

# Agric Ministry Under Scrutiny

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## MZANSI YOUNG FARMERS INDABA 2025: A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR BASOTHO FARMERS



**MZANSI YOUNG  
FARMERS  
INDABA**  
1-2 APRIL 2025  
POWERED BY FOOD FOR MZANSI

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Mzansi Young Farmers Indaba

e hlophisoang ke Food for Mzansi,

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**Date:** 1-2 April 2025

**Venue:** Lavender Kontrei Market,  
Pretoria North, Gauteng.

For more Information: Turn to Page 4 & 5





# Agric Ministry Under Scrutiny

By Kabelo Masoabi

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFSN) faced intense scrutiny from the Parliament's Portfolio Committee for the Economic Cluster on Monday, following concerns over its inability to transition local farmers from subsistence to commercial farming.

Despite numerous aid initiatives over the years, the committee expressed scepticism about the country's future ability to achieve food security and its long-term agricultural aspirations.

This scrutiny came after the ministry was called to Parliament to present its summer and winter cropping report for the 2024/25 period, as well as its plans for the 2025/26 seasons.

In light of persistent issues in local farming, committee members raised critical questions regarding the ministry's progress toward making local agriculture more productive, sustainable, and capable of supporting both local consumption and export markets.

Sello Hakane, the chairman of the Economic Cluster, did not hold back in voicing his concerns.

"The vision of commercialising agriculture appears to be a distant aspiration that the ministry has yet to realise," he remarked, pointing to the limited progress in achieving key agricultural goals.

Hakane's statement reflects broader scepticism about the ministry's performance, especially when it comes to addressing chronic challenges like late delivery of essential agricultural inputs and insufficient resources for farmers.

"We often fail to put our words into action because, in reality, it seems we're more focused on producing to provide for our families than on engaging in large-scale agricultural production. Year after year, we continue to struggle for the same reasons: seeds and fertiliser are delivered late, and many farmers don't receive them at all, and the ministry continue to tell the nation the same thing. When will we finally overcome this challenge?" asked committee member Montoeli Masoetsa.

Defending the ministry's poor performance, Thabo Moleko, the Principal Secretary (PS) of the ministry stressed a need for meticulous planning and the need for a strategic, comprehensive approach to agricultural development.

Moleko admitted that the ministry had faced significant setbacks, but was quick to shift the blame to the previous government, particularly with regards to the loss of agricultural machinery during the previous government's tenure.

"Under the previous government, almost all of the ministry's machinery, including essential tractors, was sold off," he said, noting that this had severely limited the ministry's capacity to support farmers.

However, Moleko sought to reassure the committee that efforts were being made to rectify these shortcomings.

He indicated that the ministry was nearing completion of its fourth-quarter report for the 2024/25 financial year, which would outline the number of new machinery units acquired, thanks to an additional budget recently approved by Parliament.

This report, once released, is expected to shed



light on the ministry's capacity to ramp up agricultural production and enhance its support for local farmers.

On a more positive note, Moleko highlighted recent developments, including a significant donation of 12 tractors from South Korea.

Furthermore, he indicated that more tractors were expected from China in the near future.

The addition of new equipment is seen as a critical step in increasing the capacity of local farmers, many of whom have been struggling due to a lack of modern agricultural tools.

"We are making strides to gather essential agricultural equipment to empower the private sector, which is currently facing challenges due to limited capacity," Moleko explained.

While the ultimate goal is for the private sector to lead in agricultural initiatives, he emphasised that substantial government support remains essential during this transitional phase.

In collaboration with the Disaster Management Authority and other stakeholders, the agriculture ministry is also working on a plan to improve the storage of agricultural inputs.

This includes evaluating facilities across the country to ensure that farmers have convenient access to the supplies they need.

Moleko pointed out that efforts were being made to improve storage conditions, including fumigating storage units ahead of the arrival of agricultural inputs, to prevent contamination and ensure the quality of supplies.

## Winter Cropping 2025/26: Plans for Progress

The ministry's plans for the 2025/26 winter cropping season were also discussed during the meeting with Mamohoebi Mohuoane, the Director of Crops, confirming that the ministry is committed to ensuring that farmers receive critical agricultural inputs in time for the upcoming season.

The ministry's focused plan for winter cropping 2025/26 includes the distribution of subsidised seeds and fertilisers for wheat, which is expected to begin on April 1, 2025.

