industry has faced persistent challenges, including land degradation, climate change, and limited market access.

Despite these obstacles, passionate farmers like Tšele Mooshela have found ways to thrive, ensuring the sector remains a beacon of hope for many Basotho.

For Tšele Mooshela, sheep farming is more than just a livelihood—it's a legacy.

Born and bred in the Thaba-Tseka district, his journey into ram breeding began in 2004, inspired by a visit to the Maseru Wool and Mohair District Show two years earlier.

That day, he witnessed Basotho farmers competing and excelling in sheep rearing, but what caught his attention the most were the prizes awarded to winners.

"At that moment, a seed was planted in me. Growing up in a farming family, I knew the basics of taking care of livestock, but that event opened my eyes to the potential of sheep farming as a serious business."

Mooshela's early farming experience mirrors that of many Basotho boys. After school and during holidays, he herded his father's sheep and cattle.

"The income from wool and mohair sustained our family, paying for school fees, clothes, and household essentials. This upbringing cemented my belief in the transformative power of agriculture," he recounts.

Determined to carve his own path, Mooshela took his first step toward independence by constructing a milling facility in 2003.

His aim was to process animal feed, a resource he knew would be crucial for sustaining his livestock. In 2004, he purchased his first 10 sheep and a ram. However, disaster struck when thieves stole the ram and the livestock already available on the night the ram arrived.

"It was a huge setback, but luckily the 10 sheep had not yet arrived. That incident didn't kill my dream; if anything, it made me more determined. I started this journey smarter." With resilience, Mooshela embarked on a path that would later position him as a beacon of hope.

In 2021, Mooshela's dedication caught the attention of the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP), which awarded him a M400,000 grant.

This funding marked a turning point in his farming journey, allowing him to shift from basic rearing to professional breeding.

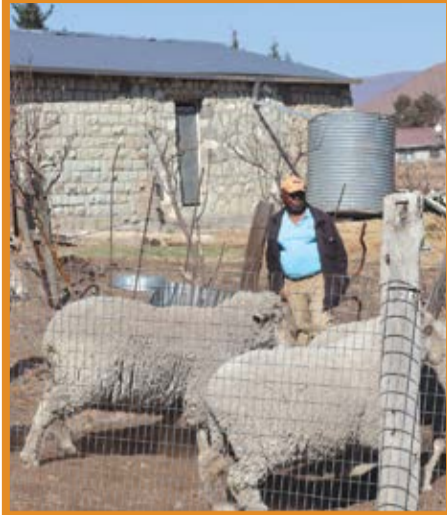
"Through the grant, I purchased 40 more sheep and a ram. This was the beginning of a pure breeding operation."

He added, "To maintain the quality and standard of what I was starting, I sold all my initial flock and focused entirely on the pure breeds."

With a second batch of funding, he further expanded his flock by acquiring 20 additional sheep.

Today, Mooshela's farm is a model of quality production, supplying rams to other farmers and earning accolades, including first place at the 2024 National Wool and Mohair Show.

Despite the launch of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded Wool



and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP) in 2015, which concluded in 2023 with the aim of enhancing the resilience, productivity, and income of smallholder wool and mohair farmers—particularly in Lesotho's highland areas—Mooshela decries the inadequate income derived from the quality wool they produce due to faulty systems.

WAMPP sought to mitigate the effects of climate change, improve land management practices, and bolster the sector's marketability, making wool and mohair a reliable and sustainable source of income for Lesotho's rural population. However, the farmer notes that the wool shearing combined system undermines their efforts.

"As much as we produce top-quality wool, we don't get what we deserve. Our shearing system doesn't differentiate or package our raw wool based on quality," he stated.

With a total project cost of US\$39.7 million, IFAD reported that WAMPP had left a lasting impact on Lesotho's agricultural landscape, and its lessons could inform future initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable and inclusive growth in the wool and mohair industry. However, over the eight years of the project's duration, Mooshela has expressed frustrations, citing a lack of policies or legal motivation that undermine their drive.

