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Lesotho Embraces Hybrid True Potato Seed

By Lungile Maseela

Next Level and RegenZ launched the Solynta Hybrid True Potato Seed (HTPS) at Qalakheng Evergreen Farms in Mohale's Hoek, marking a major step forward in innovative potato farming.

For centuries, farmers have relied on tubers as the primary means of cultivating potatoes, storing and replanting them season after season. However, this age-old method is now being revolutionised by Hybrid True Potato Seed (HTPS)—a cutting-edge innovation developed through controlled cross-breeding of different potato varieties.

This breakthrough enhances yield potential, disease resistance, and sustainability in potato farming.

Unlike traditional tubers, HTPS consists of botanical seeds—commonly called “hips”—produced through hybrid breeding.

This scientific advancement not only retains the best traits of parent varieties but also introduces stronger, more resilient crops capable of withstanding climate challenges.

According to Alex Platt, Director of RegenZ, this technology has been in development for 14 years by Dutch agritech leader Solynta.

He said it has already shown remarkable success in Europe, Kenya, and South Africa, with Kenya emerging as a key testing ground.

“The Hybrid True Potato Seed enables smallholder farmers to double their yields with fewer inputs,” Platt explained.

He highlighted how the innovation supports food security by increasing agricultural productivity while reducing the need for excessive chemical treatments.

Furthermore, HTPS simplifies storage and transportation—offering farmers a more practical, cost-effective alternative to bulky traditional seed tubers.

The launch event at Qalakheng Evergreen Farms included a harvest demonstration, showcasing the potential of hybrid true potato seeds.

Two high-performing potato varieties—Sol-



hy012 and Solhy017—were presented, both well-suited for the fresh market.

Among the attendees was Lesole Sefume, a research officer from the Department of Agricultural Research, who praised the collaboration between Next Level and RegenZ.

“We are always looking for new innovations to improve agriculture in Lesotho, and this development will significantly enhance potato production. It’s a work in progress, but the potential impact is promising,” Sefume stated.

Reflecting on the journey that led to this milestone, Sekhoane Mokemane, Commercial and Distribution Director at Next Level, emphasised the strategic partnership behind the success of HTPS.

“The launch and successful harvest of these seeds prove what we can achieve through collaboration,” Mokemane said, stressing that this initiative is not just about boosting yields but also about driving economic benefits for Lesotho.

“This partnership is designed to bring long-term advantages to the country, ensuring food security while creating employment opportunities in agriculture,” he added.

In February, Mr Anping Ye, Director of the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Division (PST), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) met with Thabo Mofosi,

Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition and Thesele Maseribane, the former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Lesotho in Italy, as a follow-up to an earlier discussion between the FAO Director-General, QU Dongyu and His Majesty King Letsie III of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The meeting emphasised the critical role of potato cultivation in enhancing food security and improving livelihoods in Lesotho.

Both parties acknowledged the necessity of strengthening the capacity of local potato growers to increase productivity and ensure sustainable agricultural development.

During the meeting, the significance of South-South cooperation in fostering knowledge and technical exchanges was underscored with an emphasis that exchanges are pivotal in helping Lesotho acquire modern agricultural technologies, particularly in the production of high-quality seed potatoes for smallholder farmers and commercial potato growers, and Minister Mofosi reaffirmed the importance of potato cultivation as a key crop identified under FAO’s One Country One Product (OCOP) initiative.

The meeting discussions focused on FAO’s potential role in supporting Lesotho’s agricultural sector through capacity-building initiatives, knowledge sharing, and technical assistance within the South-South and Triangular Cooperation framework.

It’s All Systems Go for the 2025 Mzansi Young Farmers’ Indaba!



By Lerato Matheka

With just days to go, the highly anticipated 2025 Mzansi Young Farmers’ Indaba is set to bring together the brightest young minds in agriculture for two days of knowledge-sharing, networking, and inspiration.

Hosted by Food for Mzansi at the Lavender Kontrei Market in Pretoria North on 1 and 2 April, this event is the ultimate gathering for young farmers and older farmers eager to level up their skills, tap into new opportunities, and be part of a transformative agricultural movement.

It is more than just a conference—it’s a launchpad for the future of farming.

Whether you’re looking for funding, business collaborations, or cutting-edge agricultural insights, this is the place to be.

What to expect

Big Brands, Bigger Opportunities: 2024 saw major investments and partnerships come to life, and 2025 promises even greater prospects for young farmers. Expect key industry players ready to connect, collaborate, and invest in the next generation of agripreneurs.

Masterclasses That Matter: From enterprise

development to biotech innovations, this year’s event will feature deep-dive sessions into the latest strategies shaping agriculture.

Empowering Communities: The indaba will spotlight initiatives aimed at transforming local farming communities, equipping young farmers with the tools and networks they need to thrive.

Game-Changing Masterclasses

This year’s indaba features six powerhouse masterclasses designed to equip attendees with the skills and insights needed to navigate the modern agricultural landscape and sessions will cover:

- **Climate-Smart Farming** – How technology and precision climate data can help farmers adapt to unpredictable weather patterns.
- **Mechanisation & Precision Agriculture** – Insights from John Deere experts on advanced machinery and data-driven farming.
- **Export Readiness** – Guidance on accessing international markets and trade regulations, presented by PPECB spe-

cialists.

- **Farm Finances & Investment** – Mastering cash flow, loan applications, and strategic investments with experts from Masisizane and Old Mutual.
- **Livestock Health & Disease Prevention** – Practical insights on vaccinations, disease control, and productivity.
- **Cannabis Opportunities** – Exploring the legal and business aspects of cannabis farming in South Africa.

A Stellar Line-Up of Industry Leaders

The year’s event will feature keynote addresses from some of South Africa’s most influential figures in agriculture, including:

- **John Steenhuisen MP, Minister of Agriculture** – The role of policy in shaping the future of farming.
- **Vuyiswa Ramokgopa, MEC for Agriculture & Land Reform (Gauteng)** – What’s next for South African agriculture?
- **Ivor Karan, Founder of Karan Beef** – Breaking into the commercial sector: Lessons from a beef giant.
- **Kgomotso Ranchu, Free State Cattle Farmer** – Building resilience and sustainability in livestock farming.

Meet the Exhibitors

The Mzansi Young Farmers’ Indaba will showcase top industry exhibitors, including:

- PulseAfrika
- Redstag Ranch,
- The Milk Producers’ Organisation,
- Fairtrade Africa,
- Khula App Pty Ltd,
- Old Mutual, and
- Onderstepoort Biological Products.

These brands will offer resources, innovative solutions, and business opportunities to support young farmers in building sustainable agribusinesses.

Young Innovators Tackle Post-Harvest Losses with Solar Cooling Technology

By Molula Mofosi



Mpho Yengane invents an answer for Lesotho farmers

In a world pushing for clean and affordable energy solutions, innovation has become the backbone of progress.

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2012, global efforts have been focused on fostering solutions that address critical issues like food security and energy efficiency.

One such trailblazer making waves in Lesotho is Mpho Yengane, a young electrical engineer whose ground-breaking cooling system is set to revolutionise the agricultural cold chain.

At just 29 years old, Yengane has defied convention with his cutting-edge solar-powered cooling system designed to preserve fresh fruits and vegetables.

His journey began as a Master of Science student in Sustainable Energy at the National University of Lesotho (NUL), where he focused his dissertation on a solution that could significantly reduce post-harvest losses.

Born and raised in Teya-Teyaneng, Ha-Motjoka, Yengane grew up acutely aware of energy struggles and environmental challenges.

"I have always been conscious of sustainability," he reflects, adding, "Littering never made sense to me, and I was fascinated by how human behaviour impacts the environment."

His dissertation, titled *Design and Economic Analysis of a Solar Thermal Pre-Cooling System for Agro-Cold Chain in Lesotho*, co-authored by Sebotla Mokeke and Moeketsi Mpholo, aimed to tackle the longstanding challenge of post-harvest losses among small-scale farmers.

The innovative solar-powered system—officially known as Solar Thermal Cooling (STC) technology—uses solar energy to heat a special fluid that powers a chiller, creating a cooling effect.

The team repurposed a shipping container as the structure for their prototype, utilising solar collectors to harness sunlight and convert it into thermal energy.

"The heat is then transferred to a working fluid, a combination of water and lithium bromide, which absorbs and transports the heat to the generator of an absorption chiller. Through a controlled process of evaporation and condensation, the system effectively cools stored produce, ensuring its freshness and longevity," Yengane explained.

To turn research into reality, Yengane co-founded Energy Reimagined alongside his business partner, Falimehang Rameno, a 26-year-old NUL alumnus with a Master of Science in Agricultural and Resource Economics.

He described that their mission is clear: "provide innovative and accessible cold storage solutions to farmers, many of whom lack the means to invest in traditional cooling infrastructure."

"An estimated 30% to 40% of horticultural

produce is lost due to inadequate cold storage facilities," says Rameno told Seahlolo.

He noted, "Our system offers farmers two options: purchasing the facility outright or renting it at an affordable rate. This ensures that even small-scale farmers have



access to cooling technology that extends the shelf life of their produce."

The impact of Energy Reimagined's cooling system extends beyond environmental benefits; "it is an economic lifeline for farmers who suffer severe losses due to spoilage. When crops are transported from farms to markets, their shelf life is drastically reduced by exposure to heat and sunlight. This often results in partially or completely spoiled produce, causing significant financial losses," the duo noted.

According to The African Postharvest Losses Information System (APHLIS), in 2021, Lesotho's annual estimated postharvest losses were 11,516 tonnes for maize, 1,612 tonnes for sorghum, 947 tonnes for wheat.

The highest and lowest estimated postharvest loss percentages are 15.4% for maize and 11.5% for sorghum.

Within the value chain, for all crops the majority of loss is esti-

mated to be happening at harvesting/field drying. Within Lesotho, the highest postharvest losses in tonnes occur for maize in Leribe, for sorghum in Maseru, for wheat in Mokhotlong. Regarding the nutritional losses, the estimated maize grain lost postharvest could have met the annual energy (kcal) dietary requirements of 46,209 people.

Thabo Khalema of Maluti Fresh Produce emphasises the need for proper post-harvest handling.

"Investing in high-quality seeds is only part of the equation," he says.

He added, "Without proper cooling systems, farmers risk losing a substantial portion of their harvest before it even reaches consumers."

Although still in its prototype phase, the solar cooling system has already garnered significant interest from farmers eager for sustainable storage solutions.

However, to scale up and deploy the technology, the young entrepreneurs are actively seeking funding to launch a market-ready pilot project.

"This system functions entirely off-grid, making it suitable for both commercial and subsistence farmers. Although commercial farmers are our primary target, we recognise that affordability is a key concern," Yengane said, noting while the initial

cost may be high, the long-term benefits—reduced post-harvest losses and increased profitability—far outweigh the investment.

