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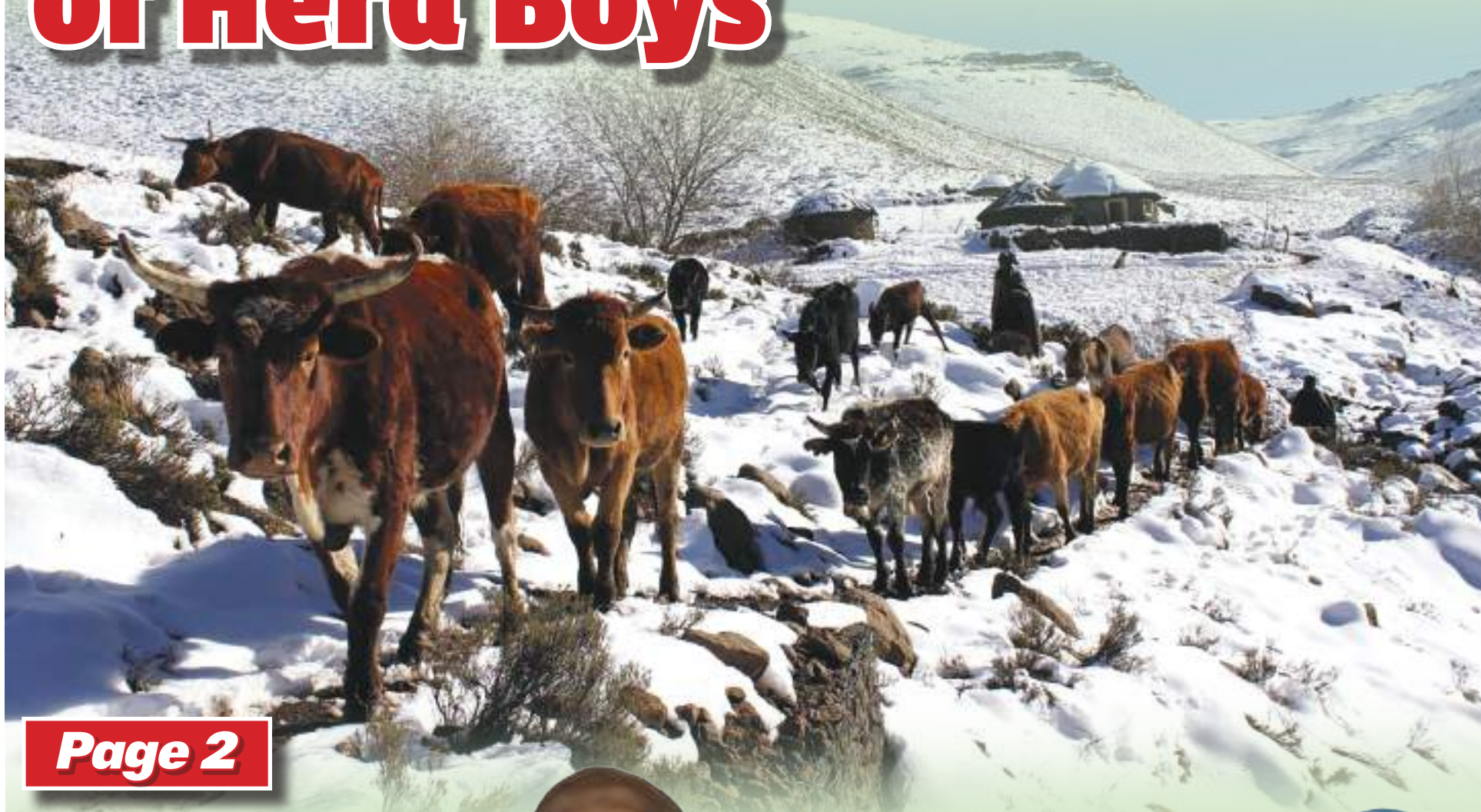
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Unpaid, Unseen and Undervalued:
The Plight of Lesotho’s Herd Boys

...at least 4000 are receiving
numeracy and literacy education



Herdboys in Lesotho

By Molula Mofosi

They rise before dawn and sleep beneath stars, guarding Lesotho’s wealth on footpaths that crisscross the highlands. Herd boys, the unsung backbone of the country’s livestock sector, play a critical role in the national economy. Yet, they remain locked out of labour protections, forgotten by policy and burdened by a legacy of neglect.

Despite their vital contribution, herders often work without contracts, compensation or recognition.

Systemic isolation, illiteracy and lack of legal frameworks make them one of the country’s most vulnerable labour groups.

“There is a common practice where employers avoid paying wages and instead promise an animal at the end of the year as compensation for the work done, but when that time comes, they always have excuses. The animal never comes,” says Retšelisitsoe Ntsamo, a former herd boy, now aged 32.

“You walk away empty-handed after a year of service, and we wonder why many boys escape to South African farms and security companies; they do so seeking dignity they don’t get when working in the country,” Ntsamo narrates.

Childhood Lost to the Mountains

While herding livestock is traditionally seen as a rite of passage in Lesotho, and many elders reflect on their journeys through ragged mountains and harsh weather conditions, it has become a trap for too many young boys.

According to the Lesotho Association of Non-Formal Education (LANFE), children as young as nine are being pulled out of school to herd animals and work in conditions that do not even meet global employment standards.

“We have recorded high numbers of child herders, particularly in the Mokhotlong district,” LANFE Executive Director, Tšepang Matsietsa, reveals.

“Our 2024 internal assessment revealed that over 4,000 boys between ages 9 and 17 are attending LANFE-coordinated numeracy and literacy classes in different rural areas across the country. This is evidence of a strong overlap between herding and early school dropout.”

Matsietsa revealed that many of the boys leave school for reasons that may seem irrational.

“Some are drawn by the gifts given to herders by different NGOs, such as new gumboots or blan-

kets, while others aspire to own their fleet of livestock. Others are fleeing from school punishment. It is not just poverty that drives the boys to herding,” Matsietsa says.

He adds, “It’s a combination of peer influence, cultural pride and at times coercion by adults, including cases of child labour trafficking by parents.”

To reach the boys, Matsietsa says LANFE runs late evening numeracy and literacy classes from 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM tailored to herders’ availability.

“While these efforts offer hope, progress is slow in most districts except Mokhotlong, which is performing exceptionally well,” Matsietsa says, noting systemic neglect remains the norm, hindering any potential progress.

A Cry for Protection and Recognition

Founded in 2019, the Monna Ka Khomo Association, also known as the Lesotho Herdsmen Association, has been lobbying for herders’ rights.

Based in Thaba-Tseka, with operations in Mokhotlong and Qacha’s Nek, the association advocates for labour protections, formal recognition and decent working conditions, fair compensation and recognition under the labour law for herd boys across the country.

“We established Monna Ka Khomo to give herders a voice,” Chairman Motalentoa Hlahlisi explains.

He adds, “We are pushing for humane treatment, fair wages and legal agreements that will acknowledge herders for their role in the chain of Lesotho’s economy.”

In 2023, the association drafted a proposed employment contract to be signed by the chief, the employer and the employee, a document they had hoped would be adopted countrywide when an employment of a herder is happening.

“The contract included a commitment from the chief to prevent child labour, a clause for fair wages, and age verification of the worker,” Hlahlisi describes; however, to their shock, the Ministry of Labour and Employment rejected the proposal, saying they don’t have stationery to print and distribute it nationwide.

“We couldn’t believe it. The excuse was ‘no paper,’ yet this was a real step toward ending the exploitation of young boys and protecting those of age from harsh working conditions,” says Hlahlisi.

Informality Breeds Abuse

Lesotho’s Labour Code Order No. 24 of 1992 grants all workers’ rights to contracts, fair wages, and rest. But in practice, herders remain excluded.

...He said he
didn’t know life
had joy; he had
never felt it.

There is no national wage scale for herders, no inspections and little recourse for abuse.

“My first employer promised me sheep as payment. He never followed through. I thought if I worked harder, he would change his mind. But the year ended, and so did my hope,” recounts Ntsamo.

Lekhibe Kolisang, deputy chairperson of the Liqaleng Herder Grazing Association, on the other hand, confirms that wage disputes and emotional abuse are common norms within the livestock operations chain.

“Employers often renege on agreements claiming the herder made a mistake that voids the deal,” he narrates.

“This destroys the morale of the herders. Under these inhumane treatments and due to the nature of the expected working arrangements, many herders go months without decent food, clothing or shelter, topped with working that hard at no pay.”

Though his community has no reported child labour cases, Kolisang stresses the poor living conditions faced by herders, including a lack of hygiene, no toiletries, and unequal access to food.

“They eat at the employer’s house, but their meals are different from those of the families. It’s subtle discrimination that cuts deep,” he says.

Dehumanised and Isolated

Poor hygiene has become a source of public shame and ridicule, further isolating herders from the rest.

“It’s not that they choose to be dirty. They are not paid enough to maintain basic hygiene. The public mocks them instead of questioning the system,” Hlahlisi notes.

According to Monna ka Khomo, herders are not included in the official wage bill. The Ministry verbally classifies them as domestic workers, but this has no legal bearing.

“Why are herders not formally included under the wage bill like factory or domestic workers?” Hlahlisi asks.

“Until we fix that, nothing will change,” he charges.

The social isolation of herders is also profound. Many live alone in remote cattle posts for months, sometimes years.

“I once asked a young herder how he was doing emotionally. He said he didn’t know life had joy; he had never felt it. My heart broke,” Matsietsa recounts.

This lack of socialisation can have long-term impacts.

Ntsamo points to behavioural challenges, including instances of sexual violence that stem from social disconnection.

“These boys grow up without learning how to relate to others. They need structured social programs, rest days and emotional support.”

Hlahlisi agrees, “...herders are seen as criminals. Communities don’t want to see them gathering together, medical staff at health facilities refuse to treat them properly due to hygiene issues, and because their diets are poor and unbalanced, their mental and physical health deteriorates, making them look frail.”

A Call for Action

LANFE and Monna Ka Khomo are calling for a comprehensive national strategy to uplift herders.

They propose the inclusion of herders in the national wage bill, formalisation of employment contracts for herders, registering herders in a national database, strengthening inspection and enforcement, as well as investing in tailored education and mental health support.

In 2023, the Ministry of Labour acknowledged herders’ exclusion and promised to include them under the National Social Protection Strategy, but implementation remains stalled by budget constraints and geographical challenges.

“Until herders are included in national policy and public consciousness, Lesotho will continue to thrive on invisible labour that is highly brutalised and exploited. These boys deserve more than survival; they deserve recognised and respected dignity,” Hlahlisi emphasises.



Ministry’s Youth Job Pledge Takes Shape with 1,000 Young Farmers



Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition Thabo Mofosi

By Molula Mofosi

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition made headlines with a bold commitment to unlock 28,870 jobs for Basotho youth through the second phase of the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II). That promise has now begun to take root through the Youth Mentorship Programme, which was officially launched on 21 July 2025.

