



SEAHLOLO

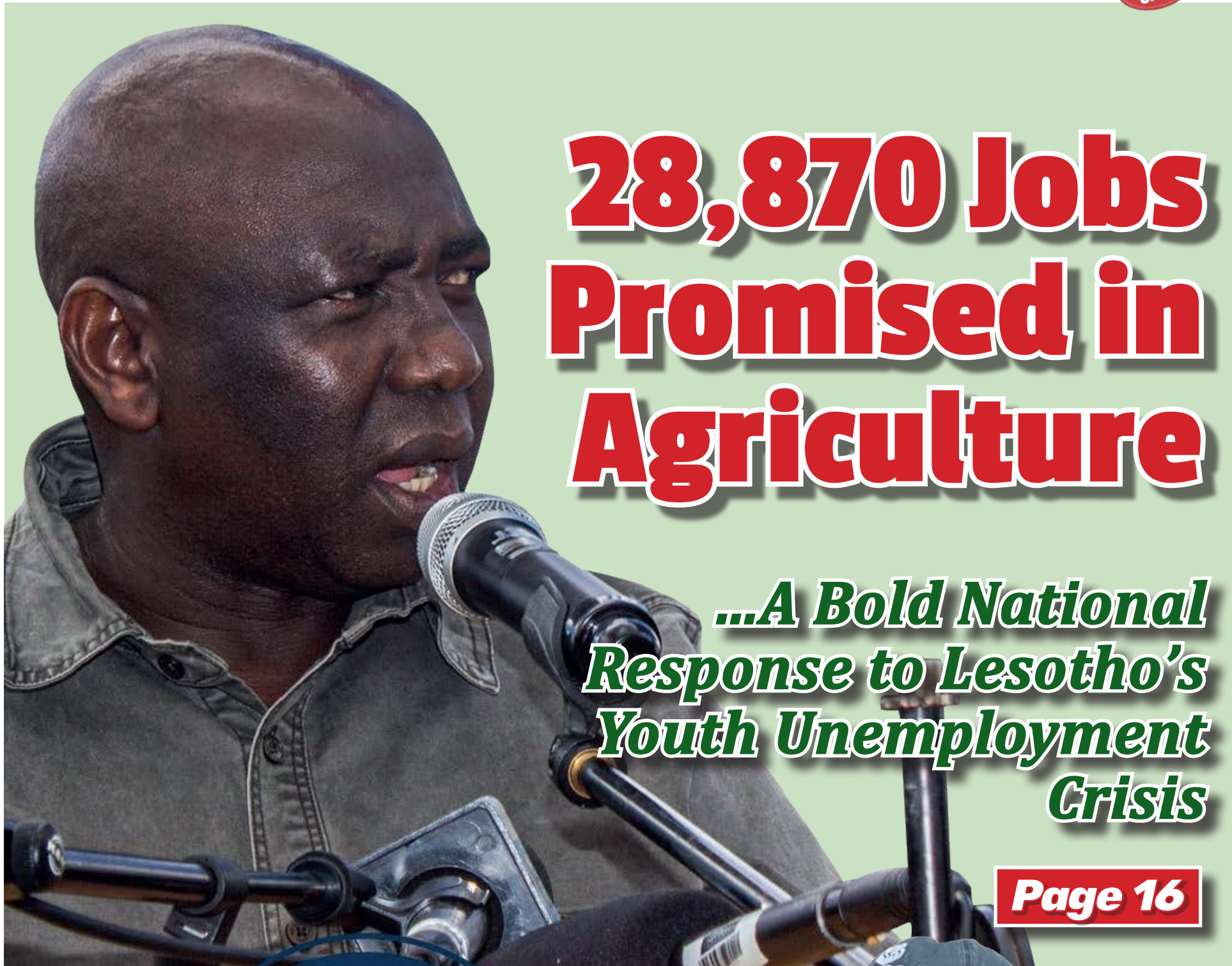
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Vol. 2 Issue 12

27|06|2025 - 31|07|2025

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28,870 Jobs Promised in Agriculture

*...A Bold National
Response to Lesotho's
Youth Unemployment
Crisis*

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FORMER PM MAJORO AMONG SADP BENEFICIARIES

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Mystery Beast Slaughters Farmer’s Flock, M21, 000 Lost

By Ntsoaki Motaung

A mysterious predator has devastated a live-stock farmer in Thabakhubelu, killing 14 sheep in a single morning and sparking fear across the rural community of Mphoko Lumaluma, in the Mohale’s Hoek District.

The victim, Mashapha Lethoko, estimates the loss at M21, 000 based on his usual sale price of M1, 500 per sheep.

“I have never seen anything like this before. It wasn’t the usual phokojoe [jackal] that attacks our animals. This one was bigger, about the size of a calf,” Lethoko said in disbelief

The bizarre and brutal attack occurred around 8

a.m. on Wednesday, June 11, when Lethoko briefly left his cattle post to borrow a spade from a nearby village to clear snow blocking the sheep’s path.

Upon returning, he was horrified to find the unknown beast already attacking his flock.

“It continued feeding as if I wasn’t even there. My dog tried to chase it off, but it killed him too. That’s when I knew this was something we’ve never dealt with before. I ran,” he recounted.

Lethoko described the predator as scarred, with a coat like that of a calf and a prominent muzzle. Despite his efforts to scare it away by throwing stones, the creature refused to flee.

Out of his 34 sheep, only 20 remain.

The farmer, who did not have insurance for his

animals, is now facing the full weight of the financial loss.

“Had they been insured, it wouldn’t feel this heavy hearted,” he admitted.

The incident has raised alarm among fellow farmers, many of whom now fear that the beast may strike again. Lethoko has urged community members to remain on high alert.

The gravity of the incident reached national attention with Prime Minister Sam Matekane, a farmer himself, accompanied by officials, visited the site to witness the aftermath first-hand and express solidarity with the affected farmer.

Meanwhile, Mokoenihi Thinyane, National Chairman of the Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association (LNWMGA), confirmed that although he had not yet received a formal report from the district chairman, he had been briefed by the Minister of Agriculture.

“He told me the ministry had received the report and is working on plans to assist the farmer. I am further told that the minister is sourcing livestock to compensate the farmer’s loss,” said Thinyane.

He also urged all farmers, particularly during the winter months, to keep their flocks close to home or nearby animal posts for quicker rescue in the event of attacks.

District Agriculture Officer ‘Malerato Lekhooba confirmed that she had reported the case to the Director of Livestock Services, adding that stakeholders were being mobilised to visit the site. “Whatever this creature is must be caught,” she insisted. “If not, farmers in that area will continue to lose their animals.”



Meraka Insurance Brings Hope to Lesotho’s Livestock Farmers

By Seabata Mahao

From stock theft to disease outbreaks, the loss of even a single animal can be devastating to Basotho farmers who rear sheep and goat.

Recognising the series of vulnerabilities in the livestock sector of agriculture, Alliance Insurance Group introduced Meraka Cover, a dedicated live-stock insurance product designed to safeguard the livelihoods of Basotho farmers.

Launched as a tailored risk management solution, Meraka Cover offers protection against a variety of threats to livestock, including theft, vehicle accidents, predator attacks, extreme cold, disease outbreaks, and flooding.

These are common risks faced by sheep and goat farmers, especially those in the wool and mohair who rely heavily on their animals for income.

“When this product was developed, we had in mind the Basotho farmers who rear sheep and goats, particularly those producing wool and mohair (Seiboko le Feralane),” said Thuso Mapetla, Head of Underwriting at Alliance General Insurance.

According to Mapetla, the product is also being extended to cover cattle and is structured to be accessible to small-scale farmers.

“Coverage begins from a minimum of 20 animals, with exceptions made in cases where fewer but high-value livestock are involved. Standard ewe insurance ranges from M2,000 to M3,000 per animal. For example, if a farmer insures 20 ewes at a value of M2,500 each, the annual premium would be around M2,500,” he explained.

To qualify for Meraka Cover, farmers are required to submit a veterinarian report, a completed

proposal form, and a record book of their livestock with official markings recognized by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Mapetla emphasised the importance of awareness and education around the product.

“We are aware that many livestock owners, particularly those in Lesotho’s highlands, may face language and information barriers. That’s why we’re working hard to raise awareness through digital platforms, television and radio,” he said.

He added that the Meraka product is still new in the market, and there’s a long way to go in educating farmers about the value of livestock insurance.

“Insurance is still a foreign concept to many rural farmers, but we are committed to ensuring they understand the protection and peace of mind Meraka Cover provides,” Mapetla said.



Wool & Mohair Export Permits Go Digital



By Molula Mofosi

From 1 September, all import and export permit applications for animal products and fibre will be processed by the Lesotho National Single Window (LNSW), this was revealed during a recent stakeholder meeting on 29 May 2025.

The digital permit system, introduced by the Government of Lesotho with funding from CAFI, aims to eliminate the paper-based process and replace it with an efficient, secure online platform.

Coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, the system was unveiled to wool and mohair traders, brokers, and other stakeholders in Maseru.

“This new platform will drastically improve how farmers and brokers access services,” project coordinator, Makali Lepholisa said noting that the manual application process was tiring, costly, and exposed farmers produce to damage or loss.

“With the LNSW, you no longer need to travel long distances to apply. All you need is a smartphone, internet access, your ID, email address, and a Tax Identification Number (TIN),” she explained.

She revealed that registration is already open, and applicants can upload required documents such as tax clearances and invoices.

Lepholisa noted that once applications are submitted, the Revenue Services Lesotho (RSL), which hosts and processes the platform, will communicate directly with users if any corrections or additional documents are needed.

“The system is available 24/7 and you can apply from anywhere. Once your application is approved, you can download or print your permit without ever

stepping into an office,” Lepholisa said.

She further explained that the system’s user authentication feature saves applicants’ information during registration, which eliminates the need to re-enter the same details for future applications.

“It is secure, efficient, and farmer-friendly. Only the registered user can access their account unless they share their password.”

While primarily designed for traders and brokers, the platform is also open to researchers, statisticians, and others stakeholders interested in trade data.

“This platform offers access to information on what types of commodities Lesotho exports or imports, supporting transparency across the food supply chain,” said Lepholisa.

The LNSW was initially launched in 2021, and its current expansion now includes integration with key government entities such as the Livestock Department, Department of Marketing, Dairy Board, and the Department of Agriculture Research. The platform’s development follows recommendations from the National Trade Facilitation Committee under the WTO (World Trade Organisation) and enjoys technical support from the World Bank.

Despite broad support, several stakeholders expressed concerns about the practicality of the system’s implementation.

OVK Country Manager Seelan Pillay acknowledged the innovation but said challenges remain regarding cross-border compliance.

“As brokers, we apply for a master permit from Pretoria, which requires a physical stamp from the Ministry, if South African authorities don’t accept digital signatures, it could cause major delays. While

we have been assured that a digital signature will be used, we will still have to wait and see if that is acceptable to the South African Revenue Service,” Pillay charged.

(he/she?) Pillay also raised concerns about digital literacy noting most of (his/her) my clients are not good with paperwork, and some struggle with technology.

“It is my hope that they adapt quickly, but that remains my main concern.”

BKB Coordinator Khauhelo Kheethoa echoed Pillay’s sentiment, warning that the rollout may be premature.

“There are gaps in the system that are going to make traders suffer. I am a broker, and when my clients suffer, I suffer. It seems like no cost-benefit analysis was done.”

“What happens when SARS wants paperwork and not QR codes? Or if the system fails? What if the permit isn’t produced and released on time?”

Kheethoa added; “Does the system comply with Lesotho’s wool and mohair legislation? I believe more engagement with South African stakeholders should have taken place before shutting down the manual process.”

Responding to the concerns, Lepholisa assured that more engagements were planned in the coming weeks.

“We still have three months to address stakeholder issues, update the system, and ensure a smooth transition. Clearing agents will also be sensitised, and discussions with SARS and South African brokers are also on the agenda,” she said.

Marketing consultants on the other hand ex-

pressed optimism, “This system brings logistical convenience and will save us a lot of money. We just need to support farmers and ensure that no one is left behind with this digital transformation.”

Lead veterinarian, Dr. Tabitha Seciso, highlighted the system’s role in controlling illegal trade, especially during disease outbreaks.

“Once we declare a disease in a specific zone, the system will reject permit applications to import or export related commodities. This is critical for national biosecurity,” she explained.

She also warned about traders falsifying names on permit applications.

“Some people use one name to export fibre at the Lesotho border and another name once it enters South Africa, especially in places like Queenstown where we have no formal certification agreement. That’s illegal, and the system will help control and even stop that practice,” she said.

Lepholisa further clarified that permits issued through the system will remain valid for 30 days while annual user registration is required only once.

She noted that while the system may go offline for scheduled maintenance, a technical support team based at the RSL training centre would be readily available to assist users.

The LNSW is fully aligned with Southern African Development Community (SADC) and World Trade Organisation (WTO) trade facilitation protocols. According to the World Bank’s Doing Business 2020 report, implementing single-window systems can reduce export processing times by up to 50%, offering significant savings to traders and governments alike.