This timeline she said provides farmers with roughly two weeks to prepare their fields before the actual farming period, which runs from April 15 to June 15.

"The ministry has already secured 400 tonnes (ap-

proximately 8,000 bags) of high-quality wheat seeds, at an estimated cost of M3,300,000. These seeds are expected to arrive on schedule, ensuring that farmers will have timely access to the resources needed to begin their planting."

Mohuoane noted that the procurement of seeds had been financed using the current budget for the upcoming financial year 2025/26, and that efforts were being made to avoid the delays that have plagued past seasons.

"Every year, we receive funds from the Ministry of Finance late, as the money is released only in the month we start winter cropping and by that time, our storage is empty, which doesn't allow us enough time to procure the necessary inputs, hence, we have restructured our procurement timeline," she added, indicating that changes were being made to ensure timely deliveries in the future.

## Procurement and Fertilizer Challenges

Ranamane Seforo, the Acting Procurement Manager provided further details on the procurement process for the 2025/26 seasons.

According to Seforo, the tender process for wheat inputs will run from February 1 to the end of March.

"The ministry has opted for a limited tender procurement method, which involves contacting a select group of suppliers to request proposals."

This approach, Seforo argued, would allow for faster procurement and delivery, particularly for fertilisers.

The total cost for the procurement of 11,100 tonnes of fertiliser, to be used for both winter and summer cropping, is estimated at M144,300,000.

Seforo also noted that the procurement process for fertilisers would begin in April, using a single sourcing method, which involves directly purchasing from a manufacturer.

This method, he explained, ensures timely procurement and fertiliser availability to farmers by late April or early May.

Despite this, the committee expressed concerns about the decision to engage in single sourcing, suggesting that it could limit competition and result in higher prices for the government. Some committee members recommended that the ministry open up the procurement process to allow manufacturers to compete for the contract, potentially achieving more favourable pricing.

## Mzansi Young Farmers Indaba 2025: A Golden Opportunity for Basotho Farmers

By Staff Reporter

The much-anticipated Mzansi Young Farmers Indaba 2025 is set to take place on Tuesday, 1 April, and Wednesday, 2 April 2025, at Lavender Kontrei Market in Pretoria North, South Africa.

This premier event is a game-changer for young farmers, agripreneurs, and agricultural leaders looking to scale their businesses, access new opportunities, and network with top industry experts.

As part of its ongoing efforts to empower local farmers, Seahlolo Newspaper is spearheading a drive to send a delegation of Basotho farmers to the Indaba.

This initiative seeks to expose Basotho farmers to modern farming techniques, agribusiness strategies, and potential partnerships that could transform the agricultural sector in Lesotho.

**Why the Indaba Matters for Lesotho's Agriculture**

With agriculture being a vital pillar of Lesotho's economy, the Mzansi Young Farmers Indaba presents a unique opportunity to learn from some of Africa's best farming minds. The event will feature:

- **Expert-led workshops and panel discussions** – Gain insights from successful agripreneurs, policymakers, and agritech innovators.

- **Access to funding and investment opportunities** – Learn how to secure capital for agribusiness expansion.

- **Cutting-edge farming innovations** – Discover smart farming technologies that boost productivity and sustainability.

- **Networking with industry leaders** – Build valuable connections with farmers, agri-financiers, and market players from across Africa.

- **Seahlolo's Quest to Elevate Basotho Farmers**

Recognising the importance of knowledge-sharing and exposure, Seahlolo Newspaper is actively seeking support to send a group of dedicated Basotho farmers to this world-class agricultural event. The selected farmers will benefit from hands-on training, business mentorship, and practical insights into value chain development.

"Our farmers need to see beyond our borders and learn from those who are leading in agriculture," said Lerato Matheka, Seahlolo's Managing Editor.

She added, "The Mzansi Young Farmers Indaba provides the perfect opportunity to bridge knowledge gaps and inspire innovative farming practices in Lesotho."

Seahlolo is calling on agriculture stakeholders, development partners, and government institutions to support this initiative. Interested farmers who wish to be part of the delegation are encouraged to reach out for more details on selection criteria and sponsorship opportunities.

## A Call to Action

With discounted early bird tickets already available, this is a chance for Basotho farmers to be part of a transformative agricultural movement. Through Seahlolo's initiative, Lesotho's young and old farmers can access knowledge, networks, and funding opportunities that will shape the country's food security and agribusiness future.

For more information on how to participate or support Seahlolo's mission, contact Seahlolo Newspaper or visit their website for more details.