At the heart of this initiative is a practical plan to support 1,000 young farmers across all ten districts of Lesotho. The programme, according to Agriculture Minister Thabo Mofosi, is designed to empower young people aged 18 to 35 who are already active in agriculture, whether formally trained or self-taught, by equipping them with both resources and mentorship to strengthen their agribusiness potential. Minister Mofosi, speaking at the programme launch, reaffirmed the ministry’s mission.

“The Ministry of Agriculture does not provide jobs, but creates an enabling environment for job creation. Through this programme, we aim to turn agriculture into a livelihood opportunity for the youth,” he said. He explained that the Youth Mentorship Programme offers tailored support based on the production focus of each participant. He noted that egg producers would receive feed, while broiler farmers would be supplied with both feed and chicks. Potato producers would receive seeds, fertilisers, and treatments, while vegetable and nursery growers would be supported with technical expertise from ministry staff. Mofosi said the programme also promotes peer-to-peer learning, with mentors selected from youth who have previously benefited from SADP support, creating a ripple effect of skills-sharing and experience-based learning. “A youth hub will also be established to offer psychosocial support to participants,” the minister said, acknowledging the emotional and mental challenges that come with farming. The programme’s application window ran from 22 to 31 July 2025, with forms available at all District Agriculture Offices and Agriculture Resource Centres. However, concerns were raised by young farmers involved in longer-term projects such as beef and dairy production, who felt left out of the current rollout. Minister Mofosi addressed this by clarifying the

phased nature of the initiative. “We are beginning with short-term, high-impact projects. Longer-term sectors like beef and dairy will be considered in future expansions of the programme,” he said. Young farmers in attendance responded with a mix of optimism and calls for improvement. Lebohang Mosaola, a sheep farmer and independent extension service consultant, expressed hope in the programme but raised challenges with traceability and legal restrictions. “Our livestock is excluded from ear tagging, even though projects like WAMPP use them. It makes it hard to improve breeding. Also, the government must accommodate independent extension workers; we can be part of the solution,” he said. Phoka Makara, an agricultural podcaster and advocate, urged the Ministry to support existing youth-led platforms instead of trying to rewrite the script. “There are already youth voices in agriculture, our podcast even won an award at Farmers’ Pitso. Empower what’s already working,” he advised. Vegetable farmer Lets’aba Molefi, from TY Resource Centre, highlighted the vulnerability of youth producers to pest infestations and weak extension support. “I lost 400 boxes of tomatoes to pests. Our resource centres don’t have the tools or chemicals we need; therefore, responses to outbreaks are delayed,” he said. Minister Mofosi acknowledged the urgency of addressing the concerns. “It is clear that we need a structured platform for deeper dialogue with youth in agriculture. We must listen and act,” he said. He also encouraged independent extension workers to register as formal entities so they can be evaluated and incorporated into ministry programming. “We are not here to compete with you, but to empower you,” he added.

Lesotho on High Alert as Ministry Sets Up Rapid Response Committees to Guard Against Animal Disease Outbreaks

By Molula Mofosi & Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition has taken decisive steps to strengthen Lesotho’s preparedness for agricultural outbreaks by establishing Rapid Response Committees at national, district, and local levels. The move comes as neighbouring South Africa battles a severe outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) with 270 confirmed cases across five provinces, including areas bordering Lesotho. On July 9, 2025, the Ministry formalised the structure of its Rapid Response system, which includes three tiers: the Executive Committee, the Technical Committee, and the District Implementation Committees. These groups are tasked with coordinating timely responses to livestock and crop disease outbreaks, which threaten Lesotho’s food systems, rural livelihoods, and trade integrity. “This is about being a step ahead,” said Dr Keneuoe Lehloenya, Director of Livestock Services and member of the Executive Committee, indicating that Lesotho is vulnerable to animal diseases, particularly because its open border with South Africa. “We must act fast when outbreaks occur. These committees will allow us to do just that.” The Executive Committee, headed by Principal Secretary Thabo Moleko, comprises directors of departments and is charged with ensuring strategic oversight. The Technical Committee, formed of specialists such as veterinarians and agronomists, is the first to be deployed to outbreak sites to collect data, assess the situation and offer scientifically informed recommendations.

“This committee provides the science and direction, while the Implementation Committees in the districts carry out the response actions on the ground,” said Lereko Masopha, Senior Information Officer at the Ministry. He added, “Extension officers in these committees will liaise with farmers, monitor impacts, and help curb the spread of diseases in communities.” The urgency of this preparedness is underscored by the confirmation of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Moqhaka Local Municipality, Free State, a South African province that borders Lesotho. According to the South African Department of Agriculture, the affected commercial farm was placed under quarantine on July 8, with surveillance and vaccination measures immediately rolled out in a 10-kilometre radius. FMD is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, goats, and pigs. While it poses no direct threat to human health, it has devastating economic implications, severely impacting livestock production and cutting countries off from international trade in animal products. The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) warns that FMD outbreaks can cost countries billions in trade losses annually. Lesotho’s continued status as FMD-free without vaccination is crucial, particularly for the export of wool and mohair, which are significant contributors to the national economy. Minister Thabo Mofosi emphasised the importance of remaining vigilant. “Although we have not recorded any FMD cases in Lesotho, we cannot afford to be complacent. Our proximity to affected areas places us at high risk,” he warned.



FMD attacks livestock in South Africa - picture sourced from the internet

He revealed, “We are working closely with local and international veterinarians, the FAO, and other partners to ensure that this disease does not cross our borders.” He further stressed that any lapse in biosecurity measures could see Lesotho forfeit its international market access, particularly in the European Union and Asia, where stringent animal health standards are in place. Masopha clarified that while the government has emergency funds allocated for such outbreaks, development partners such as FAO remain instrumental in response support, offering advanced technologies, chemicals, protective clothing, and expertise. “Depending on the type of outbreak, partners step in with the needed resources. But the goal is for the country to be fully prepared without overstocking unused materials,” he said. Principal Secretary Moleko echoed the need for strategic stockpiling. “It is not ideal to let expensive chemicals expire on the shelf. We need targeted procurement based on accurate risk analysis and real-time communication with stakeholders.” The Minister concluded by calling for clear action plans. “I want detailed reports from every department, outlining tools, timeframes, and the personnel accountable.” “Each district must also submit its assessment of current gaps and possible solutions,” Mofosi directed. With the African Armyworm and Anthrax having affected parts of Lesotho earlier this year, the Ministry’s creation of the Rapid Response structure signals a turning point in agricultural risk management. It also reflects a broader strategy to align disaster response with international standards—ensuring that Lesotho’s farmers, economy, and livestock sectors are protected from increasingly frequent outbreaks. “We are not only reacting—we are preparing. With clearly defined communication lines and responsibilities, this response system could be the difference between containment and catastrophe,” said Dr Lehloenya.



A New Dawn for Lesotho’s Cattle Industry as Thabeng ea Senai Red Meat Project Launched

By Topollo Tlali

In a momentous step towards revitalising Lesotho’s livestock sector, the Thabeng ea Senai Breeders Community (TSBC) officially launched a groundbreaking red meat production project in Mokhetsoaneng.

What began as a bold idea in 2024 has matured into a national initiative with the potential to transform Lesotho into a self-sustaining red meat producer and regional competitor.

The launch, marked by traditional prayer, song, and dance, signalled more than just the start of a project; it ignited renewed hope for Basotho farmers.

The TSBC initiative, under the leadership of Sebatatso Makoanyane, brings together breeders, researchers, and policymakers to boost local red meat production, reduce dependence on South African imports, and build a resilient agricultural economy.

Addressing attendees, Dr. Irene Sealiete, CEO of TSBC, outlined the scope of the initiative: “We subscribed to a company that safeguards our operations, established a blood institution, created feedlots in Maseru, Thaba-Tseka and Qacha’s Nek, procured 20,000 high-grade female cattle, and trained 100 animal scientists in artificial insemination.”

She also confirmed the formation of the TSBC Blood Centre, which officially commenced operations on launch day.

The project’s reach has expanded rapidly, now boasting over 100,000 registered members country-wide. It is built on principles of science-based breeding, modern feedlot systems, and farmer empowerment through education and access to genetic resources.

Representing Metolong Breeding Zone, Tseliso Nkuka, emphasised the project’s value in unlocking untapped wealth.

“Basotho own livestock, yet we often overlook its economic power. Thabeng ea Senai is showing us what’s possible when we invest in our own cattle with intention,” he said.

Local council member Sakaria Tlali praised the initiative’s community impact, offering gratitude to Makoanyane for what he called “a transformative



idea that gives life to our hopes.”

The event also welcomed Dr. Fanie from Ram-sen/Absolute Genetics, a global expert in livestock genetics, who pledged international support. “It’s a privilege to partner with Lesotho,” he said, highlighting the country’s vast potential in red meat production.

On the government side, Chief Animal Officer Molefe Petlane reiterated national support: “This project directly addresses our over-reliance on imported meat. With TSBC, we are laying the groundwork for national self-sufficiency in red meat.”

Parliamentary representative Hon Mokhothu Makhwanyane commended the TSBC’s founder, sharing pride in the vision.

“You have our full support as you lead Basotho into a new agricultural era.”

At the heart of the day’s proceedings was Sebatatso Makoanyane, the young visionary behind TSBC. In a moving address, he traced the project’s origins to an idea conceived two years ago.

“I dreamt of local red meat production that could stand toe-to-toe with international markets. I approached Professor Setsumi Molapo, and together with other partners, we began building what you see today,” he said.

Professor Molapo, of the National University of Lesotho, praised Makoanyane’s perseverance: “He brought a bold idea to my office. What began as a vision has now become a reality backed by science,

innovation, and partnership.”

The project has also earned international recognition, including a CENAGE award from the World Trade Organisation, acknowledging its potential to reshape Lesotho’s livestock economy.

Makoanyane was candid about challenges, particularly gaining the trust of Basotho farmers.

“Many viewed me with suspicion, and I understood because livestock is deeply personal in our culture. But I remained committed, not to selling dreams, but to building a future where Basotho benefit from their own cattle.”

He added: “Lesotho imports over M1.5 billion worth of red meat annually. By increasing local production, that money can circulate within our economy, benefiting our farmers and communities.”

In a heartfelt plea to the government, Makoanyane called for policy support and fewer restrictions.

“We are not politicians. We are agriculturalists trying to feed our people. We ask the government not to interfere unnecessarily but to support us. We have the networks, international backing, and the will. We simply need the space to operate.”

Minister of Agriculture, Thabo Mofosi, closed the ceremony with a firm promise of government support.

“You have my full backing. This is the kind of bold, self-driven agriculture Lesotho needs. You



Honourable Mofosi congratulating Mr makoanyane and showing how proud they are as ministry of agriculture seeing youth coming up with initiatives that can end youth unemployment



Professor setsumi Molapo elaborating how Mr makoanyane came to him and pitched his idea and how they collaborated

are not only creating food, but jobs, hope, and dignity.”

A ceremonial sod-turning followed, symbolising new beginnings. Traditional performances and jubilation from Mokhetsoaneng residents captured the day’s spirit: pride, progress, and purpose.