Lesotho Removed from Hunger Hotspot List, but FAO Warns of Worsening Regional Crisis

By Lerato Matheka

According to the latest Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP Early Warnings on Acute Food Insecurity report released last week, Lesotho has been officially removed from the list of countries experiencing acute food insecurity.

Lesotho now joins Angola, Kenya, Namibia, and Uganda, which have also shown signs of improvement after previously being identified in warnings.

In a joint statement, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) said, “Angola, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, and Uganda are no longer among the hunger hotspots, thanks to a combination of seasonal improvements, above-average agricultural production, and effective response measures.”

While this is a significant development for Lesotho, the report cautions that global acute food insecurity is on the rise, with 13 countries and

territories identified as new or worsening hotspots between June and October 2025.

“Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, Mali, and the Gaza Strip remain at the highest alert level, facing the risk of starvation and death, and require urgent attention,” the report added.

The FAO and WFP emphasise that humanitarian efforts are being hindered in many severely affected areas, stating, “Conflict and limited humanitarian access are exacerbating already critical food insecurity conditions.”

In Southern Africa, although some countries are experiencing improvements, the situation remains unstable.

The report indicates that the region continues to suffer from the effects of El Niño-induced droughts, especially in nations reliant on rain-fed agriculture.

Despite progress in countries like Lesotho, the FAO and WFP warn against complacency, asserting, “It is critical that support is sustained to avoid

setbacks. Early action and ongoing investment in resilience-building are essential to prevent future deterioration.”

The regularly updated joint report serves as a global early warning tool for anticipating food crises. It calls for coordinated efforts among governments, humanitarian agencies, and donors to prevent worsening hunger and support long-term recovery.

Lesotho’s removal from the hunger hotspot list reflects ongoing recovery efforts and improving food security conditions. However, as the region continues to face climatic shocks and economic pressures, the FAO and WFP stress the need for sustained action to maintain progress and protect vulnerable communities from returning to crisis.

In July 2024, the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) and Disaster Management Authority reported that approximately 699,000 Basotho, or one-third of the population, were food insecure for the 2024/25 cycle. Similarly, United Nations reports in September 2024 indicat-

ed that around 700,000 people would face hunger in the coming months.

Funding Initiatives to Address Food Insecurity in Lesotho

- In **September 2024**, the UN allocated **US\$2 million** from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support drought-affected communities.
- The **European Union** pledged **€200,000** (approximately LSL 4,030,000) in June 2024 to assist over 2,500 vulnerable families.
- According to LVAC, the government estimated a funding requirement of **M1.149 billion** to meet needs for 2024/25, an increase from M394 million the previous year.
- Earlier in mid-2024, the **Disaster Management Authority (DMA)** appealed for approximately **M2 billion** to finance immediate humanitarian aid and resilience-building programs.

Trout, Tears and Tenacity: Farm Boy Refines Dreaming

By Topollo Tlali and Lerato Matheka

In the steep, sun-scorched valleys of Liphokoaneng in Thaba-Tseka, where boys are more likely to become herdboys than businessmen, and where childhood is often shaped by the weight of survival rather than dreams, one young man is rewriting that narrative, one trout at a time.

At just 25 years old, Khaolo Ramarumo, affectionately known as “Farm Boy,” has turned what was once a desperate struggle to put food on the table into a thriving aquaculture venture that now serves as a beacon of hope for his family, his village, and the broader highlands of Lesotho.

His is not just a story of entrepreneurship, but a story of defying the odds in a country where poverty grips tightly, opportunities are scarce and unemployment is at its peak.

The poverty that drove many boys to herd sheep drove Khaolo toward water.

“I grew up fishing to help at home and I was my prime priority. If I didn’t, there would not be food,” Khaolo recalls.

The fish he caught weren’t for sport or hobby, they were survival. They meant dinner, school fees, clothes and sometimes, a few coins saved for a future he wasn’t sure would ever arrive.

Clutched by poverty, and faced with the responsibility of fishing, the cold rivers of Thaba-Tseka turned into his classroom and the fish his only textbooks until that reality affected his journey of formal education.

“I ended up failing Form D because of fishing,” he admits. He says he somehow envisioned that his destiny swam in those cold streams and rivers.

Where others saw isolation and hardship, he saw possibility. He recounts that every time he peered into the Maliba-Matso River and saw thousands of tiny fingerlings gliding beneath the surface, he asked himself, “What if I could grow these fish—not just catch them? What if I could build a future from this?” and just like that a dream was birthed.

In 2019, with nothing but this dream and the support of his father who remembered how fish once kept the family from starvation, Khaolo gave up formal schooling altogether and registered Ramarumo Fish Farm Pty Ltd.

Using the family, they laid the foundation. The money they used was scraped together.

No big investors, no community support, just a son and a father, digging ponds and believing in something no one else could see.

Today, Ramarumo Fish Farm is changing the face of fish farming in Lesotho and positioning the impoverished Thaba-Tseka as the hub district that houses a farm produces thousands of sought after royal rainbow trout each year in a series of raceway ponds.

His farm draws clean water from a nearby river in a sophisticated network that allows communi-



ties downstream to still have access to the water.

With the complications that comes with getting aquaculture right, access to water is at the top of it, he says, explaining that the river he uses has helped sustain this business.

“This system allows me to harvest and release the water for the farm. The harvested water is treated before it is used in the ponds and treated again before it is released downstream. It is an almost automated system which I build overtime.”

He started with just 200 fish annually. Today, the farm can raise up to 10,000.

“Dreams do come true when one puts in the work and believes,” he says.

The turning point he reveals came when he partnered with the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP), which offered him a grant that allowed for the construction of two more ponds and provided fish feed.

“That was the motivation I needed. Someone to believe I was on to something good. The money came in handy and was truly the correct motivation.”

He is now aiming to scale up production to 30,000 fish annually and dreams of exporting his trout beyond Thaba-Tseka, Leribe and Maseru.

“With the support of Basotho businesses, this product can definitely be the country pride on continental and global markets,” he challenged.

Fish farming is not an easy business by virtue of its novelty and the challenges are many.

“Feeding alone makes up 80% of the production costs and the biggest challenge is they must be imported from South Africa.

“There is a need of what may look like around

the clock nurturing because the fish must be fed several times a day,” he explains.

Like other food production commodities, aquaculture is prone to climate change stresses.

“Climate change has drastically altered the environment and temperatures. Once comfortably cool water of the highlands can soar beyond 30°C in the summer, threatening fish survival. This has forced me to seek more technological answers to sustain,” he says.

When mass fish deaths once devastated his entire stock, it was his 76-year-old father who consoled him with words that still echo in his ears, “Take that failure as a lesson, as your school fees in the farming world.”

“I had lost a lot of fish due to the changed temperatures as well as lack of adequate production knowledge,” he says quietly, recalling nights of weeping beside dead fish in the ponds, mourning lost profits.

“It felt like the end of the road when the loss was quantified in monetary terms, but as the advice from my father, each loss became a lesson. I now know that in farming of any commodity one cannot say they know it all. I immense in knowledge, I read, I learn, I rearrange, I modify every day.”

Seeing that his business idea and model is an investable one, he became a relentless student of the business, using the internet to learn things he can otherwise cant learn in Lesotho.

He went further to taking a shot at the SEBA-BATSO pitch competition where selected.

Through the program, he travelled to China for aquaculture business training.

“I learned what is defining my production. The program covered global production techniques and marketing strategies as well as technologies. I gained valuable insights into breed quality and fish health, all skills I brought back home with pride.”

He further trained under the department of Fisheries in the Ministry of Forestry where he learned formulate his own fish feed, tailored to local conditions. The result? Rainbow trout so vibrant, they are snapped up within hours.

Now, Ramarumo Fish Farm not only provides nutritious food to local households, it also employs three permanent workers and several seasonal ones, including women who harvest, clean and sell the fish.

“Wastewater and fish faeces are used in vegetable farming to help create a circular system that feeds the land as much as it feeds people,” he says.

His fish, rich in colour and carefully bred, weighs up to one kilogram in six months.

“I sell them as per request, alive, fresh or processed and where I am now, the demand exceeds supply with most fish sold within hours of harvest.”

“There are no contracts yet. I sell directly to consumers and companies.”

Sharing his financial gains, Khaola says revenue from just one cycle of 5,000 fish can bring in M350,000. Even after costs, he clears up to M250,000, a sum that is reinvested into more ponds, more feed, and bigger dreams.

Ramarumo Fish Farm is more than a business. It is a movement where Khaolo mentors youth and advocates for local production.

He champions Lesotho’s Blue Economy. He tells anyone who will listen about the country’s potential.

He is now part of national policy conversations. He has represented Lesotho at Youth Connect Africa in Rwanda.

He dreams of building a nationwide fish farming network.

He sees women, too, playing a major role, but warns that climate shifts and technology will require serious adaptation.

Despite all the attention, Khaolo remains grounded. His proudest moment was seeing his trout served at a hotel, perfectly plated. “The plate came back empty,” he smiles.

Khaolo’s work has not gone unnoticed. He met the Prime Minister during an agricultural show in Thaba-Tseka—an encounter that reaffirmed the impact of his work and made him believe even more in the future of aquaculture in Lesotho.

He’s now part of Lesotho’s Blue Economy strategy team, helping to craft national aquaculture policy and his involvement speaks to the broader potential of fish farming in tackling youth unemployment, food insecurity, and poverty in remote areas like his.

“To the youth, stop waiting for jobs. Use the water, the soil, the air and everything Lesotho gives you for free. We have all the tools to create our own solutions, what we need to dream a little and believe,” he says.

With a deep sense of spiritual vision, Khaolo sees Lesotho as a nation of latent power, waiting to wake up.

“If 10 of us make this happen, in 10 years, hundreds will join. Lesotho can be a fish nation feeding bigger markets.”





Who are we

MARKET FACILITATION DIVISION – DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Market Facilitation division within the Department of Marketing (DOM) in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFSN) is mandated to oversee the development and growth of agricultural markets in line with the existing policies, strategies and mandates. The divisional activities cut across sector specific divisions within the department namely crops marketing and livestock marketing to act as a catalyst that stimulates market development and growth in a competitive, inclusive and resilient manner. In order to achieve the divisional mandate, four sections have been identified which complement each other to strengthen intervention as listed below:

Statistics Section assists the Department of Marketing (DOM) achieve its goal by providing statistical market related information used by technical sections within the Department and external stakeholders namely farmers, processors, NGOs, Gov-



while Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) issues plant protection certificates and Department of Livestock Services (DLS) issues sanitary certificates based on the approved quotas by DOM.

- » Permits are issued to locally registered packers and traders with a valid trader's licence.
- » Permits are valid for one calendar month, issued either at district level (traders) and headquarters (Packers) at no cost although administratively costs are involved.
- » Packers and traders are expected to report the quantities and values of commodities imported on a monthly basis using an import return form.
- » Permits issued by the Department of Marketing are meant to authorise the importer (trader) to go buy and import. Issuance of the permit is not meant to release confiscated / seized commodities.



al commodities stipulated under the Agricultural Marketing Act 26 of 1967 and regulations derived thereof in line with bilateral commercial relations. Regulated commodities are for the following categories; Fruits and vegetables, beans and peas, eggs, sugar, meat, bread, wool and mohair using quota permits to administer quantities to be imported or

Community Economic Partnership Agreement and 3) Southern African Customs Union - United Kingdom Economic Partnership Agreement where tariff rate quotas (TRQs) of 10,000 and 3,998 metric tons are at zero duty. Control measures have been put in place to protect local production, growth of local industries, employment creation,



ernment institutions, schools and traders. Information is derived from nationwide data collection done on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis for agricultural commodities local market prices, regulated imports and exports data. Agricultural trade information provided assists in planning and allocation of resources, enhancing farmers' income generation capacity, promoting market performance and promoting marketing to become an effective tool of entrepreneurship and agro-industry development.

Market Information Services contributes to the development of the agricultural value chains through provision of accurate and reliable market information used by relevant stakeholders and interested groups to enable informed decision making in the sector. Platforms used to disseminate market information include local radio & television programs, social media, newspapers, market information days, stakeholder websites to mention but a few. Information disseminated includes agricultural commodities price trends collected on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis, imports and exports statistics for regulated agricultural commodities, market requirements and available market opportunities for both crops and livestock farmers including existing challenges.

Market controls and regulations monitor compliance for enterprises dealing with regulated agricultur-



exported in collaboration with other stakeholders such as Department of Livestock Service (DLS), Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) and Lesotho National Dairy Board (LNDB). The Department



easy access to nutritional food, prevention of the spread of diseases, control smuggling and fair prices to consumers especially in the wool and mohair trade.

DOM Permit issuance process on regulated agricultural

Market controls and regulations, further administers all licensing applications tools through accurate processing of agricultural trading license categories (Wool & Mohair, Fruits and Vegetables, Livestock sales, Hides & skins) where routine inspections for compliance are done at trading premises and reporting of required statistical data to relevant sections.

