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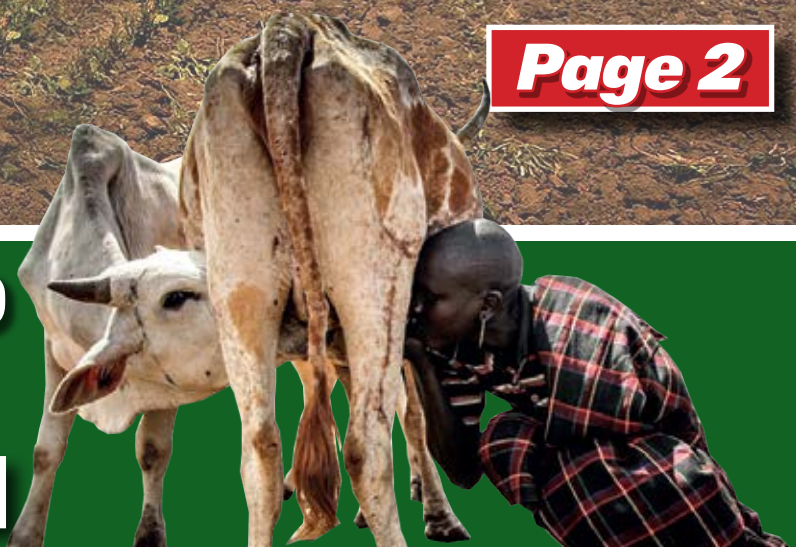


M200 Million Tractor Credit Facility Targets Youth in Agric

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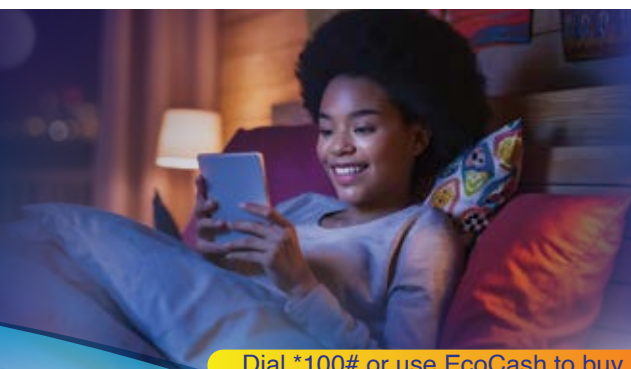
TB FROM UNPASTEURISED DAIRY PRODUCTS COULD INFECT HUMANS

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M200 Million Tractor Credit Facility Targets Youth in Agriculture



From left, Finance Minister Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, Agriculture Minister Thabo Mofosi and Lesotho PostBank MD Mokhachane Mopeli signing the MOU

By Thoboloko Ntšonyane

In a bold move to put young Basotho at the forefront of agricultural transformation, the Government of Lesotho has committed that 40 percent of its new tractor subsidy scheme will go directly to youth farmers.

Out of the 500 tractors to be acquired under the Credit Guarantee Facility for Tractors and Farm Equipment, 200 will be reserved for young people eager to enter into commercial farming.

This landmark initiative was unveiled this month by Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane during the Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony between the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition and the Lesotho PostBank.

The signing marked the extension of the Lesotho PostBank Credit Guarantee Facility, which will run for five years, offering accessible financing for tractors, farm machinery and equipment.

It was revealed that the Ministry of Finance would act as guarantor, ensuring that even smallholder and emerging farmers can access modern machinery to boost productivity.

Under the new agreement, government would inject M200 million into the scheme.

Of this amount, M175 million would fund the subsidy component, while M25 million, inclusive of taxes, would strengthen the Guarantee Fund that supports PostBank's on-lending to farmers.

"Farmers who qualify will receive a 30 percent subsidy on the cost of tractors and related equipment," Mokhachane Mopeli, the Managing Director of Lesotho PostBank explained, noting the subsidy applies to every eligible Basotho farmer who can repay their loan within a

five-year period, and each participant can receive support for one tractor or multiple pieces of machinery depending on their operational needs and repayment ability.

The arrangement significantly lowers the financial burden for small and aspiring farmers.

For youth participants, who often struggle with start-up capital, the initiative represents a lifeline to enter the agricultural value chain with real assets.

Speaking at the event, Prime Minister Matekane said the government's goal is to create tangible opportunities for young Basotho to engage in farming.

"We cannot continue to rely on old methods and outdated tools. Mechanisation is key to transforming agriculture into a business and young people must lead that change," he said.

Farmers would have the option to select from four tractor brands—John Deere, Massey Ferguson, New Holland, and Landini—each recommended for their durability and suitability for Lesotho's terrain.

The tractors are expected to weigh at least 74,000 kilograms to ensure they function effectively across various soil types.

Matekane underscored that the facility's structure is designed to make ownership accessible.

He noted that beneficiaries would not be required to pay a deposit, removing a major barrier to entry for many small-scale and youth farmers.

Mokhachane Mopeli, the Managing Director of Lesotho PostBank, hailed the scheme as a "forward-thinking initiative" that would empower farmers with modern agricultural machinery.

"PostBank has long supported government efforts to improve farmers' access to credit and equipment and this new phase is a milestone, it ensures that 500 tractors will be made available to qualifying beneficiaries, without requir-

ing upfront payment," he said.

"To qualify, aspiring farmers must demonstrate access to at least 20 hectares of land, though those cultivating 10 hectares may also be considered. Verification will be done in collaboration with extension officers, who will confirm applicants' authenticity and farming commitment," Mopeli added.

He indicated that participants may also request PostBank to procure tractors with accompanying implements, such as ploughs, harrows, seed drills, cultivators, and rotavators, depending on their farming practices.

"This flexibility allows farmers to customise their equipment packages to meet their production goals."

Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi, said the initiative represents a turning point for Lesotho's agricultural sector.

"This programme is not just about tractors, it's about ensuring that every capable Mosotho farmer can actively participate in food production," he said.

The Minister highlighted that since the Prime Minister's call to Basotho to ensure for every field is cultivated, farmers have responded positively, with many achieving strong yields.

The challenge now is not production anymore as before. We now have a problem of market access. With these tractors, we expect farmers to expand, diversify and reach high yields so that Lesotho can reach new markets," he said.

Mofosi also encouraged civil servants interested in farming to apply, saying "...agriculture remains open to anyone committed to national food security."

Dr. Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, said the initiative reinforces the role of agriculture as the backbone of Lesotho's economy.

"This expansion is not just about numbers, but impact. It is about equipping more farmers with the tools they need to succeed, building resilience in our agricultural sector and ensuring that no farmer is left behind in our pursuit of food security."

Dr. Matlanyane revealed that under the previous phase of the programme, about 75 percent of farmers who benefited were able to cultivate over 4,650 acres annually.

"The results speak for themselves. Mechanisation has improved efficiency, boosted production and strengthened food security across the country."

She applauded the Prime Minister's leadership in driving agriculture-led growth and said the new M200 million investment demonstrates government's belief in the sector's potential to create jobs, reduce poverty and stimulate rural development.

Through the joint efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lesotho PostBank, the government plans to adopt bulk purchasing strategies for tractors and implements, reducing costs and ensuring transparency under the Public Procurement Act of 2025.

This collaboration aims to make mechanisation affordable and to transform agriculture from subsistence-based to commercially driven, with young Basotho leading the charge.

"By reserving 40 percent of tractors for the youth, the government is sending a clear message that the future of farming lies in innovation, entrepreneurship and inclusivity. The youth are our energy and our hope," said Minister Mofosi.

"We are equipping them not just with machinery, but with the means to feed the nation and to build generational wealth," he said.

How to Apply for the Tractor Scheme

Step 1: Prepare Your Land

Applicants must have at least **10 to 20** hectares of land ready for cultivation. The land can be owned, leased, or accessed through family arrangements, but must be verifiable.

Step 2: Visit Your Nearest Extension Office

Contact your **District Agricultural Extension Office** for guidance. Extension officers will:

- Verify your farming activities and land readiness.
- Provide a recommendation letter confirming you are an active or aspiring farmer.

Step 3: Approach Lesotho PostBank

Go to any **Lesotho PostBank branch** with the following documents:

- National ID
- Proof of land ownership or access
- Extension officer's recommendation
- Business plan or short concept outlining your farming goals

Step 4: Choose Your Machinery

Select your preferred **tractor brand** (John

Deere, Massey Ferguson, New Holland, or Landini) and any additional **implements** such as ploughs, harrows, or seed drills. The bank will guide you through approved suppliers and procurement processes.

