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# M50 million Drought Insurance Pay-out from African Risk Capacity



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# M50 million Drought Insurance Pay-out from African Risk Capacity



Honourable Thabo Mofosi passing sincere appreciation to African Risk Capacity on behalf of government of Lesotho

By Topollo Tlali

The African Risk Capacity (ARC), a specialised agency of the African Union, has released a pay-out of US\$2.7 million (M50 million) to the government of Lesotho to support households hardest hit by the prolonged dry spell of the 2024/25.

The funds according the DMA will be directed toward food aid and cash transfers for families who lost crops and livestock during the season.

Speaking at the official handover ceremony, Elias Reatile, Chief Executive Officer of the Disaster Management Authority (DMA), said the pay-out comes at a crucial time when many Basotho are struggling with food shortages.

“This payout is not just money but a solution to some of the challenges caused by drought, which has long threatened food security in Lesotho. Our mandate at DMA is to ensure that the most vulnerable communities are protected, and today is a step in that direction,” Reatile said.

The ceremony was attended by senior government officials, ARC representatives, development partners, and humanitarian agencies.

On behalf of ARC’s national partners, Elliot Vhurumuku, Country Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), highlighted the importance of collaboration in building climate resilience.

“Our partnership with ARC allows countries like Lesotho to act quickly when disaster strikes. This model of climate risk insurance enables fast responses, helping families before situations worsen,” he said.

Vhurumuku noted that WFP has successfully used ARC resources in countries such as Zimbabwe to reach vulnerable households with immediate support. He added that such partnerships are vital in strengthening disaster management strategies across the continent.

Dr. Anthony Mothae Maruping, Chairperson of the ARC Board, commended Lesotho for showing strong commitment since signing a memorandum of understanding with the agency in 2019.

“Lesotho has been consistent in addressing climate-related risks. This pay-out is proof of that commitment and of ARC’s role as an innovative financial tool for managing disasters,” Dr. Maruping said.

Delivering remarks on behalf of government, Thabo Mofosi, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, expressed gratitude to ARC and its partners.

“ARC is not just a response mechanism. It is a financial lifeline that allows governments to withstand the shocks of climate change,” Mofosi said.

He stressed that disasters such as drought, frost, and floods have long undermined Lesotho’s food security and strained the national economy.

“Disasters are not only undermining food security at rural livelihoods but are also a disadvantage to the national budget and economy. Disasters destruct lives, reverse developments, and threaten our aims of visioning a prosperous nation, but, with tools like ARC, we can act quickly, reduce costs, and safeguard the dignity of affected communities.”

The minister revealed that in March 2025, the

cabinet approved a Disaster Risk Financing Strategy, spearheaded by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, noting, the strategy provides a framework for ensuring predictable, efficient and timely responses to disasters.

“While we cannot prevent natural disasters, we can reduce their impacts by being prepared. The current pay-out will go directly to affected households, helping them secure food and rebuild livelihoods,” Mofosi explained.

He urged development partners to continue supporting initiatives that strengthen resilience and improve the lives of ordinary Basotho.

“Today’s celebration is a demonstration of solidarity and innovation in climate financing as climate involves being with new complex challenges. I urge our development partners to continue supporting initiatives that change people’s life and reaffirms a shared vision of resilience and sustainability. The government of Lesotho wishes to express its appreciation to African Risk Capacity, African Development Bank (AFDB) and KfW for their unshakeable support and partnership in advancing climate resilience and disaster risk financing efforts in the country,” he said.

Limpho Tau, Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office, reminded the audience that farmers remain at the heart of the country’s food systems.

“Whatever you ate today, thank a farmer,” Tau said, emphasising the vital role farmers’ play despite being the most vulnerable to climate shocks.

He described the pay-out as “historic” for the farming community, noting that Lesotho first signed its agreement with ARC in 2019 and confirmed participation in July 2024.

“Today we are seeing the benefits of that decision, as support reaches those who need it the most,” Tau added.

The ceremony concluded with a symbolic cheque handover led by Dr. Maruping, ARC representatives, and government officials.

Speaking to Seahlolo in an exclusive interview after the event, DMA Chief Executive Elias Reatile said the details of how the pay-out will be distributed are still being finalised.

“We are yet to sit down and agree on the allocation process. Once the plans are complete, we will call a press conference to announce the way forward,” he said.

ARC is currently helping several African countries respond to extreme weather events. In addition to Lesotho, nations such as Zimbabwe, Malawi, Madagascar, The Gambia, and Mali have all received drought insurance payouts.





# Lesotho Hosts First National Agricultural Trade Fair



Overview of the first national agricultural trade fair

By Topollo Tlali

Lesotho celebrated a historic milestone in agriculture this month, hosting its very first national agricultural trade fair, themed “Strengthening market systems and value chain linkages for inclusive agriculture.”

The event, a collaborative effort between the government, Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Bank brought together farmers, agro-dealers, suppliers, financial institutions, development partners, and government officials in a vibrant showcase of the country’s agricultural potential.

Thabo Sekhonyana, acting as program director for the day, set a warm and inviting tone, encouraging participants to engage openly, share ideas, and forge new connections.

Thabo Moleko, the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, highlighted the importance of the fair, describing it as a platform for the country to demonstrate the strength and resilience of its agricultural sector while addressing pressing challenges.

“This trade fair is vital for advancing food secu-

ity and nutrition across Lesotho,” he said.

He outlined key objectives, including improving smallholder farmers’ access to inputs, finance, and markets, strengthening linkages between local agro-dealers and regional suppliers, and enhancing financial literacy among agro-dealers.

Moleko emphasised that the fair aimed to create an environment where deals could be struck, partnerships built, and market access expanded.



reflected the country’s collective commitment to agricultural growth.

Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, reiterated the government’s dedication to supporting farmers nationwide with better access to quality seeds, farming supplies, and markets. “Farming requires all Basotho to work together to ensure high production,” he said, urging collaboration between the private sector and farmers for the benefit of the entire nation.

The event concluded with financial sessions where banks showcased services tailored to the agricultural sector. Farmers were introduced to various financial products, loans, and insurance options designed to meet their unique needs. Banks also shared guidance on managing finances effectively, demonstrating their readiness to continue supporting farmers in achieving long-term sustainability.

As the fair drew to a close, participants spoke of the positive impact the event had on their businesses. Farmers reported gaining new customers, sharing lessons with peers, and forming valuable connections with other producers. Manufacturers expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Agriculture, encouraging more such initiatives to strengthen market access and overcome supply challenges.





# Lesotho Post Bank Strengthens Ties with Farmers at 2025 Agricultural Trade Fair



**Lebona Leokaake, post bank representative promoting agricultural loans**

By Topollo Tlali

At this year's Agricultural Trade Fair 2025, one of the busiest stalls was that of Lesotho Post Bank, where farmers crowded to learn more about the bank's growing range of agricultural finance products.

The fair, which brought together farmers, government agencies, agribusinesses, and financial institutions, offered Lesotho Post Bank a platform to explain how it is tailoring innovative loan solutions to meet the unique challenges faced by Basotho farmers.

Representing the bank at the event, Lebohlang Leokaake, an Agriculture Relationship Manager, said the fair created the perfect setting to connect directly with farmers.

"Being in an agricultural trade fair where many stakeholders and farmers are gathered enables us to spread the information, and we hope it reaches as many farmers as possible," he noted.

According to Leokaake, the bank's primary mission is to empower both small- and large-scale farmers to run sustainable and profitable businesses. Through a variety of loan schemes, Lesotho Post Bank supports farming activities across the value chain, from seeds to tractors, from livestock fattening to wool and mohair trading.

"We provide loans that are not only about giving money but about strengthening the farmer's entire production system. Our support ensures that farmers have access to inputs, proper animal feed, equipment, and infrastructure that allow them to compete and grow," Leokaake explained.

### Supporting Crop Production

For crop farmers, the bank loans are structured to cover essential inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and irrigation systems. Leokaake explained that this loan package is designed with commercial crop farming in mind, targeting crops such as carrots, peppers, tomatoes, green beans, cabbage, and cereals. Farmers who visited the bank's stall expressed excitement at the clarity of information provided, with many admitting they had not been aware of how accessible these loans were before the fair.

### Backing Livestock Enterprises

Beyond crops, Lesotho Post Bank extends its financing to livestock farmers who rear pigs, sheep, goats, and cattle.

"Working with livestock farmers is not just about helping them buy animals. We also make sure they can feed and care for them properly, because profitability only comes when animals are well-managed and healthy," Leokaake said, explaining that the loans cover the costs of proper feed, supplements, and veterinary care, while also supporting animal fattening for meat production,



## Lesotho Post Bank's Tailored Agriculture Loans for Boost Farmers

By Seabata Mahao

Lesotho Post Bank has announced a wide-ranging package of agriculture loans designed to meet the financial needs of both smallholder and commercial farmers, to strengthen food security and support agribusiness growth across the country.

Speaking to Seahlolo, Lebona Leokaake, Relationship Manager for Agriculture at PostBank, explained that the initiative is about more than just credit.

"We aim to help farmers access every product in any amount they need, provided they can afford to repay the loans. Affordability is assessed through the farmer's income sources and how active their operations are," Leokaake explained.

The bank's Agricultural Division, which operates alongside its Business Banking unit, focuses exclusively on agricultural enterprises and offers tailored solutions that range from animal production, crop farming, poultry, wool and mohair trading and livestock fattening.

One of the standout offerings is Tractor Finance, which falls under a government subsidy scheme covering up to 30% of the purchase cost.

Leokaake emphasised that the bank supports all types of farmers, whether they are just starting out or already established with secondary income streams.

"Even if someone is producing goods like sand or engaging in related activities, we are willing to assess and assist based on their business," he said.

To ensure accountability and flexibility, farmers are required to open dedicated bank accounts for their agricultural ventures.

This, he said, allows the Bank to design repayment schedules that align with farming seasons.