The inventor described that The Solar Thermal Cooling (STC) system has significant advantages over conventional cooling technologies.

"While traditional refrigeration systems have lower upfront costs, they require continuous electricity and entail high operating expenses. In contrast, STC technology has a higher initial cost but boasts significantly lower long-term expenses and zero greenhouse gas emissions. The system requires minimal maintenance—once every five years—and has a lifespan of 30 to 50 years. Crucially, it does not require highly specialised technicians for upkeep, making it an accessible and

user-friendly innovation."

"This system is designed to be intuitive. Both farmers and solar technicians can easily understand and maintain it. It's not an intimidating technology—it's a practical, game-changing solution," he pointed out.

Determined to push the boundaries of renewable energy, Yengane has since enrolled in a PhD program in Electrical Power Systems at Stellenbosch University, where he is exploring the feasibility of running entire grids on renewable energy alone.

"My ultimate goal is to contribute to the transition away from coal and fossil fuels," he asserts.

"As much as coal remains a predictable energy source, we must invest in alternative solutions that align with environmental sustainability," he charged.

Through their company, Energy Reimagined, Yengane and Rameno are committed to advancing three key SDGs: SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). Their work is driven by impact, ensuring that innovation serves both people and the planet.

The duo's expertise is gaining international recognition, with Yengane recently presenting his master's dissertation at a European conference and Rameno attending regional forums focused on food security and economic development.

Their combined skills—engineering innovation and agricultural economics—bridge the gap between research and practical implementation, ensuring their cooling system is both scientifically robust and commercially viable.

What makes their STC system stand out is its remarkable efficiency. Unlike conventional cooling methods, which typically operate at 20-40% efficiency, this solar-powered system captures up to 98% of sunlight and achieves an operational efficiency of 60-70%. This means it is not only more sustainable but also ideal for off-grid locations, such as rural farming communities in Lesotho.

As they continue their quest for funding and commercial expansion, Yengane and Rameno said they remain unwavering in their belief that their innovation will transform the agricultural landscape in Lesotho.

"Farmers are already anticipating the deployment of the system, eager to see how it will reshape their productivity and income streams. Our farmers deserve better and we want to give them the tools to preserve their hard-earned harvests, reduce waste, and ultimately, improve their livelihoods," the duo asserted.



The Solar answer to Lesotho's post-harvest problems

Agriculture to Benefit From The African Development Bank’s USD331 Million Investment

By Lerato Matheka

Lesotho’s agricultural sector is set for a major transformation following the African Development Bank’s (AfDB) announcement of a USD331 million (Over M6 billion) investment under its 2025-2030 Country Strategy Paper.

This investment will focus on agriculture, food security, rural livelihoods, and climate resilience, positioning the sector as a key driver of economic growth and sustainability.

During an official visit to Lesotho—the first by an AfDB President—Dr. Akinwumi Adesina met with His Majesty King Letsie III, Prime Minister Samuel Ntsokoane Matekane, and top government officials to outline the Bank’s commitment to strengthening Lesotho’s agricultural value chains and infrastructure.

“We will continue to support Lesotho very strongly through our new focus on infrastructure for industrial competitiveness,” Dr. Adesina stated.

His Majesty King Letsie III, who has long been an advocate for food security and agricultural development, welcomed AfDB’s increased focus on the sector, highlighting its potential to create jobs, improve nutrition, and strengthen the economy.

“With haste, we will ensure that the policies and incentives to accommodate the needs of and attract the private sector are in place, especially in healthcare, agriculture, and manufacturing,” the King stated.

Lesotho’s farmers are on the frontlines of climate change, facing severe droughts and unpredictable weather patterns that disrupt crop cycles and threaten livestock. Recognising this, AfDB’s investment will prioritise on Water Resource Man-



During an official visit to Lesotho, African Development Bank President Dr. Akinwumi Adesina met with His Majesty King Letsie III to discuss expanding the Bank’s investments in Lesotho. Picture credit AfDB

agement which will see the scaling up rainwater harvesting, irrigation projects, and watershed conservation to ensure farmers have reliable water access, Lesotho’s role in a USD2.3 Billion Regional Water Project where the Bank will help mobilise USD260 million for a water transfer project that will supply 308 million cubic meters of water annually for agricultural, domestic, and industrial use through a 700 km pipeline, as well as the Rural Water & Sanitation Expansion which will be build-

ing on the success of the Lesotho Lowland Rural Water Supply Project, which has already provided clean water to 28,266 people across eight zones in Maseru and Berea districts.

Dr. Adesina reaffirmed that AfDB’s support for Lesotho’s agriculture sector is long-term.

Since 1973, the Bank has invested USD429 million in the country, with eight active projects worth USD60 million currently in progress.

“Every challenge is an investor’s dream. Ulti-

mately, capital, like water, will always find a receptive place to go,” he noted, urging Lesotho’s government and private sector to create an enabling environment for agri-investments.

Finance Minister Dr Retselisitsoe Matlanyane highlighted that Lesotho’s energy supply will exceed demand by 2026, allowing for electricity exports to South Africa—a move that will further support energy-reliant agricultural projects such as irrigation farming and agro-processing.

Lesotho Seeks Greater Investment from the Common Fund for Commodities

By Lerato Matheka

Lesotho has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening economic ties with the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) in a bid to secure increased investments that could transform its agricultural sector and contribute to poverty alleviation.

During a visit to the CFC Secretariat in Amsterdam, H.E. Mantoetsi Mohatonyane, Lesotho’s Ambassador to the Netherlands and Belgium, engaged in high-level discussions with Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal, Managing Director of the CFC.

The discussions centred on Lesotho’s agricultural potential, investment opportunities in commodity sectors, and the need for innovative financial mechanisms to support smallholder farmers and SMEs.

The CFC, an intergovernmental financial institution established within the UNCTAD framework, has long played a vital role in supporting commodity-dependent developing countries.

Ambassador Belal highlighted CFC’s commitment to sustainable development, poverty reduction, and fostering resilient value chains, emphasising that Lesotho is well-positioned to benefit from increased engagement.

“The CFC is committed to deepening partnerships with nations like Lesotho, ensuring that investments in agriculture and commodity sectors translate into real improvements in people’s lives,” Ambassador Belal stated.

Ambassador Mohatonyane expressed gratitude for CFC’s impact on global commodity markets and emphasised Lesotho’s keen interest



Ambassador Mantoetsi Mohatonyane and CFC Managing Director Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal

in attracting investment to its agriculture sector.

She applauded the organisation’s “Humanising the Value Chains” initiative, which aims to ensure farmers and smallholder producers receive fair returns for their work.

“Lesotho has immense agricultural potential. With the right investments and strong partnerships, we can transform smallholder farming

into a thriving, competitive industry that contributes significantly to food security and economic growth,” Ambassador Mohatonyane said.

A key outcome of the meeting was CFC’s invitation to Lesotho to explore investment opportunities through the newly launched Agricultural Commodity Transformation Fund (ACT Fund).

This initiative seeks to mobilise private sector

investments that drive transformation in commodity sectors while supporting the sustainable development and poverty reduction goals.

Ambassador Belal urged Lesotho’s government and private sector entities to explore the ACT Fund, emphasising that it provides a unique opportunity to scale up investments in agriculture, promote value addition, and enhance market access for farmers and agri-businesses.

Beyond agriculture, the discussion also touched on the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in economic development.

Ambassador Belal encouraged Ambassador Mohatonyane to advocate for a viable guarantee scheme that could bridge the financing gap for SMEs.

“A guarantee scheme would create stronger linkages between SMEs and smallholder farmers, fostering an inclusive economic ecosystem that benefits both producers and businesses,” he stated.

Ambassador Mohatonyane welcomed this initiative and pledged Lesotho’s support in conducting necessary research to develop a workable model for SME financing in the Global South.

The meeting concluded with both parties reaffirming their commitment to fostering stronger economic ties and exploring further areas of collaboration in sustainable commodity development. Ambassador Mohatonyane and Ambassador Belal agreed that private sector participation would be key to achieving lasting success in these efforts.

Advancing Agricultural Research with a New Tissue Culture Laboratory

By Kabelo Masoabi

The Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) is nearing completion of a state-of-the-art plant tissue culture laboratory, a ground-breaking initiative aimed at supplying the agricultural sector with locally adapted seed varieties.

Funded by the African Partnership Programme for Sustainable Agriculture (APPSA), the facility, set to launch in June, is situated on the grounds of the Lesotho Agricultural College.

A plant tissue culture laboratory provides a controlled environment where scientists grow and care for plant cells, tissues, and organs, ensuring the production of high-quality, disease-free plants.

This approach allows for the rapid multiplication of plants, supporting both research and farming efforts. The facility has been designed to eliminate contamination risks and regulate key growth factors such as temperature, humidity, light, and nutrients, ensuring plants develop optimally before being introduced to fields.

An integral feature of the laboratory is its gene bank, which will preserve a diverse collection of seeds crucial for climate-smart agriculture.

Monica Lephole, APPSA Lesotho Coordinator, highlighted the importance of this resource in supporting local adaptation and agricultural resilience.

“Gene banks preserve genetic diversity for future use. They empower farmers by providing locally adapted seeds, reducing dependence on external suppliers, and improving economic resilience,” she explained.

Lephole further emphasised the initiative’s role in transferring technology to lead farmers, who will be trained and provided with seed



stock to breed and multiply.

“These seeds will then be distributed to lower farmers and creating a sustainable supply chain.”

She described seed breeding as a critical agricultural practice that ensures farmers have access to high-quality, certified seeds tailored to local conditions.

“The importance of this area cannot be overestimated because yield, taste, storage potential, and other crop properties directly depend on seed quality. Selected seed production allows farmers to maintain productivity even under unfavourable conditions,” she clarified.

Lephole reaffirmed the Department of Agricultural Research’s commitment to equipping farmers with the best resources to thrive despite environmental challenges.

“By localising seed production, we are strengthening Lesotho’s agricultural resilience and ensuring a sustainable future for food security,” Lephole stated.

She also noted that the preserved genetic material in the gene bank would serve as a foundation for research, helping scientists explore plant evolution and develop new agricultural technologies.

Lead farmer ‘Maliketso Khabele when speaking with Seahlolo echoed the significance of this initiative, particularly in conserving indigenous seed varieties.

“Seed banks are important for saving both wild and farmed plant genetic resources. They help keep a wide range of plant species safe for future generations. These banks protect genetic material that is crucial for improving crops, fighting diseases, and adapting to climate change.”

“I also learned that indigenous seed varieties are a promising way to enhance food security in the country,” she said.

Traditionally, Lesotho’s farmers have relied on informal seed-saving methods, often resulting in poor-quality seeds and declining productivity. Reports from the Department of Agricultural Research indicate that this new initiative marks a major shift toward structured, science-driven seed production, offering farmers reliable access to superior crop varieties.