Contract Farming facilitates formal agreements between producers and buyers which place conditions on the production and/or the marketing of agricultural produce. The aim is to enhance the integration of small-scale farmers into structured agricultural value chains, promoting sustainable market access and income stability. This initiative establishes formal relations between farmers and buyers, ensuring consistent supply, quality assurance and mutual benefit. Through these contracts, farmers are empowered to align their production with market demands, while buyers secure reliable sources of produce. By fostering collaboration, the initiative seeks to address market challenges such as quality standards, market volatility and competition from imports. Contract farming serves as a cornerstone in the Ministry of Agriculture's broader objective to transform agricultural practices, build resilient market systems and drive economic growth in Lesotho's agricultural sector.

.....Market Oriented Production!!.....



of Marketing administers wheat grain imported into Lesotho for commercial milling under three trade regimes namely 1) Southern African Customs Union (SACU) wheat rebate facility, 2) The European Union - Southern African Development

commodities has been detailed below for advocacy and public appreciation:

- » DOM first approves quotas to be imported by traders depending on the availability of regulated local produce



The Rise of Aquaculture Industry in Lesotho

By Molula Mofosi

Lesotho formally accepted the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies on May 20, 2025 making it the 99th WTO member to deposit its acceptance of the agreement.

While Lesotho is a landlocked country with no marine fisheries, it recognises the importance of the agreement in addressing harmful subsidies and supporting global efforts to ensure the sustainable use of shared natural resources.

The country however, does have a shared resource—the Senqu River.

This river is part of the Orange-Senqu River system, flowing through Lesotho and South Africa, and forming part of a larger basin that includes Botswana and Namibia. Specifically, the Senqu River originates in Lesotho and is known as the Orange River once it crosses into South Africa.

Our neighbouring countries have capitalised on this river for fish farming purposes, and Lesotho could do the same to expand its aquaculture industry.

An engineer by profession, Bakoena Pheko, is a fish tank and recirculating aquaculture systems producer who believes the current momentum shows promising growth for fish farming.

“I took a personal mission to research how South Africa is optimising the Orange-Senqu River for agricultural purposes, primarily for irrigation and aquaculture. I realised early in my career that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region is deficient in modern agricultural technology yet water is an asset we’re rich in and could help extensively in solving the unemployment crisis we are witnessing at the moment,” Pheko said.

He is among individuals leading the call to reimagine farming through technology and believes Lesotho’s abundance of water offers a key opportunity to scale aquaculture.

“We have plenty of water therefore, we should be in the game of fishery and aquaculture massively,” he noted.

Motivated by the full use of water resources, Pheko maintains a proposal to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition to establish an aquaculture centre in the lowlands is long overdue.

“Building an aquaculture breeding centre is neither sophisticated nor complex. It will help cut the costs of importing fingerlings, which are expensive, especially when coupled with high feeding costs,” he explained.

Catching up to this vision is the National University of Lesotho through the NUL Farm, which is expanding its facilities.

From an initial three to now nine ponds, the farm aims to eventually host ten ponds to accommodate the growing research interest in fish farming.

Farm manager Mahlaha Mahlaha shared, “We started bringing in fingerlings in November last year and already have a postgraduate student specialising in fish breeding.”

On the ground, trailblazers are carving out opportunities in Lesotho’s young but promising aquaculture sector.

A sector historically pioneered by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA), it is now being advanced by ambitious individuals like Khaolo Ramarumo, a medium-scale fish farmer from Thaba-Tseka.

Ramarumo, who began as a fisherman, is working towards obtaining an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) license to grow fish in Mohale Dam.

“The fish industry is at a growing stage, and it’s quite easy to get into. But for a farmer to scale to large production, they must be disciplined and qualify for funding from programmes like SEBABATSO, UNDP, and SADP. Based on my experience, the country is catching up and now funding fish farming projects,” he explained.

He added, “So long as a farmer is willing to invest time and money into their farm, they



Fish farming tanks (Sourced from Mehlole ea Lintle Agro Lesotho)

will see growth. I began in 2019, registered my business in 2020, and I am now a medium-scale farmer on my way to becoming a large-scale farmer.”

Ramarumo believes Lesotho has the water capacity to feed itself and export fish. With Mohale and Katse dams, supplemented by the Senqu River, he argues the country can attain fish self-sufficiency.

The EIA’s core mandate is to establish standards, guidelines, and compliance mechanisms for environmentally sustainable development. The division ensures that future developments align with socioeconomic and environmental sustainability goals and evaluates project compliance before approvals are granted. These safeguards

have laid the groundwork for regulated aquaculture, protecting against overfishing, pollution, and the introduction of invasive species.

Pheko emphasises that modern aquaculture must be part of an integrated food system. One model he champions is aquaponics, a combination of aquaculture and hydroponics.

“In aquaponics, fish waste becomes a natural fertilizer for crops, making it a circular and sustainable model,” he explained.

He highlights that agricultural engineering must focus on innovation.

Aquaponics, as a food production system, couples the raising of aquatic animals (such as fish, crayfish, or prawns) with cultivating plants in water. This method was implemented by St.

James Primary School under Nalane Foundation and is one of the few examples of fully capitalised aquaculture.

According to Pheko, it integrates structures that benefit both fish growing and the horticulture industry.

“Fish farming is the easiest way to tap into our natural resources on both natural and commercial scales. There is an untapped potential. While Katse Dam is currently utilised by two companies, none of them are Basotho-owned. In mountainous locations with cold climates and less arable land, aquaculture is the simplest way to practice sustainable agriculture.”

He continues, “What aquaculture needs is not sophisticated infrastructure but deliberate implementation and government willpower. Looking at the ponds I build monthly, I see enough willingness on the ground. Basotho are intelligent and adapt quickly, so government must give this sector attention, validate existing work, raise public awareness, and share information.”

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition is also catching up with this momentum, according to Mankeane Mofoti, Principal Livestock Development Officer for Fisheries and Aquaculture, a new aquaculture policy will be finalised by August 2025.

Following a stakeholder consultation workshop held on April 7, Mofoti explained the policy aims to protect aquatic life and address the information gap in aquaculture.

“Through this policy, farmers will feel safe in their pursuits, knowing there is a legal support for their operations. We intend to spread this message to the grassroots of aquaculture so that farmers know exactly what they are doing.”

She further stated that the policy will reform the outdated 1951 Proclamation (No. 45) on Freshwater Fish—a colonial-era document that remains Lesotho’s legal framework for freshwater fisheries.

“This policy reform will regulate fisheries and aquaculture, upscale current interest in fish farming, and attract investors. It will lead to an implementation strategy and a new bill to ensure sustainable production and increase indigenous species for commercial purposes,” she said.

Among the challenges highlighted by the draft policy are weak governance, inadequate trainings, infrastructure deficits, limited financing, land tenure constraints, aquatic animal health issues and an underdeveloped value chain.

The policy proposes clear pathways for overcoming these challenges, including prioritising governance, sustainable production, market access, decent work and gender equality, research and development, climate-smart agriculture, and financing models.

Its objective is to support the development of 4,000 market-led and incentivised aquaculture businesses through various financing opportunities by 2030.

Speaking as a representative of the private sector during the stakeholder engagement, Khaolo Ramarumo expressed optimism about the policy.

“There is a critical need for labs that undertake aquaculture research, and this policy will ease the establishment of such facilities.”

Ramarumo has mentored over 30 fish farmers and says the hunger for information is evident on the ground. “The policy will help close the information gap and empower farmers to scale confidently,” he adds.

Lesotho’s aquaculture industry is clearly at a turning point. From university-led research and grassroots innovations to policy developments and environmental safeguards, the sector is being built brick by brick. With sustained government support, informed policies, and committed pioneers like Pheko and Ramarumo, aquaculture could become a vital pillar in Lesotho’s agricultural and economic future.

What remains now is the will to act—boldly, inclusively, and sustainably. The waters are ready. The fish are waiting. And for the people of Lesotho, the tide might finally be turning.

A Farmer's Fight for Relevance

By Topollo Tlali

At 33 years old, Makhotso Khoaeane of Quthing-Theoheli, has lived through the kind of farming journey that breaks many, but despite poor markets, climate disasters, and limited resources, she continues to rise.

With each failed crop, she has found a reason to try again, shifting, learning, and eventually carving a small but stable space with carrots and beetroot, two crops that have brought her a renewed hope.

“I still get up and continue,” she says, her voice filled with calm defiance.

“Farming is hard, but it is mine.”

Makhotso began her journey in 2015, full of ambition and eager to feed her community.

Her first crop, red sorghum. It produced an impressive harvest. But, she was met with an unfortunate mismatch, the market preferred white sorghum instead.

“People demanded white sorghum instead. That market mismatch hindered my progress,” she recalls.

“It was the first lesson, not everything you grow will be needed or appreciated by the market.”

That lesson echoed again five years later. In 2020 after switching to red cabbage and tomatoes, she found herself once more on the wrong side of market trends in her area.

“It was such a loss. When started rotting and decomposing, I was left with no choice but to give them away for free.”

And yet she persisted.

In 2023, she increased her production of the failed red cabbage, tomatoes and added green peppers to the mix. It made sense since she had already introduced the commodities to her target market, but the market did not return the favour.

“I was only selling about 20 green peppers per week, it was a loss. Over that we experienced a heavy hail storm that destroyed everything before I could harvest.”

The next year brought more heartbreak to her persistence which saw another commodity, red onion, added to the list.

Pests ravaged her cabbage crop even though she had applied the right treatment, then drought followed.

“I was forced to harvest my red onions before



they were ready forcing me to sell at the lowest price, but they still got rotten and decomposed. I had nothing to show for the efforts.”

For many, these harsh years would have been the end, but for Makhotso, they were preparation.

In 2025, she changed her course again—this time towards carrots and beetroot, crops less common in her area and more resilient to the harsh conditions she often faced.

“There are few people who produce them. They are needed in every season and that is what gave me a renewed hope.”

The results were different. The market began to respond.

“They are less affected by pests and diseases and unlike my earlier crops, people actually buy them.”

Today, Makhotso sells around 9 kilograms of carrots a day, walking the streets of Quthing town to deliver her produce directly to customers.

“Some collect from my farm and have shown they like that they get them fresh from the soil.”

She's tried to expand her market—approaching local guest houses and large shops but unfortu-

nately the doors have not yet opened.

“They keep saying I should leave my contacts but nothing happens after that.”

For now, she remains focused on what she can control, walking, selling, delivering.

“I thought about packaging but since I just started and my current clientele seems happy with getting the produce fresh and straight from the farm, I will remain her until I have grown enough.”

Her strategy is personal and rooted in survival. It blends direct farm sales, street vending, and small efforts to enter formal markets. She knows it's not easy, but it's working.

“The connection with customers is what keeps me going,” she says.

Behind Makhotso's grit is a team: her family.

Her husband and sons form the core of her workforce.

“We work hard together and farm as a family because farming and family life are both demanding and hard to balance, but with all of us involved, it's coordinated.”

In earlier years, she says she hired addition-

al workers, hoping to ease the workload but low profits made it unsustainable her decision to co-opt her family.

Makhotso's advice to young and aspiring farmers is firm and practical.

“Before you plant anything, make sure you are prepared with all that needs to be known including the correct and advanced equipment like shade nets to protect crops and good irrigation system.”

These things, she insists, are not luxuries but are necessities making farming less painful.

Her future plans are simple but clear, better tools, better practices, and better support.

In a country where many smallholders are trapped in cycles of crop failure and poor returns, Makhotso's story is rare. She hasn't broken through the system—but she has found a way to survive within it, holding tight to the dream that one day, the system will work for her too.

“I have walked a difficult journey since 2015, but carrots and beetroot have opened something for me. I'm not where I want to be—but I'm no longer where I was.”



Redefining Farming Across Borders

By Topollo Tlali

In the small village of Lisemeng in Hlotse, Leribe, Makamohelo Sello once dreamed of furthering her agricultural education in Australia but with a different plan, fate swayed her journey differently.

Today Sello has emerged a trailblazer in commercial farming, commanding influence across both Lesotho and South Africa.

Her journey, born from unexpected detours and fuelled by sheer determination, is a compelling story of transformation, resilience, and hope.

“I was about to further my studies in agriculture in Australia but when COVID-19 hit, everything changed. The borders were closed and my plans were suddenly suspended. I had to choose a new direction because my heart was set on agriculture practice advancement.”

That new direction, she recounts, led her to her husband’s farm in South Africa.

What then began as a plan B quickly blossomed into a practical education in farming, an education no classroom could offer.

“My husband played an important role in making me venture into animal rearing. He had been practicing crop farming since 2011, and joining him was the beginning of everything I am in agriculture.”

Under his guidance and the help of seasoned workers who had been with the farm since 2013, Sello says she immersed herself with lessons embedded in the day-to-day operations of commercial farming.

“They trained me in wool and mohair harvesting, breeding, injection programmes and nutrition and I must say, they did a great job because I now excel in what I do.”

She graduated from the practical learning school to now owning and managing Terry Farm, a 1,300-hectare operation in South Africa that specialises in livestock, wool, and mohair.

The farm also produces maize and beans and employs a team of ten workers, four full-time and six part-time, contributing meaningfully to job creation in rural areas.