Don't miss this opportunity to be part of a movement dedicated to empowering the next generation of African farmers.

## OUR TEAM

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Lerato Matheka

**Supporting Editors**  
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Bereng Mpaki -Molapo

**Production**  
Bataung Monaheng  
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# Strengthening Lesotho's Agriculture: Lessons from India's Success Story

By Lerato Matheka

Lesotho's agriculture sector holds the potential to be the backbone of its economy, however, challenges such as food insecurity, poor agricultural yields, and vulnerability to climate change continue to limit its growth.

Drawing inspiration from India—a country that has harnessed agricultural innovation and global collaboration—Lesotho can adopt new strategies to transform its food production systems.

## India's Agricultural Innovations: A Roadmap for Lesotho

India's agricultural journey is marked by its commitment to research, policy integration, and technological innovation. Institutions like the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) lead the way in revolutionising farming practices. On a visit to IARI, the application of advanced technologies, including drones for field surveys and soil-testing laboratories, stood out as key drivers of improved yields.

Lesotho, reliant on traditional farming methods, could benefit greatly from such innovations. For instance, drones can help monitor crop health and optimise resource allocation, while soil-testing laboratories can guide farmers on appropriate fertilisation practices. These technologies, coupled with training programs, can empower Basotho farmers to increase productivity and sustainability.

India's model of agricultural research prioritises practical applications that directly benefit farmers. At IARI, experts from diverse fields such as climate science, economics, and genetics work together to create impactful solutions. One notable effort includes developing climate-resilient crop varieties that withstand drought and flooding—challenges that Lesotho faces regularly.

By partnering with institutions like IARI, Lesotho could introduce similar programs that focus on capacity building and knowledge sharing.



The use of technology has improved India's food production

This collaboration could help Basotho farmers adopt modern techniques and improve their resilience to climate shocks.

## Public-Private Partnerships in Agriculture

India's agriculture sector thrives on robust public-private partnerships, which drive innovation and funding. Organisations like the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) play a crucial role in fostering collaboration between the government and private enterprises. Their work has led to advancements in agribusiness, food processing, and supply chain management.

Lesotho could replicate this model by cre-

ating platforms for collaboration between its Ministry of Agriculture and private stakeholders. Such partnerships can unlock investments in agro-processing and market development, providing farmers with opportunities to add value to their produce and access larger markets.

## Food Security: Lessons from the Akshaya Patra Foundation

India's Akshaya Patra Foundation serves over 1.8 million children daily through its school feeding program. The foundation's innovative use of technology and partnerships ensures cost-effective and efficient meal preparation and delivery.

Lesotho, which also faces food insecurity in schools, could draw inspiration from this model. By scaling up its school feeding programs and involving local farmers in the procurement process, the country could simultaneously address hunger and boost rural economies.

## Diplomatic Engagement with India

The potential for collaboration between Lesotho and India extends beyond technology transfer. India's commitment to South-South cooperation, as demonstrated through its Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, offers scholarships and training opportunities for Basotho nationals. These programs enhance skills in agriculture, technology, and other critical fields.

Strengthening diplomatic ties with India could open doors for Lesotho to access more of these initiatives. Moreover, hosting joint agricultural conferences or exchange programs could foster deeper knowledge sharing and innovation.

## Policy Integration and Strategic Vision

India's agricultural policies are underpinned by strong research and a strategic vision. For instance, its emphasis on sustainability and self-sufficiency has transformed the country into a global food producer. Lesotho could adopt similar strategies by prioritising policy frameworks that support agricultural innovation, climate adaptation, and market access.

Lesotho's agricultural future depends on embracing innovation and forging strategic partnerships. India's example shows that with the right mix of technology, collaboration, and policy support, even the most challenging agricultural environments can thrive.

As His Majesty King Letsie III, Africa's Nutrition Champion, often emphasises, "A resilient and productive agriculture sector is the foundation of a healthy and prosperous nation." By looking to India for inspiration and partnership, Lesotho can unlock its potential to become a food-secure and economically vibrant nation.

# India Provides Critical Food Assistance to Lesotho

By Lerato Matheka

India has once again extended its humanitarian support to Lesotho in the height of severe food insecurity.

The latest in a series of donations, a consignment of 1000 metric tonnes of sorghum (jowar), was dispatched from the Nhava Sheva Port in Mumbai on Monday January 13, 2025.