"We all go to the same shearing shed as different farmers, producing and rearing various types of sheep. We have our livestock shed, yet all the wool is packed together as a collective unit, regardless of our different quality products. This not only affects the income we make and demotivates us, but it also discourages our children from taking this line of business seriously," he said.

The wool and mohair industry holds significant importance in Lesotho, not only as a major export commodity but also as a critical source of livelihood for rural farmers.

Lesotho is among the world's largest producers of mohair, a highly sought-after luxury fibre used in the textile industry.

In 2014, wool and mohair collectively contributed approximately 6.3% to the country's total exports, making it a vital contributor to the national economy. The industry provides raw materials for Lesotho's thriving textile sector, representing 43.4% of exports.

However, the industry has faced several challenges over the years, including overgrazing and rangeland degradation, coupled with weak rangeland management and an inefficient value chain. These issues have led to suboptimal production and lower market returns for farmers.

Mooshela, whose livestock has exponentially grown since working with the SADP, noted that another persistent challenge to his growth is land scarcity.

Expanding his flock requires more grazing land and feed crops, but limited access to land constrains his ambitions.

"I can only do so much, but if the law does not permit it, all my efforts will be limited to being a mere promising ram breeder," he says.

He adds that climate change further exacerbates his challenges, affecting both livestock health and crop yields. He urges the government to consider irrigation projects that would benefit both livestock and crop farmers.

According to IFAD, while working to improve the wool and mohair industry in Lesotho, WAMPP faced several challenges during its implementation.

"One of the most significant threats was land degradation, which persisted in some areas despite the project's efforts to promote sustainable grazing



practices. In some cases, farmers, encouraged by the improved productivity of their livestock, increased herd sizes, leading to further strain on already degraded rangelands. This highlights the need for continued education and enforcement of sustainable grazing practices," the report states.

While Mooshela's rams are valued for their superior genetics, selling them at fair prices remains a challenge.

He prices his rams at M20,000 or higher, depending on their lineage and breeding costs. However, many farmers resist paying premium prices, often haggling for as little as M5,000.

"The market isn't prepared to pay for quality. I once bought a purebred ram for M50,000, yet local buyers expect to pay far less. This inconsistency stifles the growth and sustainability of our operations. I refuse to sell my breeds for less, and I look forward to the day farmers see the value of commercialization."

To offset his challenges, Mooshela and his family have diversified their income streams, which include running a restaurant that occasionally benefits from the farm's sheep as a source of meat.

This diversification provides a financial cushion, especially during tough farming seasons.

Mooshela believes that education and preparation are critical for success in sheep farming. "The most vital thing is ensuring you have a reliable source of feed. Without that, sustaining livestock is nearly impossible."

He also emphasises the importance of strategic planning and market research.

"Farmers need to immerse themselves in learning and adapt to changing conditions. This line of work is not for the faint-hearted, but it can be rewarding if done right."

Mooshela admits that the current state of the wool and mohair industry in Lesotho can be disheartening.

"We're encouraged to evolve and improve our production, yet the market systems and policies haven't evolved to support us," he notes.

His biggest frustration lies in the lack of access to water, which hinders both livestock and crop production. "If only there were a project to help irrigate water from rivers to our farms," he muses. "It would solve so many problems."

Though the journey is fraught with obstacles, Mooshela remains optimistic about the potential of ram breeding. He hopes for systemic improvements, including better market structures, fair pricing, and policies that support farmers.

"Being a ram breeder is a lucrative business. With the right support and determination, it's a path worth pursuing. My advice to young farmers is simple: stay focused, learn continuously, and never give up on your dreams."

The road to an improved wool and mohair industry continues, with IFAD approving a new project: the Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project (WaMCoP) in 2023. This project is expected to build on the successes of WAMPP.

WaMCoP aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the wool and mohair sector, focusing on private sector-led job creation.

The project will continue to support smallholder farmers by improving their access to markets, enhancing value chain efficiency, and fostering climate resilience.