Lesotho Advances Water Security with Major Infrastructure and Smart Metering

By Lungile Maseela

Lesotho is making significant strides in strengthening its water infrastructure, with major projects advancing to improve access, efficiency, and sustainability.

This progress was the key focus of the annual Water Sector Coordinator Meeting held in Maseru by the Ministry of Natural Resources in commemoration of World Water Day which is marked on March 22 annually.

World Water Day, which has been celebrated annually since 1993, is an annual United Nations Observance focusing on the importance of freshwater.

World Water Day celebrates water and raises awareness of the 2.2 billion people living without access to safe water. It is about taking action to tackle the global water crisis. A core focus of World Water Day is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.

Every year, UN-Water — the UN’s coordination mechanism on water and sanitation — sets the theme for World Water Day and this year’s theme is - Glacier Preservation.

Bringing together key players in the water sector, the meeting reviewed accomplishments over the past year, assessed ongoing challenges, and outlined next steps for expanding Lesotho’s water security.

Present were representatives from the Lesotho Rural Water & Sanitation Project, the Lesotho Lowlands Water Development Project (LLWDP), the Department of Rural Water Supply, and the Water and Sewage Company (WASCO).

Thabiso Ts’asane, the LLWDP coordinator, provided an update on Phase II of the project, which is being financed by the World Bank and the European Investment Bank, with support from the European Union.

He highlighted the tangible progress in infrastructure development across priority zones, including Hlotse, Maputsoe, Mohale’s Hoek and Mafeteng.

“We have made great strides in constructing bulk water infrastructure, including intake structures, pump stations, raw water mains, service reservoirs, and transmission lines. This is a transformative project that will greatly improve access to clean water for thousands of Basotho,” Ts’asane stated.

He further emphasised the project’s long-term vision, saying; “Beyond expanding access, our goal is to ensure climate resilience by strengthening water management systems that can withstand extreme weather conditions.”

In addition to infrastructure expansion, WASCO is introducing advanced technology to improve efficiency in water usage and billing.

Dr. Khalema Koebe, WASCO’s interim CEO,



Thabiso Ts’asane, the LLWDP coordinator

presented the company’s new Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), a smart water metering system designed to reduce billing errors and give consumers greater control over their water usage.

“With these smart meters, customers will receive precise readings, eliminating the inaccuracies that come with estimation-based billing. Households will also be able to track their own water consumption in real time,” Koebe explained.

He described the AMI system as a game

changer for Lesotho’s water sector, adding, “This initiative not only improves revenue collection and operational efficiency for WASCO but also empowers consumers to make informed decisions about their water use.”

The meeting underscored the significant progress made in securing Lesotho’s water future through infrastructure expansion and innovative technology. Stakeholders expressed confidence that these developments will enhance access to clean water, reduce inefficiencies, and help communities adapt to climate change.

Modern Approaches to Combat African Armyworm Outbreak in Lesotho Through A Collaborative Effort Between Farmers and Experts

By Seabata Mahao

In recent months, Lesotho has faced a growing threat from the African armyworm (*Spodoptera exempta*), a highly destructive pest that jeopardises the livelihoods of farmers and the nation’s food security.

The infestation has been particularly devastating for maize, a staple crop for many Basotho households. However, as the threat intensifies, farmers and agricultural experts are turning to modern, innovative solutions to curb the spread and mitigate the damage caused by these pests.

Understanding the Armyworm Crisis
The African armyworm is notorious for its rapid reproduction and insatiable appetite. In Lesotho, its larvae feed voraciously on maize plants, significantly impacting the agricultural sector.

Favourable weather conditions, such as warm temperatures and increased rainfall, have exacerbated outbreaks in recent years, leading to extensive crop losses and heightened concerns about food security.

Traditionally, farmers have relied on chemical pesticides to control armyworm infestations, and while sometimes effective, this approach is costly, environmentally harmful, and poses health risks to both humans and wildlife.

Recognising these limitations, Basotho farmers and agricultural experts are now embracing integrated, sustainable strategies that combine technology, biological control, and community collaboration.

Harnessing Technology for Early Detection and Response

One of the most promising advancements in combating the African armyworm is the implementation of early warning systems.

Monongoaha Pelei, an independent Agriculture

and Forestry Consultant, highlights the role of satellite imagery and weather forecasting tools in predicting the occurrence and movement of armyworm outbreaks.

“These systems provide real-time updates to farmers, allowing them to take preventive action before infestations become severe,” Pelei explains.

In Lesotho, an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, supported by local agricultural institutions and international partners, is sending SMS alerts to farmers with information about potential outbreaks based on weather patterns.

By receiving early warnings, farmers can act swiftly, employing targeted control measures to reduce pesticide use and minimise environmental harm.

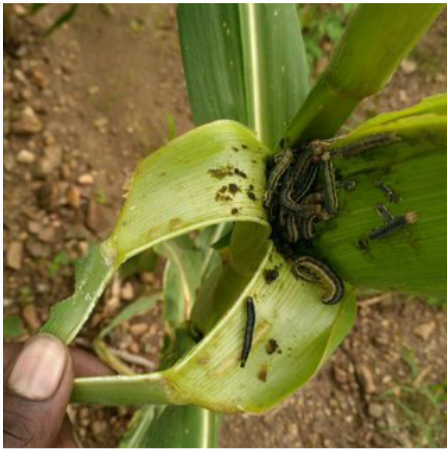
Biological Control: A Sustainable Alternative
Biological control is emerging as a crucial tool in the fight against armyworms and researchers have identified natural predators, such as parasitic wasps and nematodes, effectively regulate armyworm populations without the need for harmful chemicals.

“The government of Lesotho, in partnership with regional agricultural research institutions, is promoting the use of biocontrol agents and farmers are being trained to identify and support these natural predators in their fields. By fostering biodiversity, they can enhance their crops’ natural defences and create a more resilient farming ecosystem,” Pelei said.

Climate-Smart Agriculture and Crop Diversification

Lesotho’s mountainous terrain and unpredictable climate make it particularly vulnerable to pest outbreaks exacerbated by climate change. Climate-smart agriculture is playing a key role in modernising the country’s farming practices.

This approach focuses on improving soil health, optimising water management, and promoting the



use of drought-resistant crops, all of which enhance resilience against both pests and changing weather patterns, Pelei said.

He further stressed that crop diversification is another effective strategy for mitigating armyworm damage.

The expert encourages farmers to cultivate a variety of crops—such as legumes and vegetables—rather than relying solely on maize.

“This practice not only reduces the impact of an infestation but also contributes to a more balanced and sustainable agricultural system.”

Community Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

The fight against armyworms extends beyond modern techniques; it also relies on strong, knowledge-sharing communities.

“Basotho farmers have a long-standing tradition of exchanging farming insights, and agricultural extension services are leveraging this strength by facilitating farmer-to-farmer training sessions, so, through cooperatives and community meetings, experienced

farmers are sharing best practices on pest control, crop management, and sustainable farming methods.”

Additionally, local radio stations and social media platforms are being used to disseminate information about the ongoing outbreak and recommended control measures.

“This ensures that farmers across the country are well-informed and prepared to tackle infestations effectively.”

The Role of Collaboration: Farmers, Experts, and NGOs

Pelei indicates that a multi-stakeholder approach is proving to be instrumental in controlling the spread of armyworms.

“Various agencies, including NGOs and government bodies, are working together to provide farmers with access to pest-resistant seeds, training programs, and financial assistance to recover from pest-related losses.

“As Lesotho faces the persistent threat of the African armyworm, modernised farming techniques and collaborative efforts are essential. The adoption of sustainable, science-driven solutions is crucial to protecting crops, ensuring food security, and building resilience within our agricultural sector,” he said.

A Resilient Future for Lesotho’s Farmers

By integrating early warning systems, biological control methods, climate-smart agriculture, and knowledge-sharing networks, Lesotho is taking significant steps toward a more sustainable agricultural future. While the battle against the African armyworm continues, Basotho farmers are demonstrating resilience, innovation, and adaptability.

“With the support of modern science and collective action, farmers can safeguard their crops and secure the nation’s food supply for years to come,” Pelei concludes.

Invasive Worm Species Threatens Agricultural Production

By Kabelo Masoabi



Makeka Makhetha, a Crop Production Officer in the Ministry of Agric demonstrates how a moth trap works

The district of Leribe is grappling with an invasive worm species that is causing alarm among sorghum farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, through its Department of Crops, has confirmed the presence of these destructive pests.

The outbreak was first reported in the Likhetlane area a fortnight ago.

Local farmers raised the alarm after noticing unusual damage to their sorghum fields and upon investigation, agricultural extension officers identified the worms actively feeding on the crops.

While the species is yet to be identified, preliminary observations indicate that it poses a serious risk to both grain yield and forage quality.

Makeka Makhetha, a Crop Production Officer in the ministry, warns that the unchecked spread of this pest could significantly affect sorghum produc-

tion.

“They have already caused extensive damage, specifically targeting sorghum cobs, where they also lay a large number of eggs. Although their feeding behaviour is aggressive, their impact appears less severe than that of the African armyworm, which has been ravaging crops in the southern region,” he explained.

Unlike the African armyworm, which moves in large swarms and can devastate entire fields overnight, this newly discovered species appears to attack plants individually. This difference in behaviour requires a tailored approach to mitigation.

Samples of the worm have been sent to the Department of Research for laboratory analysis, Makhetha said.

“The findings will guide appropriate and environmentally friendly pest control strategies,” Makhetha

stated, adding that pheromone traps have already been deployed in affected areas to track the movement of moths and prevent further spread.

Farmer ‘Malisema Thabeli, who is experiencing the impact first-hand, expressed concern over her deteriorating crop.

“The infestation started over a week ago, and every day, I find more damage. These worms seem to target young sorghum cobs. At this rate, I fear my harvest will be significantly reduced,” she lamented.

This new infestation comes at a time when the African armyworm outbreak is already disrupting farming activities in southern region, particularly in Mhale’s Hoek, Liphiring, Makhaleng, Taung, and Mafeteng.

The Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with local communities, has intensified efforts to contain the outbreaks and these include targeted pesticide applications, increased pheromone trap deployment, and strengthened pest monitoring systems.

Minister of Agriculture Thabo Mofosi has called on farmers to report sightings of these pests to ex-

tension officers immediately.

“We have experience dealing with the African armyworm, and we are implementing mitigation strategies to contain its spread. However, timely intervention is key,” he stressed.

Lesotho has experienced multiple African armyworm outbreaks in the past, most notably between 2012 and 2015, when they devastated maize and sorghum crops across eight districts, including Berea, Leribe, and Maseru.

Experts note that armyworms thrive in humid conditions, often following periods of prolonged drought.

Their ability to migrate across vast distances, originating from countries like Zambia, Uganda, and Tanzania, increases the likelihood of recurrent infestations.