“My journey through farming is filled with extreme highs and lows.

“From livestock mortality to stock theft and the high cost of feed and medication, it’s not easy. But despite all that, I have my moments of joy, growth, achievements and massive production. Even though I am not where I want to be yet, I am proud of how far I have come.”

She notes that her days begin at dawn. “My mornings start at 5 a.m. I boil water, bathe, prepare breakfast, and then head to the kraals to count and record every animal. I take



pride in knowing every single detail about my stock.”

Once her employees take the animals out to graze, she shares that she continues her day by doing household chores, feeding her chickens, and preparing lunch. But... “Life in this remote farming community comes with its challenges. At times I am forced to travel to Bethlehem or Kroonstad for essentials because we don’t have the services we need nearby, and that makes things more difficult.”

Yet even in the face of financial strain, Sello remains committed.

“When I started, what has surprised me the most was how expensive farming actually is. The cost of running a livestock operation, from healthcare to feed, is overwhelming. It took me a while to comprehend and appreciate, but the reward is in the resilience it builds and eventually the profits thereon.”

Sello has grown into more than just a farmer, she is now a mentor, employer and an advocate.

Regularly attending youth and women empowerment programmes in both South Africa and Lesotho, she shares her experience to

inspire and equip others.

“All the knowledge and skills I have gained in South Africa, I try to put into practice to support farming in Lesotho because farming in both countries differs. There is a lot we can bring back including experience, mentorship and new ways of doing things.”

She says she envisions a future where commercial farmers are recognised not only as producers but as leaders of agricultural development.

“I so wish our country could give commercial farmers a chance, a real seat at the table. We can offer practical mentorship, skills transfer and proven approaches that would help smallholder and upcoming farmers to grow and reach their full potential.”

She advocates for open forums, discussions and support systems that give farmers access to advice, networks and learning opportunities.

“The more we share knowledge, the more we can grow together.”

Another issue close to her heart she says is agricultural education which she believes it is the missing link in transforming agriculture from survival to success in Lesotho.

“My dream is to see agriculture taken seriously in schools and extended into villages. We need to teach our people that farming is not just about survival. It’s a business. It’s a profession.”

She is also determined to challenge the stigma that links farming to poverty or illiteracy.

“There’s this saying that farming is for the uneducated, that stigma should be removed from people’s minds. Farming is powerful. It feeds nations and Basotho must see it as a respected, professional path.”

Looking ahead, her goals are bold and far-reaching; “I want to start exporting my breeds to countries like Lesotho, Botswana, and Nigeria. I want to sell stud rams, stud Bonsmara and eventually get into agro-tourism.”

Her vision for Terry Farm includes not just livestock excellence but creating a destination that invites people to experience the beauty and possibilities of agriculture.

“Agro-tourism would allow people to come, learn, experience, and enjoy what we have built and showing the world that farming can be modern, dynamic, and profitable.”

Sello’s journey is a living lesson in what it means to embrace change, to learn from adversity and to lead with purpose.

“Farming is not just a job, it’s a way of life. It’s about nurturing, growing and giving back, and though I still have far to go, I am proud of the distance I have covered,” she says.



Happy 62nd Birthday

To His **Majesty
King Letsie III**



A Global Leader in the Fight Against Malnutrition

Key Roles & Recognition

African Union Nutrition Champion (since 2014)

Appointed by the African Union, King Letsie III has led the continent's fight against malnutrition, tirelessly advocating for nutrition to be prioritised in national and continental development agendas.

UN FAO Special Ambassador for Nutrition

Recognised globally, The King was appointed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as Special Ambassador for Nutrition, amplifying his influence on the world stage.

Major Achievements & Advocacy

Raising Awareness

King Letsie III has been a leading voice urging African governments and international partners to make nutrition a top priority, emphasising its link to economic development and the well-being of future generations.

Mobilising African Leaders

He has worked with African Heads of State, finance ministers, and the African Development Bank to rally support for the African Leaders for Nutrition initiative, which aims to end childhood stunting and hunger by 2025.

Championing Policy & Investment

King Letsie III calls for practical, sustainable financing mechanisms for nutrition, and stresses the need for joint efforts from governments, development partners, the private sector, and civil society.

Driving Continental Action

Under his leadership, the AU declared 2022 the "Year of Nutrition," further elevating nutrition on the continental agenda and inspiring greater investment in nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

Global Advocacy

At international forums, he highlights the "positive correlation between nutrition and the socio-economic development of nations," and urges continued global momentum to eliminate malnutrition.

Let us all remember the positive correlation between nutrition and the socio-economic development of nations. It is well fed and well-nourished individuals that can drive the economic development agendas of their countries.

— King Letsie III of Lesotho

CELEBRATING

2 YEARS ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

MILESTONE



Editor's Note

Seahlolo at Two: Honouring the Voice of Agriculture in Lesotho

By Lerato Matheka

Two years ago, a vision was born. A dream carved from a passion to tell meaningful stories, amplify the voices of the soil and reframe how Lesotho views agriculture, not just as a practice, but as a powerful engine of transformation. Today, Seahlolo Newspaper stands proud as Lesotho's premium agriculture publication, marking two years of consistent impact, brave storytelling, and unwavering commitment to the people who feed the nation.

In a media landscape often dominated by politics and quick headlines, Seahlolo dared to dig deeper. We focused on the hands that till the land, the innovations that bring food to our tables, and the stories often buried beneath policy documents and market reports. We became the megaphone of the fields, and what a journey it has been.

Our Humble Beginnings

What started as a sister publica-

tion to Newsday has grown into an independent powerhouse of agricultural journalism. The decision to launch our own website in 2024 was a strategic pivot, a deliberate step to forge our own identity and create a digital home for Lesotho's agri-stories, research, and reflections. This move allowed us to expand our reach, enabling farmers, students, policymakers, and international partners to access our content in real time from anywhere in the world.

Elevating the Farmer: From Print to Practice

While our storytelling is powerful, we have never limited our impact to just pages and posts. Seahlolo has consistently gone beyond the newsroom, translating words into action. One of our proudest moments was the successful study tour to Johannesburg, where we took 15 vegetable farmers from Lesotho to learn from South African counterparts. This collabora-

tion with Food for Mzansi was more than a tour—it was a transformative experience that ignited ideas, boosted morale, and opened networks for our farmers.

Rewarding Excellence: Sponsorship that Makes a Difference

Beyond reporting, Seahlolo has stepped up as a sponsor and supporter of grassroots excellence. In 2024, we proudly sponsored the Farmers Pitso Awards, donating an irrigation system worth M10,000 to the top three schools in Agriculture. This was not just about prize-giving; it was about investing in the next generation of agri-leaders and sending a clear message: Effort is seen. Excellence is rewarded.

We believe in building an ecosystem where passion is nurtured and success is celebrated. Whether it is through awards or mentorship, Seahlolo remains committed to elevating agriculture into a respected, admired, and desired career path.

Recognition Earned: Best Media



in Agriculture

Hard work does not go unnoticed. In 2024, Seahlolo's reporter, Libuseng Molato was crowned Best Media in Agriculture, a recognition that validated our editorial integrity, field presence, and commitment to agricultural development. While won by one person, this award belongs to every reporter who walked the dusty roads to meet a farmer, every photographer who captured a moment of growth, and every reader who believed in our mission.

Telling the Story of the Nation

Seahlolo is proud to have documented key milestones that shape Lesotho's agricultural future. In August 2024, we were on the frontlines covering the prestigious visit of Rome-Based Agriculture Agencies—a moment that elevated Lesotho's food systems to global attention. Our multimedia coverage of this historic moment solidified our role not just as a national player, but as a credible international

partner in agriculture communication.

We continued this momentum into 2025, partnering with the Ministry of Agriculture's Marketing Department to organize and cover the National Market Day. Our involvement went beyond media coverage—we contributed ideas, built bridges, and ensured that rural farmers were not just seen, but heard, celebrated, and supported.

Multimedia, Multi-Platform, Multi-Impact

We have evolved with the times. Seahlolo is not just a newspaper, it is an agriculture media platform powered by video storytelling, social media campaigns, long-form journalism, and community-driven events. From short farmer profiles to investigative pieces and documentary features, we understand that the story of the land must be told in many ways to reach many hearts.

On social media, our growing dig-

ital audience is proof that Basotho want more than just news—they want education, inspiration, and practical tools. Whether we are unpacking climate-smart agriculture, profiling women farmers, or breaking down agribusiness models, our content is designed to spark conversation and encourage action.

More Than a Medium but a Movement

We are not just observers of change. We are agents of it.

Seahlolo is building a bridge between information and action through our Farmers Benefit Events. These events connect farmers to markets, resources, and each other—creating shared experiences and real economic value. Our support of grassroots innovators, especially women and youth, reaffirms our belief that agriculture is not old-fashioned—it is the future.

When we stand in a village, host a dialogue, or publish a farmer's sto-

ry, we do so knowing that we are shaping the perception of agriculture in a country that desperately needs to believe in its land again.

Holding the Line of Advocacy Through Journalism

Seahlolo has also taken a bold stance when needed. Whether reporting on delayed subsidies, climate threats, or the inefficiencies in agriculture support systems, we have used our platform to speak truth to power. But we do so with one goal—to push for solutions, collaboration, and growth.

Our work is not about finger-pointing; it's about planting the seeds of accountability so that the system works better for everyone.

The Road Ahead: Firm Roots, Fierce Vision

As we enter our third year, Seahlolo is not slowing down. We have plans to deepen our presence across districts with a lot of more exciting products and farmers interactions.

The NSDP II has identified Agriculture as an active and priority economic player, therefore more still needs to be done because food is not just sustenance, it's sovereignty.

A Heartfelt Thanks

To our readers, sponsors, government partners, farmers, experts, and critics, thank you. You have helped shape Seahlolo into what it is today. Thank you for trusting us with your stories, your struggles, and your triumphs.

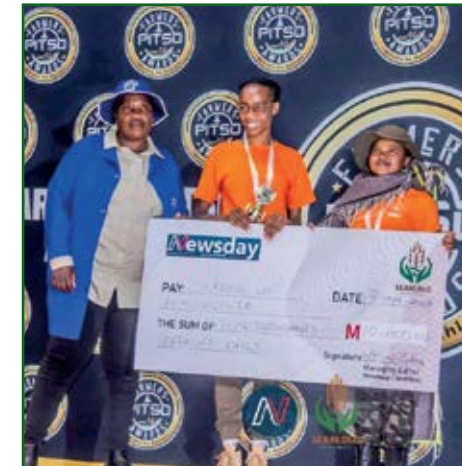
To the farmers in all the ten districts of Lesotho, you are the reason we exist. You are the heartbeat of this publication. Every headline, every centre spread, and every article is for you.

Happy Birthday, Seahlolo!!!

Here is to many more years of soil-driven storytelling, unwavering advocacy, and national impact.

Here's to the publication that doesn't just report on agriculture.

#WeGrowTogether





Vacancy

FAO Representative in Lesotho

Job Posting: 04/Jun/2025
Closure Date: 02/Jul/2025, 11:59:00 PM

Organizational Setting

FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. FAO’s goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. With 195 Members - 194 countries and the European Union, FAO works in over 130 countries worldwide. The main aim of the FAO Country Offices, which are headed by FAO Representatives (FAORs), is to assist governments to develop policies, programmes and projects to achieve food security and to reduce hunger and malnutrition, to help develop the agricultural, fisheries and forestry sectors, and to use their environmental and natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Specific activities of the Country Offices include:

- Implementing FAO's field projects and participating in the development of the Field Programme by identifying and formulating new projects and liaising with local donor representations.
- Helping governments to prevent and assess the damage of disasters and assisting them in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the agricultural sector.
- Carrying out public awareness activities and support important FAO campaigns such as the World Food Day (WFD).
- Providing assistance to technical and investment missions from FAO headquarters and from Regional or Subregional Offices to the country.
- Serving as a channel for FAO's services to governments and other partners (donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), research institutions, etc.).
- Keeping FAO informed of major social and economic developments in the country and monitoring the situation of the agriculture sector in the country.
- Acting as FAO Representative to host governments and all partners involved in FAO activities.

The position is located in Maseru, Lesotho.
Reporting Lines

The FAO Representative (FAOR) manages and is accountable for the FAO country programme, office, resources and staff. He/she reports to and works under the overall guidance and supervision of the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative (ADG/RR) and, where applicable, under the technical supervision of the Subregional Coordinator. The FAOR works closely with the Regional Leadership Team and is supported by the Regional/Subregional Office and headquarters' technical, administrative and operational staff, as appropriate. The FAOR also reports periodically to the Resident Coordinator (RC) on his/her respective contributions to the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and works towards the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSD-CF), and is an active and accountable member of the UNCT as defined in the approved 'Management and Accountability Framework' that operationalizes the RC/UNCT relationships, in accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution 72/279, and is also an active member of the Humanitarian Country Team, where relevant.