APPSA Training in Pictures

Staff from the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) and Lesotho Agricultural College participate in a sensory evaluation of sweet potato jam and juice on July 22. The exercise, part of the APPSA initiative, aims to assess consumer perception and strengthen the nutrition-sensitive value chain of orange-fleshed sweet potato products.





Department of Marketing

Market oriented production

Who are we

Contract Farming: A Market-Driven Pathway to Agricultural Commercialization in Lesotho

In a growing effort to enhance market access for smallholder farmers and promote sustainable commercial agriculture in Lesotho, the Department of Marketing through its Market Facilitation Division continues to scale up the implementation of the Contract Farming (CF) initiative. Rooted in both national and sectoral priorities, CF responds directly to the Lesotho National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP II) extended which aims to transform the country from a consumer-based economy to a producer and export-driven economy, with agriculture as a key pillar. Contract farming is seen as a tool to:

- Boost agricultural productivity
- Create private sector-led employment
- Improve food security
- Link smallholder farmers to formal markets

Contract Farming is further a strategic market linkage tool that enables producers and buyers to enter into legally binding agreements for the supply and purchase of agricultural commodities. These agreements specify product quality, quantity, pricing and delivery timelines; offering predictability and a sense of security to both farmers and traders. For producers, CF ensures guaranteed market access and potential for increased income, for traders, it secures a reliable supply of produce meeting agreed standards and timelines.

Why Contract Farming?

Lesotho’s agricultural value chains have long struggled with market fragmentation, poor coordination, inconsistent quality of produce and limited access to market information. Many farmers, especially smallholder face challenges in accessing stable markets and securing fair prices for their produce. On the other hand, traders are often hesitant to source local produce due to inconsistent supply volumes and lack of formal procurement frameworks.

Contract Farming was formally introduced in 2021 in Lesotho through a pilot project by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFSN) in the Department of Marketing as a structured response to the challenges cited to reduce market uncertainty, enhance production planning and formalise farmer-buyer relationships.

Progress to Date: Strengthening the Foundation

Building on the pilot phase initiated in 2022/23 in collaboration with Tasty Food Packers, the 2024/25 financial year marked a significant scale-up in CF activities under the Department of Marketing. During this period, a total of 19 formal contracts were signed across five districts of Maseru, Mophale’s Hoek, Leribe, Thaba Tseka and Quthing with Maseru signing the highest number of eight contracts with farmers engaged in the production of horticultural commodities namely cabbage, tomatoes, sweet peppers, onions, cucumbers and baby marrows. To enhance stakeholder understanding and promote wider adoption, buyer-seller meetings were facilitated in all ten (10) Lesotho

districts, providing opportunities for traders and farmers to engage on the CF model. However, attendance varied due to different constraints.

Parallel to buyer-seller meetings, contract monitoring was undertaken in districts with active agreements to assess on-the-ground implementation and draw lessons for policy improvement. The CF initiative again gained visibility through various media platforms, including contributions to the Department of Marketing newsletter, targeted radio broadcasts and stakeholder briefings in an effort to build awareness and confidence in the model. Furthermore, experiences from the past year (2024/25) implementation contributed meaningfully to the development of the Contract Farming Legal



Framework, intended to harmonise contract standards and safeguard the interests of all parties involved. Although progress has occasionally been hampered by challenges such as limited transport and budget constraints, the outcomes achieved in 2024/25 have laid a solid foundation for broader institutionalization and expansion of the initiative in the coming years.

Key Lessons and Ongoing Challenges

One key issue identified during implementation was inconsistency in supply fulfilment. Some traders failed to uphold their off-take commitments citing overstocking or sourcing from alternative suppliers, despite being in contract. This caused loss of income and frustration for farmers who had invested in production under the expectation of

guaranteed supply agreements and the limited engagement by farmers and traders in other districts.

A need to increase understanding through continued mobilization for greater participation and ownership has been observed. Efforts are now underway to mobilize and build the capacity of traders and farmers for further understanding and active engagement.

Way Forward: 2025/26 and Beyond

In the current financial year (2025/26), the Department of Marketing has outlined a robust and forward-looking strategy under its operational plan to strengthen and institutionalise CF across the country. A key focus is to enhance district-level ownership of the initiative by equipping and guiding District Marketing Assistants (DMAs) to lead CF efforts from a decentralised level and enhance farmer and trader mobilisation. The plan also seeks to expand CF outreach by increasing the number of formalised contracts, thereby enhancing market access for smallholder producers. In pursuit of inclusive growth, a pilot programme targeting youth and women will be launched to ensure their meaningful participation in contract farming opportunities. To strengthen transparency and accountability, the department will also develop a digital contract register and introduce seasonal feedback surveys aimed at capturing real-time implementation insights from both farmers and traders. Furthermore, sustained consultations and stakeholder engagements will continue to inform the development of the Contract Farming Bill, an important legal instrument intended to formalise, protect and guide CF partnerships across Lesotho’s agricultural landscape.

Aligning with National Priorities

The CF initiative speaks directly to the Department of Marketing’s mandate to facilitate inclusive and competitive agricultural trade. It also echoes the NSDP II priority of transforming the agricultural sector into a key economic driver. By promoting structured market engagement, CF helps unlock private sector participation, encourages productivity, supports employment creation in rural areas and reduces poverty through agribusiness-led transformation.

Conclusion

CF represents more than just agreements; it is about trust, collaboration and shared value between producers and buyers. Through sustained support, clear policy direction and alignment among traders and farmers, this initiative is poised to reshape the agricultural marketing landscape and position local farmers as reliable commercial suppliers in formal markets.

As the journey continues, farmers and traders are encouraged to see themselves not just as participants but as key agents in building a resilient and inclusive agricultural economy.

“Contract farming is part of Lesotho’s push for Private sector-led growth, Commercialization of agriculture and Sustainable development of agri-food value chains”



Contract Farming in Lesotho: A Tool for Agricultural Modernisation and Market Access

By Molula Mofosi

Contract farming is quietly reshaping Lesotho’s agricultural sector, bringing structure and opportunity to a system long marked by uncertainty.

Introduced in 2021, the initiative has created new possibilities for smallholder farmers, offering them access to formal markets and a chance to transform subsistence farming into a commercial enterprise.

At the heart of the initiative is a partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Lesotho’s Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MA-FSN), implemented through its Department of Marketing. The contract farming model was first piloted in May 2021 with Tasty Food Packers Ltd., one of Lesotho’s four major packagers.

The company specialises in the processing and packaging of dry beans, maize, and rice.

Although it lacks the capacity to provide production inputs or technical support, Tasty Foods was keen to secure a consistent, local supply of high-quality dry beans.

The pilot chose sugar beans as the crop of focus and engaged ten farmers across Butha-Butha, Leribe, Berea, and Maseru districts.

These farmers cultivated 31.4 hectares, producing approximately 24.3 tons of beans.

The initiative was closely monitored by the Department of Marketing to ensure its goals were being met.

But the journey hasn’t been without challenges. “The pilot was not as successful as we had hoped due to heavy rains that affected the produce,” Nizam Abubaker, Managing Director of Tasty Foods Ltd, revealed.

However, he emphasises the importance of resilience.

“These challenges shouldn’t discourage farmers. The goal is to stabilise the model and grow from what we have learned. The most important thing is for farmers to communicate early when production problems arise,” he said.

For Abubaker, contract farming is a strategic move.

Currently, only 10% of Tasty Foods’ packaged beans come from local farmers, while 90% are imported from South Africa.

The company aims to reverse that ratio. “We want to grow the local market and see Lesotho’s agriculture thrive,” he said, disclosing that preparations are underway with the Ministry to recruit more farmers for the upcoming season, and Abubaker is using every opportunity to raise awareness among farmers.

The Ministry’s Department of Marketing is leading this effort, with Maleshoane Lishaba, Head of Contract Farming and Statistics, seeing the initiative as a critical link in Lesotho’s agricultural transformation. “Contract farming aligns with the National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II), which focuses on private sector-driven growth and agribusiness as tools to fight poverty and create jobs. It creates structured, mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and buyers,” she describes.

She added that in essence, contract farming allows producers and buyers to sign formal agreements detailing the type of produce, quantity, quality, price, and timelines for delivery.

She indicated that this gives farmers the assurance of a guaranteed market and income, while providing buyers with a reliable, consistent supply of produce that meets specific standards.

FAO, one of the key implementers, highlights that contract farming isn’t just about selling crops, but about collaboration from seed to sale.

“This often involves the buyer offering guidance on production methods, inspection, and quality control. The buyer isn’t just purchasing a product;



they are investing in how that product is produced from the land cultivation level to harvesting,” FAO Communications Specialist, Mathabana Kotelo, noted.

MatPit Farm in Maseru is one of the success stories.

Its general manager, Rankakalo Tebatso, shared that contract farming has been a game-changer towards their growth.

“Our buyers send auditors to check if we are meeting their standards. That support has improved our operations,” he says.

“Besides, having a guaranteed buyer gives us peace of mind.”

MatPit supplies eggs under contract to retailers like Pick n Pay, Econo Foods, Stadium Foods, and Avani Hotels.

Still, challenges persist.

Delays in receiving subsidised agricultural inputs have sometimes thrown off production schedules.

Climate variability, unpredictable droughts, rains and frosts have made it difficult for farmers

to meet contractual quality and quantity requirements, Abubaker said.

“Many farmers made good progress, especially those who got inputs on time, but issues like pests, erratic rainfall, and lack of machinery impacted yields,” Kotelo said.

Farmer perceptions also varied. Some initially distrusted the model, fearing unfair pricing or rigid expectations. But those who fully engaged have seen clear benefits.

“The more they understand the contracts, the more they see how it works in their favour,” says Kotelo.

Since the pilot, the initiative has expanded.

Nineteen farmers now have contracts to supply a broader range of commodities—cabbage, lettuce, spinach, cucumber, peppers, and marrows to formal buyers including Maloti Fresh Produce and Fruits & Vegetables. These developments have come without external funding, showing strong organic growth and interest.

Contract farming is not a new idea globally. It

has been adopted in many countries as a way to modernise agriculture and connect farmers to structured markets.

In Lesotho, it is especially promising given the sector’s current constraints. Many smallholder farmers face poor access to inputs, a lack of market information, low productivity, and limited bargaining power. These challenges have kept them from transitioning to commercial farming.

The 2024 Lesotho Contract Farming Model Agreement, developed with FAO, lays out clear roles and responsibilities for both farmers and buyers. It covers everything from crop specifications to pricing mechanisms, delivery logistics, inspection procedures, payment terms, and conflict resolution.

It also includes annexes on phytosanitary measures, communication protocols, and standard documentation, making the agreement legally grounded and flexible.

However, FAO warns that without careful design, contract farming can exclude marginalised farmers.

“High transaction costs, land inequality, or vague contract terms can push some farmers out,” says Kotelo, stressing the importance of ensuring that contracts are fair and inclusive.”

The model is gaining traction not only due to its promise of income but because it can bring stability to food systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of cross-border supply chains.

“Retailers now realise the importance of sourcing produce locally. They are willing to work with farmers, but they need consistency and quality checks,” says Lishaba.