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M200.00 (NO ATTIRE & NON MEMBERS)

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SADP II Drives Agricultural Transformation Through Business Support



By Kabelo Masoabi

The Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II) continues to revolutionise Lesotho's agricultural sector by equipping small-scale farmers with the tools and skills they need to thrive.

With the support of over 100 business service providers, SADP II is helping farmers create viable business proposals and adopt innovative practices to boost productivity and resilience.

Funded by the World Bank, the Government of Japan, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), SADP II aims to promote the adoption of climate-smart agricultural technologies, increase commercialisation, and improve dietary diversity.

These objectives align with the project's broader goal of transforming subsistence farming into a more profitable and sustainable enterprise.

SADP II launched its third and final round of grant funding a fortnight ago, inviting applications

from small-scale farmers across Lesotho.

The Matching Grants Program is a central component of the project designed to support small and medium-sized agricultural businesses, farmer associations, and cooperatives in their efforts to commercialise operations.

Tankiso Mothae, SADP II Grants Officer, explained the different categories of grants available:

Large Grants for Lead Firms: Up to M1.5 million

Medium Grants for General Farmers: Up to M500,000

Youth Grants: Up to M300,000

Mothae explained that applicants are required to contribute at least 30% of the requested amount, while SADP II covers the remaining 70%.

"This co-financing model ensures that farmers have a vested interest in the success of their projects. It also encourages financial discipline and ownership," he stressed.

He further emphasised that applicants must have relevant experience in agriculture and adhere to the specified grant limits.

"These grants are meant to enhance productivity and market access, empowering farmers to achieve long-term success," he added.

Comprehensive Support from Service Providers

To ensure farmers maximise the benefits of these grants, SADP II has engaged and trained more than 100 business service providers.

These providers play a crucial role in guiding farmers through the application and implementation processes.

"The service providers help applicants refine their business ideas, prepare detailed applications, and develop implementation plans. Their support extends to managing grant funds, monitoring project progress, and ensuring compliance with financial and technical reporting requirements."

During a recent media briefing held in Pitseng, Leribe, Mothae highlighted the importance of these providers in bridging the knowledge gap for many farmers.

"Their expertise ensures that farmers adopt best practices, improve the quality of their products, and build resilience against climate challenges," he said.

SADP II prioritises investments in areas that have the potential to drive significant growth and resilience in Lesotho's agricultural sector. The following are some of the key focus areas:

Protected Agriculture and Vegetable Production
Farmers are encouraged to use shade nets and greenhouses to protect crops from harsh weather conditions and pests.

Livestock Production

This includes broiler and egg production, as well as ram and buck breeding programs aimed at improving livestock quality and productivity.

Post-Harvest Handling and Processing

Investments in storage facilities, grading, packaging, and branding are crucial for reducing post-harvest losses and enhancing the marketability of agricultural products.

Food Safety and Certification

SADP II supports initiatives that improve product quality and align with food safety standards, enabling farmers to access new and lucrative markets.

Value Addition and Diversification

Farmers are encouraged to explore niche products and high-value crops to diversify their income streams and mitigate risks associated with market fluctuations.

Success Stories: Transforming Lives Through Agriculture

One of SADP II's notable success stories is that of Malefetsane Makhabane, a beekeeper from Moteng in the Butha-Buthe district. Malefetsane's journey into beekeeping began modestly in 2018 with just two bee boxes. However, his business took a transformative turn after receiving support from SADP II.

"The program provided me with additional bee boxes, advanced equipment, and essential skills. Today, I manage over 50 bee boxes and produce around 500 litres of high-quality honey annually."

What sets Malefetsane's honey apart is its chemical-free production process. This commitment to quality has not only enhanced his product's appeal but also opened doors to potential international markets.

"Our goal is to diversify into other honey-related

products and expand our reach globally," he said.

Beyond his personal success, Malefetsane's business has created jobs for five local residents, significantly improving their livelihoods.

Addressing Sector Challenges

Despite the progress, Lesotho's agricultural sector faces several challenges and Mothae noted that subsistence farming remains prevalent, with limited access to modern farming techniques and weak extension services.