"For example, livestock farmers who sell twice a

year can have their loan repayments timed accordingly.

"Risk management also plays a critical role in the loan process. Farmers must have their assets insured, while the bank conducts thorough checks on repayment histories. If there are defaults, we need to verify the cause, whether it lies with the individual or the company they work with," Leokaake explained.

In addition to its loan services, Lesotho Post Bank is conducting a nationwide outreach through radio programmes, newspapers, and community forums, making sure that farmers across Lesotho are informed of the opportunities available, the end goal, ensuring access to funding for improve agriculture and sustainable food security.

The loan portfolio covers a broad spectrum of needs:

- Tractor Finance, offered under an MoU with the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance.
- Animal Fattening Loans, for farmers rearing pigs, cattle, and goats.
- Crop Production Loans, targeting smallholder and large-scale vegetable growers.
- Poultry Loans, supporting both layers and broiler production.
- Wool and Mohair Loans, crafted for commercial producers in the



fibre industry.

- Short and Long-Term Agribusiness Loans, for fixed asset acquisition and production expansion.

"Through these products, the bank hopes to create a stronger, more sustainable agricultural sector. We are not just giving loans; we are investing in the people who feed our nation."

Farmers interested in these services are encouraged to visit their nearest Lesotho Post Bank branch or attend community forums where representatives regularly provide guidance.

a key avenue for farmers hoping to reach both domestic and export markets.

### Boosting Wool and Mohair Production

The wool and mohair industry remains a cornerstone of Lesotho's economy, and the bank has carved out a financial product specifically for traders and farmers in this sector. Through dedicated loans, the bank helps farmers access markets, manage cash flow, and maximise profits. "By financially empowering wool and mohair farmers, we are contributing directly to one of Lesotho's strongest export industries," Leokaake noted.

### Tractor and Equipment Loans

One of the flagship services showcased at the fair was the bank's tractor finance loan, which allows large-scale farmers to acquire tractors and accessories with flexible repayment options.

"Tractors and modern equipment are critical for efficiency, yield, and food security. By helping farmers access these, we ensure they remain competitive and can meet growing market demands," Leokaake said.

In addition, the bank offers financing for a wide range of equipment, both short- and long-term, including irrigation tools, poultry houses, chicken coops, and milking machines. Poultry farmers, in particular, benefit from loans designed to boost egg and meat production, ensuring they can scale up to meet demand with the right housing and technology.

Leokaake also clarified the requirements for accessing loans, noting that farmers must have been active users of Lesotho Post Bank services for at least three months.

Individuals are expected to provide detailed written requests outlining the loan amount needed, along with supporting documents such as identity papers, proof of land use (lease or deed of sale), business records, and letters of support from local chiefs. For cooperatives or farmer groups, registration documents, constitutions, and IDs of all members are required.

While the process is thorough, Leokaake stressed that the bank's aim is not to exclude farmers but to ensure accountability and sustainability. "We want to empower farmers with affordable and accessible services. Our role is to structure financial planning that strengthens agriculture and increases food security in Lesotho," he said.

According to Leokaake, the fair reaffirmed the bank's belief that direct engagement with farmers is essential for building trust and spreading awareness about available services.

"Farmers often struggle to access loans because they lack information. By being here, listening to their challenges, and explaining how our products work, we are helping to bridge that gap," he concluded.



WHO ARE WE

# AGRICULTURAL LOCAL PURCHASE INITIATIVE

1.INTRODUCTION

According to the NSDP II, agriculture remains an important sector for food security and employment creation in Lesotho. Agriculture is regarded as the backbone of the rural economy` where 65.8 percent of Lesotho population lives. However, agricultural sector contribution to GDP has declined over time, from a high of 15.2 percent in 1984 to a low of 5.2 percent in 2014, with a slight increase of 6.9 percent in 2016. According to the Bureau of Statistics Report on 2013, it is estimated that the agriculture sector employs about 8.5 percent of the urban population and 54.3 percent of the rural population. Most farmers dominating this sector practice subsistence farming and a few farmers are producing at commercial scale.

While opportunities in the agriculture sector remain largely untapped and the sector has great potential to create jobs, especially for the majority of the population living in rural areas, this potential is being undermined by several challenges that the sector faces. These challenges include soil erosion and land degradation which reduce the country’s capability to produce adequate food for its population; fragmented and underdeveloped value chains; inadequate capacities in harvesting and post-harvest technologies and infrastructure; limited access to agriculture finance and insurance.

Moreover, lack of specialized agricultural skills and limited training for farmers; inadequate research and extension services; and inadequate co-ordination and market information system as well as access to the available markets remain this sector’s greatest challenges.

Despite these challenges, the Government of Lesotho requires that procurement preference be given to smallholder farmers` produce over imports during the procurement of food commodities for various programs and entities. The national school feeding programme being one of the programs buying large quantities of food through the different modalities including the catering model and National Management Agents and World Food Programme. The local purchase gives farmers an opportunity to benefit from the local markets and this catalyzes value chain development and results in increased production and household incomes.

As already highlighted above, the Lesotho Country context is such that farmers still need support to form and establish associations/organizations for group marketing. In addition, the same farmers have low capacities and need capacity strengthening in various technical fields to transform them into business-oriented entities that can compete in the commodity markets. This calls for concerted efforts by all stakeholders involved in the commercial agriculture sector to play the various roles in the development of farmers’ associations capacity, which includes training, support in marketing infrastructure and trade equipment.

In 2014, Government of Lesotho endorsed the National School Feeding Policy. The policy was formulated by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) with the support from WFP. Under the home-grown component of the policy, the aim is to empower smallholder farmers increase their production levels and income, and also diversify their operations into food processing. Implementation of the policy is on-going under the MOET. Having realized the limited scope of the SFP marketing channel, role players decided to broaden the scope to ac-



commodate other potential markets. The move resulted to the introduction of the Local Purchase Initiative.

In an effort to realize the aspirations of the local purchase initiative, WFP came on board in 2016 to support

the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to convene a special committee/task force with members from the different public and

to the market and for procurement of agricultural commodities in Lesotho.

The DoM is mandated to promote agricultural commercialization, value-adding, absorption of local prod-

ucts into the local and international markets and the development of efficient marketing systems, the ultimate goal being attain-



non-public stakeholders. The aim and purpose of this special committee/task force was to bring the stakeholders together and coordinate the market linkage/access activities for the smallholder farmers. The convener of the local purchase task force (LPTF) is the Department of Marketing (DoM) since market access/local purchase activities are a direct mandate of the department.

The DoM has recently rolled-out and facilitated the establishment and de-



centralization of the LPTF in the ten districts. In the long-run, the intention is to develop the agricultural local

ment of national goals of employment creation and poverty alleviation. It is the responsibility of the DoM to provide a marketing policy environment that promotes competitiveness, private sector participation, market oriented production, diversified output in accordance with comparative/competitive advantage.

2.OBJECTIVE

The objective of the LPTF is to co-ordinate the activities of stake-

holders buying food locally and create linkages between the farmers and the buyers. In addition, the LPTF is established to harmonize, strengthen, build upon and improve initiatives, programs and policies, through a coherent and multi-disciplinary approach for integrating farmers into the commodity value chains.

3.KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES & DUTIES

Coordinate value chain actors by linking up areas of syn-

- ergy to enhance service delivery through complementarity
- Organize and support market linkages forums to bring farmers and buyers together for possible business engagements
- Provide overall oversight on the strategic direction, implementation and reporting of all partnership activities in the local purchase initiative and plan of operations
- Promote value chains development and disseminate all relevant information to the stakeholders
- Ensure the engagement of private sector to take advantage of the investment opportunities in commercial agriculture
- Lobby the government and interested parties to address challenges that hinder smallholder farmers access to formal markets, e.g. access to inputs, access to storage facilities, access to trade equipment, etc.
- Promote contractual arrangements between the farming and trading communities in order to realize impactful results
- Facilitate creation of appropriate coordinating subcommittees at the district level
  - Ensure that all decisions and agreed interventions are implemented and adhered to

interventions are implemented and adhered to

- Monitor implementation progress and institute accountability measures to ensure that all relevant partners deliver on their defined roles and responsibilities

Coordinate and harmonize actions between the institutions in charge of market access and connecting of farmers to the market

- Engage periodically with key stakeholders to address implementation constraints and bottlenecks that may arise
- Serve as a forum to discuss, initiate, follow-up and activate applicable recommendations in accordance with the national law

4. COMPOSITION OF THE LPTF

Under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition (MAFSN), particularly the Department of Marketing, the LPTF is made up of the ministries and institutions depicted below:

- MAFSN (Departments of Marketing, Crops Services, Live-stock Services, Field Services, Planning & Policy Analysis, SAMP II)
- Ministry of Local Government, Home Affairs and Police
- Ministry of Trade, Industry and Business Development
- Ministry of Education and Training (School Feeding Program)
- Ministry of Defense and National Security (Procurement Unit)
- Cabinet (Food & Management Unit, DMA)
- World Food Program
- Food & Agriculture Organization
- Rural Self-Help Development Association
- Catholic Relief Services
- World Vision
- Lesotho National Farmers Union and Farmers` Union (LENAFU)



# Wine Industry Steadily Growing in Lesotho

By Molula Mofosi

With fewer than twenty wine brands currently produced or packaged in Lesotho, the country’s wine industry is still young. Yet, step by step, it is steadily growing.

Each launch adds another layer to this emerging sector and the latest, Mphatlalatsane Wine, was unveiled on 25 May 2025 by Mokhabebe (Pty) Ltd, adding an elegant new brand that seeks to reflect the culture and identity of Basotho.

“Mphatlalatsane,” translated as the Morning Star, was created in celebration of 200 years of the Basotho nation.

Founder Mpho Letima explained that the name was inspired by mokhabebe, a wildflower native to Lesotho.

The brand debuted with four ranges: Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot.

