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Donor-Funded Agriculture Projects Uplift Lesotho's Rural Economy

...Over M550 million grants and loans mobilised in the last three years



By Lerato Matheka

Agriculture remains the heartbeat of Lesotho's rural economy, and while government allocations provide foundational support, it is externally funded agricultural projects that are driving most of the sector's meaningful transformation.

The Consolidated Budget Report for 2025/2026 reveals that over M400 million worth of agricultural investments are being implemented outside of the government's core budget, making a visible difference in the lives of farmers, cooperatives and rural communities.

"In total, donor-funded projects in agriculture have mobilised over M550 million in active grants and loans over the past three years, nearly double the annual public allocation to the sector. This financing has not only filled critical budget gaps but also introduced innovations that the government can learn from and scale nationally," the report noted.

At the forefront is the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project Phase II (SADP II), a joint initiative funded by the World Bank, IFAD, and the Japan Policy and Human Resources Development Fund.

As of 2024, the project has disbursed M278.7

million and continues to support productivity, market access, and institutional capacity for smallholder farmers across Lesotho.

According to the report, SADP II has reached 14,020 direct beneficiaries, with 44% being women and 37% youth.

It has supported over 200 matching grants, empowering farmer cooperatives to invest in greenhouses, irrigation systems and poultry infrastructure.

SADP II has facilitated the establishment of 13 solar-powered irrigation schemes, particularly in Quthing, Leribe, and Berea and has financed rural feeder roads improving access to markets for more than 5,000 households.

This project has been instrumental in fostering climate-resilient agriculture, enabling farmers to shift from traditional rain-fed production to controlled and high-yield systems.

"For example, in Ha-Mokhesi, one cooperative reported an increase in tomato yields from 4 tonnes to 12 tonnes per hectare following the installation of drip irrigation and tunnel farming infrastructure," the report said.

Equally impactful according to the report was the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP), co-financed by IFAD and the European Union, which has injected M226.3 million into Lesotho's highland livestock economy.

Its interventions reached 15,532 wool and mohair producers, constructed and refurbished 21 shearing sheds, supported training for 900 community animal health workers and reduced animal mortality by 30% in intervention zones due to increased access to veterinary services.

The report noted that WAMPP has directly contributed to improved fibre quality and marketing outcomes.

"Lesotho's mohair exports have subsequently increased by M35 million over the past two years, with improved traceability and certification systems in place."

In addition to infrastructure and inputs, donors are providing technical assistance to strengthen systems and through the World Bank's institutional support, the Ministry of Agriculture has improved project monitoring, introduced e-procurement systems, and digitised farmer registries.

The World Food Programme (WFP), under its Climate Resilience and Nutrition Programme, has invested over M45 million in school gardens, nutrition-sensitive agriculture and rangeland rehabilitation. This intervention now benefits 33,000 learners and supports food diversification in vulnerable districts of Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka.

However, while these projects are showing tangible impact, the report cautions that fragmentation and short-term funding cycles pose sustainability risks.

"Many of the externally funded programs operate independently, and there is concern about the lack of institutional anchoring within the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition," the report said, noting to address this, the government should prioritise the strengthening of the Agriculture Sector Coordination Unit (ASCU) to streamline donor support, prevent duplication, and ensure alignment with the National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) and the upcoming NSDP III.

The report underscores the need for stronger public-private partnerships (PPPs) to complement donor contributions and attract long-term investment in agri-processing, storage and logistics sectors currently underfunded despite growing demand.

UN Flags Lesotho's Persisting Food Security Crisis,

By Ntsoaki Motaung

Lesotho continues to grapple with deepening food insecurity and widespread malnutrition, despite national strategies aimed at tackling hunger, a recent United Nations report said.

The report has raised red flags over the country's persistent failure to ensure food and nutrition security, especially for vulnerable populations.

Compiled by the UN Country Team, the report reveals that limited progress has been made under the Lesotho Food and Nutrition Strategy and Costed Action Plan (2019–2023).

At the heart of the problem is low agricultural productivity which has led to increasing food imports and higher prices, worsening the situation for the poor.

The report highlighted that malnutrition remains a critical public health crisis, particularly among children.

"While there has been some improvement in under-five mortality rates since 2019, infant and child mortality remain unacceptably high, driven by preventable causes such as hunger, malnutrition, and diseases like rickets," the report noted.

In light of these concerns, the UN is urging Lesotho to boost investment in agriculture, particularly in irrigation systems and agro-industrial development, to build resilience and reduce dependence on imported food.

The report also recommends expanding sustainable nutrition programs, especially in hard-to-reach rural communities where children are most at risk.

Lesotho's efforts to uphold the right to food were also placed under scrutiny during the recent Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva, a UN peer-review process that evaluates member states' human rights records.

The review examined whether Lesotho had addressed previous food security and nutrition recommendations.

Key inputs included Lesotho's national report, civil society submissions, and findings from UN human rights experts.

These documents assessed both legislative reforms and ground-level implementation efforts around food security.

Central to Lesotho's response was the Lesotho Food and Nutrition Policy (2016–2025), which seeks to improve the nutritional status of all citizens as a foundation for national health and economic development.

The policy specifically targets women and children, who remain the most affected by malnutrition.

The UPR also acknowledged the devastating food crisis of 2023 worsened by climate shocks such as hailstorms and prolonged droughts, pest outbreaks, and soaring

food prices.

"These conditions severely affected crop yields and pushed more households into hunger," the UPR stated.

In response, the World Food Programme (WFP) stepped in to support over 108,000 food-insecure individuals, while over 14,000 beneficiaries received cash-based transfers to meet basic food needs.

On a more hopeful note, Lesotho has made strides in supporting student nutrition.

Through the School Health and Nutrition (SHN) programme and its membership in the School Meals Coalition, the government has pledged to increase its school feeding budget by 50 percent in the 2024/25 fiscal year.

This investment is expected to improve children's health, learning outcomes, and school attendance.

During the UPR session, Minister of Law and Justice Richard Ramoetsi led Lesotho's delegation.

Countries such as Germany, Indonesia, and South Africa served as rapporteurs, facilitating dialogue on Lesotho's obligations, including the protection and promotion of the right to food.



Primary School Children in Semonkong eating their meal

Lesotho's Poultry Dreams Grounded

...As USDA cancels USD13.4 STEPS project

By Ntsoaki Motaung



A sudden and unexpected decision by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to cancel all existing grants under its Food for Progress program has directly hit the heart of ambitious Sustainable Transformation of Enterprises in the Poultry Sector (STEPS) project, leaving Lesotho's food security and the livelihoods of countless local farmers in jeopardy.

For a country like Lesotho, heavily reliant on imported poultry products, with over 80 percent of its poultry meat reported to have been sourced from neighbouring countries in 2021, with a staggering USD39 million (M700 million) expenditure, the STEPS project was more than just an aid program; it was a beacon of hope for poultry farmers and the country.

With a five-year operational budget of USD13.4 million (M240 million), the USDA-funded initiative, set to run until September 2028, was aimed to create a self-sufficient and thriving poultry industry in Lesotho.

"We were finally seeing a path to reduce our dependency on external markets," commented a local agricultural expert, who wished to remain anonymous due to the sensitivity of the situation.

The expert added, "The STEPS project was designed to tackle the very core issues plaguing our

poultry sector, from the lack of parent stock and poor production practices, to limited access to financing and inadequate quality standards. This sudden cut is a devastating blow both to farmers and the country at large."

"The objectives of STEPS were clear and critical for Lesotho's economic and nutritional well-being because it was aimed to significantly increase the agricultural productivity of both dual-purpose and single-purpose poultry," the expert added, noting the activities involved improving producer access to essential inputs, crucial services, vital finance, and critical end-market linkages.

According to the Marketing Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, Lesotho imported five million chickens from South Africa in 2024 alone, with additional over six million other chicken products, including offal imported to supplement the local shortfall.

These figures highlight the country's heavy reliance on imports, raising concerns about the sustainability of its poultry sector.

Implemented by Land O'Lakes Venture37 in partnership with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Lesotho's Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA), and World Poultry Foundation (WPF), the STEPS project was

meant to transform Lesotho's poultry sector through private sector enhancements that would boost markets in Lesotho's poultry sector.

The project concept note indicated that there are two broad market categories of poultry being products derived from dual-purpose chickens and from commercial single-purpose chickens.

Dual-purpose chickens are hardy, but slow growing, while single-purpose chickens are extremely efficient, but require more

maintenance, the concept note explained adding that most imports and poultry sold in Lesotho's formal markets are single-purpose chickens.

STEPS sought to catalyse the expansion of local trade in agricultural products, specifically poultry inputs, services, live poultry, eggs and processed meat and egg products.

This was to be achieved by improving enterprise access to finance, quality inputs, and consistent end markets, fostering a more robust domestic economy.

Implemented in 7 districts of Maseru, Berea, Leribe, Butha-Butha, Mafeteng, Mohale's Hoek, and Quthing, the project was not just about hand-outs, it was about building sustainable systems.

According to expectations, by the end of the project, STEPS would have "enhanced the profitability of 35,000 value chain actors and increase meat and egg production by up to 40 and 30 percent, respectively. Ultimately, these changes will boost food security and poultry markets in Lesotho."

Activities of the project included extensive market assessments, specialised technical assistance, curriculum development, and training in improved practices and quality standards.

The cancellation, which aligns with previous U.S. budget proposals targeting foreign food aid, leaves Lesotho's poultry sector in a precarious position.

"Commodities for projects scheduled for 2024 are reportedly still en route, adding to the confusion and logistical nightmare," the expert revealed.

While the USDA has remained silent on the matter, the aftershocks are deeply felt on the ground in Lesotho.

The promise of a self-sufficient poultry industry, providing affordable protein for its citizens and economic opportunities for its farmers, now hangs by a thread.

The abrupt withdrawal of critical funding from STEPS is a stark reminder of how global policy decisions can have profound and immediate consequences on the livelihoods and food security of nations far beyond their borders, a can as a shock to the Lesotho implementing RSDA.

The Managing Director for Rural Self-Help Development

Association (RSDA), Mampho Thulo, while still stunned of the cancellation, assured farmers that the association would continue with its work even without their main funder.

"Since we have an active partnership with the American company engaged to implement the project, that relationship will not end, it is just that we will not have money to implement the project, but with the little that we have we will continue our work," she said.

She indicated that, as a result of the funding cut, there are some people who are going to lose their jobs, including extension officers who were based in seven districts of Lesotho under the project.