The simultaneous presence of the African armyworm and the newly discovered worm species has raised concerns among farmers and agricultural experts alike. Without effective and sustainable control measures, Lesotho risks significant crop losses, threatening food security and livelihoods.



Lesotho Faces Growing Food and Water Crisis: Climate Report Calls for Urgent Action

...Subjected to annual loss of over US\$57,000 due to deteriorating agricultural land

By Lerato Matheka

Lesotho's agriculture and water sectors are under severe threat from climate change, according to the recently published Technology Needs Assessment (TNA) for Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture and Water report.

The report, which assesses the country's vulnerabilities and proposes technological interventions, warns of dwindling water resources, declining crop yields, and worsening soil degradation that threaten the nation's food security.

Commissioned by the Government of Lesotho, the report highlights the urgent need for technological interventions to build resilience in these critical sectors.

The report, produced with support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), provides a stark warning from climate change amplifying food production challenges in Lesotho, farmers' struggles due to erratic rainfall, extended droughts, and soil degradation, to the hardened agriculture atmosphere in growing staple crops like maize, sorghum, and beans.

The report indicates that over the last few decades, the country has experienced an increase in magnitude of climate-induced hazards such as droughts, floods, heavy snowfall and extreme temperatures, noting these adversities tremendously impact sustainable livelihoods, security and well-being of society and contribute to increased incidences of poverty and undue pressures on social services.

It signalled that although Lesotho is an insignificant contributor to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it is among the countries that are and will continue to be severely impacted by climate change.

It points further that the country has thus committed itself to developing, adopting and implementing policies and measures that will assist it to adapt and increase its resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change, however, the slow technological mobilisation coupled with inadequate knowledge transfer and limited financial capacity, exacerbate systemic failures in addressing key drivers of climate vulnerability and inaction.

The crisis could not come at a worse time, as over 700,000 Basotho are already food insecure, with agricul-



Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation in Lesotho

ture remaining the primary source of livelihood for rural communities.

Despite these worsening conditions, the Ministry of Agriculture continues to operate without an increased budget, raising concerns about the government's ability to address the crisis.

"Lesotho heavily relies on rain-fed crop production systems, especially cereal staple crops such as wheat, beans, sorghum, and maize. However, changing weather patterns, including irregular rainfall, frequent and prolonged droughts, pose a significant threat to water availability."

The report highlights that Lesotho's agricultural output is already in decline, with farmers struggling to cope with erratic rainfall and soil erosion.

"Shifts in temperature and precipitation patterns can result in reduced crop yields or outright crop failure. Lesotho's agricultural sector heavily depends on rain-fed farming, making it highly susceptible to variations in rainfall. Rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall disrupt

planting and harvesting schedules, negatively impacting crop growth and quality."

Water Scarcity and Soil Degradation: The Silent Killers of Agriculture

The report shared that water scarcity is one of the biggest threats to agriculture in Lesotho, warning that drought conditions will continue to worsen, exacerbating food production challenges.

"Reduced water availability hampers crop growth, livestock rearing, and overall agricultural

productivity. Farmers are forced to rely on limited water sources, impacting their ability to maintain stability of production systems and sustain food and nutrition security for their livelihoods," it notes.

It indicated that the mountainous terrain of Lesotho, while scenic, makes the country highly vulnerable to soil erosion and land degradation, further complicating farming efforts.

"Climate change-induced factors, such as increased temperature, erratic rainfall, and extreme weather events, contribute to soil erosion and land degradation in Lesotho. Soil erosion reduces soil fertility, nutrient content, and water-holding capacity, making it difficult for farmers to cultivate crops successfully."

"The economic cost of land degradation is staggering, with the country losing over US\$57,000 per year due to deteriorating agricultural land," the report revealed.

Livestock Under Threat from Climate Change

Beyond crops, the report declares that Lesotho's livestock sector—which contributes 75% of the total agricultural output and 52% of agricultural GDP—is also experiencing major climate-related challenges.

"Increased temperatures, water scarcity, and the spread of diseases pose significant threats to livestock health and productivity. Heat stress reduces livestock productivity, and limited water availability impacts their overall well-being. Furthermore, changing climatic conditions facilitate the spread of vector-borne diseases, affecting animal health and increasing mortality rates," it said.

In the week, farmers have already started reporting increased cases of livestock diseases due to changing weather patterns, and in the last year the diseases outbreak led to higher mortality rates and lower productivity especially with the wool and mohair sector, according to the sector's associations.

How Can Lesotho Adapt? The Technology Roadmap

The TNA report identifies several key technologies that could help mitigate the impact of climate change on agriculture and water resources.

"The most urgent recommended adaptation technologies include;

- Decentralised Community-Run Early Warning Systems – To help farmers anticipate and prepare for extreme weather events.
- Rainwater Harvesting – Essential for irrigation and reducing reliance on erratic rainfall.
- Conservation Agriculture – Techniques like minimum tillage and soil conservation to protect farmlands.

And for water security, the report prioritises:

- Water Reuse Systems – Recycling water for irrigation and livestock.
- Groundwater Harvesting – Storing underground water for future agricultural use.
- Boreholes as a Drought Intervention – Expanding access to clean water sources in rural areas.

Can the Government Rise to the Challenge?

The TNA report makes it clear, "without immediate intervention, Lesotho's food and water security will continue to deteriorate."

Farmers across the country are already struggling with declining crop yields, worsening droughts, and the spread of livestock diseases.

"The vulnerabilities in Lesotho's agricultural sector have far-reaching consequences for rural communities. Agriculture is the primary source of income and livelihood for over 80% of rural households. Reduced agricultural productivity can lead to severe food shortages, malnutrition, and increased poverty levels," the report warned.

OPINION

Lesotho's Climate Change Policy: A Plan That Must Not Be Forgotten

By Lerato Matheka

As the world grapples with the growing threats of climate change, Lesotho finds itself on the frontlines of a crisis that is disrupting agriculture, depleting water resources, and threatening livelihoods. With unpredictable rainfall, prolonged droughts, and rising temperatures, it is clear that the impact of climate change is no longer a distant threat—it is here, and it is real.

Yet, amid these challenges, one critical document seems to have faded into the background: **Lesotho's National Climate Change Policy (2017-2027)**. This policy, designed to steer the country towards a climate-resilient and sustainable future, lays out concrete measures to mitigate and adapt to the devastating effects of climate change. But the question remains—how much of this policy has been effectively implemented?

A Policy That Promised Change

The National Climate Change Policy was introduced with the vision of creating a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy that safeguards the environ-

ment while promoting sustainable development.

The policy itself acknowledges Lesotho's high vulnerability to climate change, stating: "Water resources have greatly diminished (perennial springs, robust rivers, and many dams). Farming, a major source of living in rural areas, is in steady decline. In addition, soil loss and land degradation have accelerated."

These words were written in 2017, yet the situation has only worsened. We continue to witness drying rivers, eroded farmlands, and worsening food insecurity, yet the policy that was meant to address these issues remains largely overlooked in national discussions.

What Was the Plan?

The policy set out several key objectives to tackle climate change, including:

- Strengthening climate-smart agriculture to ensure food security.
- Investing in renewable energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
- Improving water conservation through better management and infrastructure.
- Enhancing disaster preparedness with early warning systems.

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions while promoting low-carbon development.

These objectives are not just ambitious statements; they are practical solutions to Lesotho's growing climate crisis. But as we move closer to 2027, the end of the policy's timeline, how much progress has really been made?

The Reality on the Ground

While Lesotho has taken some steps towards addressing climate change, implementation has been slow and inconsistent. Consider the following:

Agriculture: Despite plans to promote climate-smart farming, many farmers still rely on traditional methods that are failing in the face of droughts and erratic rainfall.

Water Management: The country's water resources continue to decline at an alarming rate, with some regions experiencing severe shortages. The policy proposed rainwater harvesting and water reuse systems, but widespread adoption remains limited.

Renewable Energy: While Lesotho has great potential for wind and solar power, investment in these areas has been minimal. Many rural communities still rely on wood and fossil fuels for energy.

Disaster Preparedness: Early warning systems for floods and droughts exist on paper, but in practice, many communities receive little to no timely information when disasters strike.

The lack of funding and weak policy enforcement have slowed progress, leaving the country vulnerable to climate-related disasters.

The Forgotten Crisis: Land Degradation and Soil Erosion

One of Lesotho's biggest environmental threats is soil erosion, yet this issue remains largely underreported. The policy explicitly highlights:

"Lesotho loses an estimated 40 million tons of soil per year through erosion, significantly affecting agricultural productivity and food security."

Despite this staggering statistic, efforts to combat land degradation are nowhere near sufficient. Sustainable land management techniques, such as reforesta-

tion and controlled grazing, have been implemented in only a handful of communities, leaving vast areas of land exposed and vulnerable.

The Role of Climate Finance: Where Is the Money?

The policy acknowledges that tackling climate change requires substantial funding. It proposed leveraging international climate funds and forming public-private partnerships (PPPs) to secure financial support. Yet, Lesotho's access to global climate finance remains weak, and domestic funding for climate initiatives is stagnant.

The government has received funding pledges from international bodies, but much of this support has yet to translate into visible change on the ground.

A Call to Action: The Policy Must Be Revived

The National Climate Change Policy was a bold step in the right direction, but a policy is only as strong as its implementation. As climate disasters become more frequent and severe, there is an urgent need to revive and enforce the commitments made in 2017.

The government must:

- Prioritise climate change in the national budget to ensure proper funding for adaptation and mitigation efforts.
- Accelerate renewable energy investments to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and combat deforestation.
- Expand climate-smart agriculture programs to help farmers adapt to changing weather patterns.
- Strengthen disaster preparedness systems to protect communities from floods, droughts, and extreme weather events.
- Hold policymakers accountable for ensuring that the policy does not remain just another document collecting dust.

A Policy That Cannot Be Ignored

Lesotho cannot afford to delay action on climate change any longer. The National Climate Change Policy was created as a blueprint for resilience, yet its impact remains limited due to slow implementation and weak enforcement.

With 2027 approaching, now is the time to reassess, reinvest, and reignite the fight against climate change. If we fail to act now, the consequences will be far more costly—for our environment, our economy, and future generations.

The policy exists. The solutions are known. The time to act is now.



Drought devastates crop production in Lesotho

THE WAIT IS OVER

FUMANANA EA HAU



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A passion for changing lives

Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL) is passionate about changing lives by contributing to Lesotho’s economic growth through its Corporate Social Investment (CSI) programme. Through this programme, RSL invests in various areas, including education, environmental conservation, entrepreneurship, sports, arts and culture, health, orphanages, and support for vulnerable communities. The primary objective of the RSL CSI programme is to make a meaningful contribution to the communities in which the Service operates. Here are some of the recent successful projects and initiatives that RSL has supported in implementing its CSI programme.