"These issues contribute to low production levels and hinder commercialisation efforts," he said.

"SADP II seeks to address these challenges by providing farmers with the tools and knowledge needed to transition from subsistence to commercial farming. The project also emphasises climate resilience, recognising that changing weather patterns pose a significant threat to agriculture."

"By adopting climate-smart practices, farmers can protect their crops and livestock against extreme weather conditions, ensuring sustainable production," Mothae explained.

Long-Term Impact and Future Prospects

SADP II's Matching Grants Program is set to conclude in 2026, marking the end of a transformative era for Lesotho's agricultural sector. Since its inception, the program has supported 54 general grants in the first round, 173 in the second, 63 youth grants, and six lead firm grants.

"The goal for this third round is to increase the number of beneficiaries and solidify the program's impact," Mothae said.

The project's comprehensive approach—combining financial support, technical assistance, and capacity building—has laid a strong foundation for sustainable growth. By the time the program concludes, it aims to have created a more resilient, competitive, and inclusive agricultural sector.

Encouraging Participation

Mothae urged farmers to take full advantage of the opportunities offered through SADP II. "This is the final chance to benefit from the program, and we encourage all eligible farmers to apply," he said.

He also highlighted the broader benefits of the program, which include improved food security, reduced reliance on imports, increased exports, job creation, and enhanced rural incomes.

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equating nutrition, children's potential is stunted, and their development is compromised. This affects not just individual lives but the entire fabric of our nations. To address these challenges, we must engage our governments at all levels to commit to tangible actions that will improve access to nutritious food for children."

Lesotho's co-chairmanship will focus on fostering collaboration among RBA member states to promote sustainable and inclusive nutrition policies.

Maseribane outlined several key strategies that will guide the Group of Friends of Nutrition during Lesotho's tenure:

Government Engagement and Policy Support, Strengthening Agriculture Systems, Advocacy for Nutrition school meals, Public-Private Partnerships, Data-Driven monitoring and Accountability.

He emphasised the importance of integrating nutrition into public health and education policies citing, to create a framework that ensures access to affordable and nutritious food for every child, governments need to prioritise nutrition in their national agendas.

Recognising the critical role of agriculture in achieving nutritional outcomes, Maseribane underscored the need for sustainable farming practices. Highlighting the importance of empowering smallholder farmers, particularly women, to cultivate diverse crops and help communities build resilience and improve dietary diversity.

The ambassador noted the dual role of school meal programs in combating malnutrition and obesity. He called for the implementation of nutritional standards in schools pointing out that every child deserves the foundation for both learning and health.

The Broader Context: Nutrition in Crisis

Globally, malnutrition remains a significant challenge. According to recent reports, between 713 and 757 million people faced hunger in

2023, while 2.8 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2022.

Among children under five, 148.1 million were stunted, 45 million were wasted, and 37 million were overweight.

These alarming statistics highlight the urgency of addressing malnutrition, not only to save lives but also to break intergenerational cycles of poverty. Studies show that every dollar invested in nutrition yields a return of \$23, underscoring its role in fostering sustainable development.

Lesotho's National Commitment

Lesotho's leadership in the Group of Friends of Nutrition aligns with its national strategies to combat food insecurity. His Majesty King Letsie III has been a vocal advocate for nutrition, both locally and globally. Under his guidance, Lesotho has implemented programs aimed at improving food diversity, enhancing agricultural practices, and strengthening school meal initiatives.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, reiterated the government's commitment to these efforts.

"Through initiatives like the Lesotho Highlands Water Project and the Wool and Mohair Value-chain Competitiveness Project, we are addressing both the agricultural and nutritional needs of our people," Mofosi said.

Towards a Sustainable Future

The RBA's Group of Friends of Nutrition is set to play a pivotal role in achieving global nutrition targets. By fostering cross-agency collaboration and promoting innovative solutions, the group aims to create a world where no child suffers from malnutrition.