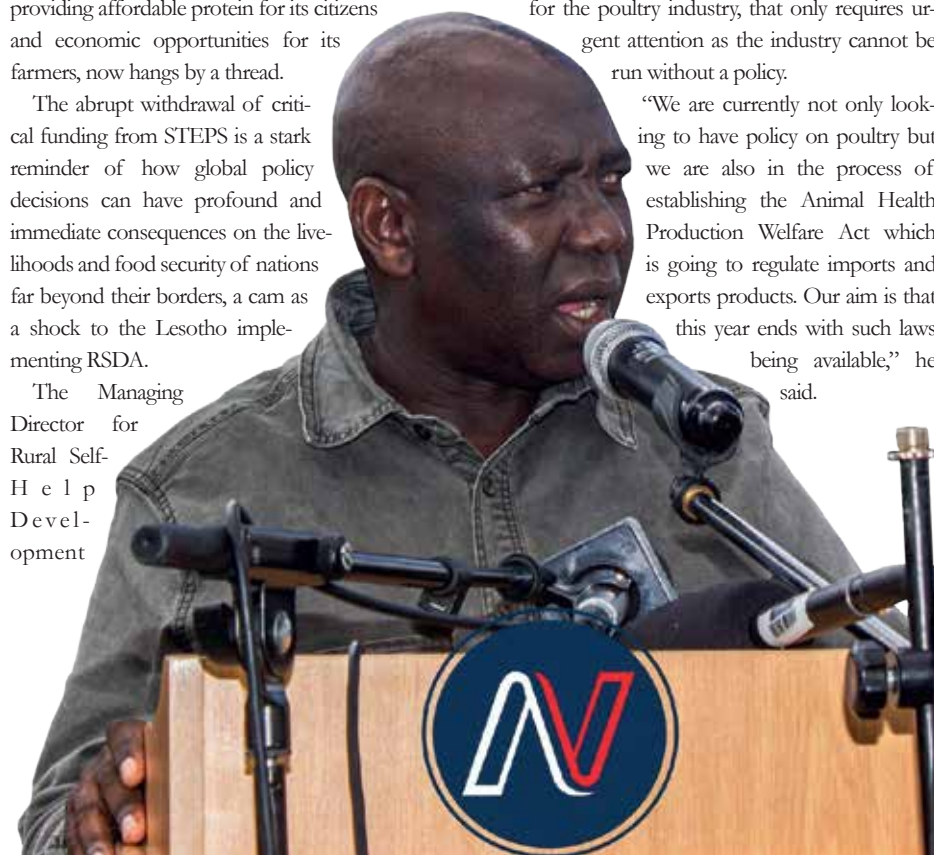
Thulo indicated that indeed the funding cut would impact their work negatively as well as the poultry industry at the national level, because the project was aimed at supporting aspects including the development of the policy specifically for the poultry industry.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, allayed the fears of the farmers, saying as the ministry they are following up on projects that are being cut by the US saying the cabinet would convene over the issues to see what can be done to help affected projects.

He disclosed that it is not only one project cut in terms of funds, hence the ministry is keeping watch and noting projects that are affected.

"After realising which projects are affected, the cabinet will convene to talk about how we can help them continue. They will be selected in terms of importance and they will be given priority as such," the minister he said, adding that, since the STEPS project included the aspect of policy development for the poultry industry, that only requires urgent attention as the industry cannot be run without a policy.

"We are currently not only looking to have policy on poultry but we are also in the process of establishing the Animal Health Production Welfare Act which is going to regulate imports and exports products. Our aim is that this year ends with such laws being available," he said.



Poultry Thabo Mofosi

U.S. Department of Agriculture Food for Progress Lesotho: Sustainable Transformation of Enterprises in the Poultry Sector (STEPS)

Approach

- Working in close partnership with the Government of Lesotho and other national and international partners, the STEPS project will segment the complex single-purpose (broiler and layers) and dual-purpose poultry markets to level-up actors regardless of their existing capacity.
- STEPS will identify entry points for both value chains to increase incomes and food security for dual-purpose producers, and address market bottlenecks in commercial single-purpose locally produced eggs and meat products.
- STEPS will focus on key entry points identified by a Poultry Value Chain Market Assessment of both value chains. Activities will support market systems to improve efficiencies in inputs, production, processing, and standards, while increasing quality and competitiveness through climate smart approaches.
- STEPS will build linkages between actors to facilitate fundamental business, trade, and policy changes, and access to critical information, technical expertise, and finance.

Target Districts: Commercial/ Dual Purpose Chickens

RSDA Offices

Venture37 Offices

Context

Lesotho is heavily reliant on importation of poultry products to satisfy demand. In 2021 Lesotho imported \$39m worth of poultry products, over 60% of poultry meat was sourced from neighbouring countries. This dependency extends to the supply of critical inputs, such as fertile eggs, day-old chicks, livestock feed, services, and veterinary health products.

Despite active local trade in poultry meat and eggs, obtained from both single-purpose and dual-purpose birds (indigenous and improved breeds), several factors have hindered poultry investment, production, and market formalization of meat, eggs, and processed products. Bottlenecks identified include lack of parent stock and poor production practice. Gaps also exist in affordable financing, quality and standards, certification, abattoirs, off-take market linkages, and appropriate research. Such overreliance means external factors have dramatic negative impact on access to poultry resources, food security and nutrition in Lesotho.

With a five-year operational budget of \$13.4m, the USDA funded STEPS project being implemented between October 2023 and September 2028 will address gaps in both the single-purpose and dual-purpose poultry value chains to increase supply, retail, and consumption of locally produced poultry products.

Area of Operation

STEPS will target activities in 7 of the 10 districts of Lesotho, focusing on commercial broiler and layer production in districts with highest production and those which have distinct commercial advantages.

Tracking Lesotho’s Agricultural Growth

...Farmers accessing subsidised seeds and fertilizers increased by 15%

By Lerato Matheka

The agricultural sector in Lesotho is on a cautious yet promising path of transformation, as shown in the 2025/2026 Consolidated Budget Report.

Despite persisting structural and climatic challenges, several initiatives have recorded measurable progress — from increased land under cultivation to revived investments in irrigation and mechanisation.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, the government has made significant headway in promoting block farming, conservation agriculture, and livestock support services.

In the past fiscal year, multiple districts reported an expansion in land area under block farming, which allows for shared inputs, joint mechanisation, and collective market access.

The budget report indicates that the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II), implemented with support from the World Bank and IFAD, has played a catalytic role.

“The project, which operates outside of the core government budget, provided targeted grants to farmer groups and supported value chain development in horticulture and poultry, and by the end of the reporting period, over 10,000 smallholders had benefited from training, inputs, and infrastructure under SADP II,” the report highlighted.

It added that the Irrigation Policy 2022–2032 is already influencing planning and implementation.

“The Ministry, supported by donor agencies, initiated pilot irrigation schemes in districts like Maseru, Mafeteng, and Leribe. These schemes are aligned with the broader goal of improving climate resilience, with the report emphasising the importance of water harvesting and solar-powered irrigation technologies.”

One of the key challenges that the Ministry continues to grapple with, the report noted is the impact of climate change.

“Unpredictable rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts have affected yields, particularly in the lowlands and Senqu River Valley. In response, the Ministry increased investments in climate-smart agriculture (CSA), particularly targeting vulnerable households.”

The report notes that “CSA approaches are now integrated in most training sessions delivered through extension services.”

Another highlight in the report is the improved uptake of agricultural inputs through the national subsidy program.

Although the system still faces issues related to timeliness and quality of inputs, the number of farmers accessing subsidised seeds and fertilizers increased by 15% compared to the previous year, the report revealed noting the introduction of e-voucher systems in selected pilot areas is expected to enhance transparency and accountability in subsidy distribution.

In terms of livestock, the report cited that the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMPP) continues to build capacity among wool and mohair farmers, particu-



larly in the highlands. The project supports shearing shed construction, animal health care, and rangeland management.

Despite these gains, the report underscores the urgent need for better coordination across ministries and sectors, particularly in land use planning, water management, and climate finance.

“The Ministry is also exploring partnerships with private agribusinesses to boost processing and export potential. The journey ahead is complex, but one thing is clear: Lesotho’s agricultural sector is no longer standing still. Through a blend of policy reform, community empowerment, and donor-funded innovation, the seeds of change are being sown,” the report noted.

Agriculture’s M10.6 million Revenue Footprint in Lesotho



Farming inputs at ministry of agriculture warehouse in Ha-Foso

By Lerato Matheka

In the previous financial year the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition projects to generate over M10.6 million in direct revenues.

This was revealed by the 2025/2026 Consolidated Budget Report which recorded a growing recognition of the Agriculture sector’s potential to generate meaningful income through value chain development, livestock trade, and exports, strengthening the sector as a strong contributor, playing a pivotal role in the economy, not just as a livelihood for the majority of the rural population, but increasingly as a contributor to public revenue.

Although the contribution of agriculture to the country’s GDP has traditionally been modest, hovering around 5-8%, the sector’s broader economic impact is increasingly visible through tax collections, permit fees, and revenue from processing and trading activities.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition reported that revenues collected through agriculture-related services such as livestock branding, laboratory testing, veterinary inspections, and producer trading licenses, were gradually rising.

In the previous financial year, the Ministry’s projects generated over M10.6 million

in direct revenues, broken down as follows;

- M4.2 million from livestock auctions and branding services;
- M3.1 million from laboratory testing and veterinary inspections;
- M2.3 million from produce trading licenses and certification fees;
- M1 million from miscellaneous services including soil testing and inspection levies.

“Additionally, services such as soil testing, farm produce inspections, and disease surveillance have created new income channels, especially in the lowlands where commercial farming is gaining traction.”

The budget report also attributes revenue growth to improved governance systems within the agriculture sector.

“The rollout of digital registries for livestock and e-permit systems for agricultural trade has reduced leakages and improved compliance among traders and commercial farmers.

“The digitisation of agriculture-related transactions is expected to boost revenue collection and reduce underreporting,” the report stated.

The report noted that one of the most notable contributors to agricultural revenue is the wool and mohair subsector, citing that with the support from the Wool and Mohair

Promotion Project (WAMPP), Lesotho has revived its international reputation for high-quality mohair.

“Revenues from wool and mohair sales increased significantly over the past year, with an estimated M256 million in exports recorded.”

The report indicated that the revenue, while mostly benefiting farmers directly, also flows to the government through export licensing, shearing shed rental fees, and transaction levies, which collectively contributed approximately M4.8 million to public coffers.

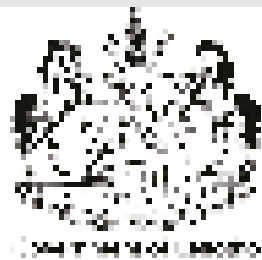
The horticulture value chain is also emerging as a key revenue stream as reported, with the notion that through initiatives like the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II), cooperatives and individual farmers are accessing regional markets.

“Sales of tomatoes, green beans, cabbage and peaches to both domestic supermarkets and South African buyers have contributed to job creation, increased rural incomes, and added at least M2.7 million in VAT and related sales taxes,” the report said.

However, the report also cautions that revenue potential remains largely untapped due to issues like poor logistics, limited value addition and low enforcement of trade regulations.

It stressed that informal trade, particularly across the South African border, remains high and much of this activity goes unrecorded.