RSL Tree Planting Initiative

Following a successful campaign in 2023, where RSL, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, planted twenty thousand (20,000) trees to celebrate its 20th anniversary, the organization continued this initiative in 2024 by planting 21,000 trees. Through a partnership with Mantsopa Rotary Club and the Lesotho Defence Force, RSL planted 5,000 trees at Liphokoaneng, Berea, and 10,000 trees at Makoanyane Barracks. Additionally, more trees were planted at Mohlaka Oa Tuka Primary School (800), Masapong Primary School (780), Lords New Church High School (1400), Leqele High School (1020), Setebing Primary School (500), Metsoarong Primary School (500), Machache Primary School (500) and Metolong Primary School (500).



Hlokomela Banana

RSL continued its support to Hlokomela Banana Adopt a School Campaign through an injection of M124, 310.00 (One Hundred and Twenty Four Thousand, Three Hundred and Ten Maloti) towards the project. RSL adopted 14 schools for 2025 and a total of 802 girls will be provided with sanitary towels throughout the year. Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate Mohato Bereng Seeiso in 2015 founded the campaign with a view to alleviate social challenges that underprivileged girl children face in schools such as lack of sanitary towels. Hlokomela Banana initiative seeks to restore the dignity of Basotho girls, some of whom miss school for over 50 days annually when they are on their monthly periods. Through availing pads and toiletries to learners, the initiative under the Queen’s National Trust Funds seeks to enhance the girls learning environment.



Health

Annually, RSL supports the Cancer Walk by purchasing tickets for staff and sponsoring the event. This initiative aims to raise general awareness about cancer.



Bacha Entrepreneurship Project

Five youth businesses were given a new lease of life when they were announced as winners of 2024 Bacha Entrepreneurship Project (BEP). The top five winners were Setilo & Sons Lintel Manufacturing, Med-IQ Group, Kabo Farmyard Fertilizers, Mabatho Farms, and Agromoth. The project is intended to assist unemployed youth within the ages of 21 to 35 to become employers and drivers of economic growth by becoming entrepreneurs. The project, now in its 4th phase, is intended to build a crop of young entrepreneurs who can break the barriers to become job creators, not job seekers. The corporate social responsibility project which began in 2014 has established and developed twenty-eight (28) businesses in different sectors of the economy and 103 youth have been employed in the businesses. The project has also capacitated 188 youths with entrepreneurial skills. The project is proudly sponsored by Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL), Standard Lesotho Bank, and the Basotho Enterprise Development Corporation (BEDCO), with a combined seed capital of M1 million.



Sponsorship for the institutions of higher learning academic awards

In line with the strategy to invest in people and technology, aiming to become a leading data-driven organization, RSL supports academic awards for best performers at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and the Limkokwing University of Creative Technology. RSL presented awards for outstanding performance to three graduating students from the NUL. The recipients were Tsepang Nkoe, recognized as the Best Student in Information and Computer Technology, Mofihli Makatla, awarded Best Student in Economics, and Khalemang Legela, who received the award for Best Student in Accounting. RSL also presented awards to Moeketsi Lipholo as a best performer in creativity and innovation, graduating in Bsc Software Engineering with Multimedia and Khahloe Thathane – a nominee under Industry Award for Excellence in Diploma in Business Information Technology at the Likmokwing University of Creative Technology.

Culture

Moshoeshoe Walk (Menkhoaneng to Thaba-Bosiu)
RSL supported the 18th Annual Moshoeshoe Walk (Menkhoaneng to Thaba Bosiu) from 6th to 8th March 2025 through the participation of 40 employees in this historic event. The primary objective of the walk is to rekindle the spirit of unity among Basotho, as embodied in the legacy left to this great nation by its founder, Moshoeshoe I.



WHO WE ARE



OBJECTIVES:

The overall objective of the department is to provide a marketing policy environment that promotes competitiveness, private sector participation, market oriented production and diversified output in accordance with comparative/competitive advantage and the development of marketing systems.

MANDATE:

The Department is mandated to facilitate market development for agricultural products and to promote agricultural commercialization, value-adding, absorption of local products into global markets

and development of efficient marketing systems with an ultimate goal of attaining national goals of employment creation, food security and poverty alleviation.

DEPARTMENTAL FUNCTIONS

- “ Conduction of marketing research and provision of market information.
- “ Market development through establishment of marketing infrastructure and farmer’s capacity building.
- “ Facilitation of market access for agricultural products in global markets,
- “ Regulation of agricultural trade through issuance of licenses and permits for imports and exports.

DIVISIONS CROPS MARKETING DIVISION

- Field crops marketing section.
- Horticulture and Floriculture marketing section



LIVESTOCK MARKETING DIVISION

- Wool and Mohair marketing section
- Poultry marketing section
- Red meat and Livestock auctioning
- Piggery market section
- Dairy market section
- Fisheries marketing section
- Hides and skins marketing section

MARKET FACILITATION DIVISION

- Controls and Regulation section
- Statistics section
- Market Information section
- Contract farming section





Illustrated by Sekantši Mokhohlane, a locally based Mosotho artist whose work has reached the international stage.
Disclaimer: The story was developed with the financial support of the European Union (EU) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Integrated Catchment Management Coordination Unit (ICU), and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or the BMZ.



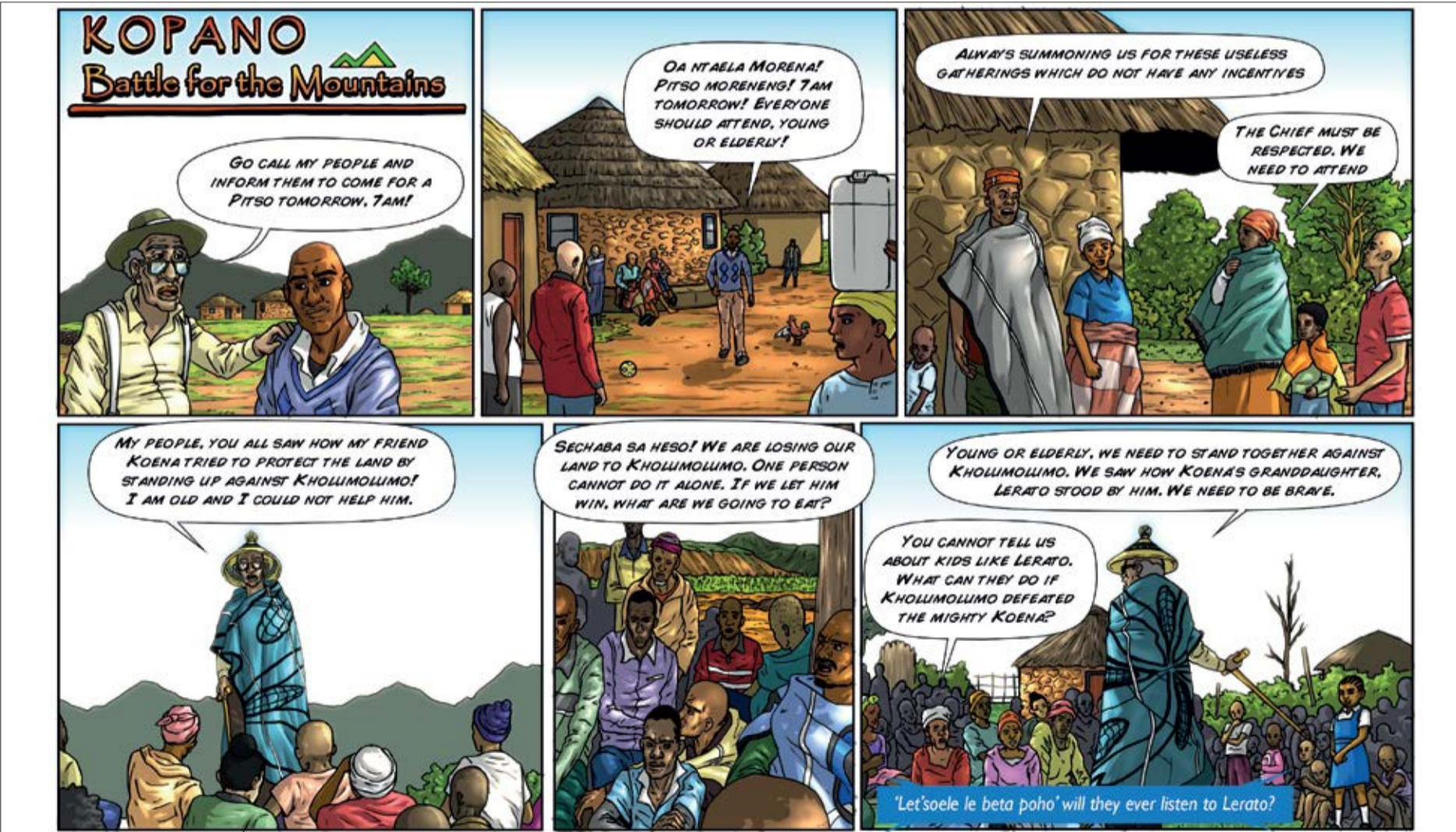
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The Kingdom of Lesotho
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition
Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project

Vacancy

The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFSN) has just started implementation of the Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project (WaMCoP), which is a 7 years project that covers the 10 districts of Lesotho. The project is financed by the Government of Lesotho, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), OPEC Fund for International Development, Global Environment Facility and beneficiary's contributions. The projects overall goal is to increase the economic and climate resilience of wool and mohair value chain stakeholders, with emphasis on wool and mohair farmers' livelihoods, including women and youth. The MAFSN has established the key positions of the project coordination unit and would like to make a call to the relevant professionals for the following additional positions:

1.
Position: Assistant Monitoring &Evaluation Officer
Duty Station: Maseru, Lesotho
Reports to: Monitoring &Evaluation officer
Number of positions: 1

Job Summary
The Assistant M&E Officer will support the M&E Officer in all data collection, analysis, and learning activities to help ensure accountability and efficiency of the project implementation for the Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project (WaMCoP). The incumbent will provide technical field support to the M&E unit and liaise with all beneficiary project departments engaging in the WaMCoP. The Assistant M&E Officer will work closely with technical offices (Livestock Production and Business Development) to assess field conditions, support capacity building initiatives, and facilitate the collection of quality data under the supervision of the M&E Officer.

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Program management Support

1.1 Support all M&E initiatives for assigned project, including monitoring data quality, tracking progress of activities, and contributing to staff capacity building initiatives as necessary.

2. **System Development**

2.1 Support in creating framework and procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of project activities

2.2 Support in defining and implementing key performance indicators as well as monitoring them throughout the duration of the projects.