Letima and her team describe Mphatlalatsane not only as wine but as



Sani wines



A range of newly launched Mokhabebe wine brand

an experience, a cultural and geographical representation of Lesotho.

“Beyond Mphatlalatsane as a wine, it re-establishes how we embrace our food systems in celebratory behaviours and in daily life,” she said.

She added, “A Mosotho bride, for example, aligns herself with the morning star when preparing breakfast, and as people, we celebrate good news with alcohol.”

Currently, Mokhabebe imports wine into Lesotho for packaging.

Brand manager Sebatatso Fokothi explains that this is a strategic move: “With this first line of production, we deliberately brought them from South Africa to penetrate the international market with a high standard of production and set the bar for ourselves.”

She indicated that the company’s long-term goal is to establish vineyards in Lesotho and develop a truly local taste.

“Cape Town is not different from Lesotho, so why are we not growing vineyards here?” Fokothi asks.

She revealed that through its schools investment programme, Mokhabebe is also promoting grape cultivation in schools and communities.

“One school has already requested grape trees and the company intends to purchase grapes from them in the future. Our programme has an educational awareness component, with students and community members learning together about farming,” she added.

The brand’s philosophy is simple: for every plant we grow, what role does it play in our food system?

Early Players in the Industry

Although the industry is still in its infancy, Lesotho already has more than ten wine brands. Among the earliest was Mashimi Wines, founded in 2015 by Sefatsa Khabo. His interest in winemaking began during a visit to the Eastern Cape in 2013 while he was still in college. “After being exposed to wine making, I knew I didn’t want to be hired elsewhere. I believed in the industry. Ten years in, I can confidently say the market in an open field for farmers, biochemists even entrepreneurs to participate in

this industry,” he said.

Khabo invested about M30, 000 to start Mashimi Wines, including a vineyard. But the vineyard was destroyed due to unprotected fields, with animals and herders damaging the seedlings.

“We ran a loss in pursuit of a vineyard,” he recalls.

For years, Mashimi Wines has imported grapes and brewing them for its production. The company also introduced apple wine, which has been well received in the market since its early days.

“Mashimi currently produces Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz, and Chenin Blanc.”

Khabo emphasises the need to establish a complete value chain for wine in Lesotho is the country ought to remotely make it. He is now reviving his vineyard project, this time with protection measures, and has partnered with a farmer in Mohale’s Hoek to grow grapes on his behalf.

Beyond his own brand, Mashimi also supplies other producers, including Kasi Farm House Wine, established in 2018 by brothers Leoma and Tsitso Monaheng.

Kasi Farm, a Pandemic Pivot

The Monaheng brothers started producing wine under their farming company in 2018, but it was during the COVID-19 pandemic that their sales surged. “That’s when we actually had the highest purchases,” they explained.

Currently producing around 3,000 bottles a year, the brothers see themselves as part of the middle of the supply chain, but remain confident about their identity.

“Our aim is to sell the culture of Lesotho through winery. We are a Lesotho that boasts local production of our wine.

They highlight the role of distributors in Maseru and the importance of wine festivals, which provide crucial exposure and sales opportunities.

Sani Wines: Linking Agriculture and Tourism

A more established vineyard that flourishes in agri-tourism belongs to Sani Wines, based in Ha Ntsi, Maseru. The vineyard traces its roots back to the Social

Forestry Project launched in 2004 by the government in partnership with GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit). Officially founded in 2008, Sani Wines transitioned from orchard farming to vineyard production in 2017.

Founder Kananelo Thamae, who inherited knowledge from his father, a beneficiary of the Social Forestry Project, specialises in pomiculture, the cultivation of fruit trees and plants. This includes skills such as grafting, pruning, pest control, and irrigation, all aimed at improving fruit yield and quality.

“Our market is mostly tourism, and that has made vineyards like ours important players in agri-tourism,” Thamae said.

However, he noted that government funding models still do not support such ventures. Khabo of Mashimi Wines agrees, citing the cancellation of his contract under the Small Agricultural Development Project II (SADPII) after two years.

According to Chabana Mokuku of CAFI (Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion), the Horticulture Incubation and Training Centre currently supports apple farmers and one vineyard farmer, Sani Wines.

“All horticulture farmers are welcome, and vineyard farmers qualify for the programme,” Mokuku noted.

Producing on about one hectare, Sani Wines bottles around 7,000 wines per season, mainly Chenin Blanc (since 2007) and Pinotage (since 2014). But climate change is a growing challenge.

“In 2023, due to heavy rainfall and hailstorms during ripening season, we did not produce anything. We have been raising funds for shade nets to protect the vines from hail, but protecting them from rain still requires new strategies, including chemical use for disease management,” Thamae explained.

Despite setbacks, he remains committed to climate-smart solutions and mentoring new fruit farmers.

Challenges and Opportunities

Khabo believes vineyards can thrive in Lesotho.

“This is an untapped market. With modern agriculture and climate-smart practices, grape production can succeed here,” he said.

He stresses the importance of marketing and entrepreneurship, noting that in his ten years in the industry, consumer reception has been strong.

Thamae added that demand for local production remains high.

“Basotho buy and love our produce. Wine festivals have also opened up the market. We are even producing for clients in the Netherlands and Johannesburg,” he shared.

Lesotho’s high altitude, he notes, enhances the natural acidity of grapes, a trait that helps wine age well.

Thamae said their line of business are to a certain extend community-driven packaging efforts with a vision to attain fully developed vineyards and a growing value chain.

“Lesotho’s wine industry is gaining ground and it is an industry rooted in culture, resilience, and the vision of farmers and entrepreneurs determined to see it succeed. If the momentum continues, Lesotho’s wines may soon claim their place on the global stage, proudly homegrown and distinctly Basotho, carrying with them the culture,” he said.

## New Dawn for Aquaculture and Fisheries in Lesotho

By Thoboloko Ntšonyane

The aquaculture and fisheries sector is beginning to claim its place on the national development agenda.

This renewed energy was evident at a recent three-day stakeholders’ workshop in Maseru, where the long-awaited policy and strategy for fisheries and aquaculture was validated.

The gathering drew a wide range of participants, from government ministries to private investors, farmers, academics, civil society groups, and development partners.

Among those present were representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, as well as Natural Resources, Environment and Forestry, Tourism, Health, Trade, Defence, and the Prime Minister’s Office.

Development partners such as the FAO, Lesotho Highlands Development Authority, Lesotho National Development Corporation, and World Vision also weighed in, underscoring the cross-cutting importance of this sector.

For years, Lesotho has lagged in fisheries, relying heavily on imported fish while underutilising its abundant rivers, dams, and wetlands. But the tide is turning. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), nearly all of Lesotho’s fish production already comes from aquaculture. With proper policy direction, the sector could expand rapidly, offering a steady supply of nutritious food, new jobs, and much-needed export revenue.

Mankeane Mofoti, who heads the Fisheries and Aquaculture Section in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, said the policy’s validation is a turning point.

“After the meeting, we are expected to implement the different key priority areas so that aquaculture can thrive and improve in the country,” she explained.

The new framework identifies seven critical areas: governance and coordination, capacity development, sustainable aquaculture, market and trade, social responsibility with gender equality, research and information dissemination, and financing and investment. Each of these, if properly addressed, could transform the sector from a promising niche into a mainstream contributor to the economy.

Already, some farmers are showing what is possible. Lesotho now boasts a handful of trout producers and small-scale farmers rearing rainbow fish, while others are experimenting with catfish.

“We have been doing intensive capacity building in all districts, helping farmers understand production and aquatics,” Mofoti said.

While the Ministry does not offer financial assistance, Mofoti said it provides technical support such as site selection, pond construction, and sourcing fingerlings.

Senior lecturer, ‘Mabokang Motsienyane, from the Lesotho Agricultural College welcomed the policy, noting that it would attract investors and give structure to a sector that has long been fragmented.

“What I also liked is that there is going to be a legal institution and a capacity-building programme, supported by a curriculum,” she said.

She added that research and education would be key, insisting that awareness should start early.

“A Mosotho child, from the moment they are born, should be empowered and taught how to earn a living by cultivating fish.”

For her, the challenge lies not just in production but also in public awareness.

“Many Basotho only know about tinned fish and don’t realise that our rivers and dams can provide fresh fish, however, pollution remains a danger, so education is vital. These documents must not gather dust; they need to be shared widely,” she stressed.

Among the younger generation of farmers, the new policy has sparked hope. Twenty-five-year-old pisciculturist Khaolo Ramarumo of Thaba-Tseka, owner of Ramarumo Fish Farm, described contributing to the policy as a milestone.

His farm produces 15 to 20 tonnes of fish annually, supplying mostly hospitality businesses, but demand far outstrips supply.

“This is not even enough. People eat every day,” he said with a smile.

Ramarumo and others in the sector are now thinking bigger. With the policy in place, they aim to increase national production from the current 2,100 tonnes to 8,000 tonnes by 2035.

Mohale Dam, along with other reservoirs, has been identified as a potential hub for scaling up production.

“Our biggest target is to farm in the Mohale Dam. If we can achieve that, the industry will change completely,” Ramarumo said.

The broader benefits are clear. According to the Pan-African Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy Framework, fisheries contribute not only to food and nutrition security but also to employment, exports, biodiversity, and climate resilience.





# MERAKA

## LIVESTOCK COVER

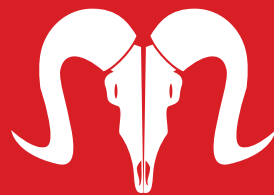
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## Bosholu



## Likolua



## Mafu



## Likotsi



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## ALLIANCE

**Always there for Basotho**



# Urban Gardening Blossoms into Culinary Success at Ha Foso

By Topollo Tlali

**K**hotso Morakabi, known affectionately as Tsuna, has transformed garden ingredients into culinary delights that are currently seasoning kitchens across the village of Ha-Foso, in Berea.

His journey began in 2019 with turning a bare land into an urban garden using recycled containers, empty bottles, and whatever scraps of soil he could find. He built a flourishing garden of chillies, tomatoes, onions and herbs.