This shipment marks the second tranche of food aid to the nation with 1000 metric tonnes of rice dispatched on 20 December 2024, further cementing India's role as a reliable partner in addressing global food security challenges.

The two shipments, one of rice and the other of sorghum, come as part of India's ongoing efforts to assist Lesotho in mitigating the dire food shortages that have affected its population. These donations are part of India's broader initiative to contribute to the food security of countries in the Global South, underscoring the strong, time-tested relationship between India and Lesotho.

In an official statement on social media, Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), emphasised the solidarity between the two countries.

"India and Lesotho: Global South partners in solidarity with each other. India sends the second tranche of food grain assistance for the people of Lesotho. This assistance will help Lesotho to address the food security issues. A consignment of 1000 MT of Sorghum depart-

ed today from Nhava Sheva Port, Mumbai for Lesotho," he wrote on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

The first consignment of rice, which was sent in December, aimed to meet the urgent nutritional and food security needs of the Basotho people. With widespread food insecurity in Lesotho, especially in rural areas, these grains are expected to provide immediate relief and help stabilise the food supply chain.

India's efforts are in line with its long-standing tradition of supporting other developing countries, particularly in times of crisis. These shipments also highlight the strengthening ties between India and Lesotho, not only in the realm of humanitarian aid but also in bilateral relations.

The two countries have held numerous discussions and meetings to explore various avenues of cooperation. In October 2024, the India GCC Trade Council organised the UN South-South Cooperation meeting, attended by Lesotho's Ambassador, where both nations emphasised the need for mutual support in global development initiatives.

Furthermore, in August 2024, they held the 5th round of the Joint Bilateral Commission for Cooperation, where discussions centred on expanding collaboration in trade, agriculture, infrastructure, and health, all key areas that are essential to Lesotho's socio-economic develop-



India donates food to Lesotho

ment.

India's contribution is also reflective of the thriving Indian community in Lesotho, which consists of about 4000 expatriates and persons of Indian origin (PIOs). These individuals are involved in various professional fields such as

teaching, accounting, and business, contributing significantly to the country's economy.

The Indian diaspora also plays an important cultural role, hosting events and performances organized by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).



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we grow together

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se ke oa sala morao. Eba karolo ea lihoai tse tlo  
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**Why Attend?**

Gain insights from agricultural experts and leaders.  
Network with like-minded farmers and agripreneurs  
from across Africa.

Access opportunities to connect with funders and investors.  
Discover new ways to grow your farming business.

**Speaker Announcements**

Some of Indaba's incredible speakers.  
More exciting announcements coming in the weeks  
leading up to the event.



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## Speaker Announcements

Some of Indaba's incredible speakers.  
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### Ivor Karan

CEO and founder of Karan Beef

Ivor Karan is the CEO and founder of Karan Beef, Africa's largest beef producer, renowned for its Heidelberg, Gauteng feedlot, which houses 21 000 head of cattle. Widely regarded as the most powerful figure in South Africa's meat industry, Karan's journey began in 1974 when, at just 20 years old, he transformed a dairy farm inherited from his grandfather into a powerhouse of the beef sector.



### Chantelle de Bruyn

Founder of Buttercup Farmhouse

Chantelle de Bruyn is a dynamic agripreneur shaking up the food and beverage industry with her innovative venture, Buttercup Farmhouse. Her flagship product, butternut coffee, is now available at retailers like Woolworths and Food Lovers Market. De Bruyn's unique approach to agricultural entrepreneurship has not only driven local demand but has also attracted global recognition.



### Leona Archary

CEO of the Agricultural Development Agency (AGDA)

Leona Archary is the CEO of the Agricultural Development Agency (AGDA) with nearly three decades of experience in public sector leadership. Holding a Master's degree in Management, she has led key rural development programmes, including serving as Acting Director General at the Department of Rural Development and Land Reforms. At AGDA, she focuses on value chain integration, building partnerships for sustainable agriculture, and supporting the growth of new-era farmers.



### Richard Manzini

CEO of Daybreak Foods

Richard Manzini is the CEO of Daybreak Foods, one of South Africa's largest poultry producers, processing over a million chickens weekly and managing the entire value chain. With decades of private equity experience spanning Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, he has a proven track record in revitalising businesses, driving market expansion, and delivering socio-economic impact.