2.3 Assist in proposing strategies to increase data use, communication and M&E culture

2.4 Support project staff and other stakeholders on ways to properly document, organize and capture project progress

2.5 Draft tools and their revisions as well as data collection procedures under the supervision of the M&E Officer (e.g. logical framework, project performance tracking, indicators, data flow chart, M&E manuals)

2.6 Support in the development of the management information systems.

3. **Data Management and Analysis**

3.1 Keep abreast of developments in project changes and progress in order to advise and recommend tools and strategies to increase project performance and results

3.2 Suggest ways to facilitate data collection and flow of data within project components

3.3 Identify strengths and weaknesses in existing data collection and management systems and propose solutions along with the M&E Officer

3.4 Perform regular field visits to ensure quality of data collected by project field staff and verify accuracy of reported data

3.5 Analyse changes and patterns in key performance indicators data and performance reports in order to support project beneficiaries

3.6 Supports data queries to ensure accurate and timely presentation and submission of required data.

3.7 Support and participate in project evaluations.

4. Communication and Reporting

4.1 Support M&E Officer in preparing required reports for timely submission.

4.2 Assist project stakeholders in developing log frames, M&E work plans, and targets throughout project implementation

4.3 Review and analyse periodic reports (weekly, monthly, quarterly, bi-annual and annual) with the M&E Officer to identify the causes of potential bottlenecks in project implementation and to enhance quality of reporting.

4.4 Collaborat with stakeholders in reviewing and preparing monthly, quarterly and final narrative and financial reports.

Qualification and Experience
Bachelor's degree in Economics, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation Plus minimum of 3 years in a similar position

Skills and Competencies

- Capacity to produce high-quality briefs and reports in English
- Proficiency in Ms Project, Ms Excel and any other quantitative data analysis tool
- Ability to design M&E tools, surveys, surveillance systems, and evaluations
- Demonstrated ability to train and build capacity of others
- Cultural sensitivity and flexibility are desired characteristics.
- Excellent command of both Sesotho and English language
- Experience with Development Partner project implementation i.e IFAD, OPEC, and GEF is desirable.

Mode and Duration of Contract
The duration of the assignment will be three years, renewable depending on satisfactory performance.

2.
Position: Assistant Procurement Officer
Report to: Procurement and Contracts Manager
Duty Station: Maseru
Number of positions: 1

Job Summary:
Under the supervision of Procurement and Contracts Manager, the Procurement Assistant will be responsible for assisting with planning, coordinating, executing and delivering project procurement function consistent with the agreed project procurement arrangement with quality and efficiency. The project follows IFAD Procurement Guidelines and procedures as stated in the Financing Agreement. Duties and responsibilities

- Ensure that the procurement function is delivered with the agreed requirements, and procedures stipulated in the agreements entered in by the Government of Lesotho and IFAD.
- Assist in the compilation of the requirements of different user departments to enable preparation of annual procurement plans
- Prepare bidding documents, evaluation reports and draft contracts using IFAD standard bidding documents;
- Prepare procurement plan and Uploads all procurement documents in the OPEN system for IFAD review and keeping the Contract Monitoring Tool updated;
- Participate in relevant tender committee meetings and assist with the preparation of committee reports;

- Solicit quotations from Suppliers for national and international shopping procurement methods;
- Prepare advertisements for the local and international newspapers pertaining to active procurement activities;
- Support safekeep and confidentiality of all procurement documents, including bids/quotations/ proposals received, various securities.
- Take part in evaluation of quotations /bids and prepare draft evaluation reports for review by the Procurement and Contracts Manager;
- Fill in the requisition forms and initiate preparation of purchase orders to commence contractual relationship with the selected Supplier;
- Inspect the goods delivered in consultations with the user department to ensure that the supplier has satisfied its contractual obligations, and the goods delivered are in accordance with the agreed specifications;
- Keep track of various contractual deliverables from the suppliers/contract/consultants and send reminder as needed
- Guide the user departments on how to prepare terms of reference for consultancy services;
- Track payment to suppliers/contract/consultant against all contracts and follow up on delays in payments
- Maintain the contract register and regularly update the same with monitoring data on progress of all contracts;
- Liaise with user departments, bid evaluation committees, procurement staff of MAFSN and other stakeholders for smooth conduct of procurement functions
- Participate in procurement audits and reviews of the Project;

Qualification and Experience
Degree in Business Management Studies/ Business Administration/ Supply Chain Management/ Procurement. CIPS Advanced Diploma Certificate is an added advantage
Have a minimum of 3 years dealing with procurement of civil works, goods, and services, and award of contracts.

Skills and Competencies

- Planning and organizing skills
- Effective Communication & negotiation skills
- Results oriented
- A high level of interpersonal skills and ability to work with teams.

Mode and Duration of Contract
The duration of the assignment will be three years, renewable depending on satisfactory performance.

SUBMISSION
Interested candidates' applications should be accompanied by detailed CVs, certified copies of national identity document, educational certificates and transcripts and be delivered to the address below not later than **18 April 2025 At 16:00hrs**
The Director Human Resources
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition
80 Constitution Road
P.O. Box 24
Maseru 100

Only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

Thabo Moleko (Mr.)
Principal Secretary - MAFSN



Government of Lesotho

LESOTHO COMPETITIVENESS AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION PROJECT (LESOTHO HORTICULTURAL INCUBATION & TRAINING CENTRE)

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
FOR
INCUBATION OF LESOTHO FRUIT FARMERS

The Lesotho government, through the World Bank financed Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project, is supporting the establishment of a Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre (LHITC), located at Mahobong in Leribe district, with the objective of scaling and replicating existing deciduous fruit commercial orchards and attracting new investments into the horticulture sector. The pilot farms established under the first and second World Bank financed Private Sector Competitiveness and Economic Diversification projects (PSCEDP) have successfully demonstrated the commercial potential to produce deciduous fruits in Lesotho for both the domestic and export markets, and there is already significant interest from investors in commercial horticulture. However, these investments can only be realized with a coordinated effort to address land administration challenges including the availability of land parcels of adequate size for commercial scale production and adopting a transparent leasing system to achieve a credible land ownership. There is also a need for coordinated infrastructure investments in irrigation, electricity, roads, packhouses, phytosanitary inspection systems and grading, and private-public partnerships to deliver effective training and skills, and impactful extension services. It is against this background that the Government of Lesotho has established the Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre.

The LHITC is located in an existing facility which is owned by the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and it is adjacent to the existing pilot commercial farms. The Centre will be operated in partnership with the National University of Lesotho (NUL).

The objective of LHITC is to provide support for scaling commercial horticulture farming in Lesotho, building on the experience of the current pilot commercial farms and addressing gaps in the value chain, access to suitable land, infrastructure, extension services, skills, finance, and markets while promoting climate smart agricultural practices.

The LHITC is currently incubating the first cohort of 7 deciduous fruit farmers and 2 vegetables farmers.

The CAFI Project Management Unit, now invites farmers and farmers groups to indicate their interest to participate in the second cohort of the full horticultural incubation program. Interested farmers should provide information demonstrating that they meet eligibility criteria below.

The selection criteria will be based on the following key requirements:

Applicants (individual farmers or farmers groups) must have:

- Access to suitable land of **the minimum size of 5 ha** (owned or rented), for at least a period of 30 years if rented, **with a proof of land ownership documents in the name of the Applicant.** The required acceptable documents are Form Cs, Leases or subleases (if the land is rented).
- The site close to a good source of quality irrigation water that will provide adequate water to irrigate an orchard of at least 5ha.
- Access road linking the site with the main road and should be in a good condition.
- The site that is close to electricity supply or other sustainable sources of power for irrigation and other functions of the orchard.

Note:
In the case of farmers groups, they must have proof of an existing legal entity (Cooperative or Company), or they must provide letter of intent to form a company or Cooperative signed by all group members. However, all members of the group must have Land Ownership Documents stated in (1) above. Experience in commercial farming will be an added advantage.

Format of EOI submissions
The applicants should include at least the following information in their submissions to enable objective assessment of the expressions of interest:

- Applicant information including name, address, cell phone, working e-mail, website (if any), names of a Project Manager (if different from applicant).
- Certified copies of land ownership documents.
- Proof of acreage from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.
- Description of the location of the site where the orchard is intended to be established.

Further information and suitability maps can be obtained at the address below during office hours [08h00 to 16h30 local time].
Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form, in sealed envelopes labelled **“Incubation of Lesotho Fruit Farmers”** to the address below in person or by e-mail on or before **Friday, 04th April 2025 at 16h30.** E-mail submissions should be sent to procurement@cafi.org.ls with a copy to nsupu@cafi.org.ls as a single attachment.

Managing Director
Lesotho Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion Project
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Lesotho
Tel.: (+266) 22 315 100

NB: This call for expression of interest is open to all Basotho farmers, including those who participated in the first and second cohort pre-incubation program.

From Farm to Fortune: Nutrition Club Member Sees Business Potential in Food Preservation

By Ntsoaki Motaung



For ‘Matšepang Molema, a vegetable producer and a member of the Bokamoso Mabuthile Nutrition Club, a week-long training on food preservation has been a game changer.

What was once just a household activity for survival is now a promising business opportunity in her eyes.

“The training opened my eyes. I realised I had been sitting on a business opportunity all along,” Molema shared.

Molema was a participant of a week-long training organised and facilitated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, through its Nutrition Department and in partnership with the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II),

Like many small-scale farmers, Molema has been growing vegetables purely for consumption. Until now, she had never considered pre-



Members of the Nutrition Club

serving food for future use or as a commercial venture.

“The training taught us how to preserve different types of food for times when they are out of season. It is important because even after months, preserved food still provides essential nutrients,” she explained.

While climate change is presenting growing challenges for farmers, food preservation provides a lifeline for nutrition and food security.

Mamonehela Ntsukunyane, another member of the nutrition club, highlighted erratic weather patterns and extreme heat as major threats to production of crops, citing lack of water as the biggest problems.

“We don’t have reliable access to water, which makes it difficult to produce food in large quantities. Even when we manage to grow crops, we struggle to get seeds and pesticides,” Ntsukunyane said.

She indicted that limited resources are preventing small-scale farmers from reaching their full potential, making food preservation skills

even more critical in ensuring food availability throughout the year.

To address these challenges, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, through its Nutrition Department and in partnership with the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II), has launched food preservation campaigns across the country.

According to Keketso Seleteng, Leribe District Nutrition Officer, these campaigns aim to accelerate food preservation practices and educate communities on the importance of food security and sustainability.

“We have completed training in six districts, including Leribe. Nutrition clubs have been trained in various cooking and food preservation techniques, proper hygiene practices, and the latest preservation technologies,” Seleteng explained.

Seleteng further explained that the training covered cooking and food preservation methods for different food types, the use of natural and artificial preservatives to extend shelf life,



proper hygiene during food preparation and storage, new preservation technologies that improve food quality, the importance of measurements and labeling in food preservation, and teamwork and food safety protocols.