From these modest beginnings, Tsuna's urban garden has evolved into a small-scale sauce production enterprise.

The seed of Tsuna's culinary adventure, he recounts, was planted during the COVID-19 lockdown.

"Jobs were on hold, movements restricted, and I found myself stuck in a rented house. The only things I saw were limited soil, unused bowls, and empty bottles. That's when my idea began taking shape," he says, recounting his first plantation of chillies, and to his surprise, the harvest exceeded all expectations.

Faced with a bountiful yield, he turned to canning and preserving his produce.

"While I was canning, an idea came: why not make a sauce?" he says.

At first, Tsuna had no formal skills in canning or sauce-making, but, desperate to stay busy during the pandemic, as an unskilled man, his aim was just to make a few coins during difficult times.

He began selling chilli sauces on Facebook, but delivery was challenging due to lockdown restrictions; however, he found ways to reach his customers.

"Early sales were promising, yet some customers complained that bottles burst before opening."

Rather than being discouraged, Tsuna used the feedback as a learning opportunity.

"I sat down and researched proper canning and bottling techniques online," he explains, saying he watched tutorials, studied the work of chefs and culinary experts, and gradually improved his skills.

With persistence and practice, the quality of his sauces improved, and customer satisfaction grew. The chilli sauce became his first signature product, putting him on the map in his community and attracting a growing customer base.

Recognising that not everyone enjoys spicy flavours, Tsuna expanded his repertoire.

He developed a mild, tomato-based sauce called "majapere," which quickly became a breakfast staple in homes across the village.

"Each bottle tells a story beyond flavour."

He said to sustain and meet the needs of his customers, he looked into partnerships.

"I did not have enough tomatoes, so I partnered with other local farmers who produced in large quantities and with their tomatoes and my herbs, I was able to create the best sauce, and it quickly gained popularity."

This collaboration highlights Tsuna's inclusive approach, ensuring that his products meet diverse tastes and support local producers.

Tsuna's love for cooking naturally drove him to expand his garden.

"When I cook with ingredients I have grown, every dish tastes extraordinary. I am not just cooking; I am exploring and testing new things all the time," he shares.

He describes his kitchen as an extension of his garden, a laboratory where flavours are discovered and perfected.

Beyond chilli and tomato blends, he ventured into onion sauces. Initially unsure whether customers



would enjoy them, he shared samples with neighbours, who responded positively.

Encouraged, he produced more for sale.

"Each recipe is rooted in the belief that sauces do more than spice food, they unite people and honour tradition," he notes.

Over the seasons, Tsuna transformed what others might have seen as wasted or limited space into a source of abundance. His small urban plot became a testament to resilience and ingenuity.

"I use everything in front of my eyes to make a living," he says.

In between his main crops, he grows basil, rosemary, thyme, and mint, each adding new dimensions to his sauces.

"Basil is my go-to for fresh, new notes. Rose-

mary adds a woody depth, reminding me of home-cooked meals from my childhood. Mint is my surprise ingredient, making dishes brighter and more exciting," he explains.

Every step, from seedling to bottling, is undertaken with care and a commitment to quality.

"There is nothing more beautiful than seeing my small garden produce abundantly and ending up in the kitchen making sauces for Basotho," he says, yet the path has not been without challenges.

Pricing his sauces was initially difficult. As an unskilled producer relying on natural ingredients and recycled containers, he worried customers would not pay. He had to balance profit with affordability, mindful of his community's financial constraints, especially during the pandemic.



Tsuna 's different sauces



khotso Morakabi sauce producer at lema Ha Foso

"The fact that I only used natural ingredients in a recycled, man-made garden was a challenge," Tsuna admits. Still, this very authentic, organic, locally sourced, and carefully prepared product helped attract customers who appreciated the effort and care behind each product.

The pandemic added another layer of difficulty, as many people struggled to put food on the table, requiring Tsuna to be flexible and considerate with pricing and production.

Over the past six years, Tsuna has grown as both a gardener and a businessperson. He has diversified his marketing, using social media platforms to reach more customers. Word-of-mouth referrals have expanded his clientele, and he has learned to adjust prices as his experience and costs have evolved.

Yet some challenges remain. He lacks access to proper storage and kitchen equipment, limiting his production capacity.

Maintaining sanitation and hygiene standards has been another hurdle, though he continues to find innovative solutions.

Despite these obstacles, Tsuna has carved out a unique space in the local food industry. His commitment to organic products and natural ingredients resonates with customers.

"Whether it's my flavourful onion sauce or my chilli blends, I know I am offering products that are not only delicious but also healthy and environmentally conscious," he says.

From 2019 to 2025, Tsuna has learned invaluable lessons in adaptability, determination, and the importance of quality.

"Flexibility allowed me to survive strict lockdowns, while perseverance and creativity have set me apart from my competitors. I hope with the work I have already put in, I will receive financial support or sponsorship to expand both my garden and sauce production, but even without it, I believe I have demonstrated that passion and dedication can transform humble beginnings into lasting impact," he says.

Tsuna's journey is a lesson in resourcefulness and imagination. He encourages others to see potential in unlikely places, such as a balcony, a single pot, or a small patch of soil.

"Use what you have, and it will lead to more to achieve," he advises.

He hopes to teach others to "find the garden in what they already have," inspiring everyone from schoolchildren to elders to start small and dream big.

For soil fertility, Tsuna enriches his garden with natural fertilisers such as crushed eggshells, banana peels, and nutrient-rich rabbit manure, collected from local sources.

"Using what nature gives keeps my small farm healthy and my conscience clear," he says, stressing that the organic cycle he has created nourishes his crops and respects the environment, reflecting his broader philosophy of sustainability and care.



# SADP II Turns Orchard Struggles into a Thriving Mixed Farming Enterprise



By Seahlolo Reporter

**M**achache Farm is a growing agricultural enterprise that started on the back of retrenchment. Owned by Makhaola Sibolane, the farm is an epitome of mixed farm practice excellence.

With the boost of the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II) grant, Machache Farm is a place of thriving orchards, vegetable plots and community employment for people of Ha-Ntho village in the Quthing district.

In the heart of Ha-Ntho village in Quthing district lies Machabeng Farm, a growing agricultural enterprise run by Makhaola Keneth Sibolane. Today, it is a place of thriving orchards, vegetable plots, and community employment. But behind this success story is a journey of retrenchment, resilience, and the transformative power of the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP).

Sibolane explains that the farm is more than just land, but a second chance at life after losing everything when retrenched.

“I was among thousands of Basotho men who were retrenched from the South African mines back in 2001. As sudden as it happened, it meant not only loss of income, but my entire livelihood,” he narrates.

The mines had been his livelihood for as long as he was an adult, but when the axe fell, he was forced to return home to Quthing with uncertain prospects.

He recalls taking into heart side programs by the mine, including the Social Plan, which charted his future into the agriculture powerhouse of Quthing mixed farming.

“The mining company I worked for had a training called the Social Plan, compulsory for all employees. They described it as a project that was preparing us for life after pension or even retrenchment when we return home,” he says, noting that when faced with the end of the road, the program suddenly made sense.

“While the project had different programs, for me, agriculture seemed the most practical choice,” he recounts.

Filled with wretchedness, yet determined to try his hand at farming, Sibolane recalls taking a stop to buy 24 peach trees on his way home from Welkom, South Africa, where he worked.

“I really can’t recall what drew me to fruit trees when there are many agricultural codes, but I broke the land with a vision for an orchard,” he says.

“When I arrived home, agriculture felt insufficient, so I also tried to run a tavern and a mini-supermarket as other sources of income to support my family,” he says, but neither business felt right.

“It was only when December came and the peaches ripened that I realised farming was what I wanted to do,” he says.

For two years, he says, he sold peaches without major setbacks as just an informal farmer, but as his work gained recognition, he registered Machache Farm.

With growth, so did the challenges.

**Battling Setbacks and Frustration**

In the third year of production, Machache Farm faced problems never anticipated: theft. Patrons from Sibolane’s tavern would sneak into the orchard at night to steal fruit. By the end of the season, profits had disappeared.

“The theft became unbearable,” he explains.

He adds that the effects of climate change gripped in with extreme weather conditions, destroying his produce.



“On top of the weather, birds destroyed whatever little I could salvage. Out of frustration, I cut down some of the trees while I tried to figure out a better way to protect my farm. I had the orchard in an open field.”

Despite the setbacks, Sibolane’s determination never wavered.

In 2017, guided by the Ministry of Agriculture, he visited a nursery farm and discovered new peach cultivars that ripened at different times of the year.

This offered him a strategic advantage: spreading his harvest across seasons.

He bought 100 new peach trees, then added another 100 alongside grapevines and apple trees. By 2017, his orchard had more than 200 fruit trees.

But with growth came new challenges—irrigation was becoming unmanageable.

“I was drawing water from the Qomogomo River using buckets. It meant paying labourers to fetch water daily, and the costs ate into my profits. Worse, the river water wasn’t always enough for my expanding orchard,” he says.

Eventually, the farm grew with an investment of a half-truck, water tanks, and a pump, but the financial strain was enormous. Bird attacks continued, particularly on his early-ripening peach trees in November.

By 2018, it seemed like every step forward came with two steps back. That was when an acquaintance told him about the SADP grants.

**The SADP Breakthrough**

“I applied for the SADP grant the first time and failed. I, however, used their comments to get my company in order. With the second grant, waiting anxiously, I still didn’t



get it. I was devastated because by then I had invested so much of my own money both in improving the farm and also in the applications.”

With tenacity and desperation, Machache Farm was entered into the competitive grant the third time, this time under the SADP II.

“SADP officials visited Machabeng Farm. They asked probing questions about sustainability. They wanted to know how I would pay employees during fruitless seasons. They suggested I diversify into vegetables, which was eye-opening for me,” he recalls.