### Thabo Mavundza

Managing Director of Africa operations at Westfalia Fruit

Thabo Mavundza is the Managing Director of Africa operations at Westfalia Fruit, a leading producer of avocados. Born in Mavalani Village, Limpopo, his career began as an engineer at the Agricultural Research Council, and today he leads 3 500 colleagues, managing assets worth between R5 billion and R6 billion. Deeply influenced by his grandmother's wisdom and mentor Steve Magagula, Mavundza is committed to giving back through philanthropy and mentoring.



### Loyiso Manga

Founder of Ubuntu Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO)

Loyiso Manga, founder of Ubuntu Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO), transformed his passion for olive oil into a thriving business, overcoming the challenges of unemployment to become a trailblazer in South Africa's olive oil industry. As the mastermind behind the country's first black-owned olive oil farming enterprise, he has not only earned national recognition with his products now on Woolworths shelves but also secured a Gold Award at the prestigious World Olive Oil Competition. His commitment to quality and sustainability has led him to pursue Halaal certification, further elevating Ubuntu EVOO's standing.



### Johann Kotzé

CEO of Agri SA

Johann Kotzé is the CEO of Agri SA, a 120-year-old organisation promoting the interests of farmers in South Africa. With extensive experience in agriculture, banking, and business leadership, Kotzé steers Agri SA as it faces critical challenges such as climate change, rural safety, and policy uncertainty. A proud product of a farming background, he holds an MBA, and has led prominent organisations like the South African Pig Producers' Organisation (SAPPO) and served in top roles at Absa and FNB.



### Dr Tobias Doyer

CEO of Grain SA

Dr Tobias Doyer is the CEO of Grain SA, a leading industry organisation providing strategic support and services to grain and oilseed producers. With extensive experience in agriculture, insurance, and academia, he has a proven track record of driving innovation and growth. He previously played a pivotal role in reshaping Agbiz, positioning it as a key player in national agricultural and economic discussions. Doyer holds a PhD in agricultural economics from the University of Pretoria.



### Dr Siyabonga Madlala

Executive chair of the SA Farmers' Development Association (SAFDA)

Dr Siyabonga Madlala is the executive chair of the SA Farmers' Development Association (SAFDA), dedicated to transforming the sugar industry and empowering black sugar cane farmers. Since its formation in 2015, Safda has championed small-scale and land reform farmers through targeted interventions, addressing financial challenges and promoting sustainability. Under Madlala's leadership, the organisation drives meaningful participation, diversification, and innovative solutions to create a more equitable agricultural sector.



### Nigel Jacobs

Co-founder of Jacobs Jam

Nigel Jacobs is the co-founder of Jacobs Jam, a rapidly growing agri-business based in the Ceres Valley, Western Cape. Combining his FMCG marketing background with his wife Christynn's expertise as a food technologist, they launched Jacobs Jam in 2018. Despite a challenging start, the business secured a breakthrough deal with the Shoprite Group in 2022, expanding their reach to 20 Checkers stores in under six months. Known for preservative-free jams, including the world's only pomegranate jam, Jacobs Jam now supplies nearly 400 independent outlets and exports to Zambia.

# Speakers

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# Division Delays Progress in Poultry Sector

## ...With 5 million chickens imported from South Africa in 2024

By Kabelo Masoabi

Poultry remains one of the most consumed protein sources in Lesotho, yet the industry continues to operate in a largely informal and fragmented manner. Most poultry farmers function at a subsistence level, struggling to meet national demand while facing numerous structural and financial challenges.

According to the Marketing Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, Lesotho imported five million chickens from South Africa in 2024 alone. Additionally, over six million other chicken products, including offal, were imported to supplement the local shortfall. These figures highlight the country's heavy reliance on imports, raising concerns about the sustainability of its poultry sector.

A recent workshop organised by the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II) brought together broiler producers and industry experts to address some of these pressing challenges.

One key issue identified was the lack of collaboration among farmers, which limits knowledge-sharing opportunities and weakens the industry's ability to compete with large-scale suppliers.

Veteran poultry farmer Khabele Matlosa emphasised that broiler producers must work together to overcome common industry challenges.

He proposed the formation of a structured poultry association that would serve as a collective voice for local farmers, enabling them to engage with policymakers, access financial resources, and explore export opportunities.

"With a recognised association, we will have a stronger voice in policymaking and be able to engage the government effectively. This will also open doors for us to tap into international markets, something many of us fail to consider," Matlosa explained.

Beyond policy advocacy, such an association could improve cost efficiencies by enabling bulk purchasing of inputs like feed, equipment, and vaccines, the farmer said, noting this would allow members to negotiate better prices and pass savings on to consumers.