Progress has continued through 2024/25. Formal contracts were signed in five districts: Maseru (8), Mophale’s Hoek (4), Leribe (2), Thaba-Tseka (1), and Quthing (4).

Farmers are supplying perishable crops that require more intensive care than beans, showing confidence in the model. Buyer-seller platforms were held across all 10 districts, allowing direct engagement between farmers and potential buyers. These sessions were also used to assess on-the-ground implementation and inform future policies.

The Department of Marketing has increased visibility through media, including newsletters, radio programs, and briefings. It is also working on a Contract Farming Legal Framework, intended to harmonise agreements and protect all stakeholders.

Despite challenges such as limited transport and tight budgets, the results have laid a solid foundation for future growth.

That growth won’t be without hurdles.

The ministry revealed that in some cases, traders failed to honour their commitments, citing oversupply or changing sourcing strategies, and this left some farmers with unsold produce. There was also low participation in some districts, suggesting that more mobilisation and education was needed.

Looking ahead to 2025/26, the department has a clear strategy.

“District Marketing Officers will be equipped to lead contract farming efforts locally. The number of formal contracts will be increased, and youth and women will be targeted through a dedicated pilot program.

“A digital contract register will be developed for transparency, and seasonal feedback surveys will gather real-time insights from both farmers and traders. These efforts will feed into the creation of a national Contract Farming Bill.”

Contract farming aligns with Lesotho’s larger goals of economic transformation. It supports private sector engagement, creates rural jobs, and helps smallholder farmers scale up. As Lesotho shifts from a consumer-based economy to one driven by local production and exports, contract farming is poised to play a pivotal role.

Lishaba said at its core, contract farming is about trust and shared value. “It’s about farmers knowing their produce has a guaranteed buyer, and buyers knowing they’ll receive quality goods on time,” she said.

With sustained policy direction, strong institutions, and stakeholder alignment, this initiative could help build a new chapter for Lesotho’s agricultural economy—one where farmers are empowered, markets are structured, and food security is no longer a distant dream.





Lesotho Restricts Imports of Eggs, Cabbage, and Potatoes to Boost Local Agriculture

By Ntsoaki Motaung

The Government, through the Agriculture Ministry, has announced restrictions on the importation of eggs, cabbage, and potatoes. The directive, communicated by the Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development, Hon. Pitso Lesaoana, on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, is expected to bolster domestic production and improve market access for local growers.

Minister Lesaoana said the decision stems from recommendations made by the Ministry’s Marketing Department, which noted a steady rise in local production of the targeted products.

According to the Ministry, imports of eggs for consumption were officially restricted in January 2025, while similar measures for cabbage and po-

tatoes came into effect in June 2025.

“The restrictions will remain in place until further notice.”

“The Ministry is committed to working with all government departments, port authorities and security agencies to ensure that no illegal imports take place, even at official points of entry,” Minister Lesaoana said.

He emphasised that the restrictions are based on production capacity within the country and will be continuously reviewed.

“We will remain vigilant and responsive to the needs of farmers, businesses, and consumers to ensure that the policy benefits all,” he added.

Supporting the announcement, Director of Marketing Lekhooe Makhate confirmed that prices of the restricted products will be monitored every week.



Pitso Lesaoana Minister of Gender, Youth and Social Development on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition announced the restriction on importation of eggs, cabbage and potatoes.

He said the Ministry is prepared to invoke the price control law if abnormal price hikes are observed.

“We expect all locally produced eggs, cabbage,

and potatoes to meet the required standards in terms of quality, quantity, and price. These parameters will be regularly assessed to maintain consistency and fairness in the market,” Makhate stated.

Regenerative Farming: A Concept Lesotho Is Yet to Grasp

By Molula Mofosi

In the fields of Lesotho, where many farmers till the soil with hope in their hearts but struggle with thinning yields and tired land, the idea of regenerative agriculture might seem distant, maybe even unfamiliar. Yet, it may be the very key to reviving the health of the land, the stability of rural livelihoods, and the future of food in the country.

Regenerative agriculture, according to experts, isn’t just a technical set of practices; it’s a mindset shift, one that invites farmers to work with nature instead of against it.

In Lesotho, where steep terrain and overused soil often lead to erosion and crop failure, this kind of farming is not a luxury; it’s a necessity, experts warn.

Years of monoculture, overgrazing and excessive ploughing have stripped the soil of nutrients and robbed communities of food security. As agronomist and soil health expert Dr. Botle puts it, “The loss of organic matter in Lesotho’s soils has reached a critical point. Without urgent intervention, our farmlands may soon become barren. Regenerative agriculture can reverse this decline and restore life to the land.”

Around the world, this movement is gathering pace.

A 2021 report by the Africa Regenerative Agriculture Study Group projects that if adopted across sub-Saharan Africa, regenerative methods could generate over M273 billion in added value by 2030, and up to M1.2 trillion by 2040 —while creating almost five million jobs along the way.

These numbers are promising, but the more powerful truth lies in the stories of farmers already leading the shift, including a few right here at home.

After the devastating 2015 drought, a farmer named Thapelo Phiri in QvaQwa, South Africa, turned his back on chemical-intensive farming and began to explore regenerative practices.

“It felt like I was healing something, not just the soil, but myself,” he reflects.

That same sense of renewal inspired Matente Khethisa, a local farmer from Leribe, who spoke at the 2nd Roundtable of African Farmers in Rome in 2024.



Matente Khethisa, an advocate for regenerative Farming

Representing Lesotho, she challenged the idea that regenerative farming is a foreign or modern concept. “We have always had these tools: compost, manure and crop diversity. We just stopped valuing them,” she said.

Her point is echoed across the continent, where farmers using agroforestry, mulching, and composting are beginning to turn depleted plots into thriving, biodiverse farms.

In other parts of Africa, farmers are already seeing transformative results.

In Ethiopia, coffee farmers tripled their yields using shade trees and pruning methods.

In Côte d’Ivoire, cotton farmers increased their harvest by 80% through crop rotation and mulching.

Ghanaian cocoa farmers improved yields by over 60% while restoring over 250,000 hectares of forest. These aren’t experimental projects but real examples captured in the report, showing that soil can be brought back to life when farmed with care.

Khethisa said for Basotho farmers, the path to regenerative agriculture doesn’t need to begin with sweeping change.

“It can start small, with one plot, one season. Composting kitchen scraps, rotating maize with beans, or reducing how often the land is ploughed. This all can make a difference.

She added, “Using what’s already available — like animal manure or crop residues — cuts costs while building healthier soil.”

The report noted that even practices like raised

beds or tunnel farming, which may seem simple, can conserve moisture and prevent erosion in mountain communities.

“The benefits go far beyond the farm gate,” the report said.

The report stressed that scaling regenerative agriculture could boost national crop production by 13% and food consumption by 24% by 2040, meaning more food in homes, less reliance on expensive imports, and lower household vulnerability.

Environmentally, the report continues saying these practices could lock away six gigatons of carbon in soils and trees, playing a vital role in fighting climate change.

“...And financially, African farmers could save up to M309 billion a year in reduced input costs by 2040.”

But to make this shift meaningful and lasting, Khethisa indicated that Lesotho needs more than a few model farmers. The system itself must adapt.

She challenges that the National policy must embrace regeneration, integrating it into extension services, land reform, and climate strategies.

“Financial support, whether in the form of subsidies for compost or microloans for tunnel farming, can ease the transition for Basotho farmers,” the farmer said.

She challenged that schools and universities must begin teaching these approaches, not just to future farmers but to policymakers, economists, and scientists.

Some tools already exist to support this shift in the country includes the Lesotho Soil Information System, which was launched in 2020.

It offers detailed insights that can help guide crop choices and farming methods across districts. But data means little if not paired with real-world training.

That’s where farmers like Geoff Johnson, a retired commercial farmer and regeneration consultant based in the Free State, step in. Although he no longer farms, he now dedicates his life to helping others transition.

“We must move away from chemicals and back to life. It’s not just about techniques. It’s about how you see and treat the land. The future of farming lies in regeneration, not destruction,” he said.

Johnson, Khethisa, and Phiri all agree on one thing: the shift must begin in the mind before it takes root in the soil.

“Start small. Try one new thing. One row of cover crops. One compost pile. And watch. Nature teaches best.” Khethisa said, encouraging Lesotho’s farmers to form learning circles, to share both failures and victories, and to tailor practices to the country’s varied terrain and climate.

“Whether it’s rotating crops with legumes, planting trees that hold soil on slopes, or conserving water with mulch, each action plants a seed for a different kind of agriculture.”

She highlighted that the challenges are real.

“Fertiliser companies won’t easily give up their markets, and many farmers still measure success by volume, not resilience. But the momentum is growing. As more farmers across Africa see regeneration not as a sacrifice, but as an opportunity to build something lasting, Lesotho stands at a critical crossroads,” she said adding that what is needed now is belief that soil is not dead, that farming can be both productive and respectful, and that the answers sought after have often been right beneath farmers feet all along.

“Regenerative agriculture may not be fully understood yet in Lesotho, but its principles are deeply familiar: care, observation, balance, and hope,” Khethisa concluded.

As Phiri echoes, “Once a farmer believes the soil is alive and not just dirt, everything changes.”



A Rare Orchard Blossoming in Lesotho’s Thuathe Phuleng



Old trees from 2015 to 2025

By Topollo Tlali

Botle Farm is quietly positioning Schlabeng as Lesotho’s promised land of high-quality apples.

Rare for the peri-urban terrain, the farming activities of Botle Farms stand as a promising future for Lesotho’s orchard farming.

Founded in 2015 by 44-year-old Seahle Letsie and his sister Moipone Ndlovu, the farm began with just a handful of apple trees and a dream to bring fresh fruit to Lesotho market and today, it is one of the few orchards supplying fresh apples to communities and vendors in Maseru, carving a path for fruit farming in a country better known for maize and livestock.

Apple farming in Lesotho is an act of both courage and deep belief.

The climate, soil conditions, and limited access to farming resources make orchard management especially demanding. But for the Letsie siblings, the vision was rooted in service.

“Orchards are rare in our country, with the biggest funded by the World Bank. Seeing its success, we believed in the potential of Botle Farm to serve our people with fresh apples and trusted the land to listen to our drive,” says Seahle.

Their orchard quickly gained attention not only for its produce but also for its impact. “The apples now feed local households, supply street vendors in the capital, and even support small-scale entrepreneurs producing juice and wine. We achieved more than we had anticipated,” Seahle continues.

Their journey has been one of growth.

In October 2024, the farm received 1,500 new apple trees, including varieties like Grensmith, Golden Delicious, and Early Red. The trees are expected to begin bearing fruit by 2027, as apple trees, depending on the type, typically take two to four years to mature.

“The goal is not just to expand, but to offer high-quality, diverse apples that meet local demand and reduce reliance on expensive imports.”

Botle Farm’s orchard is more than just a patch of fruit trees; it is a symbol of resilience and community progress pushed by determination.

“We are proud to see our apples sold in the city. Every apple we grow is a step toward independence for our community.”