"Lesotho's co-chairmanship is a testament to our nation's dedication to this cause, and together with Switzerland and the broader RBA community, we will work tirelessly to ensure every child has access to the nutrition they need to thrive," Maseribane said.

As the Group of Friends of Nutrition embarks on its new chapter under Lesotho and Switzerland's leadership, the vision is clear: a world where nutrition is not a privilege but a fundamental right for all.

GRATITUDE

We are Greatful for your Unweaving support that you've shown us for almost a 18 months by far.



PPP Forges Dominance in Lesotho's Potato Production

By Lerato Matheka

Through a shared vision of innovation, sustainability, and resilience, the Potato Production Platform (PPP) is transforming the potato into a cornerstone of agricultural development. It aims to elevate the humble potato from just an agricultural product to a symbol of collaboration and ambition.

Over 100 farmers have united under the Potato Production Platform, a dynamic association dedicated to establishing Lesotho as a global leader in potato farming.

Formed in August 2023, PPP is committed to building a self-sustaining potato sector in Lesotho. This commitment was the focal point of its inaugural event, the Potato Summer Camp, where members gathered to reflect on their progress and strategize for the future.

The event brought together farmers, government representatives, and agricultural experts, creating a platform for dialogue and planning.

For the first time, members of PPP engaged directly with Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition Minister Thabo Mofosi, who attended the camp to pledge his ministry's support for the association.

In his address, Minister Mofosi applauded PPP for its collective efforts and highlighted the association's role in advancing Lesotho's agricultural goals.

"You have given me hope, especially now at a time when Lesotho is working to position potatoes as its product of choice under the FAO's One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) project. PPP is setting an example for collaboration and innovation."

Lesotho has selected potatoes as a Special Agricultural Product (SAP) under the multinational programme known as the One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) Initiative. Potatoes were chosen as SAPs based on Lesotho's competitive advantages, which include altitude, good quality soils, and adequate water for the production of this crop.

The Minister emphasised the funding opportunities available through the OCOP project, which supports investments in machinery, processing technology, and export readiness.

He assured PPP members that their collective structure would allow the Ministry to prioritise them for input disbursement and training opportunities.

However, Minister Mofosi did not shy away from acknowledging challenges.

He apologised for past delays in providing inputs and urged PPP to explore seed breeding as a means of achieving self-sufficiency.

"Lesotho needs a seed variety suited to our climate, and when we can produce our own seeds, self-reliance is guaranteed."

One of the most inspiring moments of the camp was the recognition of young Rorisang Thamae, a budding farmer whose passion for agriculture stole the show. Initially invited to entertain, Rorisang's dedication to farming captured the Minister's attention.

Minister Mofosi pledged to personally support her journey by providing land, inputs, and machinery.

"Young people need motivation to appreciate and engage in agriculture. I will walk this journey with her and ensure her produce reaches the market," the Minister said.

A significant segment of the event focused on the consumption and importation of potatoes in Lesotho, with insights provided by Boka Ts'abo from the Ministry of Agriculture's marketing department.

According to Ts'abo, Lesotho remains heavily reliant on potato imports, with the following figures revealing the extent of the challenge:

- From January to March 2023: 70,719 bags valued at M2.6 million were imported.
- From April to June 2023: 97,793 bags valued at M3.8 million were imported.
- From July to September 2023: 83,178 bags valued at M3.9 million were imported.
- From October to December 2023: 73,979



bags valued at M9.6 million were imported.

"In total, Lesotho imported 325,669 bags of potatoes in 2023, valued at M19.9 million. Meanwhile, local production fell significantly short, with only 66 tonnes produced in 2023. Most of this production occurred between May and June, leaving gaps in supply for the rest of the year," Ts'abo said.

Ts'abo highlighted the need for more consistent production and better coordination among farmers. "The task is enormous, but the opportunity to reduce reliance on imports and retain millions within our economy is even greater."