Matlosa also highlighted the potential for pooling resources to secure private veterinary services, ensuring faster responses to disease outbreaks and improved poultry health management.

A major bottleneck in Lesotho's poultry supply chain he revealed, is the limited availability of hatcheries.

"Currently, there is only one hatchery producing day-old chicks locally, which is insufficient to meet demand. As a result, the majority of chicks are imported from South Africa," he said, stressing the need for a fully integrated poultry industry, incorporating local hatcheries, farms, and slaughterhouses to reduce dependence on external suppliers.

"Running a poultry farm is a capital-intensive business that requires financial investment, technical expertise, and strong infrastructure and high feed costs and equipment expenses continue to challenge many farmers, limiting their ability to scale up production," he explained.

He added that health management is another major concern for poultry farmers.

"The rapid growth of broiler chickens makes them prone to health issues such as lameness, breast blisters, and heart complications, requiring constant veterinary supervision. However, government veterinary services are often stretched thin, making emergency interventions difficult to access," the farmer said.

He stressed that market access remains another significant hurdle for small-scale poultry farmers, who often struggle to sell entire batches of market-ready birds in a short period.

"This challenge became particularly evident during South Africa's avian influenza outbreak in 2023. Despite the crisis, South Africa continued to supply its market from unaffected farms, while Lesotho, lacking local production capacity, remained vulnerable to supply disruptions," he pointed out.

"As long as we remain divided, we will struggle to achieve self-sufficiency. We have the resources—land, water, and electricity—but without strategic planning and collective action, we risk continued reliance on imports," he warned.

SADP II's Matching Grant Officer, Relebohile

Khathibe, outlined additional challenges that hinder commercial poultry farming in Lesotho noting that many small business owners fail to address critical aspects of their operations, including business planning, Cash flow management, developing marketing strategies and delegation of tasks among other things.

He outlined why farmers continuously fail, citing with;

- **Business Planning:** Many farmers lack a formal business plan, which is essential for setting financial goals and guiding business growth.
- **Cash Flow Management:** Issues such as excessive credit sales, unrealistic revenue projections, and failure to track financial performance contribute to business failures.
- **Marketing Strategies:** A lack of market research and poor brand positioning result in low product visibility and weak sales.
- **Delegation of Tasks:** Many farmers attempt to handle all aspects of their business alone, leading to burnout and inefficiencies.
- **Market Research:** Failure to assess competition and understand consumer preferences often results in unsustainable business models.



- **Hiring Challenges:** Delays in expanding staff and reluctance to delegate responsibilities hinder business scalability.
- **Bookkeeping:** Proper financial record-keeping is crucial for informed decision-making and compliance with tax regulations.

Despite these challenges, he stressed that with the right interventions, Lesotho's poultry sector has the potential to grow into a well-structured and com-

petitive industry.

He pointed out that by formalising operations, strengthening farmer associations, and investing in local production facilities, the country can reduce its reliance on imports and build a more resilient poultry supply chain.

"The call for unity and strategic investment is clear—without action, Lesotho's poultry industry will continue to struggle in the face of growing demand and external competition," he said.

## Can Lesotho's Layer Producers Sustain the Ban on Egg Imports?

By Kabelo Masoabi

Since the government enforced a ban on egg imports on January 1, Lesotho has managed to maintain a steady supply of eggs, signalling a shift towards greater self-sufficiency in poultry production.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, through its Department of Marketing, has assured the public that local production is currently sufficient to meet demand.

Before the ban, Lesotho relied heavily on egg imports from South Africa to fill gaps in local production. Importers were previously required to source at least 70% of their eggs from domestic producers, while the remaining 30% could be imported. However, with the current restrictions in place, the success of this policy now hinges on whether local farmers can sustain consistent production levels.

According to Makwane Lekau from the Department of Marketing, local production has been stable, allowing farmers to increase their market presence. However, concerns remain over whether the country can maintain self-sufficiency in the long term. A minimum of 700,000 trays of eggs per month is required for Lesotho to be fully self-sufficient, raising the critical question: Can local farmers sustain this level of production indefinitely?

Lekau expressed caution, pointing to a major challenge—the absence of a comprehensive database tracking active layer farmers.

"Without reliable data on egg production volumes, the government faces difficulties in accurately assessing supply levels. Currently, market data is collected from businesses that source eggs from local farmers, but this approach does not provide a full picture of national output.