The farm has created jobs for ten workers, offering rare employment opportunities in a region

where joblessness is widespread. The ripple effect is clear: by growing apples, Botle Farm is also growing entrepreneurs, families, and futures.

The journey has not been without its challenges.

Pests and diseases threaten the health of the trees, but Letsie remains hopeful.

“These challenges are part of the farming journey, but we manage through close monitoring of our produce. We have a dedicated team tasked to ensure any suspected case is attended to immediately,” he says.

With water playing a pivotal role in the success of plants, Seahle says initially, irrigation was done manually using watering cans, a time-consuming task that forced them to think creatively and invest in growth.

“...now, the farm is finalising a deal to install micro-jet sprinklers, a more efficient system that will conserve water and improve tree health.”

“We are also in the process of introducing net shading to protect the young trees from harsh weather and pests. With years of failed attempts and lessons learned, all that we are implementing is a reflection of the family’s long-term commitment to sustainable orchard care to ensure we win and succeed in this journey,” Seahle stresses.

Their approach offers lessons for other aspiring farmers across Lesotho.

Through dedicated pest control, investment in irrigation technology and hiring skilled local labourers, Botle Farm is demonstrating that orchard farming can thrive with the right mindset and support. Community involvement remains central to their success. The orchard has inspired pride in the area, showing that agriculture can be both nourishing and transformative.

Apples themselves are a gift of nature. Rich in fibre, vitamins, and antioxidants, they help fight chronic diseases, improve digestion, and strengthen the immune system. But beyond their nutritional value, they carry symbolic weight in Thuathe. As Seahle puts it, “Every apple we grow is more than just food, it is a statement that we, too, can feed our people and shape our future.”

He says he is passionate about encouraging Lesotho’s youth to follow in his footsteps of trying out the land for possibilities.

“Orchard farming is not just about planting trees but a journey of patience on the soil, a test of trust in the team and mostly, it is about planting the seeds of your future. It requires patience and hard work, but the rewards are great.

“You can create jobs, support your families, and contribute to our country’s food security,” he says, narrating that they started small with contention as their driver.

“We put in the work manually, but mostly we invested a lot of time to learn this sector we were venturing into, especially from the perspective of Lesotho, where Orchard farming is not that popular. We were never shy to innovate with new technologies. Our orchard began with just a few trees, and now it feeds communities and inspires others. The land is waiting, and the opportunities are open to be grabbed,” he says.

The story of Botle Farm is a reminder that even in the most challenging environments, growth is possible with determination and heart. From a few apple trees to a thriving orchard, from hand-watering to modern irrigation, and from quiet beginnings to a powerful community movement, the journey of the Letsie siblings is proof that agriculture, when rooted in love and vision, can blossom against all odds.

“Our journey is just beginning, and we are committed to growing Botle Farm into a beacon of success for orchard farming in Lesotho,” says Seahle.



Expansion of the orchard to 1500 Apple trees with five varieties that are expected to produce fruits for sale in 2027





From Survival to Sustainability: How One Woman is Using Egg Production to Empower Herself and Her Community



By Seahlolo Reporter

From a place of stagnation, the 39-year-old Serialong Dlamini has quietly built something remarkable with egg production through Dlamini Poultry.

The business, which came about from a place of frustration, is now a stable source of income for the Dlamini family and a learning hub for youth and women in Matholeng village of Mafeteng District.

Dlamine Poultry is leading the way in empowerment and setting the tone for self-sufficiency and economic empowerment.

The journey began in 2017, when financial issues shrouded Serialong, leaving her with a stretched yet simple question: What can I do to boost my household income? Her answer was rearing chickens.

“I remembered how in our childhood we always had chickens around. Eating meat or even eggs was never an exercise that needed much. Chickens were just there making an important part of our meals,” she recalls.

“And I also remember how local nurses mentioned how eggs are the most affordable source of protein. That was it. I saw a gap and I knew there was a demand in my area,” she says.

Serialong knew to succeed in this newly founded journey through Dlamini Poultry, her family’s support was her cornerstone.

“I sold the idea both to my child and husband, who were sceptical but went ahead and cheered on. We took a loan and bought our first 500 chicks. We didn’t employ anyone because egg farming doesn’t make much profit until the chickens mature, so it didn’t make sense to bring in workers yet. We ran the farm as a family.”

Serialong says things weren’t easy at the start of the business.

Her first shelter was a small shack, and many of her chickens died due to harsh weather conditions.

“It was a long, tedious expedition which took a toll on me. I nearly gave up,” she admits.

Her tenacity kept her going long enough until 2019, when she heard about the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II).

“I wasted no time. I went straight to the SADP II office and asked how to apply for the grant because I wanted to grow,” she says.



“What stood out for me was how they didn’t leave me to figure things out on my own. They guided me through the entire application process.”

Her successful application brought a turning point with SADP II, helping her build a brick poultry structure, strong enough to house up to 1,500 layer chickens and better withstand extreme weather conditions.

“Since moving into the brick structure, chicken deaths have dropped significantly.

“Out of a thousand, I have lost fewer than 90 chicks, and that’s a huge difference,” she says.

She adds that previously, during droughts and heat-waves, the farm experienced devastation, but with the structure built in support, no climate change effects are a threat.

Dlamine Poultry rears 1,000 layer chickens and employs one permanent and one temporary worker.

“I strongly believe the SADP II has helped me build a legacy and not just an egg production company.”

A Natural Approach to Poultry Health

Unlike many farmers, Dlamine Poultry have chosen to raise their chickens without pharmaceutical antibiotics; instead, she brews natural

remedies using ingredients like chilli, turmeric, cinnamon, and apple cider vinegar for treatment of her chickens.

“I give them the herbal mix weekly because it boosts their immune system and prevents diseases, and this is part of the many things I learned at different SADP II workshops.

“Since October 2024, I have seen a real decline in infections like bronchitis and roundworms.”

These workshops, she says, have played a crucial role in improving her disease management and overall farm performance.

“The information is practical and adds to what we need as farmers to improve. We leave those workshops feeling equipped, and evidence is seen in our work,” she adds.

A Market-Driven Model That Works

With egg demand consistently high, Dlamine Poultry has no trouble moving her product. She supplies local supermarkets, schools through the school feeding programme, and individual vendors, mostly women, who buy in bulk and resell for a profit.

“Each week has its own customer. Some buy 20 trays, others 40, resell and make a good profit,” she explains, saying it’s heartwarming to

know that her business supports other families too—whether it’s through employment or income from resale.

Dlamine Poultry keeps a schedule for her clients and proudly shares that her eggs never stay packed for long.

“There is always someone waiting for eggs. The demand never goes away.”

Championing Women and Youth

Egg farming, she says, is a space where women are already active, but she believes there’s room for many more, especially youth.

“Unemployment hits women and young people the hardest, and egg production is a business that can uplift them when introduced properly. Eggs are part of our daily meals; they are affordable, nutritious, and always in demand.”

Her words are backed by action with a mentorship programme that she is running called Dlamini mentorship for aspiring poultry farmers.

“I believe that when you are lifted, you must lift others. That is the only way we can grow as a community. I offer guidance on lighting management for chicks, record keeping, and managing chicken health, among other things, under the mentorship,” she says.

Looking Ahead

With a vision to expand, she hopes to add two more chicken houses on her farm, saying the success of the SADP II grant has opened her eyes.

“I have seen what is possible with a thousand chickens. With 1,500, and maybe more, the profits will be better, and I can employ more people.”

Serialong notes that while the business’s foundation was a financial response, the journey has evolved to being purpose-driven.

“Farming has taught me patience, resilience, and the power of support. SADP II didn’t just build me a shelter; they helped me build a future which I wish to share. Lesotho can be self-sufficient if there are two or three more Dlamine Poultry farms,” she says.

And for the many women and youth she has inspired, her journey is a powerful reminder that success doesn’t always start with abundance.

Sometimes, it starts with 500 chicks, a little hope, and a community that shows up for each other.





A Shepherd’s Dream: How SADP Helped Beleme Lebajoa Weave a Legacy in Ram Breeding



By Seahlolo Reporter

As a young boy growing up in the rural mountains of Ha Seeiso in Matelile, Mafeteng, Beleme Lebajoa always dreamt of owning his own flock, sheep branded with his name, walking proudly across the highlands, and today, that childhood dream has blossomed into a thriving wool production business, backed by improved genetics, modern infrastructure, and recognition across Lesotho’s wool sector.

Thanks to the support of the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II), Lebajoa’s Matelile Agri Business has become not only a beacon of personal success but a hub of inspiration and mentorship for fellow farmers.

Matelile Agri Business began its journey in 2019 with just ten sheep purchased from auction shows. Its efforts were improved through basic care and hard work to attain excellence.

By 2022, that humble flock had multiplied to 112.

“The quality wasn’t top-tier, but it wasn’t bad either. It was enough to work with,” he says, with a humble chuckle.

“My production was somewhere in the middle, but it was enough to make me believe I could do more and be more in the livestock industry,” Lebajoe explains.

What changed everything for his business was an encounter with an agricultural extension officer during a random farm visit.

“They were impressed with how I was improving the quality of my sheep and how I was managing the organic growth,” he recalls.

“That’s when they told me about SADP II and its grant opportunity for Basotho farmers. They encouraged me to apply, and I did.”

Determined to seize the opportunity, Lebajoa, through Matelile Agri Business, made a bold decision: he sold most of his flock to raise the M100,000

contribution required from a farmer to qualify for the grant, a risk that paid off.

Having qualified for the grant, the SADP II awarded him a borehole, a sheep shed, 40 improved ewes and 2 rams, genetically superior animals that would set his farm apart and elevate his breeding.

With guidance and support from the SADP II, Matelile Agri Business’ flock began transforming.

He mated 20 of the new ewes and achieved a remarkable 17 successful births.

“Of those 17, I sold eight rams to other farmers, and suddenly my farm became a go-to place for improved breeds. The genetics on my farm became so good that other farmers started coming to me even when I thought it was not fashionable,” he says proudly.

His farm quickly earned a reputation as a source

of quality genetics for aspiring wool farmers in the area.

Matelile Agri Business’ success caught the attention of a local shearing shed facility in Mafeteng.

“After partnering with other farmers in the area through the shearing shed, the overall wool quality produced at the shed improved significantly, and this collaboration opened even more doors.

“That’s how I learned about the district and national wool and mohair shows,” he explains, saying that before then, he didn’t know they existed.

In Matelile Agri Business’ inaugural district-level show, it emerged as a top performer, earning itself spot to represent Mafeteng at the national level.

Competing with improved genetics supplied by SADP II, Matelile Agri Business was placed among the top ten national wool producers.

“One of my rams brought home a prize,” he



beams.

The following year, Matelile Agri Business entered again—with even more animals—and came back with four awards: second and third place in the ram category, and two awards for his ewes.

“For me, the shows are not just about winning. They are a way to measure your progress as a farmer, to learn from others, and to understand what it takes to produce top-quality fleece.

“You meet people, share knowledge, learn about feeding programmes and vaccination schedules. It is more than a competition, it’s a classroom.”

Lebajoa doesn’t shy away from the challenges either.