Step 5: Access the Subsidy

Eligible applicants receive a **30% government subsidy** toward the total cost. The remaining **70%** is financed as a **five-year loan** under the Credit Guarantee Facility. **No deposit** is required.

Step 6: Approval & Delivery

Once approved, Lesotho PostBank coordinates the purchase and delivery of your machinery. Farmers will receive training on operation and maintenance through their extension offices.

Quick Facts:

40% of tractors reserved for youth farmers
500 tractors available in total
M200 million committed by government
30% subsidy per tractor or farm equipment purchase

Loan repayment period: 5 years

Implements available: Ploughs, harrows, seed drills, rotavators, cultivators



MERAKA LIVESTOCK COVER



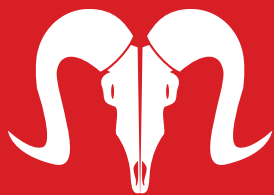
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ALLIANCE

Always there for Basotho

The Struggle and Joy of Farming in Thaba-Tseka When Climate Becomes the Toughest Boss

By Topollo Tlali

The dawn breaks slowly over the jagged mountains of Thaba-Tseka. Mist coils over the valleys like smoke and the early light paints the terraced hills in shades of gold and green.

It's a breath-taking view from the eyes of a visitor, but for those who farm this rugged landscape, beauty often hides a deeper struggle.

Here, where Lesotho's heart beats closest to the sky, farmers face the daily battle of surviving the changing climate.

Thaba-Tseka sits approximately 2,200 (7,218 feet) meters above sea level and every season brings new challenges; sudden frost, long dry spells, pounding rain that strips the hills bare. Yet, against these odds, the farmers of Thaba-Tseka continue to plough, plant and persevere.

Agriculture in Thaba-Tseka has always been defined by its geography.

The district's mix of icy highlands, steep mountain slopes and the warmer Senqu River valley offers both opportunities and harsh limitations. The high altitude gives life to cool-weather crops, but the same mountains make mechanised farming nearly impossible.

Makhema Phohleli, a small-scale farmer from Thabong village, explains the difference.

"In the flat fields, farmers can use machinery and plant more, but in the mountains, we use oxen and hand tools because the land is too steep. Planting by hand is hard, and when heavy rain falls, the soil is washed away along with what's planted," he says.

Erosion is an old enemy in Thaba-Tseka, but climate change has made it worse. Phohleli notes that when the rains come, they come violently cutting deep gullies through fields and carrying away precious topsoil. When they stop, the earth bakes hard and dry.

"Sometimes the whole fields disappear after a storm with no trace of where ploughing was done."

"These slopes are so steep that transporting manure or harvesting food is a struggle," Phohleli adds.

To fight back, he has built terraces of stone-lined steps that hold the soil and moisture.

He uses organic manure and barley rotations to restore fertility.

"I have planted barley so many times just to improve my soil's fertility and quality and it actually works," he says proudly.

Phohleli indicates that in Thaba-Tseka, success depends on knowing where and what to plant, saying farmers have learned that the cold, wind-whipped ridges favours wheat and maize, while the milder slopes are better for beans, pumpkins and cabbage.

"Potatoes and maize used to do well here previously but not anymore. The weather has changed too much that to succeed in yield, one needs to adapt. I have learned to read the sky and to choose crops that can survive," he explains.

This shift in knowledge; from tradition to adaptation, is part of a broader story across Lesotho's highlands farming.

As weather patterns grow more erratic, Phohleli says they are experimenting with shorter-maturing varieties, intercropping and organic practices.

"We are also combining old wisdom with new tools. Some of us have installed shade nets to protect vegetables from frost and hail; others use plastic tunnels to extend the growing season.

"Farming here has always been a test, but we keep trying, learning and sharing. Our land still



has a lot to give but only if we love and care for it enough," he says.

Phohleli indicates that the signs of climate change are now woven into their daily life; "winters have become longer and harsher, shortening the growing season and freezing crops that once survived the cold. Summers, meanwhile, bring unexpected heat waves and violent storms. The once-reliable patterns of rain have vanished.

"Some years it arrives early and washes away seedlings; other years it disappears for months. We plant, we lose and re-plant all over again gambling against a climate that no longer keeps its promises," he says.

These shifting conditions are also changing what people eat.

Phohleli notes that beans and barley, once back-

up crops, are now staples, replacing maize in many households.

Like in other districts, livestock is both wealth, security, pride and heritage, but even the kraal is not safe anymore.

Tsele Mohoshela, who runs Merino Holdings Farm, describes the twin threats of theft and wildlife as top of their challenges.

"As a registered farmer, my animals cannot graze freely, so I hire people to watch them," he says. "...but sometimes those workers steal and sell them far away."

"These are some of challenges we face coupled with effects of drought and diseases outbreaks," he says.

Situated high above sea level, Mohoshela describes Thaba-Tseka a rife place for wildlife attractions, saying foxes have become another persistent

danger.

"Foxes eat our animals when they do to the veldts. We have tried dogs and shelters, but they always find a way to come and ravage our animals."

For many farmers, the fear of theft and predators is constant. Some have started fencing their properties or forming community patrols, but few can afford the materials or manpower to guard herds day and night.

Mohoshela notes that animals like crops, access to water plays a pivotal role in their nurturing, but Thaba-Tseka has experienced severe droughts that left natural water sources dry.

"Due to our distance from Maseru where access to help is easy, we make a way to continue."

Mohoshela stresses that even when their production is bumper, the isolation of Thaba-Tseka limits market access.

"Poor road networks and distance from urban centres make it costly to transport goods closer to customers. I have many chicken layers and many eggs, but no market," says Mohoshela in frustration.

He adds, "We were told schools would buy from us, but those promises disappeared. Now I'm breaking eggs and mixing them with animal feed because I can't sell them off."

This disconnection leaves farmers trapped in cycles of waste and loss. When prices drop or buyers vanish, the effort of farming feels in vain.

"Sometimes it feels like we farm for the joy of it, but we cannot eat joy. We do this to grow from small scale," Mohoshela admits bitterly.

Phohleli says beneath this hardship, a collaboration has let them forward.

He explains that farmers are working together, sharing resources and learning new methods as a collective.

"We have formed informal local cooperatives that we use to access seeds and other inputs. Among things we do is to rotate pastures to prevent overgrazing while we are managing our environment," he says, adding harsher winters make it difficult for animals to find grass.

"We have learned to procure as a unit, to properly store fodder and even make fodder by drying grass in summer and keep it for winter."

These simple but vital practices are acts of resilience in a district where development projects rarely reach the mountain peaks.

"Despite these hardship, farming in Thaba-Tseka is still a source of joy and a rhythm of life that connects families with their land and ancestors.

"Farming in Thaba-Tseka is a labour of love. Every morning I wake up to birds singing and the sun rising over the mountains. The terrains are hard, but that's what makes it rewarding. When I see a crop grow after a long season, I feel peace," Phohleli says softly.

The Broader Picture: Lesotho's Climate Warning

Thaba-Tseka's story is not an isolated one — it is a reflection of a national crisis of food insecurity.

The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) and Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analysis warn that changing rainfall patterns, pest outbreaks, and heat stress are undermining food production countrywide.

The latest IPC report projects that 334,000 Basotho will face crisis-level food insecurity by early 2026, up from 258,000 in 2025.

The causes are familiar to Thaba-Tseka farmers: crop failure, livestock losses and rising food prices.



Makhema Phohleli





WHO ARE WE

Lesotho Steps Up Efforts to Boost Red Meat Production



Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition - Marketing Department

Lesotho's Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition is intensifying efforts to strengthen the country's red meat sector by encouraging farmers to produce higher-grade meat for both local and international markets.

According to Phole Keketsi from the Ministry's Marketing Department, most of the meat produced locally currently falls under Grade C, while Grades A and B—the more desirable cuts—are largely imported from South Africa. "We are in the middle of a strategy to encourage farmers to breed for the red meat market," Keketsi explained. "In earlier days, animals were reared mainly for ploughing fields, but with mechanization, livestock has become a profitable business opportunity, especially in the red meat value chain."

Promoting Quality Livestock Breeding

The Ministry has introduced guidelines to help farmers engage in legal and efficient livestock breeding practices. The initiative aims to support farmers who wish to access improved red meat livestock from South Africa through formal channels, after many previously relied on informal imports.

"These animals are reared specifically for meat and are fed in controlled environments rather than grazing freely in the fields," Keketsi said. This approach ensures better quality meat and consistency in grading.