“With more farmers recognising the benefits of food preservation, there is a growing opportunity to turn these skills into profitable agribusiness ventures, he said noting preserved foods, such as dried fruits and vegetables, could open new markets for local farmers, allowing farmers to sell their produce beyond harvest seasons and reduce post-harvest losses.

For Molema and other nutrition club members, the training is just the beginning.

“With continued support, resources, and access to markets, food preservation could not only enhance food security but also create economic opportunities for smallholder farmers across Lesotho,” Ntsukunyane said.

Lesotho’s Nutrition Dialogues: A Call to Action for Food Security and Equity

By Lerato Matheka



Nutrition Dialogues

Lesotho’s battle against malnutrition is not a new fight, but recent Nutrition Dialogues have reignited the urgency to tackle food insecurity in the country.

The dialogues, launched by World Vision International (WVI) and the 4SD Foundation, have provided a powerful platform for stakeholders—

from farmers to policymakers—to discuss the root causes of hunger and malnutrition.

At a time when 403,000 people (27% of the rural population) are projected to experience acute food insecurity by early 2025, the dialogues could not be more crucial.

For too long, decisions about food security

have been made without input from the people most affected, but the Nutrition Dialogues set out to change this by incorporating voices that have historically been ignored and this was covered by an implementation report prepared by the leading organisations.

“The Nutrition Dialogues in Lesotho seek to address this gap by providing structured platforms for these underrepresented voices to express their needs and priorities, ensuring that efforts to combat malnutrition are both equitable and sustainable,” the report explained the objective citing participants included women, small-scale farmers, faith leaders, and even children, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing malnutrition.

“Children’s workshops were particularly innovative, using drawings and storytelling to engage young voices in discussions about nutrition.”

The Take Homes From The Dialogues

The dialogues highlighted five key factors driving food insecurity in the country:

- Food Insecurity and Economic Barriers – High unemployment and poverty prevent many families from producing or purchasing enough food.
- Climate Change and Environmental Challenges – Droughts and erratic rainfall have severely reduced agricultural yields.
- Weak Agricultural Systems – Poor mar-

ket access and lack of farming resources hinder food production.

- Limited Nutrition Awareness – Cultural beliefs and knowledge gaps about healthy eating contribute to poor dietary choices.
- Policy Gaps and Lack of Government Support – Weak enforcement of agricultural policies and market instability discourage smallholder farmers.

The Urgent Need for Action

“The Nutrition Dialogues were not just an intellectual exercise—they were a wake-up call. If Lesotho fails to act on these findings, hunger and malnutrition will continue to rise,” the report warned.

Some recommendations to tackle food insecurity included; strengthening agricultural resilience through climate-smart farming and better irrigation systems, improving food distribution and market access for smallholder farmers, expanding school feeding programs to ensure children receive nutritious meals, and scaling up water conservation efforts to support sustainable farming.

A Call to Keep the Momentum Alive

The report pointed out that the Lesotho Nutrition Dialogues have laid the foundation for meaningful policy changes, but action must follow and the country must come together to ensure that food security remains a national priority.

A Brighter Future for Quthing Poultry Farmers as Mofosi Commits to Growth

By Katleho Mohanoe

Small-scale poultry farmers in Quthing are set for a transformative shift, following a capacity-building training session led by Moyeni MP Thabo Mofosi.

Speaking at the event, held at Hills-View Hall, Mofosi, who is also minister of agriculture, pledged his support in helping local poultry farmers boost productivity and secure a lucrative future in the industry.

The training, which attracted over 180 poultry farmers from both urban and rural areas of Quthing, focused on equipping farmers with modern techniques to improve chicken production and profitability.

Mofosi, alongside a team of expert trainers, emphasised that success in poultry farming requires perseverance and innovation.

In an interview, Mofosi outlined his vision for small-scale poultry farmers in Quthing, aiming to elevate them from subsistence producers to commercial entrepreneurs.

“Basotho have long kept chickens for household consumption or as a delicacy for visiting relatives and friends. That narrative must change. Poultry farming should become a viable business that sustains families and contributes to the national economy,” he asserted.

Recognising that Quthing has historically lagged in agricultural development, Mofosi explained why the project is being piloted in the district.

“I provided this free training because the South is often left behind in development initiatives. This project will start here and later expand to other districts,” he stated.

Mofosi assured farmers that his support goes beyond training. His plan includes establishing a guaranteed market for poultry producers, ensuring that their efforts translate into tangible financial gains.

“Our production will align with market demands. Initially, I will assist farmers in optimising their production processes. Then, we will set up an abattoir, where individual poultry farmers can process their chickens for retail. The goal is to supply packaged chicken meat to major retailers like Shoprite,” he revealed.

For many participants, the training was a turning point.

Limpho Maliehe, a 21-year-old farmer from Tosing, expressed newfound confidence in poultry farming.

“This training made me realize that I can start small and grow into a large-scale producer. Poultry farming can be a stable source of income. I am eager to return home and encourage other young people to explore this opportunity,” she said.

She further commended Mofosi for his efforts, emphasising that young people need support and mentorship to thrive in agriculture.

Similarly, ‘Makhothatso Monakane from Motse-Mocha Mastise noted that the training introduced innovative solutions to common farming challenges.

“As poultry farmers, we often face obstacles that seem insurmountable. This training provided practical strategies to overcome them. It also created a platform for experienced farmers to grow their businesses and for beginners to start on the right path,” she remarked.

Many attendees highlighted the importance of shifting the perception of poultry farming from mere survival to entrepreneurship.

Khethisang Koro from K’hok’hobe shared his takeaway from the event; “We must rethink poultry farming as a business venture. Our production must meet market demand, and collaboration is key to success.”

Echoing similar sentiments, Anna Shale from Qomoqomong, Ha Mokhameleli stressed that poultry training goes beyond farming skills.

“These trainings are invaluable because they teach us how to be not just poultry farmers, but also successful businesspeople and financial managers,” she said.

One of the trainers, ‘Masechaba Ramphoko, a Food and Nutrition Security Specialist, praised the high level of engagement among participants.

“Poultry farming does not end with production—it directly impacts food security. We covered topics such as changing mind-sets and embracing modern techniques. Without the right mind-set, even the best strategies won’t yield success,” she explained.

Lesotho’s Agricultural Researchers to Showcase Horticultural Breakthroughs at Regional Conference

By Seahlolo Reporter

Lesotho is set to take center stage in agricultural research as the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) prepares to present its latest findings on horticultural technologies suited to the country’s unique climatic conditions.

The presentation will be made at the upcoming Regional Scientific Conference on Agricultural Innovation, an event hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition in collaboration with DAR and the Agricultural Productivity Programme for Southern Africa – Lesotho (APPSA).

The conference, scheduled for April 1-4 at the Lesotho National Convention Centre (‘Manthabiseng) in Maseru, will be co-hosted by the Centre for Coordination of Agriculture Research and Development (CCARDESA), the Agricultural Research Institute of Angola, APPSA Angola, the National University of Lesotho, and the Lesotho Agricultural College.

Under the theme “Investing in Agricultural Research for Sustainable Economic Growth in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region,” the event aims to bring together researchers, policymakers, development agencies, agro-dealers, and smallholder farmers to explore advancements in agricultural research and technology adoption.

The APPSA project, backed by the World Bank, is a regional program designed to strengthen agricultural research collaboration across Southern Africa. Its goal is to increase access to improved agricultural technologies, helping countries enhance food security and economic development.

According to Monica Lephole, APPSA Coordinator in Lesotho, the conference is expected to attract



APPSA Coordinator Mrs Monica Lephole

over 400 participants, including scientists, investors, and smallholder farmers.

“Discussions will cover critical areas such as crop improvement, production systems, postharvest technologies, and socio-economic studies. Farmers will gain insights into recommended horticultural products that are best suited for Lesotho’s agro-climatic conditions,” Lephole told Seahlolo Newspaper.

One of the key focus areas of APPSA Lesotho is the identification of high-yielding potato seed varieties, their adaptability to different soil types, and effective disease management strategies.

Lephole further revealed that researchers are also working on determining optimal fertiliser application rates and assessing suitable types of manure for enhancing productivity.

Beyond potatoes, the program is studying resilient green vegetable varieties, including indigenous crops

like papasane and thepe, which have strong nutritional and market potential.

“Research is also underway to explore the commercial viability of crops such as onions, asparagus, and peach trees, particularly in relation to Lesotho’s diverse agro-ecological zones,” she said.

She highlighted that the DAR is conducting these research activities from its main station in Maseru, alongside four regional research stations strategically positioned across Lesotho’s different agro-ecological zones of Mahobong (northern lowlands), Silioe (southern lowlands), Mokhotlong (mountains/highlands) and Nyakosoba (central foothills).

Lephole noted that their collaboration with the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and the Lesotho Agricultural College is playing a pivotal role in the project, helping bridge the gap between scientific research and practical farming applications.

“Our primary objective is to develop high-value plant materials that demonstrate yield efficiency, pest and disease resistance, drought tolerance, and strong market viability. Additionally, we aim to strengthen institutional linkages at both local and regional levels for effective technology transfer,” Lephole explained.

APPSA is a multi-country initiative, initially launched in 2013 with Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia as the first participants before expanding into Lesotho and Angola in 2019, with both countries expected to implement the initiative until June 2025.

As part of the conference, regional researchers according to Lephole would present findings from their respective countries, offering recommendations on crops and technologies that can be successfully adopted in Lesotho based on similar climatic conditions.

The conference she said would also serve as a platform to review ongoing APPSA projects, assess progress, and shape the future of horticultural innovation in the region.

Farmers Pitso Expands to Fifth District, Empowering Agricultural Stakeholders Across Lesotho



Farmers Pitso in Qacha

By Molula Mofosi

Since its inception in Maseru in 2019, Farmers Pitso has grown into one of Lesotho’s most significant agricultural networking platforms, recognising farmers, their innovations, and agribusiness achievements.

On March 15, 2025, the initiative expanded further, launching its fifth district event in Qacha’s Nek—a step closer to its goal of establishing a presence in all ten districts of Lesotho.

Co-founder Thabiso Matsoele, a farmer himself, emphasised that Farmers Pitso is more than an event; “...it is a platform designed by farmers, for farmers, to equip agricultural stakeholders with essential agribusiness skills. The initiative has already been launched in Maseru, Thaba-Tseka, Mohale’s Hoek, Mafeteng, and now Qacha’s Nek, while farmers in Leribe and Butha-Buthe have also benefited from its market initiatives, despite not having an official launch.”

“Farmers Pitso connects producers, processors, retailers, and everyone involved in the agricultural value chain to exchange knowledge and form partnerships,” Matsoele explained.

Building a Stronger Agricultural Value Chain in Lesotho

Matsoele described that agriculture is a multifaceted industry with over twenty branches spanning crop production, livestock, agri-processing, technology, and forestry and to strengthen Lesotho’s agricultural value chain, Farmers Pitso seeks to encourage collaboration between primary agricultural stakeholders, reducing supply chain costs and fostering local market integration.