Technical Focus

The FAOR leads FAO’s response to national priorities and sustainable development challenges to advance the 2030 Agenda, as well as to advocate for action aimed at accelerating the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as established in FAO’s Country Programming Framework (CPF) and in line with the FAO Strategic Framework, with particular focus on the Programme Priority Areas (PPAs). The FAOR is entrusted with leading FAO’s contributions to the UNSDCFs.

Key Results

The FAOR successfully leads and manages the FAO Country Office and effectively represents FAO in his/her country(ies) of accreditation, developing, maintaining and enhancing collaboration with the host government and other key stakeholders on development and humanitarian issues.

Key Functions

Represent and advocate the work of the Organization:

- Represent FAO towards national authorities, partners and stakeholders.
- Advocate FAO’s policy positions in the relevant national fora, represent FAO in the national media, and implement a proactive communications strategy to raise awareness of FAO with the general public.
- Support UN joint communication efforts and speak with ‘one voice’ in delivering the 2030 Agenda.
- Facilitate timely access by national stakeholders to FAO’s knowledge resources and global public goods.
- Provide leadership on food security and agriculture policy, as well as operational matters within the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator System.
- Lead the overall emergency response preparedness, coordination and response at the country level, in cooperation with the government, UN Country Team/Humanitarian Country Team and Cluster/sector activities and related resource mobilization efforts.

Develop and operationalize the CPF derived from UNSDCF:

- Support the country's efforts towards the achievement of the SDGs, in line with FAO’s mandate and Strategic Framework.
- Lead, in line with national priorities and in consultation with national stakeholders and partners, the timely development of the CPF and the Country Work Plan (CWP) in accordance with, and as derived from, the UNSDCF process and related FAO programmes, projects and/or other activities (such as normative and policy functions).
- Lead the analysis of the country situation, providing, when necessary, updates and alerts on key events and trends, including for the UN Common Country Analysis (CCA).
- Lead FAO’s contribution to the UN common planning and programming frameworks, i.e. CCAs, UNSDCFs (former UNDAFs), Consolidated Appeals Processes (CAPs), Humanitarian Action Plans, Flash Appeals, Joint Programmes, etc.
- Advise and collaborate with internal partners to raise awareness of country priorities and needs, and support their inclusion in corporate and regional policies.
- Lead the dialogue and liaise with national government authorities on issues of FAO’s mandate.

Build partnerships and mobilize resources:

- Support the operationalization of the CPF and the UNSDCF.
- Support the establishment of effective partnerships and collaborations with governments, donors, civil societies, NGOs, the UN and other international organizations. Lead country-level mobilization of extrabudgetary resources, making maximum use of the expertise available in the Decentralized Offices.
- Support the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in strategically positioning the UN in the country and in joint UN resource mobilization efforts.

Programme implementation and monitoring:

- Ensure that programmes are managed and monitored effectively and in compliance with corporate policies, as well as procedures.
- Mobilize technical backstopping to FAO projects, in line with corporate norms, standards and procedures.
- Provide (when requested), technical support services in FAO’s areas of competence in the country(ies) of assignment, as well as other countries of the subregion.
- Operate as budget holder for national projects entrusted to him/her.
- Oversee the effective implementation of FAO programmes and projects, lead periodic reviews, monitor the CPF and FAO components in the UN Sustainable Cooperation Frameworks and Joint Programmes, and ensure timely reporting, including to the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, as well as the UN Country Team on jointly agreed results.
- Report results as per corporate reporting requirements in a timely manner.
- Address issues in real-time to minimize reputational and financial risks for FAO.

Effectively manage the office, personnel and financial resources:

- Lead and manage the Country Office and ensure effective, as well as efficient use of human and financial resources, in line with corporate policies and administrative procedures, ensuring that internal control mechanisms are in place and enforced.
- Manage all matters related to the security and safety of FAO personnel and their eligible dependents whilst ensuring full adherence to the UN Security Policy, rules and regulations, as well as to security-related instructions issued by FAO.
- Improve the observance of legal, statutory or regulatory obligations; FAO’s ethical standards and its internal Human Resources rules and policies, including the application of FAO zero tolerance policies on prevention of sexual abuse and harassment and gender parity. Promote and nurture staff development in addition to welfare.
- Identify and implement effective and efficient controls that better respond to operational risks faced in achieving FAO’s objectives, including preparation and implementation of Anti-Fraud Control plans.
- Maintain and improve the reliability, appropriateness and timeliness of financial and non-financial information.
- Reduce losses and waste of assets, as well as resources, whether through misdirected effort, avoidable errors, mismanagement, abuse or fraud.
- Ensure that a gender focal point is designated as required by the FAO Gender Equality Policy.
- Sustain and increase the confidence among Members and other stakeholders in the reliability, resilience and efficiency of FAO’s management systems.

CANDIDATES WILL BE ASSESSED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING Minimum Requirements

- Advanced university degree in an area related to the activities of the Organization, e.g. agriculture, forestry, fishery or rural development, etc.
- Ten years of relevant experience in planning, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of field programmes.
- Working knowledge (proficiency - level C) of English and intermediate knowledge (intermediate proficiency - level B) of another official FAO language (Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian or Spanish).

Technical/Functional Skills

- Work experience in more than one location or area of work, particularly in field positions is essential, in both programmatic areas and fostering government relationships.

- Extent and relevance of experience in developing and managing country field programmes from design to delivery (programme/project identification, formulation, analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).
- Extent and relevance of experience in the coordination and/or management of technical cooperation projects and programmes, including emergency, recovery and rehabilitation related programmes.
- Demonstrated experience in resource mobilization.
- Extent and relevance of experience in negotiating and cooperating with national governments, intergovernmental organizations and other institutions, as well as in designing collaborative networks and joint programmes.

Leadership Competencies

Results focus: Takes accountability for the delivery of agreed results in service of FAO’s strategic framework - **Leading, engaging and empowering others:** Coordinates, directs, facilitates and recognizes team efforts; creates an enabling environment and assists others to realize and develop their potential - **Communication:** Encourages and contributes to clear and open communication - **Partnering and Advocating:** Promotes ideas and develops partnerships to advance the Organization’s work - **Knowledge sharing and continuous improvement:** Continually seeks to improve the knowledge, skills and work processes of oneself and others - **Strategic thinking:** Makes informed and coherent decisions aligned with broader goals and strategies. Please note that all candidates should adhere to FAO values of Commitment to FAO, Respect for all and Integrity and Transparency.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- FAO reserves the right not to make an appointment.
- Appointment will be subject to certification that the candidate is medically fit for appointment, accreditation, any residency or visa requirements, and security clearances.

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

A competitive compensation and benefits package is offered. For information on UN salaries, allowances and benefits, click on the following link: <https://commonsystem.org/cp/default.asp> Other benefits, subject to eligibility, include:

- Dependency allowances
- Rental subsidy
- Education grant for children
- Home leave travel
- 30 working days of annual leave per year
- Pension fund entitlements under the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund
- International health insurance; optional life insurance
- Disability protection

FAO encourages a positive workplace culture to increase inclusivity and diversity within its workforce. FAO applies measures in which all staff members contribute equally and in full to the work and development of the Organization.

This includes:

- elements of family-friendly policies
- flexible working arrangements
- standards of conduct.

HOW TO APPLY

- To apply, visit the recruitment website at Jobs at FAO and complete your online profile. We strongly recommend that your profile is accurate, complete and includes your employment records, academic qualifications, and language skills
- Candidates are requested to attach a letter of motivation to the online profile
- Once your profile is completed, please apply, and submit your application
- Please note that FAO only considers higher educational qualifications obtained from an institution accredited/recognized in the World Higher Education Database (WHED), a list updated by the International Association of Universities (IAU) / United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The list can be accessed at <http://www.whed.net/>
- Candidates may be requested to provide performance assessments and authorization to conduct verification checks of past and present work, character, education, military and police records to ascertain any and all information which may be pertinent to the employment qualifications
- Incomplete applications will not be considered
- Personal information provided on your application may be shared within FAO and with other companies acting on FAO’s behalf to provide employment support services such as pre-screening of applications, assessment tests, background checks and other related services. You will be asked to provide your consent before submitting your application. You may withdraw consent at any time, by withdrawing your application, in such case FAO will no longer be able to consider your application
- Only applications received through the FAO recruitment portal will be considered
- Your application will be screened based on the information provided in your online profile
- We encourage applicants to submit the application well before the deadline date.

If you need help or have queries, please create a one-time registration with FAO’s client support team for further assistance: <https://fao.service-now.com/csp>



Government of Lesotho
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition

Invitation for Registration

Registration of Vehicles for short term hire in the Ministry database

1. The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho intends to improve Agricultural service delivery. Therefore, part of the proceeds will be utilized on eligible payments resulting from the procurement of the above.
2. The Principal Secretary now invites interested Basotho vehicle owners for the **Registration of Vehicles for short term hire in the Ministry database for financial year 2025/26**. Interested Basotho vehicle owners may obtain further information from the following address:

Procurement Unit and Administration Office
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition
Corner Constitution and Linare Roads
Maseru 100, Lesotho
Tel: (++ 266) 22322741

3. It is mandatory for Basotho vehicle owners to submit and note the following:

Vehicle Type: Double Cab 4x4, Single Cab 4x4, SUV 4x4, SUV, Ten-Ton Truck, Minibus (13 Seater) or Quantum

- ▶ Vehicle Registration
- ▶ Vehicle Model: 2015 upwards
- ▶ Valid third party insurance
- ▶ Complete tool kit
- ▶ Double Cab 4x4 with Canopy or Tonneau cover and Tow bar for pulling trailer
- ▶ Single Cab: Valid B permit & Tow bar
- ▶ Ten (10) ton: Valid F permit & Fitness
- ▶ 13 Seater: Fitness

4. **Submission and registration with Administration Office.**



Call for Applications: HASTEN business incubation programme now open for youth-led enterprises from in Lesotho, Rwanda and Sierra Leone

HASTEN business incubation programme is now accepting applications from youth-led enterprises in Lesotho, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. This unique opportunity supports the next generation of food systems entrepreneurs and enterprises committed to building sustainable, inclusive and resilient agrifood systems.

What is HASTEN business incubation programme?
[HASTEN—Harnessing SDG-based Agrifood System Transformation through the Empowerment of the Next Generation of Agrifood Leadership in Africa](#)— is an FAO project under the Flexible Voluntary Contribution (FVC), operating in Lesotho, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. It aims to:

- promote capacity development in transdisciplinary systems thinking for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) interlinkages,
- foster multistakeholder collaboration by strengthening public-private-academic partnerships for inclusive governance,
- and support agripreneurship and youth empowerment by scaling eco-inclusive business models that contribute to the SDGs and generate employment.

The business incubation component of HASTEN is an initiative to empower youth-led enterprises and entrepreneurs to drive agrifood system transformation.

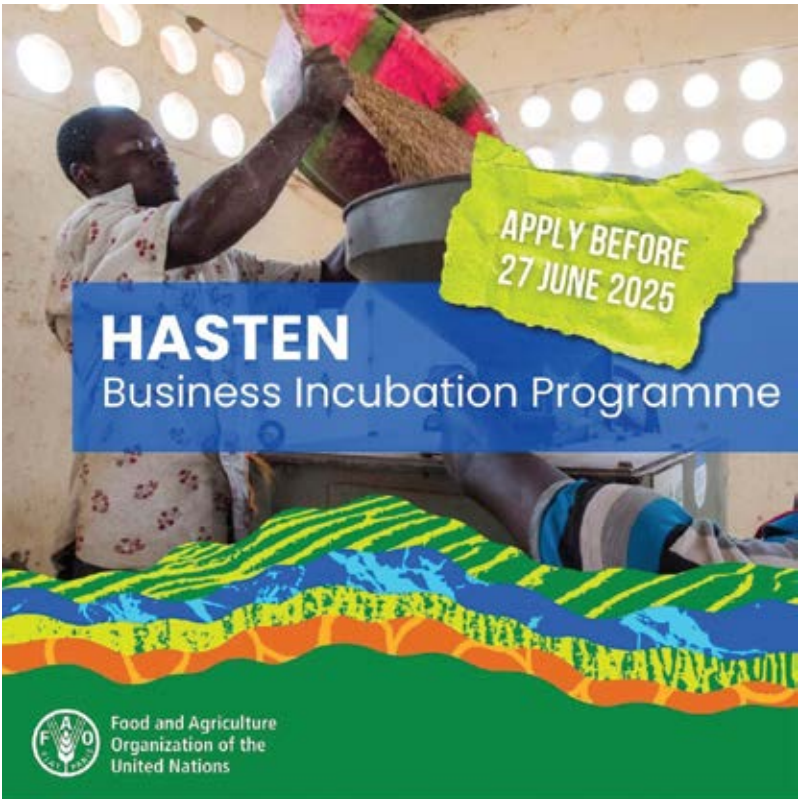
With a strong focus on youth and women-led, eco-inclusive and green startups, the programme supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that show high potential to contribute to making agrifood systems more sustainable, inclusive, efficient and resilient — and ultimately contributing to better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, leaving no one behind.

The programme is being implemented by the FAO Office of Sustainable Development Goals, with the technical support of SEED. And collaboration from FAO Country Office in Lesotho.