He adds, “That evaluation became a turning point for Machabeng Farm because SADP II recognised the potential of the orchard as a profitable business. I got the grant, and that changed the course of Machabeng Farm forever.”

Through the grant, the farm received a borehole water system, which ended reliance on expensive river water, a shade net, which protected fruit trees from hailstorms and bird damage, as well as training workshops, equipping him with modern orchard and mixed farming techniques.

“The borehole alone was a game-changer. For the first time, irrigation was reliable and affordable. The shade net meant I could finally protect my harvest and expand my production. SADP II turned my frustration into possibilities.”

**Diversification and Growth**

Acting on SADP II’s advice, Machabeng Farm diversified into vegetables, and soon the farm started producing cabbage, tomatoes, and other crops alongside fruit trees. This not only spread risk but also created a year-round

income stream.

“In September 2023 alone, we sold 873 cabbages, earning M15,895. That same month, we sold peach seedlings worth nearly M1,000. The beauty of vegetables is that they sustain us even when fruit production is low,” Sibolane explains.

Tomatoes became another profitable venture, he says, revealing that from November to February, Machabeng Farm made M47,850 from tomato sales and M24,000 from cabbage.

“This was something I never imagined when I was only relying on peaches. Now, the farm feeds both my family and the community,” he reflects.

**Creating Jobs and Livelihoods**

With growing profits, Machabeng Farm expanded its workforce. From relying only on temporary labourers during harvest, the farm now employs four permanent workers, with seasonal workers also engaged during peak periods.

“Employment is one of the things I am most proud of. It means families in my community also benefit from this farm. It is not just about me anymore,” says Sibolane.

Machabeng Farm is now divided into three major sections: Orchards for peaches, apples, grapes, and apricots, Vegetables under shade nets for year-round production and Open-field grains for additional diversification.

Each section contributes to steady cash flow and resilience against shocks like climate change.

**Challenges Remain**

Despite the progress, farming is never without hurdles. Water shortages still affect operations during drought seasons when boreholes run low, while unpredictable markets sometimes reduce profits.

“With the advice of diversification, I took a leap and once planted red cabbage, only to realise that my local market in Quthing doesn’t prefer it. I had to learn the hard way that market research is just as important as production,” he shares.

Still, Sibolane embraces challenges as lessons. He regularly visits other farms and attends agricultural workshops to sharpen his knowledge. “Reading and learning from other farmers keeps me ahead,” he says.

**From Local Farm to National Recognition**

Sibolane’s success has not gone unnoticed. The World Bank, during its agricultural visits, identified Machabeng Farm as a model for sustainable smallholder farming. Experts advised him to optimise his soil further for vegetable production, a recommendation he has already acted on.

Today, Machabeng Farm stands as a playbook manual of possibility for retrenched workers and aspiring farmers.

What began with 24 peach trees is now a diversified enterprise feeding households, employing workers and supplying fresh produce to markets in Lesotho.

“I am acquiring more land so that Machabeng Farm expands. I have already planted an additional 70 trees, including 50 apple trees, while scaling up on vegetable production. With the SADP II assistance, I am growing the farm into a reliable supplier of fruits and vegetables throughout the year. If I can get to a place where I feed Quthing and inspire more like-minded farmers, I will have achieved ultimate success,” he beams.

“Farming is not easy; it requires resilience, risk-taking, and constant learning. But with the right support, it can transform lives. For me, SADP II was that support. It didn’t just give me equipment; it gave me a new vision for my farm,” he says.





# How SADP II Shaped Ntoi Beef Farm’s vision



By Seahlolo Reporter

**N**toi Beef Farm is boasting a fleet of 74 improved quality sheep thanks to the adherence to the SADP II’s support.

Owned by Ntoi Mashakhela of Ha Mojapele, Leribe, a determined farmer whose journey into sheep farming began unexpectedly, Ntoi Beef Farm started with 34 low-quality sheep.

Back in 2015, Ntoi was running a dog breeding and farm feeds business, which he used to seed his next venture, sheep farming.

At the time, resources were limited and expansion was a far-fetched possibility.

“We did not have a stable or even enough water supply for the sheep, the most vital component of any farm activities. 34 sheep meant my dreams were valid, but the journey towards success was blurred,” recalls Mashakhela.

Understanding the importance of a legal registration, Mashakhela formalised his farm by establishing Ntoi Beef Farm and in 2022, his fortunes changed when he became a beneficiary of the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II).

Through the grant, his farm received support to bore water, build a professionally designed stable, and introduced genetically improved sheep breeds.

“SADP helped us with water, and the ball started rolling.”

“Part of the grant was a stable, genetics which greatly advanced our sheep quality. We are boasting the best quality wool,” he says with pride.

Mashakhela had always aspired to become a ram breeder, but before the grant, his flock was made up of low-quality sheep bought randomly from different local sellers.

“I knew I needed to start with a clear vision. It took me all I have to find possibilities,” he says, noting the SADP support enabled him to introduce strong genetic stock suited for sustainable ram breeding, a critical step toward his dream.

“I am now a proud Ram Breeder and employ two full-time people,” he beams.

Mashakhela recounts first learning about SADP at a community gathering in 2020, where the project’s application process



and requirements were explained.

Unlike some applicants, his first application was successful, and he was a grantee in 2022.

“The grant was clear with my milestones from the onset. The first round of benefits was water boring, then came the stable, and then I received 31 sheep and a ram, increasing my flock significantly.”

Ntoi Beef Farm’s core business is breeding, with Mashakhela noting that in a year, the farm breeds over 30 sheep for both farm expansion and market needs.

“We also sell wool, rams and improved sheep to other farmers who will also sell wool. We then have a meat production breeding wing of the business where those in the industry purchase calves. We then further dispose of old sheep, selling to those who are in the culinary sector,” he notes.

“We have just signed for the second phase, which will provide even more sheep towards my expansion,” he explains.

While hailing access to water at Ntoi Beef farm, the improved and professionally built stable, Mashakhela says, has been a game-changer.

“It is professionally built to prevent disease. The floor system ensures sheep don’t rest on their waste, which reduces sickness,” he says.

Ntoi Farm was also granted a guardhouse to secure the high-value breeds.

“The genes we now have in the farm require serious protection. The guard house not only protects the flock but also ensures the welfare of the guard himself.”

Like many smallholder farms, Ntoi Beef Farm struggled with disease outbreaks before SADP II’s intervention, which threatened the health of his flock and the sustainability of the business.

“We had a lot of diseases, but with workshops coordinated by SADP II for wool farmers, we have been able to manage the farm better. Now, diseases no longer shock the farm,” he notes.

He explained that the said workshops bring merino farmers, extension workers, and beneficiaries together to share knowledge and practical skills.

For Mashakhela, the networking has been invaluable because it has strengthened not just his farm but also his outlook as a livestock entrepreneur.

Realising the growing demand for sheep, both for meat and wool, Mashakhela strategically shifted from dog breeding to sheep farming and says it sees sheep as “one sustainable commodity for good business.”

Inspired by SADP II’s guidance, he has even started planting grains for his flock, ensuring feed security and reducing costs.

“The SADP II project motivated me to take full control of my value chain and ensure that my farm is able to produce all that is needed to serve a market. I am still learning and growing, especially in meeting market demand, but I can now see a future where my farm continues to expand.

“I have started growing feed for the flock to ensure I live up to the advice from the experts,” he says with determination.





By Seahlolo Reporter

When Thabang Tlhapi first ventured into farming in 2006, he started small with a piggery and for years, pigs were his livelihood, carrying him through the ups and downs of farming life.

Yet, in his heart, he knew that piggery was only the beginning.

Nearly two decades later, Tlhapi Farm, has become a beacon of resilience and innovation, proving how persistence, vision, and the support of SADP II can turn a farmer's dream into a powerhouse of dairy and red meat production in Lesotho.

Today, the farm's story is not just about cows or milk but a story of transition, integration, and determination reflecting the broader ambitions of Basotho farmers to modernise agriculture, seize opportunities, and inspire the next generation.

For seven years, from 2006 to 2013, piggery sustained Tlhapi and his family. The pigs provided a steady income and taught him valuable lessons in animal husbandry and farm management; however, by 2018, determined to scale his farming business, he applied for the SADP grant.

The application was unsuccessful, but instead of giving up, he took it as an opportunity to reflect and refine his vision.

"Piggery was a stepping stone. It gave me the courage and discipline to take on bigger projects. When SADP did not go my way, I studied their feedback carefully, corrected my mistakes, and pressed on."

In 2019, guided by that feedback, he shifted gears into dairy, starting modestly with three cows. Two years later, in 2021, he applied again—this time for SADP II and his persistence paid off.

The SADP II grant became the cornerstone of Tlhapi Farm's transformation. Structured in milestones, the grant provided support step by step.

"Each milestone came with its own challenges. Sometimes it was frustrating, but I learned to be patient. Today I can proudly say I have improved 70% of the farm through this support," he explains.

The first milestone he recounts was the drilling of a borehole, a lifeline for the farm's water supply. This was followed by the construction of a kraal and protective structures, then the award of eight Holstein Friesian cows, a highly productive breed well-suited for commercial dairy.

Today, Tlhapi Farm has 12 dairy cows, producing around 120 litres of milk a day.

"The demand for milk is enormous, and yet there are just a few dairy farms in the country. Collectively, even if each farmer supplied 5,000 litres a day, it would still not meet the national demand."

Although dairy is now the farm's heartbeat, Tlhapi Farm thrives on integration and diversity.

Alongside cows, the farm has retained its pigs, added sheep, poultry, and grains.

"I don't grow those others on a commercial scale. The chickens and sheep are more to make the farm vibrant. But financially, they provide important support. The income from pigs or sheep often helps cover tools, medication, and feed for the dairy cows."

This mixed farming strategy is not just about

# A Dairy Pioneer of the SADP II Grant



financial resilience, but according to Tlhapi, it also creates a balanced ecosystem where by-products are exchanged: grain feed for livestock, manure for crops, and livestock diversity for market flexibility.