Challenges in the Market

The outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in South Africa disrupted meat imports into Lesotho, forcing local butcheries, guesthouses, and hotels to depend on other countries or buy locally produced Grade C meat. The shortage highlighted the need to boost domestic production.

To bridge the supply gap, the Ministry organized livestock auction sales (Fantisi) to bring red meat trading closer to farmers. These auctions, implemented under the

Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WAMP), were awarded to local independent sellers through a transparent bidding process. However, challenges emerged as farmers hesitated to pay the auctioneer's commission, initially set at 20 percent and later reduced to 15 percent.

"There was still reluctance from farmers to bring their animals for sale," Keketsi noted. "At

the same time, illegal red meat sales continued to rise. We are now working closely with the police to regularize this trade and encourage interested individuals to obtain legal operating documents."

WAMCOP: Swapping for Success

To improve livestock quality, the Ministry introduced WAMCOP (Wool and Mohair Community Programme) — an animal exchange initiative allowing farmers to trade five underperforming animals for one modified male or two improved females. The program, which began in Maseru in December 2024, has since toured the country and is now headed for Quthing.

"We urge farmers to come in large numbers, and we also expect participation from butcheries and others in the meat business," Keketsi said, emphasizing that all participants must be properly registered.

Training Farmers for Profitability

Recognizing that many farmers lack commercial farming skills, the Ministry plans to host free workshops on recordkeeping, animal feeding, and identifying profitable markets. These capacity-building sessions aim to equip farmers with tools to make livestock farming a sustainable source of income.

Understanding Meat Grading

Keketsi further explained how meat grading works:

- Grade A animals have two teeth, indicating youth and tenderness.
- Grade B have four to six teeth.
- Grade C represents older animals with more teeth, hence tougher meat.

"Many farmers are surprised when a younger animal sells for more than an older one," she said. "That's because Grade A meat is in higher demand." Fat content—known as marbling—also influences the grade, though this method is not yet fully implemented locally.

Changing Mindsets

The Ministry continues to engage farmers through community gatherings (Pitso) to explain auction procedures and expectations before events take place. Keketsi emphasized that the greatest challenge remains changing mindsets. "Basotho have traditionally kept animals as a form of wealth, not as a commercial product. But now, there is a real opportunity to make money from livestock."

As Lesotho continues to restrict meat imports from South Africa, the Ministry sees the current shortage as a chance for local farmers to fill the gap. "We want Basotho to seize this opportunity and produce high-quality red meat for our markets and beyond," Keketsi concluded.



Lesotho Faces Mounting Food Crisis as One in Five Households Go Hungry

... Estimated 334,000 people to face more crisis by March 2026

...2024/2025 Maize yield dropped by nearly 20 percent



US\$2.7 million (M50 million), one-off cash transfer programme supported by the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and African Risk Capacity (ARC) provided relief to households affected by crop failure.

By Lerato Matheka

More than a quarter of a million Basotho are currently facing hunger, with the situation expected to worsen as the lean season approaches.

According to the Lesotho Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) Acute Food Insecurity Analysis, released in October 2025, about 258,000 people, 17 percent of the rural population, are in crisis struggling to access enough food for survival.

The report paints a sobering picture of a nation grappling with compounding challenges which include erratic rainfall, dry spells, high food prices and livestock disease outbreaks that have collectively weakened Lesotho's ability to feed its people.

By early next year, the situation is projected to deteriorate further, pushing an estimated 334,000 people, 22 percent of the population into crisis levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or higher).

This comes barely six months following Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP Early Warnings on Acute Food Insecurity report released in June where Lesotho was officially removed from the list of countries experiencing acute food insecurity.

Lesotho now joined Angola, Kenya, Namibia and Uganda, which were described to be showing signs of improvement after previously being identified in warnings.

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

Just over a month after Lesotho was removed from the list of countries identified as food insecurity hotspots by global agencies, a new regional assessment has revealed a concerning and contradictory reality: hunger in Southern Africa is worsening, and Lesotho remains far from immune.

Hardly a month after the removal from the Hunger Hotspot list, the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) report, released in July 2025, estimated that 46.3 million people across seven countries — Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, South Africa and Tanzania are projected to face acute food insecurity in the 2025/26 consumption year.

The SADC report noted that while Lesotho, alongside Tanzania and Eswatini, experienced above-average rainfall during the 2024/25 agricultural season, the country remains highly vulnerable to climate and economic shocks that continue to push many households into food insecurity.

For many Basotho, particularly in rural areas and peri-urban settlements, daily struggles to access affordable and nutritious food continue unabated and the IPC report confirms.

"Food access has become the greatest challenge. Even when food is available in the markets, many households simply can't afford it," reads part of the report, compiled by the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and The World Food Program (WFP).

Lesotho's 2024–2025 agricultural season started with hope, the report noted, adding the rains that arrived in October and November 2024 encouraged timely planting, especially in the lowlands.

"...But optimism quickly gave way to despair when dry spells and heat waves scorched crops between December and January, the crucial growth stage."

This climatic rollercoaster compounded by hailstorms birthed pests such as the Fall Armyworm. The country further experienced flooding early in 2025 which destroyed crops across most districts.

The report revealed that maize production, the nation's staple, dropped by nearly 20 percent compared to the previous year.

It further noted that Lesotho's total planted area increased slightly by 2.6 percent thanks to better access to fertilisers and seeds, however, extreme weather conditions wiped out much of the progress, leading to a national drop in yields.

Agriculture in Lesotho is not only about crops but a web of interlinked livelihoods.

The report indicates that the country's rangelands showed some improvement, but livestock health has been hit hard by disease outbreaks linked to the prolonged dry conditions.

The report noted that in some districts, households were forced to sell off livestock to buy food. But even this coping mechanism is becoming unsustainable.

"High competition in the market has driven livestock prices down, leaving farmers with little to survive on."

The IPC report further warns that these shocks have weakened already fragile income sources.

"Remittances, casual labour and crop sales remain the main sources of income for rural households, but declining employment opportunities and volatile prices have reduced their purchasing power," the report said.

According to the 2024 Labour Force Survey, unemployment in Lesotho has climbed to 33.1 percent, with youth making up nearly 40 percent of those without work.

The three districts hit hardest by hunger are Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek, all classified under IPC Phase 3.

Here, thousands of families are consuming fewer and less nutritious meals, often skipping food for days.

Districts such as Thaba-Tseka and Berea show relatively better resilience, with about half of households maintaining acceptable food consumption levels.

However, in Qacha's Nek, Mokhotlong and Leribe, less than 40 percent of households are eating adequately, forcing many to rely on desperate coping mechanisms.

Nationally, the report finds that 44 percent of households are not yet engaging in negative coping strategies. But for the majority, survival now means borrowing food, reducing meal portions, selling productive assets, or taking on exploitative labour.

"The most vulnerable households are already resorting to measures that erode their future resilience and without timely intervention, the lean season could deepen hunger across all districts," the report warned.

"From October 2025 to March 2026, Lesotho's lean season is projected to bring deeper hardship. As household food stocks deplete, nine out of ten districts are expected to slide into Phase 3 (Crisis). Only Leribe is forecasted to remain "Stressed" (Phase 2)."

"High food and fuel prices are likely to persist, worsening the purchasing power of already vulnerable families. Even though South Africa, Lesotho's main food supplier—is expected to record strong maize yields, imported food will still be too expensive for many," the report noted.

It added that there is also a risk that heavy rains associated with a possible La Niña event could cause waterlogging, damaging crops during the next planting season.

"The number of people facing food gaps is expected to rise from 258,000 to 334,000. Without assistance, these households will resort to negative coping mechanisms to survive."

In July 2024, the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) and Disaster Management Authority reported that approximately 699,000 Basotho, or one-third of the population, were food insecure for the 2024/25 cycle. Similarly, United Nations reports in September 2024 indicated that around 700,000 people would face hunger in the coming months.

Funding Initiatives to Address Food Insecurity in Lesotho:

- In September 2024, the UN allocated US\$2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support drought-affected communities.
- The European Union pledged €200,000 (approximately LSL 4,030,000) in June 2024 to assist over 2,500 vulnerable families.
- According to LVAC, the government estimated a funding requirement of M1.149 billion to meet needs for 2024/25, an increase from M394 million the previous year.
- Earlier in mid-2024, the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) appealed for approximately M2 billion to finance immediate humanitarian aid and resilience-building programs.
- In May and July 2025, a US\$2.7 million (M50 million), one-off cash transfer programme supported by the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) and African Risk Capacity (ARC) provided relief to households affected by crop failure.