"Market indications suggest that Basotho farmers are producing eggs at a large scale; however, the challenge remains in identifying these farms, as many are not officially registered in our systems," Lekau said.

He added, "This complicates our ability to source eggs precisely when needed. At present, we do not possess the assurance required to reliably maintain the ban on egg imports."

To address this, Lekau said the government plans to launch a national farmer registry program by the end of February.

"Layer farmers will be required to register their agribusinesses annually at their respective District Agriculture Offices," he said.

For farmers like Mpati Matete from Sehlabeng sa Thuathe in the Berea district, market access remains a serious challenge.



Despite producing a significant number of eggs, she struggles to sell them quickly enough, leading to spoilage.

"Some of my eggs have begun to spoil due to extended storage and excessive heat," she lamented, highlighting a widespread issue among local producers.

Lekau revealed that the government is working on establishing egg collection centres across the country which would be the distribution hub for layer farmers and buying centre for consumers.

"These centres will allow farmers to sell their eggs directly to the Department of Marketing, which will then grade and distribute them to buyers. This initiative is currently in progress and is expected to improve the efficiency of the poultry sector," Lekau confirmed.

Another factor that may threaten the sustainability of the ban is the increase in demand when schools reopen.

"The school feeding program, supported by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the government of Lesotho, provides eggs as part of its nutrition strategy and historically, this demand has been supplemented through imports from South Africa. If local farmers cannot meet the increased demand, there is a risk of supply shortages," he said.

Lekau also pointed out inconsistencies in local production, noting that when egg importation was briefly allowed in May 2023, no imports were recorded.

"...however, by June, 700,000 eggs were imported, rising to one million in July, and a staggering six

million eggs between August and December. This fluctuation raises concerns about whether local farmers can maintain a stable supply throughout the year," Lekau revealed, saying only a handful of local producers can fulfil large-scale orders from major retailers.

"For example, Pick n Pay Lesotho has been sourcing organic eggs from South Africa due to high demand, presenting a missed opportunity for Basotho farmers to enter the organic egg market."

A recent workshop for layer farmers, organised by the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II) in Thaba-Bosiu, revealed that the local industry is still far from achieving complete self-sufficiency.

Farmers identified several challenges, including a lack of industry coordination, informal contracts, high feed costs, expensive medications, poor vaccination knowledge, limited diagnostic laboratories, insufficient research, and weak technical support from extension officers.

According to SADP II Matching Grants Specialist, Relebohile Khathibe, overcoming these obstacles will require comprehensive planning and support from both the government and private sector stakeholders.

While the ban on egg imports has given local farmers a chance to expand their businesses, sustaining this policy will depend on addressing key challenges in production, distribution, and market accessibility. Without stronger industry organisation and government support, the road to self-sufficiency remains uncertain.



# WFP Delivers Lifesaving Support as Lesotho Battles Food Insecurity Crisis

By Lerato Matheka

Lesotho's food security crisis has plunged hundreds of thousands of Basotho into hunger, with the World Food Programme (WFP) stepping in to provide critical assistance.

The crisis was declared a national emergency by Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane in July 2024, following the devastating effects of an El Niño-induced drought that left approximately 700,000 people food insecure.

In his national address, Prime Minister Matekane emphasised the urgency of the situation; "Lesotho is facing one of its most severe food crises in years. With over 700,000 of our people unable to meet their daily food needs, this is a national emergency that requires immediate and collective action."

He urged local, regional, and international stakeholders to respond swiftly, warning that the country's escalating food insecurity could have long-term consequences for vulnerable communities.

Answering this call for action, the WFP ramped up its efforts, assisting 60,250 individuals in December 2024 alone.

This support targeted the most affected districts—Qacha's Nek, Quthing, Mochale's Hoek, and Maseru. Food and cash assistance were distributed through partnerships with 41 retailers, while the Standard Lesotho Bank's UNAYO platform ensured seamless cash delivery to families in need.

Recognising the importance of sustainability, the WFP worked closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition to strengthen institutional capacities. This included training ministry staff in data analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, a move aimed at enhancing evidence-based decision-making for agricultural programs. The Ministry's Strategic Plan (2024–2028) was also updated with support from the WFP, ensuring a robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework to guide future interventions.

Children, among the most vulnerable to hunger, have also been a priority. The WFP partnered with the Ministry of Education and Training to enhance school feeding programs, training 16 National Management Agents to improve food delivery, quality, and coordination.