PPP members and experts at the event outlined several challenges facing potato production in Lesotho, including:

- Access to Inputs: Delayed disbursement of fertilizers, seeds, and machinery.
- Land Ownership: Farmers struggle to secure and protect arable land for large-scale production.
- Climate Change: Unpredictable weather patterns are impacting crop yields.
- Data Deficiency: Limited access to accurate data on production and consumption hampers planning and market development.
- Lack of Seed Production: The absence of local seed breeding initiatives forces reliance on imported seeds.

Ts'abo noted that while the ministry tries to help farmers address challenges, issues regarding access to land and data collection remain problematic.

Despite these challenges, the PPP remains optimistic. Chairperson Nthethe Ralitapole highlighted the importance of the Potato Summer Camp in fostering dialogue and building momentum for the future.

"This event was about introspection and planning," Ralitapole said. "We celebrated our achievements, identified opportunities, and engaged directly with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Min-



ister's endorsement has motivated us to aim even higher."

Ralitapole also emphasised the need for stronger policies to address land access issues and protect farmers' investments. "We are confident that with the government's support, we will see a major shift in potato production by next year," he added.

The event featured practical advice from experts, including Louis Schutte of Bayagrow, a South African company specializing in pesticides. Schutte emphasised the importance of regular field inspections to

ensure crop health, describing farmers' physical presence in their fields as the "best pesticide."

With Lesotho selecting potatoes as its product of choice under the OCOP initiative, significant opportunities lie ahead. The project challenges Lesotho to not only meet domestic demand but also to produce for international markets.

Ts'abo outlined potential areas for growth, including:

- Agro-Processing: Developing food and by-products from potatoes.
- Seed Multiplication: Establishing seed breeding programs to ensure a steady supply of high-quality seeds.
- Market Expansion: Strengthening value chains to access regional and international markets.

As the camp concluded with a farm tour and bonfire discussions on next steps, the sense of unity and purpose among PPP members was palpable. Minister Mofosi urged the association to continue working collectively and promised that his Ministry would prioritise policies and resources to support their efforts.

"The journey has just begun," Mofosi said. "Together, we can transform Lesotho's potato sector into a global success story."

For PPP, the Potato Summer Camp was not just an event—it was a milestone. With strong leadership, government support, and a clear vision, the association is poised to lead Lesotho toward a future of agricultural excellence and self-reliance.



Youth Should Drive Climate Action in Lesotho



By Matsilo Nkabane

Climate change affects everyone, but the most vulnerable groups—such as women, children, youth, and the disabled—are disproportionately impacted and often excluded from decision-making processes that influence their daily lives.

Lesotho, as one of the developing countries, faces severe challenges due to the harsh impacts of climate change. The nation grapples with escalating environmental problems that hinder overall development. Currently, the top issues confronting Lesotho's youth include unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity, all of which are exacerbated by climate change.

Lesotho's youth are energetic, talented, and hold a promising future, yet they lack the empowerment needed to influence decisions that impact them. Prioritising quality education for young people is a national asset that should be central to Lesotho's development and transformation. Young individuals are inherently innovative and capable of generating sustainable solutions that are crucial for job creation, ultimately leading to a prosperous economy and improved livelihoods.

As environmental challenges, poverty, and food insecurity escalate, there is an urgent need to strengthen our economic capacity. Unlocking the potential of Lesotho's young population to drive sustainable and inclusive growth is essential.

Young people should not be perceived merely as victims of climate change; they are vital partners in developing sustainable solutions. They must be empowered, trained, and equipped with knowledge about climate solutions, including sustainable farming practices and renewable energy, as well as strategies for job creation that will benefit Lesotho in the long term. The government must facilitate an enabling environment that allows youth to thrive; neglecting their involvement in the development agenda turns them into a liability for the nation.

To accelerate climate action, it is crucial to involve young people and equip them with strategies that enhance climate resilience. While they are the drivers of change, they are often sidelined in critical discussions that affect their lives.

It is encouraging to see that young people in Lesotho are already spearheading community-based initiatives to enhance resilience against climate change. Projects focused on reforestation, waste management, and sustainable water practices should receive funding and prioritisation to effectively address local environmental issues. Additionally, young people must be given more significant roles in combating climate change at both national and international levels.