While the DMA/ARC intervention covered an estimated 86 percent of caloric needs for a portion of the affected population, analysts say it was too short-term to make a significant dent in the crisis.

Qacha's Nek received the highest coverage, 19 percent of its rural population.

The IPC analysis calls for immediate humanitarian assistance, particularly for households in IPC Phase 3 or worse. But beyond emergency aid, it urges the government to scale up long-term resilience programmes such as catchment management, rangeland rehabilitation and livestock vaccination.

"The government must strengthen early warning systems and invest in community-based forecasting to prevent recurrent food crises," the report recommends.

Despite the grim statistics, not all is lost. There are signs that Lesotho's markets remain functional, ensuring food availability even when local production declines.

Water levels in major reservoirs are high, and winter cropping is expected to benefit from residual moisture and the government's 70–80 percent input subsidy on seeds and fertilisers.

TB from Unpasteurised Dairy Products Could Infect Humans



Unpasteurized milk

By Tumelo Taole

Lesotho continues to bear one of the highest tuberculosis (TB) burdens globally. According to the Ministry of Health, 664 out of every 100,000 Basotho are infected with TB.

With a population of just over two million, this translates to at least 15,000 people living with the disease. Experts warn that TB can be transmitted not only between humans but also between cows and humans, a concern especially for dairy farmers.

This was highlighted by South African consultant Ronald Raphoole during a three-day training workshop for dairy farmers organised by the Lesotho National Dairy Board (LNDB) in Maseru on Monday.

The workshop aimed to equip dairy farmers with the knowledge and skills needed to improve production, compete internationally and protect both human and animal health.

Raphoole explained that unpasteurised milk from infected cows can transmit TB to humans.

He also warned about other zoonotic diseases, infectious illnesses that can pass between animals and humans.

"Zoonotic diseases are caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi, or parasites and can spread through direct contact, food, water, insects, or other vectors. Examples include rabies, salmonella, Lyme disease and influenza, which account for over 60% of human infectious diseases.

Brucellosis, another bacterial disease caused by *Brucella* bacteria Raphoole said also poses a significant risk.

"It spreads through direct contact with infected animals or their fluids and by consuming unpasteurised milk or dairy products. Symptoms include fever, sweats, headaches and body aches, and in chronic cases, the disease can lead to long-term health issues such as joint pain or heart valve inflammation," he described.

The first day of the workshop emphasised that dairy farmers should exercise caution when handling livestock. Experts recommended that both humans and animals undergo health screenings at least once a year to prevent disease transmission.

Statistics from the 2019/2020 agricultural year by the Bureau of Statistics show that Lesotho had 330,726 cattle, 59% of which were female.

Most cattle were over two years old, with 105,117 males and 154,992 females.

Maseru had the largest cattle population (59,029), followed by Leribe (56,094), while Qacha's Nek had the fewest at 1,303.

During this period, 7,158 cattle died from various diseases, with anaplasmosis responsible for the highest number of deaths (2,119). Berea recorded the highest cattle mortality (2,060), while Quthing and Qacha's Nek recorded the lowest (97).

Dr. Llang Maama, head of the TB and Leprosy Department at the Ministry of Health, noted that while TB transmission from animals to humans and vice versa is possible, it has not yet been confirmed in Lesotho.

She noted with improved testing mechanisms, the country's health system may determine the originalities of TB variants on humans.

"With improved testing, the country may one day determine whether animals are a source of TB, but to this date we aren't able to determine," she said.

She further highlighted the link between agriculture, nutrition and health outcomes, noting that poor agricultural practices and food insecurity can contribute to malnutrition, which in turn increases TB susceptibility and worsens treatment outcomes.

The Ministry of Health continues to advocate for community TB screening through programs in Advocacy, Communication, and Social Mobilisation (ACSM).

Farmers Trained on Responsible Water Use and Legal Registration of Irrigation Schemes

By Molula Mofosi

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, through the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project II (SADP II), has completed a week-long national workshop training farmers and irrigation associations on the legal use and management of water for agriculture.

The training brought together over 30 representatives made up of members of Mishaka, Mabeoana and Liholong irrigation schemes, as well as local community leaders, youth and women groups.

The participants were guided through the process of legally registering their irrigation associations and developing constitutions that would govern water use, management and accountability within their communities.

The training was facilitated by Mamotume Maliehe, Registrar for Civil Society Groups from the Ministry of Law and Justice, who said the purpose was to help water users form legally recognised and transparent organisations.

“Whenever ten or more people come together to pursue a common goal, that grouping is identified as an association and that association must be registered,” Maliehe explained, noting the law recognises the importance of organisation.

“It brings order, fairness and accountability. An unregistered association risks operating outside the law, which can cause problems in the long run,” she said.

She said the facilitation was part of the government’s joint effort to ensure that farmers benefiting from irrigation systems funded by SADP II comply with the Societies Act of 1966.

“It is every Mosotho’s responsibility to know and abide by this law,” she emphasised.

According to SADP II Irrigation Officer Tšitso Marabe, the training was necessary to formalise water users and irrigation groups in Lesotho, most of which previously operated without legal frameworks.

“We learned that many irrigation facilities introduced by government projects lacked proper governance structures, so registering these groups legally will protect the systems from being misused or claimed by individuals. It will also make it easier for them to open bank accounts, form partnerships and access markets.”

Marabe added that formalising irrigation associations also protects water as a shared natural resource.

“Water doesn’t belong to anyone, thus when we regu-



Irrigation scheme Workshop attendees

late its use, we protect the source, the system and the livelihoods that depend on it.”

He said the goal was not only to promote irrigation as a tool for food production, but also to teach farmers to view it as part of agribusiness that must be managed responsibly.

“Business and law are not separate in agriculture, in both, good governance ensures sustainability.”

For Lefa Maime, chairperson of the Mishaka Irrigation Scheme, the workshop was an eye-opener.

“Before, we didn’t realise how poor communication between farmers and livestock owners was harming our water sources,” he said.

He added, “Different users draw water for different purposes, for animals, vegetables and households, and without coordination, the systems quickly deteriorate. This training has helped us see the importance of structure and clear roles.”

Maime said the workshop also helped clarify leadership gaps within his association.

“We had a leadership structure, but it wasn’t well-defined. Now, with a proper constitution, we know exactly who does what and how to respond to challenges like water pollution or overuse,” he said.

For newly formed groups like Liholong Irrigation Scheme in Thaba-Bosiu, the timing could not have been better. The group, made up of 17 horticulture farmers, is about to receive new irrigation infrastructure from SADP

II.

“This workshop came at the right time,” said Matsie Mofokeng, one of the founding members.

“We are learning how to manage water wisely, how to handle finances within the association and how to take care of the irrigation technology responsibly.”

Mofokeng added that the workshop also helped dispel doubts in her community about SADP II’s support.

“Some people thought the project was just talk. But after this, we have seen that SADP II truly delivers. This training proves that they are investing in long-term solutions.”

According to Marabe, Maseru marked the final leg of similar irrigation governance workshops held in all ten districts of Lesotho. Each session concluded with participants drafting constitutions for both their irrigation schemes and water users associations, totalling six new legal documents by the end of the week.

As Lesotho continues to face the twin pressures of climate change and water scarcity, responsible water management has become central to the country’s food production strategy. The Ministry hopes that by equipping farmers with legal and technical knowledge, irrigation systems will remain sustainable for future generations.

“We are a water-rich country by name,” Maime reflected, “but without care and knowledge, even rich resources can run dry. This training is a reminder that water is life — and it must be protected.”

Market Before Production Roundtable Unite Farmers



By Topollo Tlali

Farmers, entrepreneurs and agribusiness partners recently came together for a roundtable discussion under the theme, “Market Before Production”, calling for a shift from traditional farming toward a more coordinated and demand-driven approach.

The discussion, facilitated by the district’s Department of Marketing with the support from the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP II), gathered crop producers from Butha-Buthe, Leribe and Mokhotlong alongside entrepreneurs and agricultural Extension Officers.

The aim was simple yet transformative, to ensure that what farmers grow aligns with what the market truly needs.

Opening the session, Matee Limo from the Butha-Buthe marketing office, said the purpose of the meeting was to reconnect the agricultural value chain.

“We called everyone together to maintain a strong chain where farmers, extension officers and entrepreneurs support one another,” he explained.

He added, “Farmers must produce with guidance from extension officers, while the market buys what the farmers grow. Meeting face-to-face helps us strengthen these partnerships and build a market that benefits everyone.”

The introductions that followed painted a vivid picture of agricultural diversity in the highlands, from cabbage and potatoes to onions, carrots, beetroot, tomatoes, and peppers.