“The Ministry is currently collaborating with the Ministry of Trade to formalise cross-border agricultural commerce and improve earnings. In the upcoming financial year, the Ministry intends to enhance its revenue streams by investing in agro-processing facilities, commercialising government-owned land, and upgrading auction facilities. These plans aim to transform agriculture from a consumption-driven activity to a revenue-generating engine for Lesotho’s economy,” the report noted.



Who are we

LIVESTOCK MARKETING DIVISION

The Livestock Marketing Division, one of the key arms of the Department of Marketing (DOM) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFSN), continues to drive the significant progress in the de-



velopment of the country's livestock value chains. Governed by the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1967, the division plays a central role in advancing the economic viability and sustainability of livestock enterprises nationwide.

The division is structured into five specialized sections: **Dairy, Livestock** (focusing on red meat and livestock auctions), **Piggery, Poultry** (covering both chicken and eggs), and **Wool and Mohair** (including cottage industry). Each section focuses on the marketing and development of its respective commodities, contributing to broader departmental goals through performing three main functional areas-Market Research, Market Development, and Market Access. The division further supports the Market Facilitation Division in implementing the controls and regulations function as far as livestock trading is concerned.

Under its **Market Research** mandate, the division undertakes a range of analytical activities including feasibility studies for proposed marketing infrastructure projects, value -chain analysis to identify opportunities and gaps, profitability analyses to guide farmers towards more lucrative enterprises.

Moreover, market needs assessments are undertaken to help determine which livestock products are in demand, the quantities required, preferred quality standards,

seasonal trends, and pricing expectations. All these initiatives are critical for informing evidence-based decisions and tailoring interventions to the real needs of farmers and industries' stakeholders at large.

One duty is to empower farmers through **Market Development**. In support of livestock farmers, the division implements numerous capacity building initiatives. These include training programs on agribusiness, marketing principles and post-harvest

such as slaughtering facilities, aggregation/ collection centres, auction yards, processing plants, shearing sheds etc. Farmers exchange platforms are also organised to allow emerging/ small scale-producers to learn from successful counterparts. Additionally, sections disseminate timely market information through various media platforms to support informed decision-making by all industry players.

To enhance market access for livestock



handling techniques, facilitation of investment in essential marketing infrastructure

and livestock products, market linkages platforms are facilitated and strength-

ened under the **Market Access Function**. These are intended to pave a way for livestock and livestock products to find space in the market. Generally, such platforms include:

i. Buyer-seller meetings- these are organised meetings where livestock producers (sell-

ers) and buyers negotiate business relationships based on defined market requirements.

ii. Market Days offer producers a chance to showcase and sell their produce while engaging with industries' stakeholders.

iii. Livestock Auctions are facilitated specifically by the red meat and livestock auctions section in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. Farmers bring in their livestock to be sold through auctions. The events are preceded by thorough buyers' mobilisations and farmers' sensitisations on auction procedures to ensure smooth transactions.

iv. Facilitation of wool and mohair procedures for export market- The wool and mohair marketing section plays a pivotal role in facilitating the export of wool and mohair by providing guidance on the proper classing of such fibre and assisting with all necessary documentation.

The Livestock Marketing Division remains committed to enhancing the economic prospects of the agricultural sector through market access, sustainable enterprise development, and strengthened value-chains. Its multifaceted approach ensures that livestock farmers are well equipped to thrive in both local and global markets.



Smart Chickens? Lesotho Student’s AI Innovation Could Transform Poultry Farming

By Relebohile Makhetha

A remarkable fusion of agriculture and artificial intelligence, a student at the National University of Lesotho (NUL) is breaking new ground with a home-grown, high-tech solution that promises healthier chickens and smarter farming.

Mangange Mpobole, a forward-thinking innovator, has developed an AI-powered poultry monitoring system that could redefine how farmers care for their birds.

His project, recently spotlighted by NUL Research and Innovations, uses ordinary cameras and artificial intelligence to track chicken behaviour—offering farmers a powerful early-warning system for illness.

Traditionally, poultry farmers rely on visual inspections to check the health of their flocks, an exhausting, time-consuming process prone to error, especially in large-scale operations.

According to NUL Research and Innovations, this method is “slow, tiring,” and easily misses early symptoms that could prevent widespread disease.

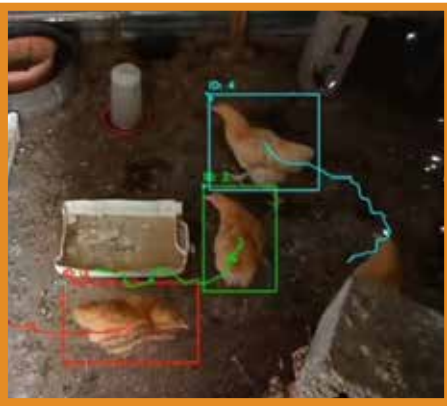
While other tech-based solutions, like sound sensors or wearables, exist, they are often costly and complex to implement. Mpobole’s system takes a different path: it’s affordable, scalable, and designed with real farmers in mind.

At its core are simple, strategically placed cameras inside poultry houses. These cameras feed live footage into an AI system trained to recognise individual birds—effectively creating a type of facial recognition for chickens, as NUL Research and Innovations describes it.



“The system goes beyond passive observation. It monitors each chicken’s movement, feeding and drinking patterns, and general activity over time. Using this data, it builds a behavioural profile for every bird. If a chicken deviates from its usual behaviour becoming sluggish or eating less, for instance, then the system immediately alerts the farmer,” the NUL Hub explained.

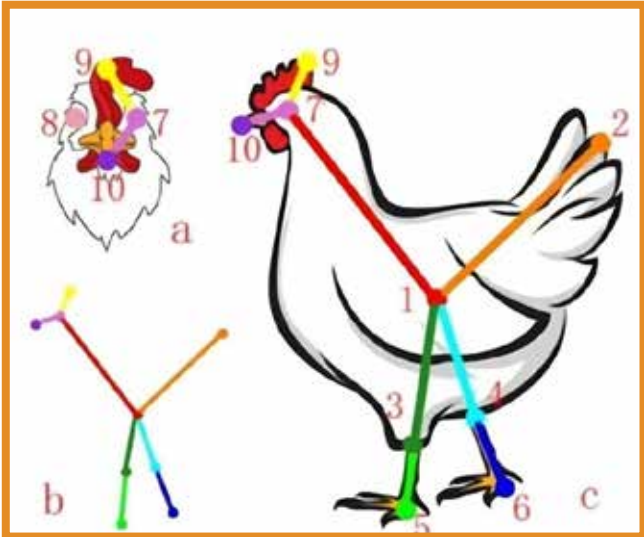
It added, “This real-time intervention is a game-changer. It allows farmers to act quickly, improving flock health and reducing losses. The system also tracks consumption, helping optimised feed use and cut down on waste, a critical



factors in cost-efficient poultry production.”

Mpobole’s innovation highlights the power of local talent to solve local challenges with cutting-edge tools and as the NUL Research and Innovations notes, the technology is not only practical and effective, it is also designed to be accessible to smallholder farmers, potentially ushering in a new era of precision agriculture in Lesotho.

“With poultry farming playing a key role in food security and rural incomes, especially among youth and women, this kind of innovation could empower farmers and boost productivity in ways never imagined before. Mpobole’s AI solution might just be the start of a digital transformation in Lesotho,” the NUL Research and Innovations said.



Mohale’s Hoek Vegetable Farmers Reap Big with Best Practices

By Lerato Matheka

Mohale’s Hoek is a district often associated with subsistence farming and unpredictable weather patterns, but a quiet agricultural revolution is underway.

Vegetable farmers in Mohale’s Hoek, under the guidance of the Lesotho National Farmers Union (LENAFU), are transforming their operations using Best Management Practices (BMPs), and the results are inspiring.

A case study conducted by LENAFU profiles farmers who have implemented sustainable, environment-friendly, and productive methods in vegetable farming.

From soil conservation to water-efficient irrigation and organic composting, these farmers are proving that with the right techniques and support, agriculture cannot only feed families but also build thriving livelihoods.

One such farmer is Mamorena Seqao, who champions the Machobane farming system. Her method emphasises composting, crop rotation, and water conservation.

“We are not just planting, we are preserving the soil for future generations,” she said.

Her drip irrigation system, fed from a nearby stream, has become a model for water-smart farming in the area.

Lefu Poone, another farmer, has scaled his cabbage production to nearly 4,000 heads per cycle, using Green Coronet and Cape Spitz varieties.

He complements this with beetroot, tomatoes, and leafy greens. His fields, situated on well-drained slopes, thrive due to good soil structure and regular composting with kraal manure.

For Sempe Lebona, another farmer, the jour-



ney began with many setbacks — low yields, poor soils, and irrigation struggles. But, after consulting with the Ministry of Agriculture’s extension services, he diversified his crops and now grows tomatoes, carrots, onions, and peppers.

His success underscores the vital role of technical support in transforming struggling farms into productive ventures.

The LENAFU study highlights several practices that have led to improved outcomes:

- Use of tunnels and greenhouses to protect against hail and extend growing seasons.
- High-yielding seeds like Trinity tomatoes and California Wonder peppers.

- Soil conservation methods such as mulching with eragrostis, crop rotation, and minimal tillage.
- Integrated pest management, blending local herbal solutions with safe chemical controls.

Even Thoriso Monenane, a different farmer, who once left Lesotho in search of work in South Africa, returned to farming with renewed purpose.

He started with a homestead garden and now operates a profitable farm with shade nets, irrigation hoses, and greenhouse structures acquired through government support and communal funding.

All the profiled farmers reported profits and

pitfalls with the financial benefits more tangible enough to make a case.

Farmers report:

- Selling Cape Spitz cabbage at M10 per two heads;
- Tomato boxes going for M50–M60;
- Green pepper buckets for M70;
- Butternut bags ranging from M35–M45.

Profits from vegetable farming have allowed farmers to buy livestock, build homes, and pay school fees, the study recorded with one farmer confirming that, “Vegetables bought me pigs, cows, and dignity.”

However, challenges remain visible with post-harvest proving an eminent challenge that sets back progress.

The study identified the lack of cold storage, poor access to markets, and expensive transportation as huge existing limitations to earnings.

While the system shows faults, the study continued to identify weak record keeping as a challenged facing individual farmers. The study further noted low participation of youth in farming.

LENAFU recommends that the Ministry of Agriculture and private sector partners establish a formal vegetable market centre in Mohale’s Hoek, improve access to inputs, storage, and training services, and introduce financing schemes tailored to smallholder vegetable farmers while also encouraging youth and women to join the vegetable value chain.

LENAFU noted that the success of Mohale’s Hoek vegetable growers offers a model worth replicating across the country.

“With the right support, agriculture in Lesotho can become a powerful driver of food security, income, and rural development.”

The AgrInvest, A Blueprint for an Inclusive, Investable Future

By Lerato Matheka

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has financed AgrInvest, an initiative that stripped bare the real issues of Lesotho's agriculture sector.