Local procurement from smallholder farmers has not only provided meals for schoolchildren but also boosted rural economies.

In its fight against malnutrition, the WFP has supported a government-led nutrition campaign to challenge harmful socio-cultural norms and promote better dietary practices. This campaign is underpinned by a Target Audience Analysis, which identifies gaps in engagement and develops strategies to reach underserved populations.

Smallholder farmers, who are vital to Lesotho's food systems, have also benefited from targeted support.



Through the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment Programme, 150 farmers have transitioned from subsistence to sustainable, business-oriented farming.

In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture, with the WFP's backing, facilitated resilience-building workshops in multiple districts covering topics such as aquaculture, poultry management, and fire belt establishment, equipping farmers with skills to improve productivity and income generation.

Prime Minister Matekane's call for collective ac-

tion remains critical in addressing this crisis. "We must unite to address this challenge. Together, we can not only save lives today but also build a more resilient and food-secure Lesotho for tomorrow," he said.

With continued collaboration between the government, WFP, and other stakeholders, Lesotho's journey toward food security is taking shape. However, long-term investment, innovation, and sustained commitment will be key to ensuring no Mosotho is left behind.

## Celebrating Farmers, Building the Future

This past Saturday, Monakeli Farms hosted the inaugural Farmers Lunch, bringing together farm-

ers from diverse disciplines to connect, share, and inspire.

With impactful speakers sharing their

journeys, the event highlighted the critical role farmers play in transforming the food production landscape.

Here's to the hands that feed the nation and the minds shaping a sustainable future



# Sheep and Goat Auction to Boost Local Production



**By Ntsoaki Motaung**

**T**he Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association (LNWMGA) hosted a successful sheep and goat auction in Maseru on Wednesday, with a primary goal of enhancing the country's wool and mohair production.

The event, which showcased over 100 sheep and 100 goats, aimed to encourage local sourcing of improved livestock and foster economic growth within the country.

LNWMGA Chairperson Mokoenehi Thinyane highlighted the importance of reducing dependence on foreign livestock by stressing that Lesotho is capable of producing high-quality stock.

"This auction is organised to stop farmers from traveling abroad to purchase improved livestock when we have the capacity to breed the quality that is needed right here. We must keep our money circulating within the country, ensuring that our economy thrives," Thinyane said.

He also took the opportunity to remind the public of Lesotho's prominent global position in the wool and mohair industry, ranking second in mohair production and fourth in wool production.

This achievement, he pointed out, demonstrates the country's growing potential to meet both local and international demand for these commodities.

Despite the country's strong standing in the industry, Thinyane expressed concern about the government's recent purchase of sheep from foreign countries for donation to local farmers, highlighting the need for more government support for domestic livestock sourcing.

"We need our government to support the 'buy local' initiative. It is disappointing that the Prime Minister's office bought sheep from abroad for donation to farmers. This is not helping our local industry at all," he charged.

He further highlighted that stock theft remains a significant issue for farmers, with many losing their investments in improved livestock to criminals.

Thinyane urged the government to take more proactive steps to address the security challenges

facing farmers, which continue to hinder their ability to grow their businesses.

In response, the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security, Nutrition pledged the ministry's continued support for initiatives aimed at improving local production.

Echoing Thinyane's sentiments, the minister reaffirmed the importance of prioritising locally produced goods and ensuring that resources are directed towards strengthening domestic agriculture.

Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane attended the auction and praised the high quality of Lesotho's wool and mohair.

He expressed confidence that the country will soon achieve the top global ranking for these products, stating, "Lesotho has the potential to lead the world in wool and mohair production, and we are committed to ensuring that the necessary support is in place to help our farmers reach this goal."

The Prime Minister also committed to ensuring that his office will prioritise local sourcing of goods and services whenever possible, reinforcing the government's commitment to fostering domestic industries.

The auction highlighted Lesotho's growing capacity in livestock production, with both local farmers and buyers showing strong interest in the event.

Thinyane stressed that as the country continues to build on its agricultural strengths, the collaboration between the private sector, government, and organisations like the LNWMGA is expected to play a critical role in transforming Lesotho into a leading player in the global wool and mohair market.

"With government support and increased local sourcing, Lesotho's agriculture sector has the potential to strengthen its position on the global stage while contributing to the nation's overall economic development."

"This successful auction is just one of many steps toward improving local production, addressing challenges such as stock theft, and ensuring a sustainable future for Lesotho's farmers," he said.