Yet behind this abundance lies a common challenge: most farmers produce without knowing the market’s demand or quality standards.

This, Limo said is what must change.

“We can’t afford to plant first and ask who will buy later. Market understanding should guide production decisions if we want to stabilise food security and improve incomes,” he stressed.

Among the entrepreneurs who addressed the farmers were representatives from six local agribusinesses.

Their message was unanimous, quality, quantity and consistency remain the biggest gaps between producers and buyers.

“Basotho farmers are capable, but their production is often inconsistent and poorly packaged,” one shop owner noted.

“Because of that, many of us end up sourcing from South Africa. We want to change that, but it requires farmers to take market needs seriously.”

Mahasela Nkoko, representing the Northern Agric Hub, said the hub acts as the middle link between farmers and retailers.

“As a market centre, we align farmer production with what the market needs,” Nkoko explained, saying they buy from farmers, package the produce, barcode it and supply it to retailers.

“...But that process only works when farmers meet standards.”

Nkoko also revealed that the hub has conducted research on seed varieties that yield longer-lasting, high-quality produce suited for long shelf life.

“We are planning another meeting with government and farmers to share details of climate-resilient seed types that last longer on shelves without decaying,” he said.

He further introduced plans for contract farming arrangements, noting that the hub would classify producers into four categories based on farm size and production capacity to ensure stable supply chains.

“Farmers must also learn to price their goods fairly. Let’s align prices to market standards so everyone in the chain benefits,” he emphasised.

Closing the meeting, Vuka Tsabo, the Horizontal Alliance Officer with the SADP II revealed that demand within Butha-Buthe alone is enough to sustain hundreds of local farmers if they can produce in time and at an upscale.

“Every week, Butha-Buthe’s shops use about 9,700 bags of cabbage and 1,155 boxes of tomatoes, add peppers, onions, potatoes, carrots, and beetroot, these seven crops alone could secure the district’s food supply and boost our economy if farmers respond to this demand,” he shared.

Lesotho Farmers Pour Hope into Local Milk Production Drive

By Seabata Mahao

Lesotho’s dairy dream is slowly taking shape after years of the country’s reliance on South Africa for milk and dairy products.

The government, through the Lesotho National Dairy Board (LNDB), is now stepping up efforts to empower local farmers with the skills to produce milk that proudly carries the “Made in Lesotho” label.

This month the LNDB, in partnership with the Milk Producers’ Organisation (MPO) from South Africa, hosted a four-day dairy training workshop in Maseru.

The training gathered farmers from across the country to learn about dairy cattle breeding, nutrition, disease control and record keeping.

LNDB Chief Executive Officer Abiel Mashale said the training was part of a long-term plan to help Lesotho achieve self-sufficiency in milk production.

“As an organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture, our role is to build a strong dairy industry by supporting farmers and growing the sector. We funded this training with M60,000 so that farmers could attend free of charge and gain the skills to improve productivity and move the country to self-sufficiency,” he explained.

Despite Lesotho’s estimated 168,000 cattle owners, only 572 farmers have advanced dairy farming knowledge, a gap that limits local production.

However, progress has been steady, “...in 2016, national milk production was around 1.2 million litres a year, and today, thanks to continuous training and better management, we have reached about 2.3 million litres in 2024/2025.”

Mashale added that the LNDB continues to expand milk collection centres, artificial insemination services and heifer distribution programmes to improve herd quality and yield.

Workshop facilitator Ronald Rapholo from MPO emphasised that success in dairy farming depends on sound management.

He advised farmers to prioritise high-yielding, disease-resistant breeds as well as to ensure balanced feeding suited to different stages of lactation.

When you adopt preventive health measures such as regular vaccinations and parasite control, you are guaranteed to improve productivity, enhance profitability and build resilience.

Rapholo also urged farmers to keep detailed records of milk yields, breeding, and veterinary care to monitor herd performance and inform management decisions.

“Having cows doesn’t make one a dairy farmer. It’s about how you feed, breed and care for your animals.”

He urged farmers to invest in disease-resistant breeds, balanced feeding and consistent record keeping to track

performance and make informed decisions.

“If you don’t measure, you can’t improve,” he said.

For farmers like Mahe Moholei from Leribe, the training has been an eye-opener as before he worked with limited knowledge and a lot of guessing.

“Now we understand that milk production is a science. We now know what to look for in a good breed, how to feed them properly and how to keep diseases under control.”

Moholei, however, pointed out that high feed costs continue to erode profits.

“Feed is too expensive. Many of us end up losing more than we make. We are encouraged to grow our own fodder to cut costs and maintain proper herd nutrition, but that too is not as simple as its suggested,” he said.

Mashale reaffirming the LNDB’s commitment to strengthening the dairy value chain and supporting local farmers noting, “Our long-term goal is for Lesotho to produce enough milk for itself.”

He added, “Every farmer who applies what they have learned here is a step closer to that dream.”

As farmers left the training hall, many carried not only new knowledge but renewed hope.

“We came here as farmers but we are leaving as dairy entrepreneurs. Milk is more than just a product but a livelihood and a promise to our families.”

How Beleme Lebajoa Became the Architect of Merino Farming in Lesotho



Beleme Lebajoa, Founder of Matelile Agribusiness

By Molula Mofosi

The morning sun stretched across the Matelile hills on October 8th, casting a golden glow over a gathering that was more than a celebration but a testament to vision, discipline and faith.

Farmers, community leaders and agricultural officers converged in Mafeteng to honour Beleme Lebajoa, a dedicated wool and ram breeder who had reached a remarkable milestone: completing the fourth and final phase of the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project II (SADP II).

For Lebajoa, the founder of Matelile Agribusiness, the moment marked the culmination of five years of persistence, sleepless nights and steady learning.

From his humble beginnings with a handful of sheep and juggling being a police officer, to becoming one of Lesotho's most promising Merino breeders, his story mirrors the resilience of Basotho farmers who continue to thrive despite climate pressures, disease outbreaks and market challenges.

Raised in the village of Ha Seeiso, Matelile, Lebajoa always knew his heart belonged to farming.

By day, he serves in the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) in Maseru; by night and on weekends, he tends to his flock in the rural heartland where he was born.

"As a boy, I always knew that I would one day have a flock with my mark on them," he says proudly.

"Now I do."

His journey began in 2019 with just ten auctioned sheep. They were not of the highest quality, but he nurtured them patiently to potential.

"My flock was not excellent nor poor—it was just satisfactory, but I knew I could do better."

By 2022, through careful breeding and improved management, his flock had grown to 112 sheep, a testament to his discipline and understanding of animal husbandry.

Lebajoa's breakthrough came when agricultural extension officers intro-

duced him to the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project II, a World Bank-funded initiative under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.

Encouraged by the officers, he applied in 2020. The process was demanding: applicants had to demonstrate commitment and raise 25 percent of their project funding, while SADP II covered the remaining 75 percent.

"I had to sell my flock to meet the terms of the grant. It wasn't easy, but I believed in what I was building."

His perseverance paid off.

Matelile Agribusiness was awarded M400, 000, which transformed his farm's operations.

The first phase of the grant provided a borehole water system, kraal structure and 40 genetically improved ewes along with two rams.

Today, the farm stands proudly with over 60 high-quality Merino sheep, managed by a growing team of local workers.

"I produce my own feed mainly maize and grain for my sheep and the community and that that has been my secret to consistent quality."

At the celebration in Matelile, SADP II officers hailed the farmer as a model of excellence.

Ana Seke, Project Facilitation Officer for SADP II, described him as "a farmer who demonstrates that commitment and accountability yield results."

She noted that Lebajoa is the first farmer to complete the fourth and final phase of the SADP II grant scheme.

"In this second round of the programme, we had 22 beneficiaries and Matelile Agribusiness is the first to reach the finish line. His success should inspire others still on their journey," she said.

Lebajoa's discipline and transparency have made him a trusted example in the farming community.

His meticulous record-keeping, adherence to timelines and investment of profits into new ventures, including



A Ram provided by SADP II

grain production, have solidified his position as a true agripreneur.

The Lesotho National Wool and Mohair Growers Association (LNW-MGA) Chairperson, Mokoenihi Thin-yane, praised the farmer's work as crucial in building national resilience in Merino breeding.

"The closure of borders due to the blue tongue outbreak in South Africa created a shortage of breeding stock however, farmers like Lebajoa are bridging that gap. His rams and ewes are of such quality that they now serve as a domestic source of improved genes."