Dairy farming, Tlhapi insists, is not a "one-man mission."

Recognising this, he joined forces with other farmers to form the Determined Association, a group focused on collective procurement, knowledge sharing, and cost reduction.

"When you import cows as an individual farmer, costs can kill you, but when farmers team up, use one agent, share logistics, and avoid scams, one can save a lot of money. Collaboration reduces risks and makes us stronger," he says.

Within the association, he explains that farmers exchange feed, manure, transport, and expertise,

building a support system that extends beyond individual farms. This cooperative spirit has been key to Tlhapi Farm's survival and growth.

One of the greatest impacts of SADP II, the farmer emphasises, has been its insistence on accountability and precision.

"SADP II is not a token of luxury but a stepping stone to the vision you outlined in your application. Farmers must remember that SADP II is not their business manager; therefore, it is up to us to take full responsibility for our farms' growth."

He points to some farmers who lose focus once funds arrive.

"That mentality is dangerous. This grant is not about buying luxuries; it's about building the future you committed to."

For Tlhapi Farm, SADP II has also introduced

him to professional skills such as bookkeeping.

Today, the farm has clear records on each cow's performance, evaluates when to retire animals, and understands the financial value of the herd. Coupled with his academic background in agriculture, these skills, he says have elevated his farm from survival-based to agribusiness-oriented.

"Farming is not a retirement plan. It is a career that demands full-time commitment and looking at the business aspect of it, it takes about three years to see real profit. I don't encourage young Basotho to treat it as a side hustle. Start early, treat it seriously, and the long-term rewards will come," he advises.

Tlhapi's forward-thinking mindset is visible in the farm's infrastructure. His cowshed and kraal are designed to minimise movement inside, maintaining sanitation and functionality. Doors are positioned so that workers move outside rather than within the shed reducing contamination risks.

"These small innovations make a big difference," he says proudly adding, "With every design, I am thinking about efficiency and animal welfare."

Beyond his own success, Tlhapi is committed to creating opportunities for others.

The farm employs one permanent worker and four temporary staff, while also mentoring young men and women.

He believes the youth must see farming as a career of dignity and potential.

"Farming is not for lazy people. Even if you have money, it will not compensate for the love and care animals need. If you begin young, you can build a legacy."

Holding fast to the Sesotho proverb "Ea bohlaale o ithuta ka mehla" (The wise keep on learning), the farmer embraces lifelong learning through the array of SADP II workshops, Ministry refresher trainings, and farmer-to-farmer exchanges.

Tlhapi Farm has already achieved over 100% profit turnover since receiving the SADP II support, but Tlhapi knows the journey is far from over.

He reveals that the farm is still working toward its final milestones, which include farm signage, medical kits, and a lactometer for milk quality testing.

"I have a blueprint I can point to as a milestone, but there is still more to do. The dream is to leave a legacy of excellence in dairy farming," he says.

Reflecting on the journey, Thabang affirms that without SADP II, Tlhapi Farm would not be where it is today.

"The initiative is precise. It expects accountability, and that's exactly what farmers need. When you apply, be clear, be disciplined, and know that every cent must be justified. SADP II is not a get-rich-quick scheme—it is a stepping stone to perfection."





Government of Lesotho  
Tender Notice  
MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
Department of Water Affairs

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)  
Groundwater Hydrocensus in Lesotho (Lot 1)

**Introduction**

Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) through its Department of Water Affairs received funds from Government of Lesotho to procure consultant for the **execution of a Groundwater Hydro-census activity nationwide, (Lot1) and River Longitudinal profile and Cross-Sectional Surveys, River Ratings within the three main Catchments. (Lot2) and Community and Stakeholder Engagement in areas around Wetland Areas and Natural Springs Declared as Protected Water Resources ,(Lot 3)**

Therefore invites qualified and experienced consultancy firms to submit their proposal for the execution of a Groundwater Hydrocensus activity nationwide and **River Longitudinal profile and Cross-Sectional Surveys, and River Ratings within the three main Catchments.**

**Scope of Work for Groundwater Hydro-census activity**

The scope of work includes identification, verification, characterization and capturing groundwater monitoring points (boreholes and springs) and individuals geolocation. SECTION B: Objectives This project aims to: - Collect and update information on groundwater sources. - Establish a comprehensive digital registry of all identified groundwater point

**Objectives**

This project aims to: - Collect and update information on groundwater sources. - Establish a comprehensive digital registry of all identified groundwater points. - Support planning for groundwater monitoring and management

**Scope of Work**

The successful bidder will be expected to undertake the following:

- Desktop Review and Preparation - Review existing hydrogeological maps, borehole data, and spring inventories. - Identify target areas for field verification and census.
- Field Data Collection (Hydrocensus) Locate and verify existing groundwater sources: - Boreholes (equipped/unequipped) - Springs (protected/unprotected) - Groundwater monitoring points (e.g., piezometers) - Record GPS coordinates (in decimal degrees), physical characteristics, spring yield tests (where possible), usage type, status (functional/nonfunctional), and ownership. - Conduct basic water quality testing insitu water quality testing. - Water sample collection for analysis at DWA laboratory
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement - The consultant is expected to work with all Local Authorities/Community Councils during the execution of the project. - Ensure community knowledge of water resources management is incorporated.
- Database Development and Integration - Design and populate a geospatial

database (compatible with the existing systems) and maps - Submit data in formats agreed upon (e.g. shapefiles, etc.)

**River Longitudinal profile and Cross-Sectional Surveys, and River Ratings within the three main Catchments. (Lot2)**

**Objectives of the Assignment**

The main objective of this consultancy is to conduct detailed hydrometric surveys, develop updated cross-sectional and longitudinal profiles of selected rivers, and generate reliable river rating curves to improve discharge estimation at excising gauging stations as well as for proposed gauging sites.

**Scope of Work**

**The consultancy will undertake the following tasks:**

**3.1 Preliminary Assessment and Planning**

- 3.1.1 Review existing hydrological data, station records, and previous survey reports.
- 3.1.2 Select Priority Rivers and stations in collaboration with DWA.

**3.2Field Surveys**

- 3.2.1 Conduct cross-sectional surveys at each selected gauging station using standard equipment (e.g., Total Station, Real-Time Kinematic Global Positioning System (RTK-GPS), and Acoustic Doppler Current Profile (ADCP)).
- 3.2.2 Perform longitudinal surveys covering approximately 1–2 km upstream and downstream from the station to capture reach variability.
- 3.2.3 Identify hydraulic controls, floodplain characteristics, and obstructions.

**3.3 River Rating Development**

- 3.3.1 Conduct manual discharge measurements at different flow levels where possible.
- 3.3.2 Compile historical stage-discharge data for curve fitting.
- 3.3.3 Develop or revise rating curves using appropriate hydraulic and statistical methods (e.g., power law regression, Manning’s equation, HEC-RAS modelling).

**3.4 Capacity Building**

- 3.4.1 Provide training to DWA staff on hydrometric survey techniques and rating curve development.
- 3.4.2 Prepare simplified field protocols and survey manuals.

**3.5 Reporting**

- 3.5.1 Submit a comprehensive technical report with:
  - 3.5.1.1 Survey data (coordinates, elevations, river profiles)

Effective and inclusive stakeholder consultation is critical for the success of these initiatives. The Department seeks the services of a qualified individual consultant to conduct community and stakeholder consultations around these protected water sources to raise awareness, gather inputs, and secure community ownership.

Detailed Specifications and Terms of Reference are found in the RFQ document.

Interested firms must provide all necessary information and credentials including, technical and financial Proposals , More details about this RFP will be found in the Terms of Reference.

Applications may be addressed to;

The Procurement Unit, Ministry of Natural Resources, Bokamoso Business Suit, Orpen Road, and Opposite Centre for Accounting Studies Maseru.

Tel: 27325160

**Terms of Reference Issuance and Submission**

**The Terms of Reference document is issued on the 08 August 2025, and closes on the 17 September 2025 at 10:00am. The closing date for collecting document is Friday 8 September 2025, at 4:00pm. To register for this RFP, Consultancy Firms have to pay a non-refundable fee of M500 to Department of Water (DWA), Accounts Office from Friday 08 August, 2025 until Monday 8 September, 2025. The method of payment is cash. Consultancy firms must produce the receipt obtained from accounts section, to procurement Unit at the (DWA) in order to receive the documents.**

The MNR therefore invites competent consultancy firms to compete for this RFP.