Defeating climate change requires coordinated efforts from all stakeholders. By fostering inclusivity, we can mitigate climate change and create a sustainable future. The new generation holds the power to transform the planet through their actions.

The future of Lesotho and the world rests in the hands of its youth.



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.





His Majesty Calls for Sustainable Irrigation Practices



By Kabelo Masoabi

Lesotho's agricultural future hinges on effective water management, says His Majesty King Letsie III. Speaking at this year's World Food Day celebration in Quthing, the King stressed the urgency of implementing sustainable irrigation systems to boost agricultural productivity and enhance food security.

His Majesty underscored that Lesotho, despite being rich in water resources, faces significant challenges in harnessing this potential to support farming.

He urged the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, to address water scarcity issues that continue to undermine agricultural output.

"We need to explore ways to bring water closer to farmers. It's impractical to encourage farming without guaranteeing access to water. I understand your ministry has an irrigation policy, but it requires improvement and effective implementation. It needs to be carried out to benefit these farmers," the King said.

His Majesty highlighted the growing impact of climate change on Lesotho's agricultural landscape, pointing to extreme weather events such as heavy rains, strong winds, and prolonged droughts, which have become increasingly common and pose severe threats to farming communities.

"These adverse conditions challenge the livelihoods of our farmers and compromise the food security of our nation. We must adopt resilient farming practices and improve water management systems to safeguard agricultural productivity."

Farmers echoed the King's concerns. Manyakallo Phalima, a crop farmer from Qomoqomong, emphasised the critical role water plays in agriculture.

"Water is essential for irrigating crops, managing livestock, and maintaining farm operations. However, with increasing scarcity and environmental challenges, achieving optimal yields has become more difficult," she said.

A recent study by the World Bank, titled "Lesotho Water Scarcity and Climate Assessment," paints a complex picture of water management in Lesotho. Despite its water-rich highlands, the country remains vulnerable to recurring floods and droughts.

Lesotho's water sector contributes approximately 10% to its gross domestic product (GDP), driven in part by the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), which has attracted over

US\$3 billion in investments and generated nearly US\$800 million in revenue since 1996.

"Lesotho's challenge lies in balancing water exports with domestic needs," said Marcus Wishart, Senior Water Resources Management Specialist at the World Bank. He added that to achieve its developmental goals, Lesotho must adopt an integrated, long-term approach to water management and climate adaptation.

The World Bank study highlights several critical investments and strategies to improve water security and agricultural resilience:

Integrated Water Infrastructure: Targeted investments in water infrastructure could enhance irrigation potential, boost food security, and support hydropower production without compromising regional water transfers.

Irrigation Expansion: Expanding irrigation by 12,000 hectares could significantly increase crop yields, adding between 70,000 and over 100,000 tonnes annually of maize, beans, peas, sorghum, and wheat. This would represent a 50% yield increase under favourable climate scenarios.

Resilient Water Supply Schemes: Developing interconnections between the LHWP and the Lesotho Bulk Water Supply Scheme (LBWSS) could enhance national water resilience and ensure a balanced allocation for domestic, industrial, and agricultural use.

The report underscores that agriculture in Lesotho is predominantly rain-fed, making it highly susceptible to climate variability. Expanding irrigation infrastructure is therefore vital for improving food security.

King Letsie III reinforced this message during the World Food Day celebration, urging all stakeholders to commit to long-term, sustainable water management practices.

"The benefits of such investments extend beyond food production. They enhance livelihoods, create job opportunities, and strengthen our economy."

As Lesotho grapples with the dual challenges of climate change and food insecurity, King Letsie III's call for sustainable irrigation practices serves as a rallying cry. His vision aligns with national and global efforts to secure water resources and promote resilient agricultural systems.

The government, in collaboration with international partners like the World Bank, has a unique opportunity to transform Lesotho's agricultural landscape. By prioritizing sustainable water management and investing in modern irrigation, the country can build a robust agricultural sector capable of feeding its people and supporting its economy for generations to come.