At a time when the livelihoods of over 60% of Basotho hinge on agriculture — and yet the sector contributes less than 8% to national GDP — the future of Lesotho's food systems hangs in the balance, with over 700 000 Basotho facing food insecurity.

However, through the bold, multi-stakeholder AgrInvest Lesotho initiative, the country is repositioning agriculture as an engine of economic recovery, job creation, and inclusive growth.

Launched in 2021 and concluded in late 2023, AgrInvest Lesotho is a transformative technical co-operation project implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security with support from the FAO under project code TCP/LES/3802.

With a modest FAO contribution of USD404, 000 (M 7.5million), AgrInvest has delivered something many large-scale programs often fail to do, a pragmatic, policy-driven blueprint for value chain development that directly engages farmers, youth, women, civil society, and the private sector.

Lesotho's economy has undergone significant structural changes in the past 30 years, once dominated by agriculture and government services, it is now largely driven by manufacturing and retail.

Despite this shift, agriculture remains the primary livelihood for the rural population, yet smallholder farmers remain largely excluded from mainstream economic activity.

The National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II) highlighted these gaps, including the lack of commercialisation and diversification among small-scale producers, exclusion of rural producers from modern value chains, and absence of an enabling environment for private sector collaboration.

AgrInvest was then designed as a direct response to these challenges.

Its primary goal acceding to the concept note was to increase private investments in agrifood systems and create an inclusive, sustainable, and competitive sector.

"The project centred on policy transformation and development of Sector Development Plan Agreements (SDPAs), mobilising stakeholders through the AgrInvest Multistakeholder Platform (MSP), conducting commodity value chain analysis and prioritisation, institutional and capacity building, promoting



gender and youth inclusivity, and building sustainability through global linkages like the FAO Hand-in-Hand Initiative," the concept note explained.

It clarified that at the heart of AgrInvest's strategy is the development of SDPAs, legally recognised, commodity-based strategic documents that guide investment and policy action in key value chains.

"Originally targeting nine value chains, the project completed and validated four SDPAs for poultry, pig-ger, pulses, and potatoes," the FAO produced document said.

It added, "A fifth SDPA for vegetables was still under development by project end and is recommended for finalisation."

FAO indicated that the SDPAs were co-created with sector actors through intensive consultations, field assessments, and technical analysis.

"They identify strategic investment areas, outline public and private roles, and define development outcomes including employment creation, income generation, and food security.

"AgrInvest used data-driven criteria to prioritise value chains based on domestic demand, production competitiveness, and potential to reduce poverty, hunger, and unemployment," FAO said, noting that the profiling process identified more than 20 structural and systemic limitations across the value chains, including weak governance in producer associations, inadequate financial services, poor market integration, and policy fragmentation.

"The project focused on four value chains with im-

mediate potential for investment and reform," FAO noted citing AgrInvest stood out for its deliberate inclusion of traditionally marginalised voices, particularly women, youth, and smallholder farmers.

"In all stakeholder consultations, over 38% of participants were women, with active participation from organisations such as Farm Girls, Farmers on Heels, Girls-led Action on Climate Change, and Black Boer. These groups influenced SDPA content, advocating for gender-responsive investment strategies, market access for women-led agribusinesses, and climate-resilient inputs and extension services.

"Youth groups too emphasised the need for decent job creation across value chains," FAO said.

It indicated that AgrInvest also empowered the Department of Planning and Policy Analysis (DPPA) to coordinate national consultations, work with technical consultants, and engage private stakeholders.

"As a result, Lesotho's Ministry of Agriculture has drafted the Comprehensive National Agriculture Policy (2022–2026), strengthened analytical capacity to lead future value chain assessments, and created a governance model for agrifood system transformation."

The AgrInvest Multistakeholder Platform (MSP) was institutionalised with a Terms of Reference (ToR) and coordination framework, including institutions such as Lesotho National Dairy Board, Lesotho National Development Corporation, and Basotho Enterprise Development Corporation.

"Although AgrInvest did not directly introduce

new technologies, it embedded climate-smart principles and promoted environmentally viable value chains. Policy tools proposed in SDPAs are expected to reduce environmental degradation and enhance soil and water use efficiency. The initiative provided a blueprint for blending public and private capital into value chains, with government acting as a facilitator.

"As a result, new public-private partnerships are under consideration, and financing cases for poultry, pulses, and potatoes are being prepared for the Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum," FAO said.

It stressed that the groundwork has already inspired local actors such as LENAFU, which has begun hosting its own dialogues to explore employment within the potato value chain.

AgrInvest aligned itself with a rights-based approach by advocating policies that ensure access to nutritious food, fair wages, decent working conditions, and equal opportunity, especially for women and youth.

Despite its achievements, the project's final evaluation identified areas requiring further attention.

"The vegetable SDPA remains a national priority. Signing and endorsement of all SDPAs by high-level government officials is pending, and integration of SDPAs into the National Budget Framework is critical for implementation.

"Dedicated financial mechanisms, including catalytic grant facilities or investment guarantees, are needed to de-risk private sector participation," FAO suggests.

It called for continued high-level policy advocacy, suggesting that the Ministry of Agriculture champion the SDPA model as a core component of national development.

"Lesotho stands at a crossroads. The failure to unlock the economic potential of agriculture has long been blamed on farmers, rain, or markets, but AgrInvest has proven that the real issue is systemic misalignment, and that it can be fixed.

"With clearly prioritised value chains, evidence-based policies, empowered farmer groups, and a functioning stakeholder platform, Lesotho is now equipped to move from fragmented initiatives to coherent, investment-ready agricultural systems," FAO said, suggesting that the success of AgrInvest is not just in what it produced, but in what it catalysed.

"It created space for dialogue, trust between public and private actors, and practical tools for real transformation, but the baton lies with the government of Lesotho, private investors, farmer organisations, and civil society.

"The blueprints are drawn. The platforms are ready. The moment is now. If Lesotho is serious about food sovereignty, youth employment, rural development, and sustainable growth, AgrInvest must not be treated as a closed chapter — but as the beginning of a new book in Basotho agriculture," FAO noted.

Sources: AgrInvest Lesotho Final Report (TCP/LES/3802), FAO Lesotho, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

SADP II Thrives as Funders Conduct Vital Support Mission

By Ntsoaki Motaung

The Second Phase of the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP II) recently hosted its funders for a critical support mission, an exercise deemed essential for maintaining the momentum of the project and ensuring its alignment with strategic development goals.

Speaking on the purpose of the visit, SADP II Communications Specialist, Malefetsane Raliengoane, explained that the mission aimed to review project implementation over the past six months, evaluate key deliverables and explore practical solutions to emerging challenges.

"The objectives of the mission were to assess project progress with a fully staffed Project Management Unit (PMU), review preliminary outcomes from the latest call for grants, and track the advancement of small irrigation schemes," said Raliengoane.

Additionally, funders followed up on previously agreed action points and measured progress since the last joint mission, Raliengoane said noting their visit, which involved direct engagement with project beneficiaries, offered a valuable window into the real-world impact of SADP II across rural communities.

Raliengoane emphasised the transformative effects of the project on smallholder farmers, noting that grant recipients have significantly expanded their production and improved their market access.



"SADP II grants encouraged farmers to increase their yields and link directly to markets. This has not only boosted production but also led to improved incomes," he explained.

He added, "The project's influence extends beyond economic outcomes. In many households, especially

among members of community nutrition clubs, there has been a marked improvement in dietary diversity."

"Members of nutrition clubs have reported a significant improvement in their household diets. Access to diverse food sources is changing nutrition outcomes in targeted areas," said Raliengoane.

In regions where SADP II has rolled out irrigation infrastructure, he said a noticeable shift in farming practices is taking root.

He noted that farmers are moving away from traditional cereal crops and increasingly embracing high-value cash crops, an evolution driven by the reliable water supply that irrigation brings.

"Where irrigation schemes have been established, many farmers have transitioned from cereal production to cash crops, marking a strategic shift towards more profitable agricultural ventures," he added.

Raliengoane further noted that such visits by funders are not ad hoc—they are an integral component of SADP II's monitoring and evaluation framework.

"Typically, two key missions are conducted each year: support missions and supervisory missions. Support missions focus on tackling implementation challenges and sharing valuable lessons, while supervisory missions assess overall project performance and track progress against previously set targets," he said, adding the regularity of these visits ensures that the project remains on course, responsive to on-the-ground realities, and agile enough to adjust strategies where needed.

"These monitoring missions are essential for ensuring that the project remains aligned with its intended objectives and that all performance indicators are being met," Raliengoane emphasised.



From Health Advice to Honey Empire

By Topollo Tlali

When Masilo Maphutsi first heard the doctor's advice to reduce sugar intake and opt for honey instead, he had no idea that it would mark the beginning of a life-altering journey.

At that time, he was simply seeking a healthier lifestyle, but when he realised how expensive store-bought honey was, a bold idea began to brew in his mind: *Why not rear bees myself?*

It was a thought that lingered and nagged at him for almost a year.

Like most new paths in life, it felt daunting. Beekeeping is not the kind of enterprise many in Lesotho naturally gravitate towards.

Unlike crops or livestock, which are familiar forms of farming, apiculture—beekeeping—is still a mystery to most. But Maphutsi was not one to let fear silence potential.

In 2018, he took the first real step. He walked into the Ministry of Agriculture to inquire about what it would take to become a beekeeper. There, he received guidance, technical information, and the confidence to begin.

"That's when I started, with just one box of bees," he recalls, his voice calm but laced with pride.

The Humble Hive that Changed Everything

From that first solitary hive, Maphutsi's passion took root. Like a bee determined to build, he studied bees' behaviour, their social order, their extraordinary work ethic. His apiary slowly expanded, each new box a milestone not just in production, but in personal growth.

He learned, for instance, that if the queen bee is calm and present, the rest of the hive follows suit.

"I noticed that when I have the queen bee with me, no bee can bite me," he says, describing the delicate balance of trust and technique required in beekeeping.

"...but not every day was harmonious.

"There were harsh days when the bees stung my sheep. It was hard for me to control them," he admits.

Managing bees he says is not like managing goats or chickens.

"These are wild yet incredibly intelligent creatures. I had to evolve alongside them, learning patience, precision, and humility," he recounts.

Despite significant growth, challenges remained.

"I still lack protective overalls and a smoker tool, which are very important for safely collecting bees," he says.

And although his bees now produce ample honey, he lacks the proper extraction machine and must travel long distances to process his yield. These obstacles would dishearten many, but not Maphutsi.

The Complex Society of Bees—and Lessons for Life

Maphutsi now manages twelve thriving hives, each with roughly two thousand bees.

To him, the hive is more than just a means to an end; it's a living, breathing society.

"The roles within it—the queen, worker and drone mirror the intricate relationships that hold human communities together, yet here we are talking bees.