**RFP Opening**

RFP documents will be opened by the Ministry of Natural Resources Procurement Committee on the 17 September, 2025 at 10:30am in the presence of bidders or their representatives who wish to attend at the following address: Ministry of Natural Resources, Bokamoso House, Orpen Road, and Opposite Centre for Accounting Studies Maseru

**Clarifications and Contacts**

All questions and clarifications relating to this RFP should be directed to The Procurement Unit, Ministry of Natural Resources, Bokamoso House, Orpen Road, and Opposite Centre for Accounting Studies Maseru. Tel: 27325160



REGENERATION OF LANDSCAPES AND LIVELIHOODS

Maseru, Lesotho AUGUST 6,2025

Invitation for Bids

Re: Procurement of Energy Efficient Cook Stoves for Ultra Poor

Ref No: LSO-2000002340-0163-G-ICB

- The Government of Lesotho has received financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) towards the cost of Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods (ROLL) and intends to apply part of the financing for the purchase of these goods. 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 ROLL project.
- The Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods includes ensuring that rural communities adopt transformational practices for regenerated landscapes & sustainable livelihoods. The expected outputs are reduction of environmental degradation and improved livelihoods of participating communities. The duration of the project is eight years and it is implemented in six districts (Butha-Buthe, Leribe,Berea, Thaba Tseka, Qacha’snek and Quthing)
- This IFB follows the general procurement notice that appeared on national newspapers, Newsday on the 25 April 2025, Public Eye on 18 April 2025 and one international newspaper, mail and guardian on the 23 May 2025.**
- The purchaser now invites sealed bids from eligible entities (“bidders”) for the provision of Energy Efficient Cook Stoves for Ultra Poor. More details on these goods and related services are provided in the schedule of requirements in this bidding document.
- This IFB is open to all eligible bidders who wish to respond. Subject to the restrictions noted in the bidding document, eligible entities may associate with other bidders to enhance their capacity to successfully deliver the goods and related services.
- The goods and related services, and the contract expected to be awarded, are divided into the following lots:

| LOTS  | DISTRICT    | QUANTITIES |
|-------|-------------|------------|
| LOT 1 | Berea       | 500        |
| LOT 2 | Leribe      | 500        |
| LOT 3 | Butha-Buthe | 500        |

|       |             |     |
|-------|-------------|-----|
| LOT 4 | Thaba Tseka | 500 |
| LOT 5 | Qachasnek   | 500 |
| LOT 6 | Quthing     | 500 |

- Bidding will be conducted using the International Competitive Bidding (ICB) method, the evaluation procedure for which is described in this bidding document, in accordance with the IFAD procurement handbook which is provided on the IFAD website <https://www.ifad.org>. The ICB process, as described, will include a review and verification of qualifications and past performance, including a reference check, prior to the contract award. **Full bidding document can be accessed by sending an email to:procurement.roll@gov.ls**
- Please note that a pre-bid conference **will not** be held as described in the bid data sheet BDS, Section II of the bidding document.
- Bids must be delivered to the address below and in the manner specified in the BDS ITB 25 no later than **13 October 2025 at 10:00 a.m** local time

Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods  
Post Office Building, Level 7  
P.O.BOX 92, MASERU  
E-mail:[procurement.roll@gov.ls](mailto:procurement.roll@gov.ls) and copy to [morakanyane.mafatle@gov.ls](mailto:morakanyane.mafatle@gov.ls)

- Bidders should be aware that late bids will not be accepted under any circumstances and will be returned unopened to the bidder. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security (as required) in the manner and amount specified in the bid data sheet.
- Please note that electronic bids **shall not** be accepted as defined in ITB BDS 25.

Yours sincerely,

Procurement Manager  
Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods  
P.O.BOX 92 MASERU  
[procurement.roll@gov.ls](mailto:procurement.roll@gov.ls)





Kingdom of Lesotho  
Invitation for Bids

Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security & Nutrition

Supply and Delivery of Agricultural Machinery Spare Parts.

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 sealed bids from interested bidders with relevant trader's licences for the **Supply and Delivery of Agricultural Machinery Spare Parts**.
- Interested bidders may obtain further information from the following address:  
  
Procurement Unit  
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition  
Corner Constitution and Linare Roads  
Maseru 100, Lesotho  
Tel: (++ 266) 22322741
3. A complete set of bidding document may be purchased by interested bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **(M5,000.00) Five Thousand Maloti only**. The method of payment must be payable at Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. Bidding documents will be available from **05th August 2025**.
4. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 04th September 2025 at 12:00 noon. Late bids will be rejected. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of **M20, 000.00** in the form of a bank guarantee or irrevocable/assurance letter of credit valid for thirty (30) days beyond the validity of the bid. As appears in the bid data sheet.

5. It is mandatory for bidders to submit the following valid documents: (a) Tax Clearance Certificates; (b) Trader's License, (c) Certificate of Bona Fide Bidding, (d) Bid Security and (e) a completed bid form. These documents [especially (a) and (b)] shall either be originals or certified copies from the source. **Non- compliance with this requirement may invalidate a bid.**
6. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at **14:00hrs on Thursday, 04th September, 2025** at the address given below:  
  
**Board Room  
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition  
Corner Constitution & Linare Roads,  
Maseru 100, Lesotho.**
7. Bidders shall ensure that the envelopes containing their bids are properly addressed as indicated under ITB above and are clearly marked **"Supply and Delivery of Agricultural Machinery Spare Parts."** **GOL/G003/2025/26.**

**Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition also reserves the right to cancel the tender before submission or opening of the tenders, postpone the tender submission or opening date and accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition is not bound to accept the lowest or any bid.**

Procurement Manager



Kingdom of Lesotho  
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition

Invitation for Bids

**Supply and delivery of Agricultural Machinery and Equipment.**

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 sealed bids from interested bidders for the **Supply and Delivery of Agricultural Machinery and Equipment**.
- Interested bidders may obtain further information from the following address:  
  
Procurement Unit  
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security & Nutrition  
Corner Constitution and Linare Roads  
Maseru 100, Lesotho  
Tel: (++ 266) 22322741
- A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by interested bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **(M 5,000.00) Five Thousand Maloti only**. The method of payment must be payable at Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition. Bidding document will be available from Tuesday **02nd September 2025**.
3. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before **October 02nd, 2025 at 12:00 noon**. Late bids will be rejected. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security of **M 20, 000.00** in the form of a bank guarantee or irrevocable/assurance letter of credit valid for thirty (30) days beyond the validity of the bid. As appears in the bid data sheet.
4. It is mandatory for bidders to submit the following valid documents: (a)

- Tax Clearance Certificates; (b) Trader's License, (c) Certificate of Bona Fide Bidding, Bid Security, and a completed bid form. These documents [especially (a) and (b)] shall either be originals or certified copies from the source. **Non- compliance with this requirement may invalidate a bid.**
5. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at 14:30hrs on Thursday, **October 02nd, 2025** at the address given below:  
  
**Board Room  
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security & Nutrition  
Corner Constitution & Linare Roads,  
Maseru 100, Lesotho.**
6. Bidders shall ensure that the envelopes containing their bids are properly addressed as indicated under ITB above and are clearly marked **"Supply and Delivery of Agricultural Machinery and Equipment"** **GOL/G004/2025/26**. Envelopes should not bear the identification of the bidder.
7. **Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition also reserves the right to cancel the tender before submission or opening of the tenders, postpone the tender submission or opening date and accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition is not bound to accept the lowest or any bid.**

Procurement Manager



06  
SEPTEMBER  
2025

VICTORY HALL  
(MOJALEFA LEPHOLE)

08H00 - 16H00

**GENERAL TICKET M100**

+266 5803 2245/  
+266 6275 6737

06  
SEPTEMBER  
2025

VICTORY HALL  
(MOJALEFA LEPHOLE)

19H00 - 23H00

**YOU ARE  
INVITED TO  
FARMERS PITSO  
GALA DINNER**

HOW TO BOOK A SEAT FOR PITSO GALA DINNER

|                                                     |                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>BOOK YOUR SEAT</b>                               | <b>PAY WITH</b> |
| M550 SINGLE                                         |                 |
| M950 COUPLE                                         | 55162           |
| M4,500 FARMERS TABLE FOR 10                         |                 |
| (RSVP) +266 5875 6737 FOR<br>CORPORATE TABLE FOR 10 | 61407           |

06  
SEPTEMBER  
2025

VICTORY HALL  
(MOJALEFA LEPHOLE)

08H00 - 16H00

**YOU ARE INVITED TO  
FARMERS PITSO AWARDS  
ANNUAL CELEBRATION  
EVENT**

**GENERAL TICKET M100**

+266 5803 2245/  
+266 6275 6737

06  
SEPTEMBER  
2025

VICTORY HALL

19H00 - 23H00

**Mr. Thapelo Sephiri LEOTOANA**

**BOOK YOUR SEAT**

|                 |
|-----------------|
| <b>PAY WITH</b> |
|                 |
| 55162           |
|                 |
| 61407           |

M550 SINGLE

M950 COUPLE

M4,500 FARMERS TABLE FOR 10

(RSVP) +266 5875 6737 FOR  
CORPORATE TABLE FOR 10



# All Systems Go for Farmers Pitso Award 2025

By Topollo Tlali

There is a buzz of excitement rippling across Lesotho's farming community as preparations intensify for the 2025 edition of the Farmers' Pitso Awards scheduled for September 6 at Victory Hall.

Farmers, agribusinesses, schools, and agricultural stakeholders are eagerly awaiting what promises to be the most inclusive and celebratory edition yet, one that not only recognises excellence but also shines a spotlight on the changing face of agriculture in Lesotho.

The awards have grown into an annual highlight, but their beginnings were far more modest. What started as a small gathering of farmers, brought together to share knowledge, skills, and farming practices, has blossomed into a national platform that celebrates innovation and resilience. Over the years, the Farmers' Pitso Awards have become more than a meeting of like-minded people; they have turned into a stage where stories of success, perseverance, and transformation are told and honored.

From the outset, the purpose was simple: to unite farmers, strengthen collaboration, and provide a learning space, but organisers soon realised that recognition could be just as powerful as training, and so the awards were born. They quickly became a motivating force, encouraging farmers to take pride in their work while setting benchmarks for others to follow. "We created a platform where farmers learn and expand their farming perspectives," said Thabiso Matsoele, one of the founders, reflecting on how the ceremony gradually shaped into the influential event it is today.

What makes the awards unique is how they blend celebration with knowledge-sharing.

Over the years, high-profile stakeholders, from agricultural experts to policymakers, have joined the gatherings, adding depth and influence. Through panel discussions, workshops, and exhibitions that happen as build-up events to the awards, farmers not only received recognition but also gained access to crucial information and opportunities that directly impact their productivity.

Perhaps the most visible change sparked by the awards has been in the way farmers present themselves

and their products. In earlier years, many smallholders sold their produce informally. Today, thanks in part to exposure through the Farmers' Pitso, packaging, branding, and marketing have become standard practices. Farmers now promote their work with gazebos, banners, and promotional materials that make them competitive in both local and regional markets.

This professionalisation according to Matsoele has not only raised farmers profiles but also inspired more young people to enter agriculture with a business mindset.

The 2025 edition is set to build on this momentum with new categories and expanded recognition.