Who should apply?

The programme specifically targets SMEs and startups that meet the following criteria:

- Legally registered in Lesotho, Rwanda or Sierra Leone
- Operational for 1–3 years
- Led by entrepreneurs aged 18 to 35
- Demonstrate a clear contribution to sustainable agrifood systems transformation



- Fully comply with FAO integrity standards and are not involved in any UN prohibited or unethical practices
- We are especially looking for:**
Resilience boosting startups that enhance the resilience of agrifood systems to climate change, and other systemic shocks and stressors, through sustainable agricultural practices and climate-smart innovations.
Safe and nutritious food enterprises that produce or enhance access to healthy, nutritious, safe and affordable food, support food quality and safety standards and increase public awareness around nutrition and healthy diet choices.
Inclusive business models that promote value chain and livelihood opportunities for smallholder farmers, women and youth.

Programme benefits

Selected enterprises (8–10 per country) will participate in a 5-day, in-person incubation workshop, designed to strengthen sustainable business practices and support the growth of eco-inclusive and socially driven agripreneurship models. They will receive tailored guidance to develop sustainable business plans and financial strategies, utilizing interactive workbooks and hands-on tools, facilitated by international and national coaches. The final day of each workshop includes an ecosystem event, where participants will pitch their business models and connect with stakeholders from the public and private sectors, academia, and development organizations,

opening doors to future collaboration and increased visibility in the startup ecosystem. In addition, three enterprises per country will be selected for tailored follow-up support focused on scaling their operations and building strategic partnerships.

How to Apply and What to Expect

1. Read full details on the eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria on the [HASTEN webpage](#).
2. Fill in the [application form](#) by 27 June 2025.
3. Shortlisted applicants will be contacted and will be invited to present their business virtually before final selections are made.
4. Incubation workshops will be held in each country from September – October 2025, with follow-up support for selected enterprises taking place in October- November 2025.



FARMERS PITSO AWARDS

Victory Hall

Maseru

06th Sept 2025

09:00 - 16:30

Entrance Fee

M100.00

Exhibitions Free

For More Info Contact:

+266 5803 2245



Op-Ed: Lesotho’s Removal from Hunger Hotspots Is a Milestone—But Not the Finish Line

By: Patrice Talla Takoukam – FAO Sub-regional Coordinator for Southern Africa and FAO Representative for Eswatini, Lesotho and Zimbabwe



Pg 15 Dr Patrice Talla

This month brought a rare but welcome headline in global food security: Lesotho is no longer on the list of global hunger hotspots.

According to the latest Hunger Hotspots 2025 report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), Lesotho—alongside Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—has been removed from the list of countries facing the most severe levels of food insecurity thanks to notable improvements in food security. It is a significant moment for the country, one that deserves recognition. But more importantly, it demands reflection and renewed resolve.

The report attributes this achievement to a combination of favourable climatic conditions and co-ordinated interventions that have borne fruit. For Lesotho, this is not just a technical adjustment on a global chart. This is a momentous achievement for Lesotho and the SADC region and a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Government of Lesotho, partner organizations and communities.

We should take pride in this progress. But we must also acknowledge a difficult truth: food security in Lesotho remains fragile. A shift in weather patterns, a poor harvest, or a regional economic shock could easily reverse the gains we have made.

Years of droughts, floods, and economic hardship have pushed thousands of Basotho house-

holds into chronic food insecurity. That context has not disappeared overnight. What has changed is our ability to respond more effectively—with tools like climate-smart agriculture, better seed and fertilizer distribution, and stronger coordination across sectors.

FAO and its partners have played a key role in this progress, helping to build resilience for small-holder farmers—who form the backbone of the food system—through improved access to resources and knowledge. Irrigation systems have been rehabilitated. Climate-smart practices are slowly taking root. We are seeing what is possible when evidence-based policies meet community-driven solutions.

Still, this is no time for complacency. Being delisted from a hunger hotspot report does not mean hunger has been defeated. It means we’re heading in the right direction—but the journey continues. We must keep investing in sustainable agriculture, building climate resilience, and strengthening social protection programmes so that no one is left behind. FAO remains committed to providing technical assistance, capacity building, and policy support to ensure long-term food security and sustainable development in Lesotho and across the African region.

The road ahead is long. But today, Lesotho is in a stronger position. Let us build on this momentum to ensure that every family in Lesotho can count on the food they need—not just today, but for generations to come.

How a United Farming Group in Phamong is Cultivating Hope Against the Odds

By Lerato Matheka

Matjantja Temong’s journey is a mirror of what food production was according to tell tales of our elders. A united movement led by the wisdom hands of women and men that remained in the villages. A story of an underlying hope buried in the soil to break the hunger chains when worked together

Letamorenng Lehloenya, a leader of the village agriculture group remembers it clearly the moment when more than 270 farmers, most of them women, came together under the banner of Matjantja Temong, not to chase profit, but to fight the poverty that was swallowing their village whole.

“We were given seeds as Matjantja Temong group to put in practice communal cropping. We all agreed to use Ntate Machobane’s method of intercropping—temo ea tlhakantsuntsu—and it changed everything. We worked together and when we went to the farm, we came back with nutrition and pride. We knew we were doing something greater than ourselves,” Lehloenya recounts.

With no external resources but boundless will-power, they farmed year-round on shared land. No one gave up.

The goal wasn’t just to feed their families, it was to rebuild their dignity. From home plots to borrowed land, they expanded their work.

“We grew beyond our understanding. We diversified so much that we started producing and selling potato seeds to communities as far as Mafeteng and Tšita’s Nek.”

What started as a survival effort quickly became a beacon and potential that attracted The Rural Self-Help Development Association (RSDA) and the Small Grains Programme who saw potential in their collective model and introduced support to preserve and replant old seed varieties.

“Being trusted as a seed bank for old varieties has



kept us intact and sustained. I can’t remember the last time we bought seeds. Over five years later we are still sowing the seeds we were entrusted to reproduce and preserve, therefore we don’t worry about late inputs or any other common challenges.”

Facing unpredictable climate shifts, the group made a bold shift, specialising in crops like sorghum which is successful in drier areas like Senqu.

“We focused on one crop commodity with time, sorghum and the harvest was as we had hoped.

“Our harvest are processed by young people from the village to help us turn the sorghum into refined products and suddenly we weren’t just farmers but employers of our children,” he said, adding their local processing initiative birthed a micro-economy, giving youth a sense of purpose and community

members access to healthy, locally-made foods. The model was working.

But like many stories of rural ingenuity, this one has not been spared its challenges.

From 270 committed members, only about 30 remain active today.

Of the 12 original sub-groups, just eight have survived.

“It’s not that people lost interest. It’s the lack of support from the government and institutions of power as well as people’s expectations. People want quick results. They want to plant and walk away, but farming needs love, commitment, and patience.”

The collapse of the potato seed project still stings.

“Without access to quality first or second generation seed, our yields dropped drastically and the founding support we heavily relied on vanished without explanation. We were left using fourth-generation seed whose quality weren’t worthy for the market. The harvest was poor. We had no choice but to discontinue,” Lehloenya recalls.

Despite these setbacks, Matjantja Temong remains a registered group, deeply committed to its mission, but the cries for help are getting louder; “we need training, transport, and renewed connection with institutions like RSDA.”

“Members live far apart, and many can’t attend meetings as regular as we would want. They walk long distances and sometimes in dangerous conditions just to be part of something bigger. We often change venues to accommodate them, but still, many are left out.”

Lenhoenya and his members have already proven what’s possible: community-led production, conservation of indigenous seeds, value-addition, and local employment creation. They have rejected chemical-intensive farming choosing instead to work with nature through manure, healthy soil practices, and respect for tradition. They have practised agroecology before it became a development buzzword.

28,870 Jobs Promised in Agriculture

...A Bold National Response to Lesotho's Youth Unemployment Crisis

By Staff Reporter

Lesotho is battling a youth unemployment crisis of unprecedented proportions, with over 760,000 young Basotho aged 15 to 35 currently unemployed, while only around 145,000 are employed, according to the Bureau of Statistics (BoS).

The youth unemployment rate remains alarmingly high, sitting at approximately 24.2% for ages 15–24, with some estimates placing it as high as 39%. In response to this dire situation, Prime Minister Samuel Matekane recently declared youth unemployment a national disaster, underscoring the urgency of bold and immediate intervention.

Amid this crisis, agriculture has emerged as a cornerstone of the government's job creation strategy, with 28,870 new job opportunities earmarked for young people across the country.

Irrigation Revival to Create Over 22,000 Jobs

A key component of this plan is the revival of large-scale irrigation infrastructure, initially proposed under the now-aborted Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) project.

"We cannot continue to rely on rainfall alone. Irrigation is the key to sustainable food production, especially in the face of climate change," said Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi.

According to the Minister, the government is committed to supporting this initiative, although the final financing model is still under development.

Through this programme, 1,580 hectares of land in Mohale's Hoek and

Leribe will be developed, resulting in:

- 3,160 permanent jobs
- 18,960 casual labour opportunities during peak seasons

This totals 22,120 jobs, the single largest contributor to the government's projected employment targets.

6,000 Youth Jobs Through SADP II

An additional 6,000 jobs will be created through the Smallholder Agricultural Development Programme II (SADP II). Beginning this August, the initiative will place 1,000 youth—100 from each district—into mentorships with experienced farmers for the October to December planting season.

Each mentored youth is expected to hire five peers, multiplying the total job impact to 6,000.

"The programme will focus on poultry production, wheat and crop farming, as well as vegetable processing and value addition," Mofosi said.

Climate Resilience Pilot to Hire 60 Youth

The Ministry is also piloting a climate-resilient agriculture programme, which will engage 60 youth—10 per district—with each receiving:

- Free farming inputs
- 80% production insurance against climate-related losses

"This is about empowering young people to farm with confidence. They will know that even if disaster strikes, they are protected," Mofosi explained.

Mechanisation: 200 Jobs Through Tractor Scheme

In an effort to reduce dependence on manual labour and modernize farming, the Ministry has partnered with Post Bank Lesotho to distribute 200 tractors, creating 200 new jobs for trained operators.

Already, 30 young women in Butha-Buthe have been trained in tractor operation. "I've been instructed to ensure that youth are a significant portion of the beneficiaries of this mechanisation programme," Mofosi stated.

Wool and Mohair Value Chain to Employ 450 Youth

Through the Wool and Mohair Value

Chain Competitiveness Project (WaMCoP), an estimated 450 youth will be trained and employed in wool processing, Livestock feed production and fertilizer manufacturing

"By the end of the project, we aim to have youth-led operations producing fibre-quality-tested wool, as well as locally made feed and fertilizer, reducing our dependence on imports," said the Minister.

Land Leasing to Create 160 Jobs

Minister Mofosi also revealed that 160 jobs will come from leasing underutilised arable land owned by institutions such as the Lesotho Agricultural College to youth-led agribusinesses.

"The Ministry is finalising inclusive lease agreements that ensure youth can access productive land without bureaucratic hurdles," he said.

Horticulture: A Call for Youth Participation

Although only one youth is currently involved in the LNDC-coordinated horticulture project, Trade Minister Mokheithi Shelile said the government aims to expand the initiative to nine orchards nationwide.

"So far, we have six men, three women, and only one youth involved. We need more young farmers in horticulture," Shelile urged.

Business Incubation and Incentives

Entrepreneurship hubs such as Sebatso and the Pathways to Sustainable Livelihoods Initiative have already supported over 3,500 individuals, nearly half of them youth. These hubs provide, business incubation, financial literacy training and access to start-up capital.

To further support young agripreneurs, the government has rolled out key incentives:

- 30% discount on tractors and farm machinery
- Tax relief for youth-led businesses
- Public procurement opportunities for youth, women, and people with disabilities (PWDs)
- Removal of registration fees for youth-owned enterprises

Prime Minister Matekane stressed the need for sufficient funding: "If resources and finances do not exist, it is useless," he warned.

Voices from the Ground: Young Farmers Speak Out

Alice Letata, a 12-hectare farmer, noted: "Even where land is available, access to machinery remains a challenge. We miss out on production cycles because we can't afford the equipment."

Lebohang Mosaola, a wool and mohair grower and graduate of Lesotho Agricultural College, said, "I welcome the 30% machinery discount, but is there research proving the wool processing initiative is viable? And when will it be implemented?"

Why Agriculture?

Agriculture currently accounts for 29.2% of total employment, yet contributes only 6.6% to GDP (as of 2023). However, it indirectly supports 80% of the population, making it a high-impact sector for poverty reduction and sustainable development.