Thin-yane further reflected on how Lesotho's wool and mohair sector has evolved, saying; "Our farmers today are professionals. Men and women who earn respectable incomes. Farming is no longer associated with poverty. People like Lebajoa represent that change."

He noted that the calibre of farmers in the country has evolved over the years and that the wool and mohair sector has transformed into an industry that supports families and uplifts communities.

Speaking at the event, SADP II field officer, Relebohile Khathibe, explained that the broader goal of the programme is to transform smallholder farmers into commercial, tax-paying enterprises.

"The aim is to make agribusiness a key part of Lesotho's formal economy. We expect each beneficiary to create jobs, build community capacity and operate transparently."

He noted that Matelile Agribusiness now employs several workers, helping fight unemployment in Mafeteng.

"Every successful farmer means jobs created, and every job means food on a table. That is the ripple effect of this project," Khathibe said.

He stressed that SADP II encourages farmers to diversify.

"As long as investments remain within the agricultural value chain, expansion is welcome. That's how small farms evolve into enterprises that pay taxes and sustain communities."

Khathibe noted that many beneficiaries struggle to progress beyond the first or second phases due to financial or management challenges.

"What sets Lebajoa apart is his humility and discipline," Khathibe added noting working with him was easy.

"...he is proof that progress follows patience."

He also recalled Matelile Agribusiness' success in the National Small Stock Show earned him national attention.

"After his victory, the Minister of Agriculture publicly pledged to buy him a ram worth M30,000 through SADP II, that shows how much confidence the leadership has in him," Khathibe recalled.

Running a wool and mohair enterprise in Lesotho is not without obstacles. Climate change, disease outbreaks and costly feed are constant threats, but Lebajoa has found strength in self-reliance.

"My turning point was learning that producing my own feed keeps my sheep healthy and my costs low," he explained.

As a registered block farmer, he cultivates maize and grains to feed both his animals and his community.

"I never run out of food. In fact, I produce extra for my neighbours."

"With visible agribusinesses like mine, young people can see that hard work pays. They don't have to leave home or choose crime. They can build something," he said, hoping that the government continues to invest in breeding programs and disease management to reduce reliance on imported stock.

"Blue tongue is a serious issue that sees many farmers lose good animals because they don't know which vaccines to use or when. We need more education on that."

"I am grateful that SADP II fast-tracked my dream, but what keeps me going is the desire to see Mafeteng become a hub for quality wool and mohair production. If we keep improving and breeding locally, we can reduce imports and build our own legacy."



Mabita Poultry Farm Chickens



Mabita Poultry Farm Egg Production

Mabita Poultry Farm, a Layer Empire in the Making

By Seahlolo Reporter

The gentle rhythm of clucking hens and the hum of a self-pumping borehole tell the story of ambition, resilience and transformation in the village of Phaphama, in the district of Botha-Bothe.

It is here where Linkeng Mabitje, founder of Mabita Poultry Farm, is steadily building what she calls her “Layer Empire”, a dream that began with love, patience and faith in the power of agribusiness.

“I developed an interest in egg production in 1995,” she recalls, her tone filled with nostalgia.

She adds, “My mother-in-law was a poultry farmer, and I admired how she earned her living from chickens. But at that time, I was focused on education. I wanted to be highly educated and work in the corporate world.”

Her dream came true, for a while at least.

Linkeng worked in Pretoria, South Africa, where she rose through the ranks and reached the peak of her career. But, after years in the white-collar world, she felt a stirring for something more meaningful and sustainable.

“When I retired, I started different businesses, from salons to other ventures, but something was still missing,” she says.

“I wanted to build something that would last.”

That longing led her back home to Lesotho and back to the inspiration of her mother-in-law.

“I had seen poultry farming sustain her for decades. I wanted to follow in her footsteps, this time with real commitment.”

In 2018, Linkeng built her first poultry structure and took over 500 cages from her mother-in-law.

Three years later, in May 2021, she brought in her first 2,000 layers and officially launched Mabita Poultry Farm.

Her mentor — her mother-in-law — was there every step of the way, offering guidance and experience drawn from years in the business.

“She made me understand that poultry farming is a full-time responsibility.

“The birds depend on your attention, discipline and consistency to best perform,” Linkeng explains.

Just when she was trying to scale up, fate introduced her to the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II) which rewrote her script of success.

“I was approached by a service provider from SADP II,” she recalls.

“At first, I didn’t know what it was all about. I had never heard of the project before, but I was open to knowing more about them.”

After a detailed explanation, she realised it was exactly what



Linkeng Mabitje, Founder of Mabita Poultry

her farm needed, an opportunity to grow.

With the help of the service provider, she prepared her first application and cast her net.

“I had no idea I would be successful,” she says with a smile.

“When I received the news that I had been approved for funding, I felt a huge weight lift off my shoulders. For a long time, I carried the dream alone but SADP II came as a helping hand from heaven.”

Her first interaction with SADP II was through a training workshop, which she describes as a turning point.

“Before that, I had no formal training in poultry farming. Everything I knew came from experience and observation,” she says.

“But, the workshop opened my eyes. I realised I was sitting on a diamond, a good business that just needed proper management.

“I learned the importance of record-keeping, disease control and overall animal welfare. It completely changed my approach,” she says.

With the SADP II grant, Mabita Poultry Farm expanded its infrastructure and moved to creating employment.

“My biggest need was more cages to increase the capacity. I wanted to increase the number of chickens and improve production efficiency,” she explains, adding that the SADP II helped her add

more cages and also provided a new self-pumping borehole.

“Our old water system required manual pumping, which was time-consuming and unreliable. The new system made our operations smoother and less labour-intensive,” Linkeng states.

Today, Mabita Poultry Farm boasts 2,000 layer birds that produce eggs all year-round.

“There has never been a time when the farm had no chickens,” Linkeng says proudly.

“As soon as one batch reaches its cycle, another comes in. The production wheel keeps turning.”

This growth, she says, has created employment opportunities for the local community.

“I now have a team of four, two men who clean and feed the chickens and two women who collect and clean the eggs. I handle sales and administration of the business and thanks to the SADP II, this farm now supports several families.”

Linkeng admits that managing the business side of farming was her greatest challenge.

“Poultry farming is not just about feeding chickens; it’s about managing numbers, planning cash flow and maintaining consistency. Before the SADP II training, I used to struggle with keeping track of sales, expenses and feed quantities. Now, I run my business with structure and confidence,” she says.

The workshops, she notes, didn’t just offer tech-

nical knowledge but they instilled a business mind-set.

“SADP II has shaped the way I think about farming. It has decluttered my thoughts and perceptions of it. Mabita Poultry Farm is not a side hustle, it is a full-fledged business.

“That shift in perspective has made me more disciplined and goal-oriented,” she beams.

The transformation has not gone unnoticed as young farmers now looking to Linkeng for guidance.

“I have become a mentor of sorts,” she says modestly.

“Many people, especially the youth, visit my farm to learn about egg production. I always share the knowledge I have gained from the different SADP II workshops throughout this journey.”

Her influence has had tangible results, she notes, citing several young people she has mentored have applied for and received SADP II grants themselves.

“Seeing them succeed makes me so proud. I am convinced that farming can change lives, but we need to change our mind-set first to actually make it. Agriculture is not for the desperate, it’s for the determined,” she stresses.

Linkeng’s journey is far from over, she envisions building a large-scale, automated egg production facility with up to 50,000 layers.

“SADP II helped me realise my potential, now my goal is to establish a high-tech, fully automated poultry operation that increases efficiency, profit and food security for Lesotho while positioning me as a trailblazer,” she says confidently.

Her dream extends beyond business growth.

She aims to produce high-quality eggs for local supermarkets and eventually expand into regional markets.

“When I look at the quality of eggs we produce at Mabita Poultry, I see potential. The demand for eggs is high and I want to grow to a level where I can influence market pricing while maintaining top quality.”

As a woman who has carved her path in a male-dominated sector, Linkeng is passionate about seeing more women venture into agribusiness.

“Egg production is one of the best financial investments a woman can make. It doesn’t just put food on the table, it gives women financial independence and the ability to support their families,” she emphasises.

With fire in her voice and gratitude in her heart, she adds, “SADP II gave me the foundation, but the dream was always mine. Now I am building something that will last for generations. Mabita Poultry is not just a farm — it’s a legacy in the making.”



From M20 to Market Success, Mphalane Turns Unemployment into Prosperity



Mphalane T'silonyane, Founder of Sehlapong Vegetable Production

By Seahlole Reporter

In 2016, with just M20 in his pocket, and a new graduate with no clear hope of the white collar opportunity, Mphalane T'silonyane decided to fight off the idle mind that unemployment often breeds, and bought a few seedlings and seeds of a variety of vegetables.