"The queen bee, for instance, is not just a figurehead. She can live up to five years and lays over 2,000 eggs a day. Her pheromones keep order in the hive, preventing chaos, rivalry, and collapse. She rarely flies. She stays

inside, attended to by the workers. She is the heart of the colony," the farmer explains.

He adds, "Then there are the worker bees, small but mighty. Their short five- to seven-week lifespan is filled with constant labour; nursing, cleaning, guarding, and eventually, foraging. The drones, on the other hand, live only to mate with the queen. If they fail in this mission, they are expelled and die."

Maphutsi says he has learned to read these rhythms, to respect the hierarchy and harmony of his hives.

He's also learned that bees, while fierce protectors, sting only as a last resort—and die after doing so.

"It's a reminder of the cost of defence, of sacrifice, and of nature's profound design."

More Than Just Honey: An Empire of Bee Products

Maphutsi's venture—Tumi and Melo Production, formally registered in April 2025—is no longer about honey alone.

Today, his bees yield a treasure trove of natural products: beeswax for skincare, propolis for medicinal use, and even honey wine.

"I don't only have organic honey. I make wax for vaseline, propolis for flu and other illnesses, and wine," he says proudly noting these aren't just by-products.

"They are proof of innovation and the power of value addition in production."

He describes that the beeswax is used to create natural healing balms, highly sought after in a world turning back to organic remedies.

The propolis, a resinous compound, he says is known for its powerful antibacterial and antiviral properties, while the honey wine—rich, golden, and culturally resonant—adds a new layer of pride and creativity to his brand.

Each product reflects the farmer's commitment not only to producing but to healing, nourishing, and connecting his community with the gifts of nature.

Yet even as his product line grows, Maphutsi faces daily limitations.

"I sell my products from home. It's still challenging," he admits noting without a physical storefront or larger distribution network, his dream of reaching more Basotho remains a work in progress.

Still, he's undeterred.

"I believe my products can be known countrywide because they are organic and healthy," he says, with the kind of optimism that only true entrepreneurs carry.

He credits his wife as his unwavering supporter; "Without her, I wouldn't have come this far."

The Science of the Hive: Mastering Bee Management

Maphutsi's success is no accident, he says it is grounded in science and strategy.

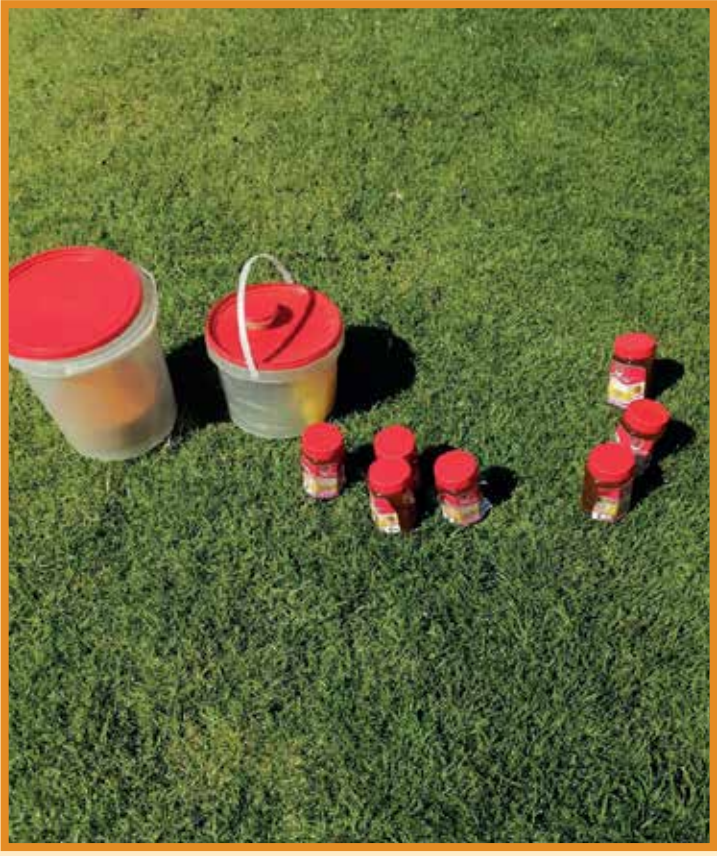
His hives are carefully placed in areas that receive early morning sunlight and natural shade during the heat of the day.

"This helps regulate temperature and keeps the bees active but safe," he explains.

He ensures that nearby floral sources support foraging, even considering planting sunflowers and other bee-friendly crops. In colder months, he explores supplemental feeding methods to maintain hive health.

And when it comes to pests and diseases, the farmers strongly notes he avoids chemical shortcuts.

"I use traditional methods like ash and



cinnamon to deter ants and raise hives above ground to prevent infestations. Natural methods keep the bees safe and the honey clean," he says, reflecting a philosophy of harmony over harm.

"I am also learning advanced techniques like hive splitting and queen breeding to strengthen my colonies," he explains, adding replacing queens regularly is another future goal, one that will ensure longevity and productivity.

Hygiene, Standards, and Safety



From harvesting to packaging, Maphutsi emphasises hygiene. He understands that the purity of his products hinges on cleanliness, of the tools, the process, and the people.

"I sterilise my equipment, I wear clean protective clothes, and I keep

the processing area clean," he explains, saying these practices are not just about compliance; they're about trust.

"Every jar of honey, every block of wax, every drop of wine represents my family name and vision."

A Vision Rooted in Education and Empowerment

Beyond the commercial side of his business, the farmer is deeply committed to education.

He mentors young people in his village, Sefikeng, Ha Keiso in Teyateyaneng, teaching them about the power of bees and the potential of beekeeping.

"I teach young people to care for bees and how important they are, and how they can change someone's life," he says.

In a country where youth unemployment is high and land is often a limiting factor, he says his skills sharing stems from beekeeping as a sector that presents a unique solution.

"It requires minimal land, has low overhead, and produces high-value products."

Maphutsi believes that by spreading knowledge, he's not just growing his brand—he's growing a movement.

The Road Ahead

Today, with Tumi and Melo Production registered, Maphutsi is ready to spread his wings.

"Now that I'm fully registered, I can go anywhere in the country to showcase my products," he says with a smile saying scaling up means expanding his hive count, securing proper equipment, and reaching new markets.

He's also seeking partnerships with agricultural agencies, cooperatives, or even supermarkets that can help take his products from village to nation.

His ultimate dream? To see Lesotho become known for its rich, organic honey and to inspire a new generation of beekeepers who don't just see bees as insects—but as a path to independence.

Masilo's Legacy: Sweetness Born of Struggle

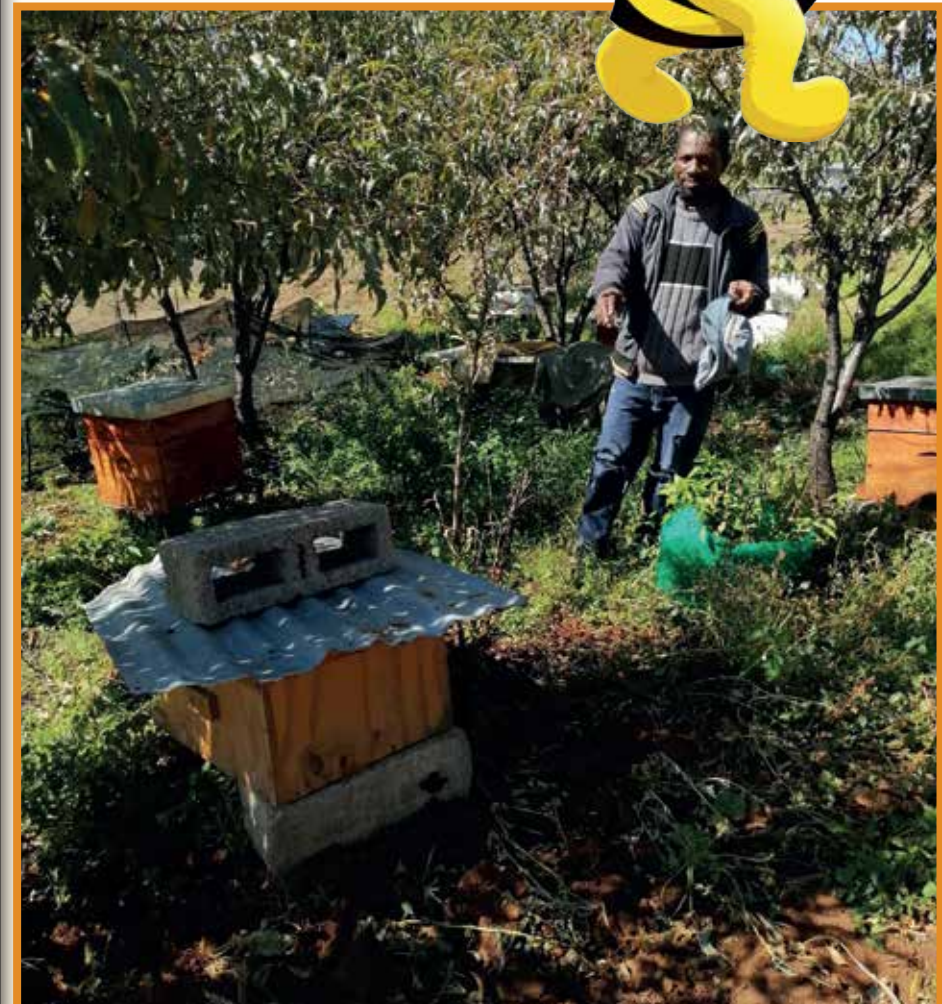
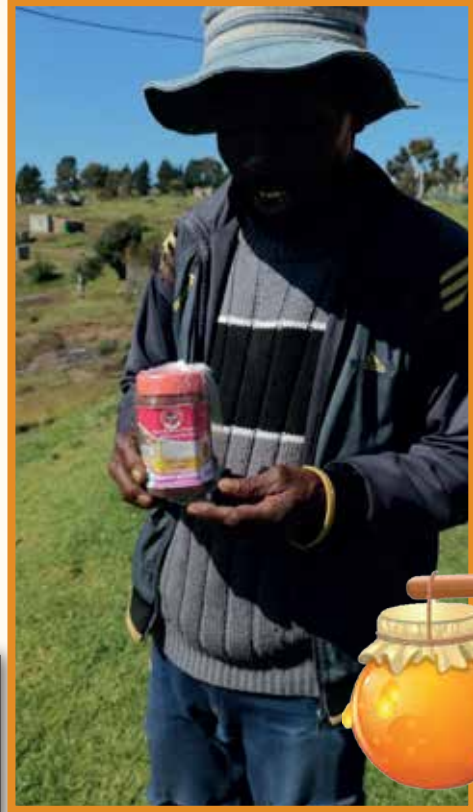
Maphutsi describes his story as more than a business profile but it's a testimony. A testimony of how health advice turned into a honey empire, how curiosity birthed a calling, and how, through grit, learning, and the love of bees, he is creating ripples in a sector many still overlook.