“Livestock farming isn’t easy. Merino sheep need a different kind of care. They require special attention, from feed and vaccination to shelter and water. Feeding, in particular, is one of the biggest hurdles. It is expensive to feed them right, that’s why I always tell farmers to grow their own feed if they can to minimise costs.”

Matelile Agri Business is not just talking but is leading by example: a certified block farmer, the company has planted 88.4 hectares of maize to support its sheep through a self-managed, sustainable feeding scheme.

The maize is mixed with minerals and supplements to ensure the livestock sheep produces high-quality wool and good quality ewes.

“It’s financially wiser this way and it ensures I can control what goes into my animals,” he notes.

SADP II’s support didn’t end with the livestock. They also helped Lebajoa’s Matelile Agri Business expand its infrastructure.

“Before, I had a stable that could only house 70 sheep, but with SADP’s help, I now have one that accommodates 100. That alone has changed everything,” he says.

In addition, the project helped the business set up a reliable water supply system. “Now we have water 24 hours a day, and that’s a blessing most people overlook, but it’s essential for any livestock farmer; in fact, water is essential in all agricultural activities,” he stresses.

The impact of SADP II on Matelile Agri Business goes beyond numbers and prizes. It’s about the transformation of a person, a household, and a community. Today, it employs three permanent workers and offers seasonal employment to three more. And more importantly, it serves as a training ground for others.

“When farmers come to buy rams, I don’t just sell them animals. I offer skills transfer workshops. I mentor them on feeding, lighting, disease prevention, and how to improve genetics. That way, we all grow together,” he says.

For Lebajoa, this isn’t just farming—it’s legacy-building through Matelile Agri Business.

“It takes time to improve a farm. Breeding takes patience, but with support like what I received from SADP II, the process becomes faster, and the results are visible.”

He is already planning the next steps: more improved rams, more structured training, and eventually, a fully independent wool production hub for his district.

Beleme Lebajoa and Matelile Agri Business’ story is a reminder that dreams, no matter how distant they may seem, are always valid—especially when matched with commitment, community support, and the right kind of help. Through SADP II’s investment, one shepherd’s dream is now shaping the future of wool farming in Lesotho.





Liketso’s Leap: Youth Grant Turns Poultry Passion into Purpose

By Seahlolo Reporter

From navigating financial hardship to building a thriving poultry business, 26-year-old Liketso Khoachele from Matelile, Ha Seeiso in Mafeteng, is proof that a single opportunity, backed by determination, can change the trajectory of a young person’s life.

Her success can be seen with Liketso Agri Business, a manual what searching for dreams and possibilities look like.

Like many Basotho youth, Liketso’s early dreams were interrupted by harsh realities.

After being forced to drop out of tertiary education due to financial challenges, she found herself back home, uncertain about her future.

“I went back to Matelile with no clear path. I was just a young girl trying to figure things out. My education possibility just ended, and so it seemed my life,” she recalls.

In 2019, to take charge of her future and rise above the social challenge, she took up factory work for financial sustainability until the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

“Just when I was starting to gain momentum, the pandemic struck, and I lost my job. I was broke and back to square one; it felt like my cycle of life was engulfed by pain.”

While at home, Liketso began helping a friend who ran a small poultry project, and it was there that her love for farming was born.

“In 2020, I realised I had found something that sparked my interest, raising chickens. Realising that opportunities can strike when one least expects, I went to my mother and shared my vision.

“To my surprise, she supported me with enough to start. I started Liketso Agri Business with just 100 layers and a winning spirit,” she recounts.

Her choice to go into egg production was deliberate: “Eggs are always in demand, and people buy them daily,” she explains.

However, the road was far from smooth.

“In a rush to grow and ambition to meet the market but also succeed as a farmer, I added another 100 chickens, but the profits were still not coming. Most of the income went to feed.”

Liketso narrates how she saw pain and knew it by name.

“My chickens started dying, eggs were sometimes damaged, and funds were depleted. It started feeling unbearable. It was frustrating,” she says, but the possibilities of success held her back.

“I held on. I had nothing else to fall back on, so I



truly had no choice.”

Determined to make her venture work, Liketso reached out for help.

In 2022, a friend advised her to approach the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition to explain her struggles with Liketso Agri Business.

“At the time, I wasn’t very hopeful. I had my doubts about government offices, but I went anyway because this needed to work.”

Officials at the ministry informed her that applications were closed for adult grants under the Small Agriculture Development Programme II (SADP II)

but encouraged her to stay alert for the SADP II Youth Grant. “Honestly, I forgot about it. Then one day—almost a year later—I got a call from SADP II. They said the youth grants were open, and I should apply.”

She did just that.

After submitting her application and undergoing a verification process, Liketso was accepted.

“SADP II came to inspect my farm. They took me through training workshops, and when I was awarded the grant, I was ready. I already had some money saved to contribute my percentage.”

In April 2025, Liketso’s dream gained new life.

Through SADP II, Liketso Agri Business received support to build a larger chicken house capable of accommodating 1,500 birds, and she was supplied with 400 chickens along with cages.

“Before this, I only had cages for 200 birds. Now I can manage a much larger operation.

“I have seen a real difference. I can now pay my staff, buy feed, and even save some money,” she beams.

Unlike before, she no longer has to rely on relatives for basic needs.

“I used to have to ask my family for help. Now, the farm is taking care of me and has grown to offer employment to others.”

The SADP II Youth Grant didn’t only offer financial support—it came with practical knowledge.

“We were trained on record keeping, farm management, disease prevention, marketing, and even climate-smart practices. That was valuable for me.”

Her advice to fellow young people is clear: “Farming isn’t easy, but if serious and committed, success is a given,” she says, adding that the SADP II doesn’t give out money to people who aren’t serious.

“You have to show up, prove your commitment, and treat farming like a business.”

Liketso says she now understands the value of being her own boss.

“Jobs are scarce, but farming gives us an opportunity to create employment. I’m currently employing two permanent workers and I have taken on two mentees to help them learn the ropes.”

Liketso Agri Business’ market has grown as well.

“I started supplying local supermarkets, and now I supply the school feeding programme and also sell as a street vendor. I can confidently say that my business has expanded in a way I never imagined.”

As she awaits the third phase of her SADP II grant—set to increase her stock to 1,500 birds—Liketso says she is already planning ahead.

“Even if it doesn’t come immediately, I’m in a position now to grow my business on my own. That is the real impact of this grant.”

What began as a fallback plan during a crisis has now evolved into a sustainable business, one that is not only changing Liketso’s life, but also uplifting her community.

“SADP II didn’t just invest in me, they invested in everyone I help, employ, and mentor. This grant has been my financial breakthrough.”

Through grit, vision, and support, Liketso Khoachele is turning the tides of poverty, one egg at a time.





Letlotlo Champions Local Farming and Fortified Food in a Bid for Food Security

Staff Reporter

According to an article published on 23 May 2025 by **Newsday**, Lesotho currently imports 98% of what it consumes; an alarming figure for a small developing country. This aligns with international data, including a 2023 report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which highlights Lesotho's heavy reliance on food imports, with estimates ranging between 90-98%, particularly for processed and staple foods.

The situation is not as bad when it comes to maize meal and wheat flour production, even though it is still higher than it should be. According to Lesotho Flour Mills' (LFM's) estimates, around 60% of all maize meal and wheat flour consumed in Lesotho, is imported from neighbouring South Africa, with only 40% produced by Lesotho-based millers. Unfortunately, Basotho farmers supply less than 5% of the white maize and wheat milled by Lesotho-based millers. Fortunately, the situation with yellow maize is looking better with an estimated supply of 30% of yellow maize used in local feed production, for supply into the livestock feed production chain.

LFM sees these figures as an opportunity. To close this gap, LFM offers a guaranteed market for local farmers and has launched a series of initiatives to support farmers and the local feed and food production supply chain. LFM

is working with several important industry players, including international and local organisations, like the United Nations, World Food Programme (WFP), and the Government of Lesotho.

"LFM is in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, engaging in regular community forums and farmer roadshows to educate growers on grain grading, quality control, and best practices." Mr. Dingaan Mann, the LFM Food Safety and Quality Assurance Manager since 2020, says. "Farmers are also encouraged to bring in samples for free testing, allowing them to improve their produce to meet national and international standards." Mr. Mann joined LFM in 2010 as a laboratory technician, after completing a Bachelor of Science degree in Biotechnology, at the National University of Lesotho. He since worked himself through the ranks and recently completed a Wheat Milling qualification offered by the Southern African Grain Milling Academy.

LFM pays farmers within seven days and currently accepts all maize and wheat grades, except those infested with grain weevils, to encourage more participation. Becoming a supplier is straightforward, requiring only an ID and banking details. Farmers can contact LFM on 2221 5200, to request more information from the LFM Customer Services department.

Lesotho Flour Mills as the country's

leading milling company, is driving change through investment, innovation, and advocacy for local food production. "It is crucial that we start producing more as a country," says Mr Thabo Thovala, LFM's Flour Production Manager. "We have the potential and the people, we just need to make the system work for us. As LFM, we are not just waiting to buy, we are mentoring as Ntate Mann has mentioned," Mr Thovala explains. "We want farmers to succeed commercially."

Mr Thovala has 23 years' experience in wheat milling and production. He has been the LFM Wheat Flour Mill Production Manager, since September 2017. He joined LFM in 2002, after completing a Certificate in Fitting and Machining at the Lerotholi Polytechnic Technical College in Maseru, and a Diploma in Industrial Engineering at the Port Elizabeth Technikon. LFM assisted him to also complete advanced international wheat milling qualifications with City & Guilds, and the Buhler African Milling School based in Kenya.

LFM recently invested M7.4 million in upgrading automated wheat milling software and hardware components. This replaced outdated controls with a new PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) system, dubbed "the brain of the mill". Five staff members, including Mr Thovala, were trained in Johannesburg to operate the new system.

"The PLC system does not only speed up production, but also assists in quality control, detecting early faults and reducing waste. It also significantly lowers electricity use, cutting operational costs," says Mr Thovala.

LFM's product is fortified, enriched with essential vitamins and minerals to improve health outcomes. Fortification, which is the process of adding essential vitamins and minerals to food plays a crucial role in public health. "In Lesotho, where malnutrition remains a concern, fortified maize meal and flour helps combat common deficiencies, including iron, vitamin A, and folic acid. These nutrients are especially important for children and pregnant women. "This is why international organisations choose to buy from us, because we offer good quality fortified foods produced in Lesotho," says Mr Mann.

Lesotho Flour Mills embraces the vision of fostering self-sufficiency, promoting fair trade, and safeguarding public health. By collaborating closely with policymakers, industry stakeholders, and communities, we can collectively unlock the full potential of our agriculture and food production sectors. Through unified effort, we aim to build a resilient and sustainable local food supply chain that secures the nourishment and well-being of all Basotho, ensuring a future where food security is not only a goal, but a lasting reality.

Lijo tsa boleng!

Letlotlo La Basotho

“Polokeho ea lijo tsa liphoofole ke polokeho ho batho.”

DINGAAN MANN
Quality Assurance Manager

Lijo Tse Hlabosehang!