The gesture that began as a small attempt to stay busy has grown into Sehlapong Vegetable Production, one of Butha-Buthe's most promising youth-led agribusinesses.

"I started with almost nothing — only twenty maloti and a strong will to work,"

"At that time, I had just completed my studies at the Lesotho Agricultural College, but jobs were scarce. I decided to use what I had, knowledge and passion," Mphalane recounts.

Armed with little more than determination, Mphalane began cultivating tomatoes, green peppers, and rape on an open field.

"I used normal seeds, and not hybrids, that were not suitable to our harsh climate. My crops suffered from hailstorms, frosts, and heatwaves. Year after year, I watched my efforts get washed away. With the education knowledge, my efforts were met with harsh reality of failure," he says.

Adding to his frustration, when yielded looked promising, was an issue of theft.

"Because I live far from the farm, thieves would harvest my crops before I could. It was heart-breaking because at this point on my journey, I had very little to show for my hard work."

For several seasons, Sehlapong Vegetable Production survived in name only but remained a struggling enterprise sustained by stubborn faith rather than profit.

"I never stopped seeking help. Through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, I stayed connected with extension officers who introduced me to a project that would later change his life, the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project II (SADP II).

"When I first learned about the SADP II, I didn't know it could help farmers like me but after applying and being selected as a beneficiary, everything changed."



Sehlapong Vegetable Production

Through the grant, Mphalane received a shade-net structure to protect his crops from extreme weathers, a borehole with a reliable water supply, a stand supporting three 5,000-litre tanks and a drip irrigation system.

"These facilities transformed my production completely," he says proudly.

He adds, "The shade-net protects the crops from hail and frost, a problem that rendered my efforts useless when I began my journey, while the borehole and drip irrigation system allows me to control soil moisture even during heat waves. I now produce consistently and with better quality."

Beyond infrastructure, SADP II introduced Mphalane to hybrid seeds that are more resilient to climate change effects and yield higher outputs.

"Before, I struggled with weak plants and low yields but with the hybrid seeds, my production improved drastically, both in quantity and quality," he

explains.

One of the most valuable aspects of SADP II, he says, was market exposure.

"SADP II facilitated market days where we could showcase our produce directly to buyers and that shortened the gap between producers and consumers. It reduced post-harvest losses and helped us build lasting trade relationships," he beams.

The market days, he says also gave him confidence; "When I compared my vegetables with others, I realised that my produce stood out. Customers preferred my crops and that gave me the motivation to grow even bigger."

With better yields came better profits.

"Sehlapong started generating enough money to reinvest. We managed to buy a vehicle for deliveries and input purchases, which improved logistics. We also fenced the farm to prevent theft," he states.

The once-struggling Sehlapong Vegetable Production is now a stable agribusiness employing two permanent workers, in addition to his wife, who co-manages operations.

"Employment creation is one of the best things that came out of this journey. Now the farm sustains not only my family but also the families of my employees."

Mphalane's decision to pursue vegetable farming was not random. It was personal.

"I grew up in a family that farmed vegetables for consumption, so after college, I realised I could turn that childhood experience into a source of income. Vegetable production doesn't require huge capital like livestock farming. With the right knowledge, it's easy to start and expand gradually."

He attributes his success to the combination of formal agricultural education, extension services and SADP II workshops.

"Each stage taught me something new, from disease control to financial management. Today, my farm rarely suffers from crop diseases because I apply preventive methods like fungicides and use resilient hybrid seeds as I have learned."

Through SADP II's training, Mphalane also learned about commodity groups, which are networks of farmers who produce the same crops for collective marketing.

"Being part of a commodity group has many benefits. We buy inputs in bulk at discounted prices, share knowledge and maintain production standards that the market requires."

This collaborative approach helped him secure contracts with three major clients — supermarkets, schools, and street vendors, ensuring a steady market for his vegetables.

"Today, I no longer worry about where my produce will go. Everything I harvest is sold."

Having overcome the harsh reality of youth unemployment, Mphalane is now mentoring five young farmers in his community.

"I know what it feels like to have a qualification but no job that is why I help other youth learn how to grow vegetables and start small businesses."

He believes vegetable farming offers one of the fastest returns in agriculture.

"Cash crops like tomatoes and green peppers can start earning profit within months. You don't need to wait years like in livestock production. That's why I keep urging young people to take up farming, it's practical and rewarding," he says.

He also highlights that SADP II is youth-friendly, encourages innovation and entrepreneurship among young farmers.

"The project doesn't just give you inputs, it gives you knowledge, confidence and exposure to the market," he says.

Looking to the future, Mphalane dreams of expanding his farm with more shade-net structures to increase production and employ more young people.

"Right now, our focus is maintaining quality, however, soon I want to increase our quantity too. That means more hands on the farm, meaning more young people getting work."

For Mphalane what started as an escape from unemployment has become a story of empowerment and economic freedom.

"Vegetable production gave me more than income. It gave me purpose. If we invest in knowledge and hard work, farming can rescue our youth from unemployment," he says with a smile.



Moshemane Farm, a Dairy Legacy in Construction



Moshemane Dairy Cattle

By Seahlolo Reporter

For Marefiloe Pitso, founder of Moshemane Dairy Farm, farming is no longer just a livelihood; it is a legacy in the making for her teenage daughter, Refiloe.

Situated in Serutle Tlhakaneng, Butha-Buthe, Marefiloe is a poised, determined woman who is challenging the norm and excelling in crafting a legacy, one that is nourished daily by milk, hard work, and love.

"I am building this farm for my daughter," Marefiloe says softly, her tone, a blend of pride and determination.

"It is my way of ensuring that she inherits something sustainable, something she can grow beyond me with."

Before Moshemane Farm became a thriving dairy enterprise, Marefiloe was known as a skilled grain farmer.

For decades, she produced sorghum, yellow maize and wheat on a medium scale.

Yet, recurring post-harvest losses gnawed at her profits.

"What drove me into dairy production was the loss I kept suffering from after every harvest. I needed a way to recover value from my crops and dairy farming offered that solution."

Her logic was clear and practical: grain production could feed livestock, particularly dairy cattle, animals known for their heavy feed requirements.

"In my view, dairy cattle consume a lot of feed and since I already had the grains, it made perfect business sense," she says.

Marefiloe began modestly with two dairy cows, but her first attempt was short-lived.

"I failed on a high note," she admits with a smile.

"I bought the animals without proper research or consultation. I simply did not know enough about dairy management."

Rather than giving up, she learned.

Selling the initial cows but keeping their calves, she started anew, this time leaning on advice and mentorship from other dairy farmers. With patience and humility, she nurtured the calves into maturity, her first major success.

"The calves became my teachers. By the time they reproduced, I had learned how to manage feeding, disease control, and the general wellbeing of dairy cattle," she reflects.

From two cows, her herd expanded to four milking cows, producing more milk than she anticipated.

"That's when I realised how high the demand for milk truly is," she says.

Her main buyer, Lesotho Dairy Products became a consistent part-



Marefiloe Pitso on the Left with daughter Refiloe Pitso right

ner.

"They have never once said milk supply is enough," she chuckles.

In addition to commercial supply, Moshemane Farm has become a community supplier, serving local households and schools.

"Our doors are always open for milk sales," Marefiloe says proudly.

With demand steadily rising, she saw the need to scale up.

"Dairy farming is not just about having cows, it's

about commitment, discipline, and proper feeding. These animals are like children; they require consistent care and attention," she explains.

Just as the business was finding its rhythm, tragedy struck. In 2024, Moshemane Farm lost three of its four dairy cows, two to bloat and one to a foot condition.

"It was devastating. I had plans to milk nine cows that year, but it all fell apart," Marefiloe recalls.

Yet, even in loss, she remained steadfast noting one fundamental lesson that one can't farm alone



Marefiloe Pitso in the Kraal

without employees to help in the operations.

Today, Moshemane Farm employs two full-time workers and three seasonal labourers, mostly during feed production seasons.

"It gives me joy to know that I am contributing to livelihoods in my community," she adds.

Her turning point came in 2022, when she applied for and won a Smallholder Agricultural Development Project Phase II (SADP II) grant.

"It was my first application, and I qualified," she says with visible gratitude.

She notes that the SADP II win came at a time when her dreams needed revival.

Through the grant, Moshemane Farm received a water supply system, site fencing and a large multifunctional kraal serving as a storage area, milking station and cattle shelter.