SIDEBAR: Beyond Honey – Amazing Bee Products and Their Benefits

Beekeeping offers more than just sweet rewards. Here are the incredible products bees provide and why they matter:

- ♥ Honey:
 - Natural sweetener packed with antioxidants.
 - Used to soothe sore throats, treat wounds, and boost immunity.
- ♥ Beeswax:
 - A base for candles, lip balms, lotions, and vaseline.
 - Known for its moisturising and healing properties.
- ♥ Propolis:
 - A resinous substance bees make from tree sap.
 - Natural antibiotic and antiviral; helps treat colds, sore throats, and minor infections.
- ♥ Honey Wine (Mead):
 - Traditional fermented beverage made from honey and water.
 - Popular among artisanal drink enthusiasts and cultural markets.
- ♥ Pollen & Royal Jelly:
 - Superfoods consumed for energy, protein, and vitamins.
 - Believed to boost fertility, immunity, and overall vitality.

Bonus Fact: All bee products are 100% natural, making them valuable in both local and international organic markets.



INFO BOX: How to Start Beekeeping in Lesotho
Thinking of becoming a beekeeper? Here's how to get started:

1. Get Training:
 - Visit your nearest Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Forestry offices for training and guidelines.
 - Attend workshops or shadow experienced beekeepers.
 2. Start Small:
 - Begin with 1–2 bee boxes. You don't need to buy bees—capture a wild swarm if you have the knowledge.
 3. Essential Equipment:
 - Bee box (hive)
 - Beekeeper's suit and gloves
 - Smoker tool
 - Honey extractor (can be rented or borrowed at first)
 4. Choose a Good Location:
 - Place hives where there are plenty of flowering plants.
 - Ensure sunlight in the morning, shade in the afternoon.
 5. Register Your Business:
 - Once you're ready to sell, register your business to access more markets and government support.
 6. Keep Learning:
 - Join beekeeper associations, attend seasonal trainings, and follow sustainable practices.
- "It starts with one box, a bit of courage, and love for nature," says farmer Masilo Maphutsi.





FARMERS PITSO AWARDS

Victory Hall

Maseru

06th Sept 2025

09:00 - 16:30

Entrance Fee

M100.00

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For More Info Contact:

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Students and Farmers Unite at High School Agriculture Fair

By Lungile Maseela

The grounds of Hlotse Agriculture College in Leribe buzzed with energy on a bright Friday morning as high school students from across the district gathered for a unique and inspiring occasion.

Far more than just a fun day out, the event was a vibrant celebration of agriculture, youth, and the promise of a thriving future rooted in the soil.

Hosted by the Leribe Agriculture Teachers Association, the High School Agriculture Fair brought together more than 35 schools for a day filled with learning, competition, and community spirit.

“We came together as agriculture teachers to show students that agriculture is not just something to study, it’s something to live on,” said Pokane Mosotho, Chairperson of the association.

He added, “The fair aimed to motivate students to see that there’s both business and life in agriculture.”

Beyond promoting the importance of agriculture, Mosotho noted that the event was also designed to uplift and inspire learners as they prepare for their final exams.

“Aside from motivating students, we also use this time to entertain and uplift them



Agriculture Quiz Competition, which tested students’ knowledge across junior and senior levels. Students competed, three in each category, representing different schools and putting their classroom knowledge to the test in a real-world setting.

Quiz Competition Results:

Junior Level:

- Educo Hub High School of Science & Technology
- Likhatleng High School
- Mahobong High School

Senior Level:

- Mahobong High School
- Khethisa High School
- Mathethisa High School

The atmosphere following the quiz was electric.

Students and teachers danced in celebration, with sounds of whistles, ululations, and joyful laughter filling the air.

“The quiz was easier than I thought, although the calculations part was a bit challenging, but I made it,” said Lindiwe Mocumbi from Educo Hub, who claimed first place in the junior quiz.

“We really do benefit from events like this. Seeing the tools we learn about in class and understanding how they work in real life is such a bonus. I hope we continue having more of these events,” Mocumbi added.

Farming for the Future: The Farmers’ Pitso

Another critical element of the fair was the Farmers’ Pitso, which brought together local producers to share their experiences with students.

From livestock keepers to juice makers, the exhibition offered students a first-hand experience at what a future in agriculture could look like.

The most inspiring part? Many of the exhibitors were young entrepreneurs themselves.

“We were invited by Farmers’ Pitso to showcase our products to students and educate them about our business,” said ‘Matikane Ntsoti of Matebele Enterprise, known for producing raspberry and cactus juice.

Showing joy, she said, “Students have been flooding our stall with questions. It’s been incredible to see how eager they are to learn.”

‘Makhabisi Nts’anya of Atlehang Foods also expressed excitement at participating. “Being invited to motivate students through showcasing our products and handing out



before they head into their final exams. That’s part of the reason Leribe continues to see a good pass rate in the subject,” he said.

With generous support from sponsors—Tarps4Lesotho, Monakeli Farm, Sentinel Farms, Alice Wa Le Farmer, Foso Hardware PTY LTD, and Seahlolo Newspaper—the event offered a wide range of engaging activities. These included a vibrant farmer exhibition, an interactive quiz competition, and awards recognising academic excellence.

One of the key highlights was the



small gifts during the quiz competition meant a lot. We’re showing them that business in agriculture is not just possible; it’s thriving.”

Through guided tours of the farmer stalls, live demonstrations, and tastings of fresh produce, students got a hands-on experience that brought textbook theories to life.

As the day drew to a close, it was clear that the event had accomplished more than just showcasing talent or delivering knowledge. It planted seeds of curiosity, confidence, and ambition in every student who attended.

“This fair is just the beginning. We’ve seen the importance of hosting such events and the impact they have on our students. There are more to come,” Mosotho said.

Shifting Tastes: How Consumer Choices Are Fueling Lesotho’s High-Value Crop Revolution

By Molula Mofosi

A quiet agricultural revolution is taking shape in Lesotho’s agriculture landscape. The once-unfamiliar hues of purple cabbage, dark green baby marrow, and fresh cucumbers have now become everyday favourites on vendor stalls.

These are no ordinary vegetables—they represent a growing category known as high-value crops, and their increasing popularity is being driven by changing consumer preferences.

These crops are prized for their profitability and low input requirements. Typically grown on small plots, they offer farmers higher returns with minimal land and resources.

In Lesotho, crops like mushrooms, garlic, cucumbers, asparagus, strawberries, and wild berries such as rosehip are showing strong promise.

According to Dr. Bataung Kuenene, Chief Research Officer at the Department of Agricultural Research, these crops not only thrive in the local climate but also hold immense market potential.

Dr. Kuenene points out asparagus as a particularly profitable crop.

“Asparagus is a perennial plant that requires minimal maintenance, yet delivers high yields year after year. It’s a perfect opportunity for farmers seeking sustainable income,” he says.

Perennial plants like rosemary, lavender, and fennel are also gaining attention. Their resilience to drought, ability to withstand cold winters, and



low maintenance make them a wise investment.

Farmer Mary Hansen is one such producer who has embraced this trend.

With support from Foso Hardware, which provided her with seedlings and technical guidance, Hansen began cultivating red cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli.

She describes her experience as both enriching and profitable.

“The market for high-value crops is wide open. Buyers are often willing to advise you on the standards they expect. You just need to be willing to learn,” she shares.

Her crops have found a steady market with retail outlets such as Pick n Pay Masianokeng

and Mpeoa Supermarket, as well as with individual consumers who are more conscious of their health and nutrition.

“There is a growing awareness about food choices, especially for disease prevention. That’s what’s driving the demand,” she says.

Even in challenging seasons, Hansen remains profitable.

“In winter, my profit margin is 100%, while in summer, it’s around 75%. Pests vary with the seasons, but with proper management, the returns are worthwhile,” she says.

Industry players confirm this shift.

Thabo Khalema from Maluti Fresh Produce notes that while overall supply of high-value

crops remains low, the quality of production is steadily improving, particularly in tomatoes and peppers.

Cucumber, he says, was one of the most purchased crops this season.

However, Khalema also stresses the need for proper quality standards to support the growing industry.

While the Lesotho Standards Institution (LSI) was established in 2020 to support certification and national standards, food-specific standards are still pending. This gap has been a setback for farmers hoping to export, especially with crops like asparagus.

Retailers also highlight the challenges of inconsistent supply.

Mookho Hloaisi from Pick n Pay Lesotho explains that while they prioritise local sourcing, gaps in production create missed opportunities.

“We sourced broccoli, lettuce, and watermelon locally in large quantities. But we had no broccoli for two full months, and that’s a gap a local farmer could have filled,” she notes.

She encourages farmers to consider contract farming, which has proven effective in ensuring quality and regular supply.

Hloaisi also reminds farmers that having a phytosanitary inspection report from the Department of Research is essential to access bigger markets.

“Doors only open when your produce is certified and safe to eat,” she sa

Tsikoane Market Centre Underused and Overlooked

By Ntsoaki Motaung



Tsikoane Market Centre launch

Despite its promise to boost local trade and farmer incomes, the Tsikoane Market Centre in Leribe stands as a stark symbol of exclusion and underutilisation, leaving many in the community disillusioned.

Member of Parliament for Tsikoane, Malefetsane Mabote, raised urgent concerns about the facility’s failure to serve the broader population.

He questioned both the limited number of beneficiaries and the opaque criteria used to allocate trading space at the centre during a recent Parliamentary sitting.

While the issue was directed at the Ministry of Trade, it was Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, who responded clarifying that oversight of the market fell under his ministry.

He acknowledged the centre’s operational delays and underuse, attributing the stall to structural issues that emerged after the management contract was awarded in 2022.

“Shakes Enterprises PTY Limited was awarded the tender in 2022 to run and manage the facility, but structural problems were discovered

which delayed the company to start work. It has been a while now and it is expected that they should start work very soon,” Mofosi explained.

He further admitted that a lack of coordination between the centre’s management and local farmers remains a major stumbling block.

“There is no alignment between the needs of



the farmers and the operational plan of the market, causing more delays,” the minister noted.

In an attempt to address the disconnect, Mofosi said the Ministry has initiated training for all stakeholders including market operators and farmers, to cultivate a shared understanding and ensure farmers are empowered to sell their produce through the centre.

Mofosi also pointed to the need to revise the market centre’s rules and regulations.

“We must review how the centre is being run so that it truly benefits farmers and honour its initial mandate,” he said, adding that a more detailed plan of action would be presented to Parliament in the near future.

In a broader trade discussion, the Minister

revealed that government is reviewing national laws regulating import and export practices for all market centres in the country.

The goal, he said, is to prioritise Basotho products over imports, reinforcing domestic production and economic resilience.

Still, the challenges facing agriculture in Lesotho extend far beyond market access.

During the same session, MP Mabote raised critical concerns about the impact of climate change on grain production, including the vulnerability of grain-producing countries that donate to Lesotho despite experiencing extreme weather themselves.