Letlotlo La Basotho

“Mmechini ea boleng bo holimo, e etsa phoofo ea boleng.”

MR. THABO THOALA
Lesotho Flour Mills
Flour Production Manager



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.**



Ministry of Agriculture, Food
Security and Nutrition
WamCoP
P.O. Box 24
Maseru 100



REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

(Individual Consultants)

LESOTHO
WOOL AND MOHAIR VALUE CHAIN COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT
Assignment title: Productive Alliances Consultancy
Reference no.: LSO-2000003942-0065-CS-ICS
The Government of Lesotho has received financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) towards the cost of Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the recruitment of consulting services provided by an individual consultant as part of the post of Productive Alliances Consultancy. The use of any IFAD financing shall be subject to IFAD's approval, pursuant to the terms and conditions of the financing agreement, as well as IFAD's rules, policies and procedures. IFAD and its officials, agents and employees shall be held harmless from and against all suits, proceedings, claims, demands, losses and liability of any kind or nature brought by any party in connection with Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project.

The consulting services ("the services") include improving the three strategic supply chains through productive alliance approach. The assignment is expected to take two months (eight weeks in total). The applicant consultant will work under the supervision of the WamCoP PCU with support from the DOM, DLS and IFAD, the selected consultant will be responsible for the sets of deliverables above.

This request for expressions of interest (REOI) follows the general procurement notice that appeared on Lesotho Times on 1 May 2025 and on The Reporter on 2 May 2025.

The attention of interested consultants is drawn to IFAD's Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Policy and the Revised IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption its Activities and Operations. The latter sets forth IFAD's provisions on prohibited practices. IFAD further strives to ensure a safe working environment free of harassment, including sexual harassment, and free of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in its activities and operations as detailed in its IFAD Policy to Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. By entering in this document, you certify to have read, understood, and agreed to be bound by the Privacy Policy of IFAD. Interested consultants shall not have any actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest. Consultants with an actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest shall be disqualified unless otherwise explicitly

approved by the Fund. Consultants are considered to have a conflict of interest if they a) have a relationship that provides them with undue or undisclosed information about or influence over the selection process and the execution of the contract, or b) have a business or family relationship with a member of the client's board of directors or its personnel, the Fund or its personnel, or any other individual that was, has been or might reasonably be directly or indirectly involved in any part of (i) the preparation of the REOI, (ii) the selection process for this procurement, or (iii) execution of the contract. Consultants have an ongoing obligation to disclose any situation of actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest during preparation of the EOI, the selection process or the contract execution. Failure to properly disclose any of said situations may lead to appropriate actions, including the disqualification of the consultant, the termination of the contract and any other as appropriate under the IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Projects and Operations.

The following conflict of interest rules shall apply with respect to recruitment of government/client staff within the consultant's proposed team:

a. No member of the client's board of directors or current employees of the client (whether part time, or full time, paid or unpaid, in leave status, etc.) shall be proposed or work as, or on behalf of, any consultant.

b. Except as provided in sub-clause 8.6(d), no current employees of the government shall work as consultants or as personnel under their own ministries, departments or agencies.

c. Recruiting former client or government employees to perform services for their former ministries, departments or agencies is acceptable provided no conflict of interest exists.

d. If a consultant proposes any government employee as personnel in their technical proposal, such personnel must have written certification from the government confirming that: (i) they will be on leave without pay from the time of their official proposal submission and will remain on leave without pay until the end of their assignment with the consultant and they are allowed to work full-time outside of their previous official position; or (ii) they will resign or retire from government employment on or prior to the contract award date. Under no circumstances shall any individuals described in (i) and (ii) be responsible for approving the implementation of this contract. Such certification shall be provided to the client by the consultant as part of its technical proposal.

e. In the case where a consultant seeks to engage the services of any person falling under ITC sub-clauses 8.6(a) – 8.6(d), who may have left the client within a period of less than twelve (12) months of the date of this RFP, it must obtain a written "no-objection" from the client

for the inclusion of such a person, prior to the consultant's submission of its proposal.

The Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project now invites eligible Individual consultants ("consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the services in the form of a curriculum vitae (CV). A consultant will be selected in accordance with the individual consultant selection (ICS) method set out in IFAD's Project Procurement Handbook that can be accessed via the IFAD website at www.ifad.org/project-procurement. Interviews **will not** be conducted as part of the selection process.

The shortlisting criteria are:

- ◆ Minimum of Master's Degree in Agribusiness/Agricultural Economics/Social Sciences/Business Development or related field.
- ◆ At least five years' relevant experiences in working with productive alliances/ collaborative arrangements within a wide range of industries, especially agricultural.
- ◆ Three years' experience in conducting Productive Alliance trainings
- ◆ Experience in developing PA for wool and mohair will be an added advantage for the consultant
- ◆ The consultant should have a proven track record of building capacity of staff on the development and implementation of Productive Alliances
- ◆ Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of regulatory frameworks, technologies and market requirements, and of the entrepreneurial and management skills

Any request for clarification on this REOI should be sent via e-mail to the address below no later than **12:00hrs on 28 July 2025, Lesotho time**. The client will provide responses to all clarification requests by **16:00hrs on 30 July 2025, Lesotho time**. Expressions of interest in the form of curriculum vitae (CV) must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail or by e-mail) by **12:00hrs on 01 August 2025, Lesotho time**.

Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project
Attn: Procurement and Contracts Manager
P.O. Box 24
Department of Livestock Services
Old Airport Road, Moshoeshoe II

e-mail: mlejota-thakong@wamcop.org.ls and cc: mtau@wamcop.org.ls

1. The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/document-detail/asset/41942012>.
2. The policy is accessible at www.ifad.org/anticorruption_policy.
3. The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/document-detail/asset/40738506>.
4. The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/privacy>.



FARMERS
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06th Sept 2025
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Grassroots Innovation Heals Lesotho’s Eroded Landscapes

By **Ntsoaki Motaung**



Rehabilitation work at Boqate Leasure Park

What began as a birthday gathering in November 2019, on the degraded hills of Boqate, sparked a movement that is now transforming Lesotho’s most eroded landscapes. From that dusty day emerged the Re Kata Mangope Foundation, a home-grown effort to reclaim land scarred by deep gullies, known locally as mangope. In Lesotho, mangope—or dongas—are more than just environmental scars. They are symbols of lost productivity, unsafe terrain, and communities at risk. These deep, hazardous gullies, carved by decades of water runoff and poor land management, render vast tracts of land unusable. But one foundation is

proving that these wounds can be healed. “We felt the land and Lesotho deserve better. We wanted to turn scars into gardens, erosion into ecosystems of hope and poverty into opportunity,” Advocate Makhetha Motsoari, founder of Re Kata Mangope, explains. At Boqate Hills Resort & Leisure, where gullies once dominated the terrain, the foundation piloted simple, sustainable methods that have now caught national attention. The approach begins with used tires, placed at the heads of erosion channels to slow down water flow. The gullies are then filled with compacted soil. Over time, layers of compost, organic brush and recycled farm waste are added to regenerate fertility.

“The results have been remarkable. What was once barren and dangerous land is now terraced, green and teeming with flowers, vegetables, fruit trees and grass,” Motsoari says. This transformation is not only visual, it is deeply social. Re Kata Mangope’s approach empowers communities to reclaim control over their environment, one shovel at a time. The foundation’s impact stretches beyond land restoration. Its mission is rooted in community development and youth empowerment. “We are restoring native grasses and trees, reducing flash flood risk, and building soil health. We are also training young people as guides, gardeners, and conservationists, giving them new paths forward,” Motsoari explains. At Boqate, gullies have not just disappeared, they have been integrated into functional, beautiful landscapes. Events now take place where erosion once ruled. Guests walk through lush gardens, often unaware of the devastation that existed before. “Seeing the before-and-after photos is the only way people believe it’s a total transformation,” says Motsoari. Re Kata Mangope’s model is deeply participatory. Communities help identify erosion hotspots through consultations and visual surveys. These areas are then assessed for severity, and a plan is drawn. Motsoari explains the process, noting local villagers and youth volunteers carry out the work in a cash-for-work model, similar to successful national employment schemes. “Resources are kept local: recycled tires, compost from agricultural waste, brush from the land. Training is conducted through workshops,” he says. He shares that the foundation currently runs on

personal reinvestment, small grants, and income from eco-tourism activities hosted at Boqate. Despite not being formally registered, Re Kata Mangope has earned the trust of communities and local authorities across districts. Requests for support and training now pour in daily. Motsoari is clear about the foundation’s vision: to become a national leader in land restoration and policy innovation. He is calling on the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Land Reclamation, and tourism authorities, to formally recognise Re Kata Mangope’s work. “We want to deploy teams to conduct national donga surveys, develop training for public extension workers, and contribute to conservation corridors. Our work aligns with national catchment management goals; it is only profitable for the country to adopt it, it works,” he says. The foundation measures its success through quantifiable results: the number of contours built, soil infiltration rates, vegetation regrowth, and sustained community involvement. Challenges remain. The foundation needs formal registration, scalable funding, and stronger support to overcome labour intensity and climate unpredictability. Still, the vision is bold and ambitious. By 2030, Re Kata Mangope aims to launch national “Operation Re Kata Mangope” campaigns in every district, establish a formal training academy for donga rehabilitation, develop income streams through eco-tourism and consultancy and partner with government and donors for wide-scale impact. “Our dream is for every village to transform mangope into gardens. We want Lesotho to be known not for erosion, but for regeneration,” says Motsoari.

Climate Change and Agriculture: An Emerging Threat to Health, Gender Equity and Youth Prosperity

By **Thoboloko Ntšonyane**

In the face of escalating climate shifts, Lesotho’s rural and farming communities are experiencing far more than erratic weather patterns and poor harvests. Climate change is now deeply entangled with the country’s sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), particularly impacting women, youth, and smallholder farmers. This link between climate and SRHR was the focus of a multi-stakeholder dialogue held recently, convened by the SADC Parliamentary Forum under the SRHR, HIV and AIDS Governance Project. Participants explored how environmental crises, from prolonged droughts to flash floods, are worsening food insecurity, overburdening fragile health systems, and deepening gender inequalities, particularly in agriculture-reliant communities. Weather forecaster Maqhanolle Tsekoa from the Lesotho Meteorological Services highlighted that what used to be “normal climate patterns” have shifted dangerously, with extreme rainfall and prolonged dry spells becoming frequent. “Climate has always been taken for granted but now it’s like wearing three blankets instead of one; heat is trapped, rain falls irregularly, and our farming cycles are in disarray,” he explained. This unpredictability directly disrupts access to clinics and maternal health services, especially in Lesotho’s rugged farming zones. He narrated that flooded roads, snow-blocked passes, and drought-damaged infrastructure prevent pregnant women and the elderly from reaching facilities in time, threatening lives in already vulnerable populations. Yet despite the looming dangers, Lesotho’s National Climate Change Policy, which calls for strengthened health systems and climate resilience,



remains under-implemented, with insufficient integration of SRHR into climate finance and planning. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Gender Officer Matseliso Mokone noted that these disruptions ripple far beyond clinics. “In climate-affected rural areas, women are often forced to give birth at home due to lack of water or skilled birth attendants,” she said. She recounted a case of a woman who was at a health facility, maternal waiting homes and ready to give birth, but was met with a challenge of lack of water and to be helped, she had to pay strangers to fetch water, as the facility had none. The meeting indicated that women in agriculture are often the first to suffer during droughts and last to recover from floods. The situation is dire. “Loss of crops means not only lost income but reduced autonomy, pushing some into vulnerable situations where sexual and gender-based violence rises, and unintended pregnancies follow,” Mokone said. She further noted that these conditions also erode young women’s ability to participate meaningfully in agricultural production or rural development.