To further modernize the sector, the government—with support from the World Bank—has developed the Lesotho Climate-Smart Agriculture Investment Plan (CSAIP). The plan targets CSA adoption on 30% of agricultural land by 2030, focusing on:

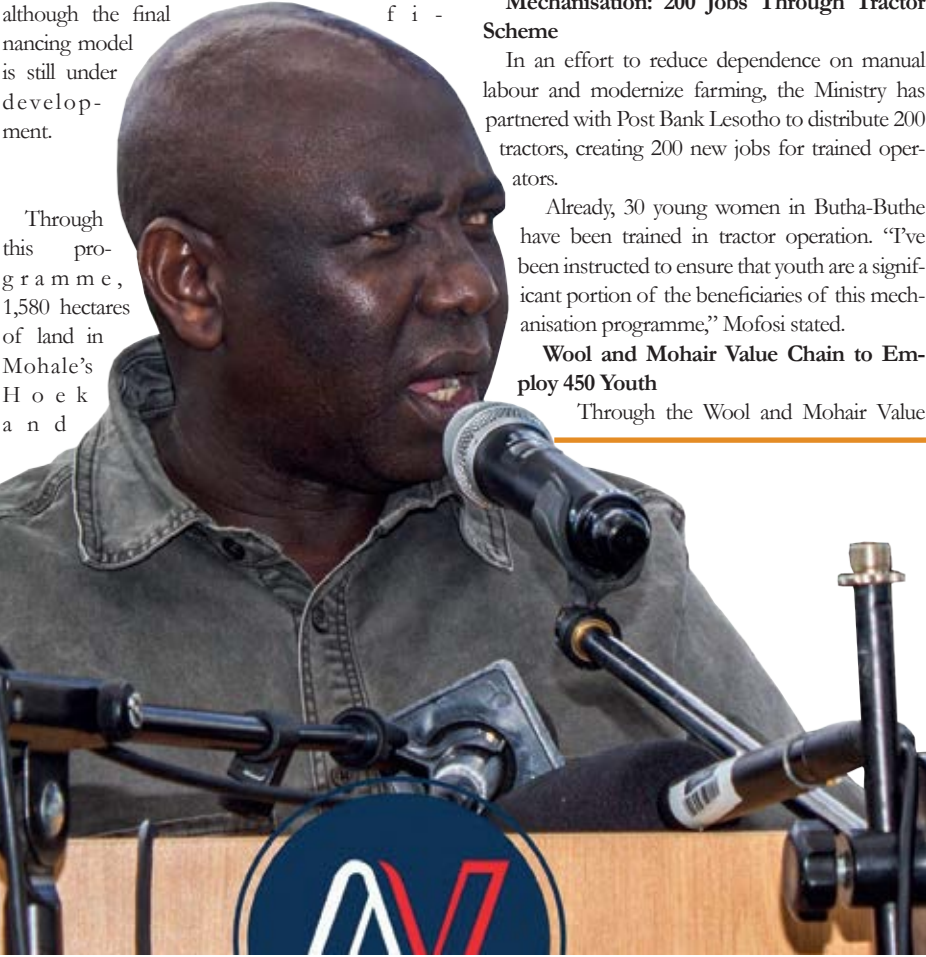
- Climate-resilient crop varieties
- Drip irrigation and efficient water use
- Soil conservation
- Agroforestry

These practices are expected to improve food security, income, and nutrition, while also creating jobs in both on-farm and off-farm activities such as training, machinery maintenance, and agro-processing.

A Stark Reminder: The Numbers Behind the Crisis

According to the 2025 United Nations Voluntary National Review, Lesotho's unemployment challenges remain acute:

- Youth unemployment rose from 29.1% in 2019 to 37.75% in 2024
- Overall unemployment stood at 30.29%, with female unemployment at 30.80%
- A staggering 84% of youth are in informal employment, lacking benefits and job security.



The Minister of Agriculture, Thabo Mofosi

By Ntsoaki Motaung

Access to agricultural land remains a major hurdle for young people in Lesotho, threatening to undermine national efforts to reduce unemployment and promote youth-led agricultural enterprises.

This challenge was highlighted by Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, during a recent engagement between Prime Minister Sam Matekane and Basotho youth.

"We are still faced with a serious challenge. Our young people do not have access to agricultural land. This alone continues to hinder every effort we make to support youth participation in agriculture," the minister said.

According to the Minister, the lack of access to land has directly impacted the success of several government initiatives.

"Some of the SADP projects failed not because

youth weren't interested or capable, but because they simply didn't have land to operate on," he explained, citing that, even those who qualified for grants could not receive them due to this critical issue.

To address this, Mofosi announced that his ministry is working with the Ministry of Local Government to prepare a new gazette aimed at reallocating idle agricultural land.

"We are drafting a gazette that will be released by the first of next month. This gazette will ensure that unused agricultural land is handed over to people who are ready and willing to work it, especially the youth."

The Minister emphasised that the process will be handled with care to avoid unnecessary conflict.

"We are not here to dispossess people, but we cannot allow land to lie idle when we have youth who are hungry for opportunities," he said.

The support for this shift, he revealed, is also

coming from the highest authority.

"His Majesty King Letsie III has already spoken to the Chiefs, urging them to make sure that no land remains unused. The land must work for the nation," said Mofosi.

In highlighting the potential of agriculture to transform livelihoods, Mofosi pointed to the once-promising Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) project, which was designed to revitalise agriculture in multiple districts.

"We had started work in Mohale's Hoek—Phamong, and Leribe—Tsoilitsoili, Likhakeng, and Maka and the project would have developed 1,580 hectares of land and created 3,160 permanent jobs and about 18,960 casual labour opportunities."

However, the project stalled after the United States government pulled its funding.

"That was a setback, but we are actively engaging with the U.S. government to revive this project,

but even if the U.S. does not come back on board, we are planning a way forward. It may take longer, but this is a project worth continuing for the sake of our young people."

Mofosi stressed that agriculture can be a tool to not only feed the nation, but also to unlock jobs and reduce youth dependency.

"This is more than just farming; it's about creating an independent generation of young people who see agriculture as a business and a livelihood," he said.

With unemployment among Basotho youth at alarming levels, the government's renewed focus on land accessibility signals a broader understanding that resources must be redistributed in a way that promotes equity and productivity.

"The future of agriculture in Lesotho depends on our ability to empower young people and that starts with giving them access to land," Mofosi concluded.

Lack of Agricultural Land hinders Youth Involvement, Minister Reveals



Former PM Majoro Among SADP Beneficiaries

By Molula Mofosi

The Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II) has officially launched the implementation of its third and final round of matching grants, awarding support to 387 beneficiaries, including former Prime Minister Dr. Moeketsi Majoro.

Funded by the World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the Government of Japan, SADP II aims to support the commercialisation of smallholder agriculture in Lesotho by enhancing productivity, sustainability and market access for farmers. Through this final round, the programme continues to promote growth across the sector, with a focus on empowering youth, women and agri-entrepreneurs.

The matching grants are awarded under three competitive categories: Large Grants of up to M1.5 million, Medium Grants of M500, 000 and Youth Grants capped at M300, 000. These grants are intended to finance infrastructure development, climate-smart technologies, and farm business expansion for selected smallholder farmers.

Dr. Moeketsi Majoro, who has turned to agriculture since retiring from politics noted, “On my outgoing speech, I mentioned that Lesotho must feed itself,” he recalled.

“Despite government support like the 80% subsidy on seeds and fertilisers, the 30% discount for tractors through Lesotho Post Bank, and the rise of block farming, our agricultural sector still has a long way to go,” he said.

Now a grain block farmer, Majoro stressed the urgency of protecting agricultural land from urban encroachment.

“Zoning laws exist, but they are not enforced. Productive fields are being converted into residential areas the government must take a stand. The ‘Trump-era’ disruptions in global aid should be a wake-up call for Lesotho to become food secure,” Majoro said.

The matching grants were launched alongside a

training workshop designed to prepare beneficiaries for success.

Thabo Matsepe, Chairperson of the Matching Grants Committee, addressed farmers, cautioning them against the mismanagement that plagued earlier rounds.

“We have greenhouses standing empty because some beneficiaries abandoned their projects. This time, District Agricultural Officers and extension staff will ensure compliance. We are no longer taking chances,” Matsepe charged.

Tankiso Mothae, SADP II Grants Officer, emphasised the project’s shift in focus from subsistence farming to enterprise development.

“We expect at least 30% growth from these farms and this means having a clear business plan, knowing your numbers, and being accountable. Production alone is not enough—financial literacy, supply chain awareness, and resource management are equally important.”

While SADP II does not allocate grants by commodity, Mothae noted that certain value chains have shown strong performance in past cycles, including poultry, wool and mohair, tomatoes, and agro-processing.

“If farmers stick to the plan, many of them could become millionaires. The potential is there. We spend billions importing potatoes and cabbage, our farmers should be filling that gap.”

Still, Matsepe expressed caution regarding certain project types.

“Agricultural associations and piggery ventures often collapse due to internal conflicts or lack of sustainability. While we continue to support such groups, we assess them with increased scrutiny.”

He also voiced concern over the limited participation of young people.

“Youth face serious barriers, especially access to land and start-up capital. We urge parents to sub-lease land to their children. And we call on SADP II to consider revising youth grant requirements to make them more accessible.”

Thabang Tlhapu, a dairy farmer and 2021 grant



Moeketsi Majoro_ Former prime minister



Thabo Matsepe_ Matching grants Commette

recipient shared words of advice with the new cohort:

“When using this grant, verify your suppliers. I’ve lost money by dealing with unreliable companies. Consult others, especially when dealing internationally. The Ministry of Agriculture can guide you.”

Lillo Beleme, a high-value crop producer from Ts’ehlanyane, Leribe, reflected on how SADP has shaped his business over five years.

“In phase one, I received 15 bags of fertilizer. This time, I hope to install a greenhouse to maintain

yields during winter. I supply Maseru, Leribe, and Mokhotlong. This grant will help me keep up with demand.”

As SADP II enters its final phase before winding down in 2026, its legacy is already tangible. Since its inception, the project has disbursed grants to six lead firms, 63 youth-led ventures, 173 general smallholder farmers in round two, and 54 in round one. The programme continues to be a beacon of hope for transforming agriculture in Lesotho into a viable and sustainable sector.

By Lerato Matheka

In an effort to empower a new generation of farmers, the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II) has launched a youth mentorship initiative that equips young Basotho with the skills, knowledge, and financial support necessary to pursue agriculture as a business.

According to Matching Grants Officer Relebohile Khathibe, the project’s design is rooted in an understanding of the unique challenges young people face in agriculture.

“As SADP, we have realised that the challenges faced by the youth and older people differ with the main challenge facing young people mostly is lack of access to land at all, while older people usually do,” he said.

Khathibe explained that many of the youth SADP works with are recent school graduates, most of whom are unemployed while some are even young or single parents.

“After seeing this, we knew that agriculture could be their rescue. Under this program, we then began teaching them how to survive and make a living through agriculture, however, access to skills alone proved insufficient,” he said.

“After we equipped them with knowledge, another challenge emerged, access to money. The youth need capital to start farming businesses,” he pointed out, noting in response, the SADP stepped in to provide matching grants to help bridge the financial gap.

“We met them halfway with grants to support the businesses they came up with.”

Khathibe indicated that unlike older farmers, who generally understand their markets, youth often have no idea where to begin.

“Many young people start farming thinking commodities have a lot of market potential, but they do so without research, planning, or monitoring. We are trying to stop this by equipping them with all the knowledge they need,” he said.

Khathibe emphasised the importance of thorough business planning, citing before starting a business, one need to ask: Why this business? What

SADP Youth Mentorship Programme Offers Path to Agricultural Prosperity



is the goal? Will it be profitable? What are the possible risks?”

He illustrated the point with a case, “There’s a young person who told me they started poultry farming with a lot of money, but now they’re making less than they invested. That is the reality if there is no proper planning.”

Market research, he stressed is a critical first step.

“It is a component we press on in our trainings. We try to tell the youth that Market research helps entrepreneurs identify their customers, competitors, and gaps in the market. Without it, one risks making

costly mistakes like producing what nobody wants or pricing your product too high compared to the market needs.”

Beyond market research, SADP encourages participants to think about consistent quality and volume.

Khathibe said the ultimate goal of the program is to develop market-oriented farmers.

“We want youth to understand agriculture not just as a livelihood, but as a business.”

The impact of the mentorship programme is already being felt, with Itumeleleng Sello, a 17-year-

old participant who dropped out of school in Grade 8, finding new purpose through farming.

“I’m using my mother’s land and its easier because she loves farming but is getting older. She asked me take over and it became a dream come true because I am passionate about agriculture. And since I’m not in school I need to build a life where I don’t have to ask my parents for money hence my participation in the trainings to assist me with seeing my passion as a business,” she said.

Itumeleleng dreams of growing into a full-scale agripreneur. “I want to turn this into a real business that will create jobs and change lives,” she said with determination.

Another youth participant, Teboho Letsie, from Quthing, produces a wide variety of vegetables.

“I have always loved farming because I grew up in a family that farms. My parents have always depended on it to make a living,” she noted,

She indicate, “To get full access to my parents’ land, I just need to show them that I’m serious and passionate about it. I believe that will make it easier for them to hand it over fully.”

She added that agriculture is providing a lifeline to many young people especially from the rural Lesotho.