Minister Mofosi acknowledged the serious threat posed by climate change, confirming that the Ministry had already conducted studies to assess the country’s readiness.

He revealed a relationship with a local company currently producing maize seed varieties such as ZM 521, ZM253, ZM523, and VPO 5120, which were developed by ministry-trained professionals. He further noted the varieties are already being used by Basotho farmers.

In addition to maize, he mentioned locally developed bean seeds like Noah 45 (Lebete), Pinto Nodac, and Mchize, which are also being distributed to farmers.

The minister highlighted the role of the APPSA project, which focuses on research and the revitalisation of indigenous seed varieties as a path to national seed sovereignty and climate resilience.



Tsikoane Market Centre launched by former Minister Keketso Sello in 2022 July

The Future Grows Here: A Farmer-Turned-Scientist Cultivating Change in Lesotho

By Seabata Mahao

In an era where climate change is no longer a distant forecast but a pressing daily challenge, one young Mosotho is planting more than crops—he is sowing hope, innovation, and resilience across Lesotho's fields.

Monongoaha Pelei's journey began in the quiet hills of Mazenod where he was raised in a farming family.

From an early age, he saw first-hand the power of the land, not just as a source of food, but as a means to education, dignity, and opportunity.

Farming paid for his schooling, instilled purpose, and sparked a passion that would grow beyond his wildest dreams.

Now 24 years old, armed with a Diploma in Forestry and Resource Management and a BSc in Crop Science, Pelei is bridging two worlds; the traditional knowledge of his upbringing and the cutting-edge science of modern agriculture.



The Founder of Farm with Pelei, Monongoaha Pelei

food production—efficient, scalable, and climate-smart,” he notes, adding still, that the road ahead is not without obstacles.

“At the height of farmers problems is their inability to secure markets. Farmers often grow crops without guaranteed buyers, leading to harvest waste and financial losses,” he says noting market access and farmer education go hand in hand.

He believes that agriculture should be seen as a viable career path for young people and not a fall-back plan.

“Farming is not a dead end. It's a business. A future. We need the youth to believe that, see its potential and convince themselves towards success.”

His call to action extends to entire communities—urging them to support farmers, protect farmland, and participate in agricultural knowledge-sharing.

“Even small farmers matter. If we all eat, then we all depend on agriculture, therefore, supporting our farmers means securing our future and our ability to commercialise what we produce.”

He added, “As the threats of climate change grow more urgent and eminent for Lesotho farmers, solutions must rise from the ground up to influence policy change and hard decisions. We need to start seeing a blend of scientific expertise, grassroots wisdom, and deep personal conviction from the very farmers who are feeling the pinch,” Pelei says.

He adds, “We cannot eat technology or concrete as seen being promoted by the government, and having funds pumped there, but through education and innovation, we can grow our way out of hunger and hardship, blending the very technology to offer agriculture solutions to improve our production as a country.”

His work supports global development goals such as Zero Hunger and Climate Action—but at heart, Pelei's mission is local, personal, and deeply human.

His purpose is not fame, but impact. “It's not about being known. It's about making a difference—in the soil, in our communities, and in the future we are planting.”

leaders urging farmers to adapt to survive.

Through greenhouses, plastic tunnels, and shade nets, he is helping growers protect their crops against extreme weather and maximise their production.

He encourages the use of improved seed varieties and livestock breeds, and promotes catalytic converters for farming machinery to reduce environmental impact.

“At the centre of my work is the promotion of indigenous wisdom and I strongly promote the Machobane Farming System as a sustainable, home-grown solution for farmers of all ages and practices,” he says, speaking boldly about the role of trees in food production.

“Trees are not just shade; they are life,” he says, advocating for soil-binding species such as eucalyptus to combat erosion and promote biodiversity.

His model farm in Maseru serves as a hands-on learning space for farmers.

“I regularly host training through Farmer Field Schools and community workshops and I use my farm as the ultimate school where all things are practicalised,” he says.

He places a special focus on empowering women, whom he calls the backbone of Lesotho's food security, and continues to break gender barriers by promoting inclusive participation.

Among his most exciting ventures he says is the promotion of hydroponics—soilless farming that uses water to grow crops in controlled environments.

“This system reduces disease, saves space, and uses less water, making it ideal for Lesotho's changing climate,” he describes, adding that precision farming, where data guides decisions around planting and irrigation, is also on the rise.

“These technologies represent the future of



His story is one of rising from the soil to serve it better.

Back in 2019, while the world struggled with the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pelei quietly launched Farm with Pelei, a consultancy and advocacy platform that equips small-scale farmers with practical, sustainable farming knowledge.

His vision was never just about growing food.

“I wanted to help Basotho farmers, my vision was purely about restoring pride to farming, place tools of knowledge into the hands of rural communities, and build a resilient agricultural future where both women and the youth have an opportunity,” he explains.

With limited resources and unwavering conviction, he narrates that he began offering ad-

vice on staple crops like maize and beans, introduced agroforestry techniques, and promoted eco-friendly methods such as intercropping, organic fertilisation, and soil regeneration.

“When things took momentum I then expanded to focus on orchard development, pest management, and post-harvest handling, all critical skills in a time when climate variability threatens every harvest and wreak havoc to Lesotho's ability to produce food,” the scientist notes.

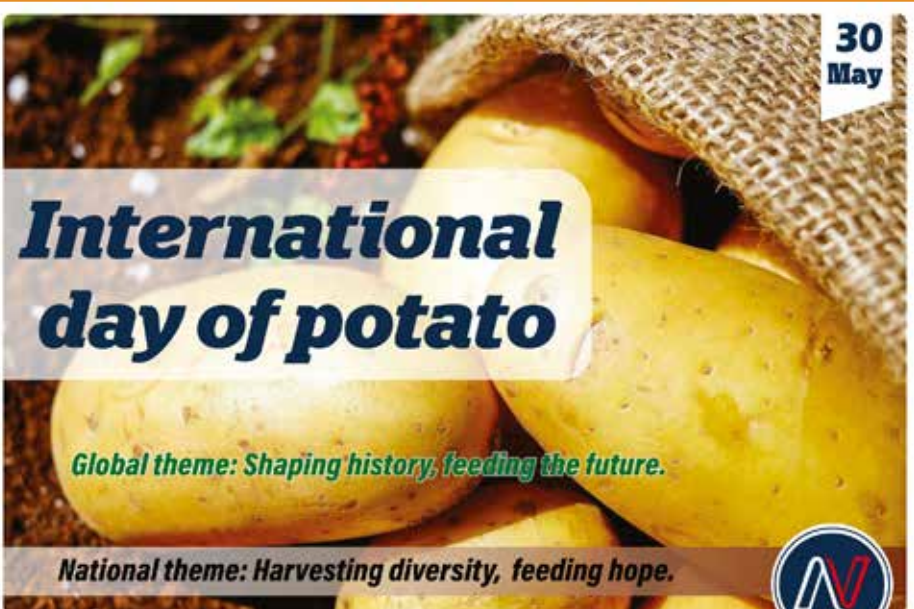
He points out that across Lesotho, traditional farming practices are under siege.

“Farmers are now forced to confront droughts, hailstorms, and erratic rainfall with soil erosion, low yields, and invasive pests becoming a common norm.”

Pelei is among a growing number of thought

International Bee's Day

20 May



30 May

International day of potato

Global theme: Shaping history, feeding the future.

National theme: Harvesting diversity, feeding hope.





By Topollo Tlali

Eighty-one-year-old Mamakhaola Peete rises before dawn each day to tend to her livestock and work her land, a routine she has followed since she married into the Peete family more than sixty years ago.

Her weathered hands, steady and skilled, tell the story of a lifetime of dedication to farming and the land that sustains her and her family.

Peete has devoted her life to agriculture not only as a means of survival, but as a foundation for her family’s progress.

Following the death of her husband, she narrates having to shoulder the responsibility of running the farm alone.

Through hardship and uncertainty, she says she has transformed farming into a source of resilience, raising and educating her children on the strength of the soil beneath her feet.

Though her journey began with subsistence farming, over time she transitioned into commercial production.

“My goats and sheep are the ones that bring in the most income through wool shearing,” she says, adding that wool and mohair provide regular returns, with buyers like BKB offering payments after shearing.

Testing different type of crop production to move with time, Peete says one of her proudest moments was being recognised as the best female pumpkin producer in her area — a title awarded by fellow farmers in the Berea district.

Firmly rooted in the heavy traditions of Basotho, Peete continues to use age-old farming techniques including intercropping, crop rotation, and organic composting choosing to produce organic.

These methods reflect her commitment to sustainability, enabling her to maintain the land without overreliance on chemical inputs.

“I learned to interpret the soil fluently and all the skills are self-taught,” she explains, noting that she practiced crop rotation long before the concept became widely known as a sustainable farming practice.

Her 15-hectare farm now supports a variety of livestock, cattle, goats, sheep, donkeys, pigs, and chickens, while her fields yield sorghum, maize, beans, pumpkins, and an assortment of vegetables.

“It is a home of agriculture vibrancy,” she says.

Looking back, she reflects that farming has always had its challenges, but today’s struggles are more intense.

She cites delays from the Ministry of Agriculture in providing seeds and fertilisers, as well as difficulties in accessing veterinary medicine.

“We are still waiting for winter seeds yet look at the time. If you are reliant on the government, you are in trouble,” she says, adding that there’s a pressing need for the government to help advertise wool and mohair so farmers can reach better markets beyond what is currently available.

She pointed out that climate change has only deepened these challenges noting erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, and prolonged droughts,

The Life and Legacy of a Woman Farmer



“...all have taken a toll on my yields circle for both crops and animal farming.”

“The rains no longer come on time, sometimes they are too little or sometimes too heavy, both scenarios affects soil erosion and water scarcity. While we at times experience heavy rains, water scarcity has worsened, making it harder to maintain the farm’s productivity,” she says.

She adds that climate change effects have seen more pests and diseases outbreaks.

“Once manageable problems in terms of pests and diseases now come in waves of uncontrollable pandemics. They destroy more crops than they used to and kill more animals than before,” she explains, saying these all forced her to blend traditional knowledge with modern practices while maintaining organic management of the farm.

She notes that to advance education plays a pivotal role.

“I started adopting climate-smart agriculture techniques, using conservation practices such as likoti (planting basins) and the Machobane Farming System, both gaining traction among Basotho farmers for their ability to improve soil health and conserve moisture.

“I am learning new ways to protect my land, my animals and crops-mixing what I know with new methods to keep the farm strong and more productive,” she says.

From modest beginnings with just four workers, Peete’s farm has grown to employ fourteen people.

“I’m very pleased to have such committed people working alongside me. Their contribution has enabled me to increase my output and create a sense of shared purpose — not just for income, but for community upliftment,” she says.

With all her success, Peete feels a sense of loss that her children have chosen careers outside agriculture.