“We must understand that gender inequality increases when resources shrink, and immediately, climate change turns poverty into a gender issue.” The Chair of the Parliamentary Women’s Caucus, Hon ’Makaleho Motsoasele, emphasised that although Lesotho’s greenhouse gas emissions are minimal, the country’s suffering is disproportionate. She called for prioritising mitigation efforts, particularly in farming districts where the climate shocks hit hardest and the recovery is slowest. Lesotho’s agricultural vulnerability was reinforced in the 2021 World Bank Climate Risk Country Profile, which links extreme weather with increasing soil erosion, desertification and a loss of arable land, all critical concerns for a country whose economy and nutrition are deeply tied to the land. The conversation also surfaced structural inequalities. Tampoase Mothopeng of the People’s Matrix decried how the LGBTIQ+ community is sidelined during disaster responses, often blamed when disease or floods hit. This, he warned, isolates groups from planning and recovery conversations, a dangerous exclusion in a country that needs all hands on deck.

The Lesotho Network of AIDS Services Organisations (LENASO) Executive Director, Mamello Makoe, made a strong appeal for integrating SRHR into agriculture and climate budgeting. “Family planning tools are lacking at rural clinics, and the biggest challenge remains a lack of funding. Our policies are there, but our pockets are empty,” she said. Hon Itumeleng Rantšo, MP and Chair of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Committee, also called out the gap between government budget speeches and implementation. “Our ministries present good promises, but data and accountability are weak. How can Parliament hold them to account if we don’t know what’s working?” she charged. She also pointed to taboo issues such as access to safe abortion, stressing that cultural and religious beliefs must not silence the reality of gendered suffering worsened by poverty, climate and poor public health infrastructure. “Climate change is the starter to poverty,” she argued. “...And poverty places an unbearable burden on women,” she said.



Hope or Illusion? Lesotho’s Exit from Food Insecurity Hotspot Shadowed by Southern Africa’s Hunger Crisis

...46.3 million people across SADC to face food insecurity

By Lerato Matheka

Just over a month after Lesotho was removed from the list of countries identified as food insecurity hotspots by global agencies, a new regional assessment has revealed a concerning and contradictory reality: hunger in Southern Africa is worsening, and Lesotho remains far from immune. According to the latest SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) report, released in July 2025, 46.3 million people across seven countries — Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, South Africa, and Tanzania are projected to face acute food insecurity in the 2025/26 consumption year. For many Basotho, particularly in rural areas and peri-urban settlements, daily struggles to access affordable and nutritious food continue unabated. The SADC report notes that while Lesotho, alongside Tanzania and Eswatini, experienced above-average rainfall during the 2024/25 agricultural season, the country remains highly vulnerable to climate and economic shocks that continue to push many households into food insecurity. The report highlights a concerning uptick in food insecurity, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and low-income urban ar-

reas, underscoring the compounded impact of the 2024 El Niño-induced drought, ongoing conflict, and high food prices. At the same time, the region experienced normal to above-normal rainfall in many areas during the 2024/25 season, supporting a modest recovery in cereal production and grazing conditions, particularly in countries like Tanzania, Lesotho and Eswatini. While Lesotho’s removal from the FAO-WFP Hunger Hotspots report in June 2025 was seen by some as a sign of progress, agriculture experts and grassroots farmers were cautious. “You cannot remove hunger with a pen,” Seate Seate, a farmer from Thaba-Tseka told Seahlolo, “Yes, it rained, but how much of our maize made it to harvest? How many families have enough food stored? How much food did the country even produced?” These concerns are echoed in the 2025 SADC RVAA Synthesis Report, which brings together findings from seven Member States that completed national assessments despite financial and logistical challenges. For Lesotho, participating in these regional processes remains critical — not only for aligning with global response mechanisms but also for ensuring

that local realities are reflected in planning and aid decisions. According to the RVAA summary, “Timely and harmonised vulnerability assessments remain critical to inform early action, response planning, and policy development.” The 2024 El Niño-induced drought left scars still visible in many parts of Lesotho. While some farmers reported modest recoveries in grazing lands and cereal output in 2025, livestock losses, soil erosion, and reduced seed availability continue to haunt the country’s smallholder farmers. For women-headed households, youth, and the elderly — often without formal employment or remittances — one good season is not enough to bounce back from years of compounding shocks. Yet, Lesotho’s government and partners have been proactive. Through the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC), national data continues to feed into regional systems, with technical support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and FEWS NET. These tools help identify areas of urgent need and allow for early response planning, but data alone is not food on the table.

During the annual SADC forum held virtually in July, and again at the 29th Steering Committee meeting, stakeholders from across the region agreed that food insecurity is evolving and intensifying, and countries must move beyond reactive aid towards sustainable food systems. In Lesotho, an agroeconomist who spoke with Seahlolo indicated that that meant rethinking dependency on South African food imports, expanding irrigation, and investing in nutrition-sensitive agriculture. The SADC forum also emphasised that even as countries like Lesotho exit global emergency watchlists, they remain in a state of fragile recovery, susceptible to falling back into crisis without sustained interventions. FAO, as a long-term partner to SADC and Lesotho, has pledged continued support, focusing on improving digital data collection, strengthening early warning systems, and aligning tools with international standards like the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). FAO representatives reiterated that no regional food system can be resilient unless every country, even small and mountainous Lesotho, is equipped to anticipate and respond to crises.

Climate Crisis Comes at a High Price: Lesotho Warned

By Ntsoaki Motaung

Lesotho faces a staggering financial burden of over US\$2.5 billion to deal with the harsh effects of climate change—a cost the country simply cannot afford to ignore. This warning was delivered by Teke Ramotubei, Director of the Lesotho Meteorological Services (LMS), at a national climate action event where leaders, scientists, and development partners gathered to reflect on the country’s climate readiness. Ramotubei stressed that failure to act decisively will only drive the cost of adaptation higher. He warned that Lesotho’s fragile environmental and economic systems cannot withstand further delay. Referring to alarming findings by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), he noted that the world has already warmed by about 1.1°C. For Lesotho, that has translated into increased drought, erratic rainfall, floods, soil degradation, and outbreaks of disease. “These are not future threats; they are already a part of the daily lives of Basotho, especially in rural communities where farming and food production depend heavily on predictable seasons.” The LMS Director expressed concern that if

global temperatures reach or exceed the 1.5°C threshold, the consequences would be devastating for countries like Lesotho. “The country will struggle to meet its water needs, rainfall patterns will continue to deteriorate, and agricultural output will be severely affected.” The directors noted that many communities already face recurring crop failures and food shortages. “Our beautiful kingdom is already experiencing the worst of climate change, and without action, it will only get worse,” Ramotubei said. He appealed to communities across the country to protect critical weather monitoring infrastructure, such as remote weather stations, which are often vandalised or neglected. These instruments, he explained, are essential for forecasting, tracking, and understanding weather patterns and the climate itself. “Without the data that we get from those stations, we do not have the weather. Without that data, we do not have the climate, and without that data, we do not have the climate change information needed to plan,” he said. He added that the cost of replacing these instruments is too high for a country already under financial pressure. The call for action resonated among other speak-

ers, including Minister of Environment and Forestry, Letsema Adontsi, who affirmed Lesotho’s policy commitment through its updated National Climate Change Policy 2027. The policy has set out measures to reduce carbon emissions, strengthen food and health systems, build water resilience, and enhance climate financing. Minister Adontsi pointed out that while Lesotho contributes very little to global emissions, it is among the countries suffering the worst consequences. “We are not the cause, but we are forced to carry the heaviest burden,” he said. UN Resident Coordinator, Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, echoed these concerns and reminded the audience that the climate crisis is already here. She emphasised that Lesotho has an opportunity to turn the crisis into a chance to lead on renewable energy, highlighting the country’s abundant sun, wind, and water resources. “Lesotho has what it takes to become energy self-sufficient and a leader in sustainable innovation,” she said, urging stronger coordination between government, citizens, and international partners. In the same meeting, Mofihli Phaqaane, Chairperson of the National Climate Change Committee, highlighted the need to include everyone in the climate response—especially women, girls, people with disabilities, and rural communities. These groups often experience the harshest effects of climate change but are seldom part of the planning or solution-making. Phaqaane emphasised that education, partnerships, and localised action are essential if Lesotho is to truly build climate resilience. The impact of climate change on agriculture was also brought to the fore by Khotso Leaphean of the Lesotho National Farmers Union (LENAFU), who revealed that many farmers are abandoning their fields due to extreme weather. Erratic rains, prolonged droughts, and unpredictable seasons have made farming increasingly difficult, he said, raising serious concerns about national food security and nutrition. “We are seeing fewer young people entering agriculture. Some of our most experienced farmers are quitting. If we do not act soon, we will not be able to feed ourselves,” he warned. This urgent conversation on climate resilience

comes just one month after Lesotho was removed from the list of global food insecurity hotspots—a temporary relief that many experts agree is fragile. A recent announcement from the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) programme revealed that more than 46 million people across seven Southern African countries, including Lesotho, are projected to face acute food insecurity in the 2025/26 consumption year. The regional report attributes worsening conditions to erratic weather, pest outbreaks, and economic shocks—many of which are climate-induced. During the Annual Dissemination Forum of the SADC RVAA Programme held earlier in July, participants emphasised the need for harmonised vulnerability assessments to inform policy, investment, and emergency response. Despite data collection and funding challenges, seven SADC countries—including Lesotho—completed their national food security assessments, contributing to the regional report. The forum, supported by partners such as the FAO, WFP, and FEWS NET, highlighted the compounded effect of the 2024 El Niño-induced drought, persistent conflict in some parts of the region, and high food prices. While the RVAA report acknowledges modest recovery in cereal production and grazing conditions in countries like Lesotho, Eswatini, and Tanzania due to favourable rainfall in the 2024/25 season, the broader picture remains troubling. FAO has pledged continued support to SADC Member States, including Lesotho, through technical assistance, digital data systems, and peer learning to improve the quality and use of food security assessments. As one of the countries that just emerged from a critical food insecurity designation, Lesotho must now seize this moment to invest in resilience. The removal from the hotspot list should be seen as a wake-up call—not a time to relax. Unless urgent action is taken, Lesotho risks slipping back into a crisis that could have been prevented. The climate emergency is not waiting. With proper planning, community involvement, and the right partnerships, Lesotho still has a chance to protect its people, its land, and its future. But as Ramotubei warned, “The costs of acting are high. The costs of doing nothing are far higher.”