With the youth mentorship programme, SADP is not only investing in seeds and tools—but in people. “Our aim is to give young people the opportunity to rewrite their stories—through the land, through hard work, and through agriculture,” said Khathibe

A Promise Half-Fulfilled: Inside Lesotho's Struggle to Feed and Nurture Its Schoolchildren

By Ntsoaki Motaung

Early morning in rural Lesotho often begins with a familiar sound, the clang of cooking pots and the murmur of children gathering around steaming bowls of porridge. For many of these children, the meal served at school is more than just food, it is a vital source of nourishment, sometimes the only substantial meal they will have all day. In a country where poverty and food insecurity remain stubbornly high, the school feeding program is a beacon of hope, a promise that the government and its partners have made to the nation's youngest citizens.

Yet, behind this hopeful image lies a complex and often troubling reality. The ambitious policy frameworks and investment pledges that underpins Lesotho's School Feeding Program (SFP) clash with the logistical, financial, and systemic challenges that hamper its full implementation. The result is a program that, while life-changing for some, falls short of its promise for many others.

Lesotho's commitment to feeding its schoolchildren is enshrined in its School Health and Nutrition Policy, revised in 2023.

The policy is bold and visionary, aiming to provide nutritious, locally sourced meals to all primary school children on every school day. It recognises that good nutrition is not just a health issue but a critical factor in educational success, cognitive development, and long-term economic growth.

At the heart of the policy is a home-grown approach: the government pledges that up to 80% of the food used in school meals should come from local smallholder farmers. This dual objective is designed to simultaneously improve child nutrition and stimulate rural economies by creating a reliable market for local agricultural produce.

To support this vision, the government committed to increasing the school meals budget by at least 50% in the 2024/2025 fiscal year, aiming to raise the cost per meal from about US\$0.19 (M4) to US\$0.43 (M8.20) over three years.

This increase is intended to improve the quality, diversity, and nutritional value of meals served in schools.

The policy also emphasises multi-sectoral collaboration, involving ministries of education, health, agriculture, and social development, as well as partnerships with international organisations like the World Food Programme (WFP) and donors such as the Principality of Monaco.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has been a steadfast partner, supporting over 51,300 learners in all ten districts during the first half of 2024 as part of the National School Meals Programme.

The Principality of Monaco's €600,000 donation has helped provide meals for 10,000 children and training for 300 smallholder farmers, strengthening the link between agriculture and school feeding.

Despite the policy's clear goals and increased budget commitments, the reality on the ground paints a more sobering picture.

One of the most significant gaps lies in the



Primary School Children in Semonkong eating their meal

sourcing of food. While the policy aspires to 80% local procurement, in practice, only about 5% of the food used in school meals is sourced locally. The vast majority—around 95%—is imported. This reliance on imported food undermines the policy's goal of supporting local farmers and rural economies.

Smallholder farmers, who could benefit immensely from stable school feeding contracts, remain largely excluded due to logistical challenges, lack of capacity, and weak linkages between agricultural production and school feeding procurement systems.

The financial promises have also been difficult to realise fully.

Although the government pledged a 50% budget increase, actual funding has been inconsistent, with reports of budget cuts and delayed payments to food suppliers.

In 2022, these delays led to a crisis where suppliers went unpaid for months, resulting in schools receiving substandard meals. Teachers and parents reported that children were often served meals consisting solely of peas, samp, and papa, lacking the protein, fruits, and vegetables necessary for a balanced diet.

The program currently serves over 300,000 children across Lesotho's ten districts, a significant achievement in a country with a population of just over 2 million, however, capacity constraints mean that many schools, especially in remote and mountainous areas, still lack reliable access to school meals.

Reports have indicated that in some schools, portions have been reduced due to rising food prices and supply chain disruptions.

In others, meals have been skipped entirely when ingredients failed to arrive on time. Teachers in rural areas speak of "managing expectations" as they try to keep children fed amid unpredictable deliveries.

The program has also faced allegations of inefficiencies and misuse. Some reports suggest

inflated enrollment numbers to access more food supplies, diversion of food meant for schools, and weak oversight mechanisms.

While these issues are not widespread, they erode community trust and highlight the urgent need for stronger monitoring, transparency, and community involvement in governance.

The policy envisions nutrition education as a core component of the program, with practical lessons on balanced diets, food preparation, and healthy habits integrated into school curricula, yet, many schools lack the basic resources to deliver these lessons effectively.

Ideally, there should be demonstration gardens, cooking facilities, or teaching materials at the schools however, social biases persist, with practical subjects like home economics and agriculture often undervalued compared to traditional academic subjects.

Existing nutrition clubs established in over 400 schools are a bright spot, helping to raise awareness among children, women, and caregivers, however, scaling these efforts remains a challenge.

The stakes of these shortcomings are high because malnutrition in Lesotho remains a critical public health challenge with profound implications for children's futures. Nearly one in three children under five (33.2%) is stunted, a condition caused by chronic undernutrition that impairs physical growth and cognitive development. This rate, while slightly improved from 34.6% five years ago, remains alarmingly high compared to regional and global averages.

Micronutrient deficiencies, particularly iron deficiency and anemia, affect about 40% of women and children, leading to fatigue, poor concentration, weakened immunity, and increased vulnerability to illness.

Lesotho is also grappling with a paradoxical double burden: while many children suffer from undernutrition, others—especially in urban areas—are becoming overweight or obese. This

reflects nutritional inequality and the growing consumption of ultra-processed, low-nutrient foods.

Malnutrition directly affects educational outcomes. Hungry children struggle to concentrate, have lower attendance rates, and are more likely to drop out and this is seen when teachers frequently report that children's grumbling stomachs hinder their ability to learn.

Despite these challenges, there are positive signs.

The World Food Programme (WFP) has been a steadfast partner, supporting over 51,300 learners in all ten districts during the first half of 2024 as part of the National School Meals Programme.

In its annual country report 2024 WFP Lesotho provided support to over 103,000 food-insecure people in the first half of 2024, including 52,000 people receiving assistance through the Anticipatory Action Initiative.

WFP's support to the National School Meals Programme nourished over 51,300 children across all 10 districts, advancing toward the goal of feeding 240,000 schoolchildren by year's end.

It partnered with the Department of Nutrition and Home Economics to implement nutrition initiatives across all 10 districts, resulting in the establishment of over 400 nutrition clubs. These clubs engage women, men, and nutritionally vulnerable groups, in learning innovative nutrition skills.

Teachers in areas where meals are reliably provided report improvements in attendance, enrollment, and classroom engagement. Knowing a meal awaits them encourages children to stay in school longer and participate more actively.

School feeding is only one part of a larger fight against malnutrition. Complementary interventions in maternal health, sanitation, and poverty reduction are needed to create lasting change.

Phokeng Farm, a Home Where Hope Takes Root in Rows of Potatoes

By Topollo Tlali

Situated in the dusty soils of Ha Mopele, in Botha-Bothe districts Mochebelele Tlaba is leading a quiet revolution one seed, one row and one harvest at a time.

Tlaba, a soft-spoken yet determined farmer walks his land with a sense of purpose that's hard to ignore explaining that his land is not just earth to him. "It is possibility."

"I started farming in 2015 with livestock—sheep, goats, and cattle, but in 2020, I saw something that changed the direction of my work," he says, with eyes that hold both memory and ambition.

That something was potato farming. Or rather, it was the realisation that chips in the shops, meals in the markets, and food on every plate trace their roots to the humble tuber.

"We noticed a growing demand of potatoes, especially in shops that make chips and other potato-based foods. That's when we decided to change the cause and saw the possibility of potatoes being our future." And so, Phokeng Farm was born.

A farm rooted in livestock began to pivot, transforming into a powerhouse of potato production. Starting with 6.8 acres in counting.

These are not ordinary potatoes nor is the production process.

The farm cultivates varieties including Mondial, Panamera, Sifra, and Alison to add value and cater for different needs.

He describes his new formed journey was strengthened by knowledge acquired from reading and training.

Coming from livestock farming, he needed to put in the work to understand how to best win.

"The first step to getting it right is knowing that the potatoes need deeply ploughed and well-harrowed soil. That is the foundation. If the soil isn't ready, the seeds won't sing. And the



If the soil isn't ready, the seeds won't sing

seeds must be clean, disease-free, carefully chosen. A good crop starts with good seed."

Science agrees. Potatoes thrive in loose, well-drained soils, and healthy seed tubers lead to uniform growth and better yields. But Tlaba isn't

quoting studies, he is living the science, every day with every planted row.

The rows are rain-fed. "We don't irrigate yet, but we are planning to use drip irrigation soon. That will help us conserve water and be less dependent on rainfall."

Like many farmers in Lesotho, Tlaba has learned to read the skies, to listen to the wind, and to prepare for the unpredictable hands of climate.

"We face the worst challenges when there's too much rain or when the heat becomes unbearable," he explains citing these extremes invite disease and pests, uninvited visitors to the feast.

"We follow weather forecasts and prepare accordingly, and we use hybrid seeds that are more resistant but the battle still rages because

of impacts of climate change."

But the future for Phokeng Farm is not only about survival but described by its expansion.

Tlaba's dream is to produce potatoes from December through August, creating a near-year-round supply.

"We want

to ensure that people who need potatoes always find them. We are striving towards steady production, steady income, and steady possibility that Lesotho is able."

"We also plan to introduce calibrated planters and potato harvesters to ease the work and even help others," he explains, with excitement.

"Right now, harvesting with a cow-drawn plough causes great losses because some potatoes get damaged in the process. Machinery will help reduce waste and improve efficiency."

Speaking about the imminent challenge of inputs, Tlaba says they are looking into producing their own seed of high-quality, resilient seed that will unlock

even higher yields.

"We produce about 12 tonnes of table potatoes each year which are sold to Basotho at low prices, so our people can access food they can afford," he says noting that his farm compensate its employees not only with money but with potato hampers too.

"We also offer free training on production, nutrition, and harvesting to people interested in learning, and this is all thanks to extension officers and other successful farmers who support us."

For Tlaba, vigilance is key, "A farmer must be alert at every stage, from seed selection, soil preparation, nutrition, protection, post-harvest handling and marketing."



From Classroom to Commerce: LAC Student Enterprise Project Nurtures Future Agripreneurs



By Karabo Ramathe

At Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC), tertiary education is fast becoming more than just academic theory, it's a launch pad for entrepreneurship. Students demonstrated their potential to become future business leaders as they showcased their Student Enterprise Projects (SEP), reflecting innovation, resilience, and business acumen tailored to the needs of Lesotho's agricultural economy.

Held under the theme of self-reliance and sustainability, the SEP presentations spotlighted student-led businesses addressing unemployment, food security and real-world agricultural challenges.

"The objective is to encourage students to be independent," explained Lineo Mosaile, Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Animal Science and SEP supervisor.

"We want them to graduate not just as job seekers, but as job creators," she said.

The SEP model offers students seed funding based on approved business proposals. Once projects are complete, students are expected to repay the loan with a 24% annual interest and a service fee—a structure that mirrors real-world financial systems and instills accountability.

"Students are treated like entrepreneurs. They apply for funding, justify their proposals and are held responsible for how the

money is used," said Thabo Matsepe, a lecturer and key SEP coordinator explained.

He added, "Mismanagement or failure to repay affects their academic records and future funding eligibility."

Matsepe acknowledged, however, that financial constraints threaten the program's growth.

SEP requires M1.2 million annually to run effectively, but for 2025, the fund received only M800, 000, with M500, 000 contributed by the government in 2023.

"We are appealing to both government and private sector stakeholders to support this transformative program. It empowers youth and directly contributes to national development," he said.

Among this year's standout projects was a

vegetable production business led by Katleho Makhele and his team.

Granted M66, 000, the group impressively utilised only M45, 000, returning M21, 000 to the SEP account.

Their enterprise cultivated a variety of crops including spinach, carrots, beetroot, green beans, and potatoes. Their targeted marketing strategy focused on the LAC community, local vegetable vendors, and social media promotion. Despite setbacks like erratic weather, limited irrigation, and crop damage from animals, the group thrived.

"This project taught us corporate skills, reinforced our practical knowledge, and helped us contribute to food security. We now plan to formalise this into a fully operational farm to help grow Lesotho's economy through ag-

riculture," said Makhele.

Makhele extended gratitude to LAC staff and supervisors for their guidance, as well as to the broader college community.

"Above all, we thank God for the strength and opportunity to execute this project successfully," he said.

Another noteworthy initiative was a baby chicken production business spearheaded by Motlatsi Nhlapo and his team.

With M12, 194 in funding, they serviced clients within the LAC community and cultivated a regular customer base, including professionals like Dr. Tamuka. Despite facing stiff competition, theft and threats from predators such as cats, the group is ambitious.

"We envision a full-scale hatchery within the next eight years, but we need support from both the government and individual investors to scale up."

Matsepe stressed that the Student Enterprise Project is not just building businesses but character, confidence, and a culture of entrepreneurship among graduates of LAC.

"As graduates go on to establish farms, agribusinesses, and cooperatives, the impact of SEP is already being felt. With consistent investment and institutional support, LAC's SEP initiative could help rewrite the narrative of youth unemployment by turning graduates into the country's next generation of agricultural innovators," he emphasised.