“I had hoped they would take over since I am not getting old,” she confides, pointing to photos of her son, now a nurse, and her daughter, a teacher.

She worries that young generations lack both the drive and the skills to grow their own food. “The world is changing and those who can’t produce for themselves may suffer and this is inclusive of my children who have and continue to show no interest in farming,” she warns.

To young people, she offers advice that ‘farming is a calling that demands daily attention’.

“A farmer is needed three times a day — morning, afternoon, and evening. Other jobs may fade with time, but food is always needed. A farmer’s work never ends.”

Her words are a rallying cry for younger generations to see farming not as a fall-back but as a noble and essential profession, one that requires persistence, learning, and deep care for the land.

Branding Breakdown Fuels Stock Theft

By **Ntsoaki Motaung and Relebohile Makhetha**

The country’s rural economy is bleeding as stock theft surges, leaving farmers devastated and communities at risk.

At the heart of this growing crisis lies a broken livestock identification system marked by equipment shortages, low coverage, and slow service delivery.

In April 2025 alone, the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) reported a staggering 865 animals stolen across the country.

Police reported to have managed to recover 531—just over 60%—but the figures still paint a grim picture for the nation’s livestock agricultural sector.

LMPS Breakdown of April 2025 Livestock Theft Cases:

- **Cows:** 189 stolen | 128 recovered
- **Horses:** 32 stolen | 18 recovered
- **Donkeys:** 58 stolen | 12 recovered
- **Sheep:** 555 stolen | 339 recovered
- **Goats:** 60 stolen | 33 recovered
- **Pigs:** 1 stolen | 1 recovered

Thirty-eight suspects were arrested in connection with these crimes. Of those, 11 have been convicted, five cases remain before the courts, and 22 are still under investigation.

While these numbers alarm farmers, they also spotlight a deeper systemic issue: a livestock branding system unable to keep pace with the demands of rural communities and the threat posed by cross-border rustling.

Livestock branding, or tattooing in the case of small stock, has long been Lesotho’s frontline defence against animal theft, Director of Livestock Branding, Pitso Ramokoatsi, said.

He explained that the system is designed to identify ownership, deter illegal sales, and track cross-border movements. However, he noted that delays, dysfunction, and resistance among some

...865 stolen in April alone



livestock owners have weakened its effectiveness.

Ramokoatsi revealed that the government has branded over 1.7 million livestock nationally to date.

Branding, he added, acts as both a deterrent and a recovery tool making it harder for criminals to sell stolen animals, especially in South Africa, where proof of ownership is now routinely required at sales.

“Branding helps recover stolen animals and curbs illegal trade. It gives farmers security, particularly those whose livelihoods depend entirely on livestock farming,” he said.

Ramokoatsi points to equipment shortages, staffing inconsistencies, and non-cooperation from certain livestock owners as serious hurdles.

Some owners, he claims, intentionally avoid branding their animals, either out of mistrust, fear of errors by temporary workers, or because they may be complicit in stock theft networks them-

selves.

The situation came under sharp political focus on May 22, 2025, when Peka Member of Parliament (MP) M. Mpobole raised the issue in Parliament.

Mpobole revealed that livestock tattooing services have not been available in her constituency since 2018.

“This gap has left entire villages vulnerable to cross-border theft where unmarked Basotho cattle are quickly branded and absorbed into South African markets.”

“In Ha Maphutse, we once had 16 cattle kraals. Today, only two remain. The rest have been emptied by thieves and all is due to lack of access to branding,” she said.

Mpobole proposed a community-led solution where farmers procure their own tattooing irons and the government supplies the fuel. But her suggestion has stalled in bureaucratic bottlenecks.

Responding on behalf of the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police, Public Service Minister Stephen Mputi confirmed that 11,148 animals had been tattooed so far, including 954 large stock and 10,194 small stock. However, he admitted that progress in regions like Peka has been severely limited.

“One of our biggest challenges is that while farmers register their livestock, they fail to present them when mobile branding teams arrive,” Mputi said.

He also dismissed the idea of privately owned branding tools, citing risks of fraud and unauthorised livestock sales.

The inability to brand animals consistently has created fertile ground for theft and with porous borders, criminal syndicates on the rise, MP Mohau Hlalele of Thaba Phechela charged, arguing that livestock tattooing should now be declared a national emergency.

“Basotho are losing not just cattle, but their dignity and ability to survive. The loopholes in our system are leaving communities vulnerable and at the mercy of thieves. This issue should now be declared an emergency,” Hlalele said.

Meanwhile, awareness campaigns have helped shift public perception, Ramokoatsi said, noting that more livestock owners now appreciate branding’s value, especially as it is increasingly required for insurance, veterinary services, and export purposes.

Yet he stressed that even with public support, the system cannot function without the basics: working tools, trained personnel, and consistent government support.

In Lesotho’s agriculture according to different reports, livestock is not just wealth for the rural population, but it is food security, school fees, emergency cash, and intergenerational inheritance.

The Critical Role of Modern Irrigation in Lesotho’s Farming Future



By **Topollo Tlali**

For Mamatebele Kotoane of Ha Mohatlane, Berea, farming began as a necessity, but has since evolved into a powerful story of resilience, innovation and transformation.

“I started farming in 2005 with nothing but watering cans. I used to fetch water from the village dam, walking back and forth many times a day just to keep my crops alive,” she recalls.

“It was gruelling work, battling the elements, unpredictable yields, and relying solely on manual labour. Some days, the sun was too hot. Other days, the rain came too late. But I never lost hope. I always told myself, if I keep going, things will get better,” she says.

Her persistence began to bear fruit. Known in her village for the quality of her produce and her unwavering dedication, Kotoane’s turning point came in 2017 when she received her

first greenhouse from the Economic Inclusion Fund (EIF).

“It felt like a dream. Finally, I could protect my crops from the weather. I started growing tomatoes and peppers year-round—and the quality improved dramatically,” she says.

The greenhouse marked a significant leap forward with protection from harsh weather and pests.

She says she was able to extend her growing seasons and experiment with new crops.

Encouraged by this progress, she pursued further support and applied for assistance through the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP).

“When I got the approval, I was overjoyed. The funding allowed me to build another greenhouse and, more importantly, to install a borehole and water storage tank. I now have my own water source right on the farm.”

Access to a borehole marked a game-changer.



Powered by electricity, the farmer says it allows her to pump water into tanks and use a drip irrigation system to deliver water directly to her crops.

“Now, I just turn on the tap. It has saved me so much time and energy. Water is everything in farming. Without it, there is no production,” she notes.

Kotoane is a vocal advocate for water conservation and smart irrigation.

“I always tell other farmers to collect and store water during the rainy season. We need to build dams and invest in tanks. That’s how we can survive the dry spells,” she emphasises.

She says her modern drip irrigation system has significantly improved efficiency; “It delivers water straight to the roots, so there’s no waste. That’s especially important in areas like ours where water is sometimes scarce.”

Yet, her journey hasn’t been without challenges.

She still struggles with ensuring her tanks are filled daily—especially during the dry season.

“You have to be strategic with how you use water for sustainability,” she admits.

Even greenhouses present hurdles she says, noting they can trap too much heat, which stresses plants.

“I need to find ways to regulate the temperature,” she says.

She plans to install an air conditioner in her greenhouse to control the internal climate and reduce disease.

She is also looking to build a storage facility to preserve food during times of low supply and high demand.

“I want to be able to store produce for off-season sales so I can fetch better prices and reduce waste,” she says.

She also dreams of processing her crops into value-added products, “...that way, I can increase income and create more opportunities.”

For Kotoane, success in farming isn’t just about infrastructure, it’s about mindset.

“Farming requires discipline, patience, and self-control. You must be willing to work hard, even when results aren’t immediate,” she points.

She credits much of her progress to the support she’s received from EIF and SADP.

“They believed in me. Their support changed not just my life, but my family’s too. I’m proud of how far I’ve come, and I’m not done yet.”

At the heart of her story is a simple but profound truth: Water is life.

“Without water, there are no crops. Without crops, there is no food. That’s why we must prioritise water management. We need more dams, more tanks, and better irrigation systems across our communities.”

Her message to policymakers and fellow farmers is clear: invest in water, adopt smart irrigation, and prepare for climate uncertainties.

“With determination and a little help, anything is possible,” she says with a smile.

Young Farmers Raise Alarm Over Market Gaps and Production Challenges

By Ntsoaki Motaung

At the recent Agrivision Lesotho launch held in April, young farmers seized the moment to raise pressing concerns about the hurdles they face, chief among them being inconsistent market access and the inability to meet growing consumer demand due to production constraints.

The event, which featured a vibrant showcase of local agricultural products, doubled as a critical platform for young producers to voice the realities stalling their progress.

Itumeleng Moleko from Atlehang Foods explained how demand often outpaces their ability to supply.

“A lot of people love our products, but we cannot produce to meet their demand. We only have one production machine and lack a suitable drying machine to process fruit residue from our juice production. This results in significant waste and financial losses,” she said.

Lebohang Selepe of Ha Bo Khoho echoed the market challenges experienced by poultry producers, noting the unpredictable demand in the sector.

“While there are times when the chicken market is good, there are also periods with no demand,” she observed.

Despite the volatility, Selepe highlighted their commitment to supporting new poultry farmers by assisting those who purchase parent stock until their chickens are ready for sale.

“We try to find markets for our clients, but it is often very challenging. We have recently turned to social media to broaden our reach, and I believe wider adoption of



such strategies could improve market access for everyone,” she said.

In response, the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, who was in attendance assured participants that government is listening.

He announced that parliament is in the process of drafting legislation aimed at strengthening direct linkages between producers and buyers.

The minister further revealed that an Animal Health and Production Welfare law is in development, a crucial step toward better regulation of the livestock and poultry sectors.

Mofosi emphasised his commitment to encouraging youth participation in agriculture, describing it as a vital sector for Lesotho’s future.

Further raising hopes, the Minister announced plans for the imminent launch of a testing facility that would allow local products to meet international export standards—a game-changer for farmers seeking to access global markets.

He also advocated for the extension of the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP), recognising its transformative impact on small-scale farming.

Adding his voice to the conversation, Member of Parliament Nkaku Kabi echoed the farmers’ concerns and urged the government to support initiatives like Agrivision Lesotho through enabling legislation.

He emphasised the importance of securing stable markets for high-volume crops such as potatoes to curb losses from unsold produce.

Kabi also had words of encouragement for the young farmers in attendance. He urged them to be patient and persistent, acknowledging that agriculture is a long-term investment.

“Agriculture often requires time to yield significant returns,” he said, while also stressing the importance of adopting new technologies to boost productivity and adapt to shifting weather patterns.

The Agrivision Lesotho launch ultimately did more than showcase produce—it gave a voice to the young people powering the country’s agricultural future. Their testimonies and the ensuing government commitments underscored the need for targeted support, strategic investments, and bold policy reforms to unlock the sector’s full potential.