The importance of this approach is highlighted in a 2011 study by Jacques H. Trienekens in the International Food and Agribusiness Management Review, which states

that producers must gain control over production, trade, and distribution to ensure product quality, fair pricing, and economic sustainability.

Farmers Pitso aligns with this principle by promoting localised market access, reducing the need for expensive transportation to Maseru, and equipping farmers with the knowledge to improve their productivity, trade opportunities, and resilience to climate change.

Encouraging Farmers to Explore Multiple Value Chains

During the Qacha’s Nek launch, ‘Mathabo Tsepa, chairperson of the Qacha Farmers Association, urged farmers to diversify their agribusiness efforts rather than relying on single-income streams.

“If you are a pork producer, you can venture into logistics and invest in reefer trucks. That will not only reduce your transportation costs but also generate additional income by transporting meat and fresh produce for other farmers,” said Tsepa.

Farmers Pitso serves as a platform for creative thinking, helping agricultural entrepreneurs identify new opportunities within their industries, Tsepa explained to the farmers and further encouraged them to reduce dependence on external aid and instead explore innovative ways to make their farming businesses self-sustaining.

“Let us stop thinking that farming is a one-way street and start finding ways to sustain ourselves,” she added.

By connecting young innovators with industry experts, policymakers with agricultural beneficiaries, and farmers with cutting-edge technologies, Matsoele said the initiative fosters growth, knowledge-sharing, and networking among stakeholders.

Overcoming Challenges in Lesotho’s Agricultural Sector

Agricultural value chains in developing countries often

face several structural obstacles, as noted by Trienekens’ study and these include; limited access to infrastructure and institutional support, scarce financial resources for small-scale producers, reliance on traditional farming methods, minimal integration with regional and international markets.

Lesotho faces similar challenges and according to the World Food Programme (WFP) Annual Country Report 2023, released in April 2024, 49.7% of Lesotho’s population lives below the food poverty line.

The report further noted that small-scale farmers struggle with high input costs, lack of investment capital, and poor market access, which limit their ability to scale up their businesses.

“Farmers Pitso is more than just an awards program. We coordinate farmers’ markets in different districts, including the launch markets to help agricultural producers reach new customers and strengthen the value chain within Lesotho,” Matsoele emphasised.

Recognising and Rewarding Agricultural Excellence

Following each district launch, Farmers Pitso hosts an awards ceremony, acknowledging outstanding stakeholders in the agricultural sector.

Matsoele believes that recognition is a powerful motivator for farmers to work harder and innovate within their respective fields.

“The best way to motivate a person is to award them for their work well-done. This recognition encourages farmers to push for excellence, knowing their hard work will be acknowledged,” he explained.

A Vision for National Expansion and Partnerships

Matsoele pointed out that Maseru itself lacks sufficient arable land, making it essential to extend outreach programs to other districts where farming is more viable.

“Through these efforts, Farmers Pitso helps farmers understand climate change, crop resilience, and innovative agribusiness models, ensuring continued food security for both local and national markets,” he said.

Working With the Ministry of Agriculture

Farmers Pitso has become a crucial partner in strengthening Lesotho’s agricultural sector, supplementing the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

The Farmers Pitso team worked alongside the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure the success of the Qacha’s Nek launch, receiving hospitality support in the form of food and accommodation. However, Matsoele clarified that while the ministry assisted with logistics, there are currently no formal agreements between the two entities.

“We appreciate the ministry’s support during this launch, but Farmers Pitso remains an independent platform. Our mission is to collaborate with organisations and the government to further empower farmers through knowledge-sharing and market access,” he said.



Restoring Land and Transforming Agriculture: The Impact of ROLL on Basotho Farmers

By Lerato Matheka

Lesotho’s agricultural sector is undergoing a significant transformation as farmers adopt agroecology skills and land restoration techniques to combat environmental degradation and enhance productivity.

With years of overgrazing, soil erosion, and climate change negatively impacting the country’s food production, initiatives like the Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods (ROLL) project are playing a crucial role in empowering communities and ensuring sustainable farming practices.

Funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), and the Government of Lesotho, ROLL is an ambitious eight-year initiative that aims to regenerate degraded landscapes while simultaneously improving the livelihoods of rural farmers.

The project is currently being implemented in five districts—Thaba-Tseka, Leribe, Berea, Qacha’s Nek, and Botha-Bothe—where it is expected to directly benefit approximately 100,000 people and indirectly support up to 340,000 rural Basotho.

One of the most pressing challenges for Basotho farmers has been soil erosion and land degradation, which have drastically reduced agricultural productivity. The ROLL project is tackling this issue head-on by promoting agroecology-based farming techniques that restore soil health, increase biodiversity, and enhance climate resilience.

“The project ensures rural communities in Lesotho adopt transformational practices for regenerated landscapes and sustainable livelihoods,” states the Report on the use of the Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) in Lesotho in the context of the Restoration of Landscape and Livelihoods Project (ROLL).

Through ROLL, farmers are learning about crop rotation, intercropping, organic composting, and water conservation techniques, all of which reduce the need for chemical inputs while improving yields.

The project also supports sustainable livestock management, encouraging farmers to replace low-quality breeds with improved ones to reduce overgrazing and enhance wool and mohair quality.

According to the Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE), which was implemented in Lesotho as part of ROLL, many local farms are still in the early stages of agroecological transition.

The study found that less than 5% of farms could be considered fully agroecological while most farms scored below 50% on the agroecological transition scale.

The study further indicated that diversified farms (those integrating crops, livestock, and horticulture) performed significantly better than monoculture farms.

“The use of TAPE in these territories provided important data and key information about the overall sustainability of farms measured by different indicators of performance,” the report notes.

Despite these challenges, the report highlighted that farms adopting agroecology techniques saw higher productivity, greater resilience, and improved food security, underscoring the importance of expanding these practices nationwide.

Tackling Climate Change and Food Security

Lesotho is particularly vulnerable to climate change, with erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and soil erosion threatening agricultural pro-

duction and according to the study, the ROLL project is addressing these issues by restoring rangelands, implementing water conservation techniques, and promoting sustainable grazing management.

“Environmental resilience and capacity to adapt to climate change is very low, especially due to the lack of diversification and soil erosion in mountain landscapes,” the report states.

To strengthen climate resilience, ROLL is working with community coalitions, grazing associations, and women’s savings groups to promote knowledge-sharing and ensure that farm-

ing techniques are tailored to Lesotho’s specific environmental conditions.

The Role of Women and Youth in Sustainable Agriculture

One of ROLL’s key focus areas is ensuring greater participation of women and youth in agriculture and the study found that while men still dominate livestock farming, women play a significant role in crop production, food preservation, and community-led agricultural initiatives.

The project is also encouraging youth involvement by supporting education and training programs in agroecology.

The Impact of Agroecology and the ROLL Project



Land Rehabilitation Initiative through tree planting by ROLL

By Lungile Maseela

Farming sustains life in Lesotho, yet years of overgrazing, soil erosion, and climate change have left vast landscapes barren.

In response, the Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods (ROLL) project is leading efforts to restore degraded land and secure sustainable farming livelihoods through agroecology.

Funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and implemented with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA), ROLL is reshaping agricultural practices across the country.

At the heart of ROLL’s mission is agroecology—an approach that integrates traditional knowledge, biodiversity, and ecological resilience to improve soil health and sustainability.

However, the transition to these methods remains slow, as highlighted in the Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE), a study conducted on 200 farms across four agro-ecological zones in Lesotho.

The findings show that while some farmers are embracing agroecological practices, many still rely on monoculture farming, which depletes soil nutrients and reduces long-term productivity.

“Most farms still rely on monoculture, and few have adopted diversified farming techniques

that could improve soil health and long-term sustainability,” the report states.

Despite the challenges, the study found that farms implementing agroecological practices saw better economic returns, with diversified farms—those integrating crops and livestock—generating higher productivity and income than those practicing monoculture.

Breaking Barriers: Knowledge, Market Access, and Climate Challenges

The shift toward agroecology is not without hurdles. Many Basotho farmers lack access to markets, technical knowledge, and financial resources needed to transition fully to sustainable farming. Additionally, climate change continues to threaten yields, making it difficult for farmers to maintain consistent food production.

“Another challenge is the low participation of women and youth in agroecological farming, especially in livestock production,” the report notes.

It stresses that cultural norms still dictate who owns land and makes agricultural decisions, often leaving women and young people out of the equation.

“For Lesotho to achieve true agricultural sustainability, empowering these groups must be a priority.”

Agroecology’s Role in Restoring Landscapes and Strengthening Livelihoods

The ROLL project is working to foster

“By promoting sustainable agribusiness opportunities, ROLL aims to curb rural-to-urban migration and create economic prospects in farming communities.”

With just a few years left before the project concludes in 2028, stakeholders are focused on ensuring the long-term success of agroecology and land restoration initiatives.

The project is advocating for policy reforms to support agroecological transitions, additional funding to expand restoration projects and building stronger partnerships between farmers, researchers, and policymakers.

knowledge sharing, enhance access to resources, and create supportive environments for sustainable agriculture.

It promotes diversified farming systems that integrate different crops, livestock, and income-generating activities, encouraging efficient resource use and reducing dependence on external inputs.

A key focus of ROLL has been its work in restoring degraded rangelands.

The project supports sustainable livestock management by introducing better-quality breeding stock to reduce overgrazing while enhancing wool and mohair production. Farmers are also trained in water conservation techniques, helping them adapt to erratic rainfall and prolonged droughts.

“The success of wool and mohair farmers in the highlands demonstrates how organised co-operatives can improve market access—a model that could benefit crop farmers as well,” the study suggests.

A Vision for the Future: Scaling Up Agroecology in Lesotho

While progress is being made, the TAPE study emphasises that more efforts are needed to scale up agroecological practices and strengthen Lesotho’s food systems.

The report highlights key recommendations, including; improved knowledge-sharing networks to ensure farmers receive technical training and support, government incentives for sustainable farming to encourage more farmers to adopt agroecological methods, stronger local markets to improve profitability and sustainability and increased resilience to economic and environmental shocks through diversified farming practices.

Early results from the study indicate a positive correlation between agroecological transition and economic performance, with more advanced farms demonstrating higher productivity and improved incomes.

The project also emphasises gender equality, youth empowerment, and better access to resources and markets, ensuring that all farmers benefit from these advancements.

ROLL’s Lasting Impact on Basotho Farmers

As the ROLL project continues, its success will be measured not only by improvements in land restoration but also by the long-term resilience of the farming communities it supports. With just a few years remaining before its completion in 2028, stakeholders must ensure that the knowledge, skills, and structures put in place remain sustainable.