"For the first time, there will be an emphasis on celebrating women in agriculture, highlighting their critical contributions to food security," Matsoele explains, adding that awards for young female broiler and piggery farmers will shine a light on the energy and innovation women bring to the sector.

"This year we want to honour women who are making farming a sustainable livelihood for their families and communities," he stressed, noting the symbolic importance of giving women greater visibility.

Beyond awards, the event would feature exhibitions where farmers can showcase their produce and innovations.

"This marketplace-style setup is designed to connect producers directly with consumers, manufacturers, and policymakers.

"The addition of a gala dinner to this year's event will allow farmers to interact with government officials and discuss pressing policy issues, including climate resilience and market access," he explains, adding that content creators have also been invited to make the ceremony more impactful, bridging the gap between rural farmers and urban consumers through digital storytelling.

The inclusivity of the awards continues to expand with organisers going to great lengths this year to reach rural areas through gatherings in districts such as Thaba-Tseka, Mokhotlong, and Qacha's Nek to ensure smallholder farmers in remote regions also feel part of the celebration. Social media remains a central tool for awareness and voting, but word-of-mouth and commu-

nity mobilisation are equally important in spreading the message.

Still, the journey has not been without challenges.

Matsoele admits that sustaining the awards has been a test of perseverance. "While sponsorships from agro-solution companies and partners like Seahlolo Newspaper provide crucial support, 80 percent of the costs are now covered by farmers themselves. This financial commitment speaks volumes about the determination of our farmers to sustain their own platform, even when external funding falls short."

"We are tired, frustrated, and disappointed at how the business community is not as supportive. We really need support from big companies to keep this going," he said, underscoring the financial gaps that threaten the long-term sustainability of the awards.

Despite these obstacles, the future vision remains ambitious.

Matsoele stresses that they dream of expanding the Farmers' Pitso into a full national farmers' market, a platform not just for awards, but for trading, networking, and capacity-building.

"Long-term plans include farm visits, data collection, and monitoring to ensure that the stories celebrated on stage translate into measurable progress on the ground."

"The impact of the awards is already evident. Past winners have gone on to secure contracts, attract investment, and inspire others to raise their standards. Some are now recognised nationwide, fielding calls from stakeholders who discovered them through the Pitso platform. Foso Hardware, for example, became a standout partner by donating hampers to farmers over several years, while individuals like Mrs. Matente, Mabita, and Morakabi have become household names in farming circles thanks to their recognition through the awards," he describes.

The organiser pointed out that as the 2025 edition approaches, the excitement is not just about the awards themselves but what they represent: "a collective acknowledgement that farming is the backbone of food security in Lesotho and that farmers deserve to be celebrated as the heroes they are."

The awards align closely with national agricultural priorities", shifting from subsistence to commercial farming and strengthening food security, yet they also symbolise something bigger: pride, unity, and resilience in a sector that continues to face challenges."

## Principal Chiefs Commit to Improved Community Nutrition

By Molula Mofosi

MASERU –

The Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP) convened a meeting with the Principal Chiefs on August 20, 2025, to discuss the implementation of nutrition and agricultural commitments made earlier this year.

The chiefs pledged to support the modernisation of irrigation infrastructure and improve community nutrition in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.

Speaking at the meeting, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, said the initiative is a continuation of commitments already made by traditional leaders.

He stressed that poverty, hunger, and social challenges have weakened community resilience.

"The community has changed due to poverty and hunger. There are social issues that are prevailing; therefore, it is important to draw ourselves back to the roots of culture, which is unity and utilising the soil that the country has," he said.

He added that the country's arable land must be put to productive use. "This is the chance to hold hands and improve the nutrition of the communities. We have nutrition clubs in villages, so the ministry is working hand-in-hand with them and with chiefs to ensure everyone benefits. We need to revitalise the land of chiefs as we had agreed."

The meeting also heard a progress report from 'Makamohelo Semuli, Director of Nutrition and Home Economics, who outlined the specific commitments undertaken by the council of chiefs:

- Exemplary leadership in food production: Chiefs pledged to lead by example in food production and good nutrition practices. They called for the deployment of agricultural extension workers in villages, equipped with up-to-date knowledge, to actively support family gardens and smallholder farming.
- Monitoring and reporting: Chiefs committed to providing monthly progress reports during their meetings, detailing food and nutrition initiatives in their villages, including schools. They requested cooperative feedback from extension workers on challenges and needs observed in communities.
- Nutrition advocacy: Chiefs will champion breast-feeding campaigns and promote balanced diets. In return, they called on the government to provide consistent education on breastfeeding, nutrition choices, and child food supplementation.
- Revival of fallow land: Chiefs committed to making unused land available through Seahlolo (Blockfarming) arrangements, where landless farmers with resources can gain access for cultivation.
- Communal gardens: Land will be allocated for communal gardens, with the request that the government ensure protection against climate impacts, mobilises water supply, and improve accessibility.
- School nutrition programs: Chiefs serving on school boards pledged to promote diverse food production in schools and ensure agriculture is taught as part of the curriculum. They stressed the need for extension workers to support these initiatives for both learning and family food security.

Semuli emphasised that while progress is being made, significant challenges remain.

"We want to hold hands with the chiefs to overcome the problem of land that is in the hands of people who do not produce. This is an urgent matter, as we are also trying to eliminate the practice of selling arable land for housing," she said.

She also raised concerns about livestock diseases threatening the agricultural sector.

"There is a serious foot-and-mouth issue that is prevailing in the sector. We want to mobilise information about this disease and help Basotho understand why the borders are closed for incoming livestock from South Africa. We also need to increase sensitisation on vaccination programmes, which farmers must remain vigilant about."

The meeting concluded with renewed commitment from both government officials and chiefs to strengthen food security efforts through cooperation, effective land use, and targeted nutrition campaigns.

By formalising these commitments, the Principal Chiefs signalled their determination to not only preserve cultural leadership but to directly engage in addressing food insecurity in their communities.

# Lesotho to Host International Wool Textile Organization Round Table in 2025

By Topollo Tlali

Lesotho is set to take centre stage in the global wool industry when it hosts the International Wool Textile Organization (IWTO) Round Table from 23 to 27 November 2025, an event expected to open new doors for farmers, the textile sector and the national economy.

The announcement was made earlier this month by the Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association (LNWMGA), which confirmed that Standard Lesotho Bank will be the main sponsor of the gathering.

IWTO, established in 1930, is the international body representing the global wool textile trade, bringing together growers, traders, processors, spinners, weavers, garment makers and retailers of wool and allied fibres.

The 2024 round table was hosted in Turkey, and this year marks a milestone for Lesotho, which has been lobbying for years to bring the prestigious event home.

LNWMGA Chairperson Mokoenehi Thinyane said the announcement is the result of persistent efforts.

"We struggled for many years to win the opportunity to host the event, and it was only last year that the IWTO president acknowledged our tireless efforts and confirmed Lesotho as the host nation," Thinyane explained.

Lesotho became an IWTO member in 2009, and Thinyane noted that the privilege of hosting had not come easily.

"During our visits to other countries, we saw how these events boost economies. Hosting in Lesotho will be the biggest achievement for us. Hotels, guest houses, restaurants, travel agencies – all these businesses will benefit from international visitors," he said.

According to Thinyane, the round table will not only highlight wool production but also serve as a showcase for Basotho culture and entrepreneurship. Farmers, wool

crafters, textile manufacturers, and designers are being invited to attend and present their work.

"This is not just a showcase but a platform to show who we are, and how our animals contribute to Basotho culture in front of international leaders," he said.

He added, "It is a chance for Basotho to advertise their products and attract investors who may return to support the sector."

Thinyane revealed that the programme would feature an official opening led by the Prime Minister or the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, followed by technical sessions and presentations on wool projects in Lesotho.

According to the Director of Marketing within the Agriculture Ministry, Lekhooe Makhate, the program would further include demonstrations of wool products such as mats and clothing, and discussions on wool's contribution to the economy.

"Basotho are known for excelling in competitions, so the round table will also include wool shearing and product competitions, as well as business-focused sessions and sustainability discussions," Makhate explained.

Beyond conference halls, delegates would also be taken on cultural tours to Thaba Bosiu to learn about the history of the Basotho nation, and to Malealea, known for its scenic beauty and cultural heritage.

"This event is not only about discussions," Thinyane emphasised, saying is an opportunity to deepen the relationship between IWTO and LNWMGA, while showcasing Lesotho's rich land and culture."

While Lesotho ranks fourth in global wool production, Thinyane noted that farmers continue to face challenges such as market access, livestock diseases, theft, and climate change.

He believes the IWTO event could help turn the tide.

"Most Basotho live by rearing animals, and our aim is

to see farmers succeed and live well like others in different professions. The IWTO round table can be a game changer because it allows us to learn directly from global leaders," he said.

He added that wool production already creates jobs across communities, from herders, shearers, wool classers and record keepers. Hosting an international event of this magnitude will reinforce this impact by stimulating more opportunities.

To ensure inclusivity, LNWMGA announced that the event will be live-streamed on social media, allowing farmers across the country to follow proceedings even if they cannot attend in person.

Thinyane also revealed that each district would hold meetings after the round table, so representatives can share the information with farmers at the grassroots level.

Looking to the future, he highlighted the potential for education and international collaboration.

"In the past, we received a proposal to send ten students to Australia for studies in wool, but COVID-19 restrictions stopped that. There are many opportunities from IWTO membership, and hosting will only increase them," he said.

The IWTO has 33 members across 23 countries and is dedicated to promoting sustainable wool production through research, education, and knowledge sharing. Its events are renowned for shaping industry standards and opening opportunities for host countries.

For Lesotho, the 2025 round table is expected to strengthen partnerships, grow the textile value chain, and shine a global spotlight on the resilience of Basotho farmers.

"Hosting this event is a victory for the entire nation. It proves that Basotho farmers are not only producers but also global players in the wool industry," Thinyane concluded.

# AGRIC Events In Pictures