The grant also provided five pregnant dairy cows, greatly improving milk production.

"Losing the three cows had set me back, but SADP II doubled my herd and boosted production immediately. Now, I see profit margins widening and envision milking at least 20 cows in the near future," she says.

The additional infrastructure and improved management practices have allowed her to stabilise production and expand her customer base.

"SADP II shortened the journey toward my dream," Marefiloe says.

Looking ahead, Marefiloe plans to relocate the farm to a larger space and also expand land currently used for feed production.

"With the growth we are experiencing, I see myself transforming part of my crop fields into a full dairy farm," she says.

Her long-term vision is to diversify production into cheese, yogurt and sour milk, turning Moshemane Farm into a full dairy processing hub.

"When that happens, I expect to create even more jobs, especially for women and youth in my community," she says.

Her dream goes beyond profitability, "I see myself living on the farm, managing the cows closely and producing pure, quality milk and milk products," she shares.

Marefiloe is passionate about mentoring others, particularly women. "I always tell women—don't fear large animals or the kraal," she insists. "There's good income and dignity in dairy farming."

She believes women can break traditional boundaries and build wealth through agriculture.

She advises, "Start small, even with crossbreeds. Learn animal management first before moving to expensive breeds."

She also mentors several young farmers, some of whom have gone on to become SADP II beneficiaries themselves.

"It's fulfilling to see the youth following in my footsteps," she says.

Beyond funding, Marefiloe credits SADP II and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition for continuous support through extension services, training workshops and study tours.

"The workshops have been eye-opening. We have learned about feed formulation, animal nutrition, bookkeeping, marketing and disease management, all knowledge I am using to perfect this dream."

Through Nqabeni Resource Centre and SADP II, she's built a strong network of veterinarians and fellow farmers.

"I am more confident and informed now than ever before," she notes.

Moshemane Farm, she says, is not just a business but a vehicle that is bridging generations in her clan line.

Her daughter, Refiloe, already takes an active role during school holidays.

"Helping my mother on the farm teaches me responsibility," Refiloe says shyly.

"I now understand the value of what she's building and one day, I want to make it even bigger."

Marefiloe says each bucket of milk represents not just income but continuity, resilience and love.

"I am building more than a farm. I am building a beautiful future."



WORLD BANK GROUP



SADP II



Kingdom of Lesotho

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE

LESOTHO LOWLANDS
WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT PHASE III
Everyone Needs Water

REQUEST FOR QUOTATION FOR

SUPPLY, DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION OF EQUIPMENT FOR TWO HYDROMETRIC STATIONS

Name of Project: **Lesotho Lowlands Water Development and Sanitation Project III (LLWDSP III)**

Project ID No: **P-LS-E009-008**

Loan Number: **2100150043397**

LCB NO: **LS-LLWDPIII-0050-GO-LCB**

Date: **23rd October 2025.**

1. The Ministry of Natural Resources, Department of Water, received financing from The African Development Fund (ADF) (hereinafter called The Financier) for the implementation of the Lesotho Lowlands Water Development and Sanitation Project Phase III (LLWSDP III) that is intended to supply clean water and sanitation services to Botha-Bothe and parts of Leribe. LLWSDP III is coordinated by Project Implementation (PIU) based in Maseru. Part of the funds are to be used to procure equipment for Two hydrometric stations at Ngoajane and Khukhune.
2. You are invited to submit your quotation for supply, delivery and installation for the above as per attached schedule of requirements.
3. Bidding will be conducted through national competitive bidding

using Request for Quotation (RFQ) Method.

4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from Procurement Division Lesotho Lowlands Water Development and Sanitation Project Phase III, LNDC Development House, Block D level 9 Maseru, Lesotho to ramagelef@llwdp3.org.ls cc seitlhekome@llwdp3.org.ls and inspect the RFQ document during office hours 0900 to 1600 hours.
5. A complete set of Request for Quotation document in English may be obtained by interested eligible bidders at the above address.
6. Quotations must be addressed and hand delivered/courier to the address below **on or before 3rd November 2025 at 14:00hrs**, electronic submissions will not be allowed, and late bids will be rejected.

The Project Manager

Lesotho Lowlands Water
Development Project Phase III
LNDC Development House, Block D level 9
Constitution Road
Maseru, Lesotho.



Kingdom of Lesotho

LESOTHO LOWLANDS
WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT PHASE III
Everyone Needs Water

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
(CONSULTING SERVICES-FIRM SELECTION)CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISION OF DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS AND PILOT FAECAL SLUDGE
MANAGEMENT TREATMENT FACILITY

Project : **Lesotho Lowlands Water Development and Sanitation Project III**

Project ID No.: **P-LS-E00-008**

Loan No.: **2100150043397**

Ref No.: **LS-LLWDPIII- 00301-CS-CQS**

Date: **23rd October 2025**

1. The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho has received a Loan financing from the African Development Fund (ADF) towards the cost of the Lesotho Lowlands Water Development and Sanitation Project Phase III (LLWSDP III) and intends to apply part of the agreed amount of this loan to payments under the contract for Consultancy services for the construction supervision of distribution networks and a pilot Faecal Sludge Management treatment Facility.
2. The services included under this project are to carry out is :

Construction supervision of distribution networks and pilot faecal sludge treatment facility including service reservoirs and all the related works within the selected project area or settlements.

3. The Ministry of Natural Resources - Department of Water now invites eligible Consultants to indicate their interest in providing consultancy services as summarized in 2 above. Interested Consultants must provide information indicating that they have ten (10) years of demonstrable experience in construction supervision of water distribution networks and three (3) years for faecal sludge management treatment facility. They should also show that they have successfully carried out and completed at least five water supply projects similar or bigger in nature and scope, and at least two faecal sludge management treatment units in the past five years in developing countries. (Brochures, names and contact details of organizations for which the consultant has completed similar assignment, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc.)
4. The Consultant shall indicate the most recent successful performances (at least

five projects) accompanied by a certificate of completion issued by the client. In addition, they must demonstrate experience in FIDIC (Red book) contract of works for civil engineering construction. Consultants may constitute Joint Ventures to enhance their chances of qualification. The Client will provide available data to the Consultant, and the Consultant will undertake the assignments with highest integrity to ensure that the project objectives are met.

The consultancy services will be carried out within a period of Eighteen (18) calendar months.

5. Eligibility criteria, establishment of the short-list and the selection procedure shall be in accordance with Consultant Qualification Selection method (CQS) set out in the African Development Bank's "Procurement Policy for Bank Group Funded Operations", dated October 2015, which is available on the Bank's website at <http://www.afdb.org>.
6. Interested firms may obtain clarifications if any by email to the Procurement Specialist at ramagelef@llwdp3.org.ls cc makhaolam@llwdp3.org.ls or can come to the office from 8:00am -16:45hrs.
7. Expressions of interest of not more than fifty A4 pages must be hand delivered or sent by courier to the address below by 11:00hrs local time on or before 17th November 2025 and mention **"EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISION OF DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS AND PILOT FAECAL SLUDGE MANAGEMENT TREATMENT FACILITY"**.

Att: Mamathe Makhaola (Mrs)

Project Manager

Lesotho Lowlands Water Development and Sanitation Project Phase III

LNDC Development House, Block D, Level 9

Constitution Rd, Maseru 100.

Lesotho.



Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition
P.O. Box 24
Maseru 100
Lesotho
Tel: (+266) 22322741

Letter of Invitation

October 31, 2025

- The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho through Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition intends to test the Agricultural Soil in Lesotho for Enhanced Agricultural Productivity.
- The **Principal Secretary for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition** now invites **“Technical and Financial Proposals in SEPARATE envelopes”** to provide the following services: **Testing of Agricultural Soil in Lesotho for Enhanced Agricultural Productivity**. More details on the services are provided in the Request for Proposals (RFP) referred to under 5 below.
- The technical proposal shall clearly demonstrate your understanding of the expected outputs, your proposed approach to the services involved, necessary equipment, your comments on the Scope of Work, your relevant experience, and you will be expected to provide detailed and updated curricula vitae for the proposed key personnel for carrying out the assignment. The financial proposal should clearly reflect the breakdown of your fees and all other associated costs for carrying out the assignment.
- A Service Provider will be selected in accordance with the current Government Public Procurement Regulations 2025 and Public Procurement Act 2023 and the procedures described in the RFP. A firm will be selected under Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) procurement method as stipulated in this Request for Proposals (RFP).
- Detailed RFP is available at the address indicated.
- Your sealed proposals should be submitted at the following address by **12:00 noon on November 27, 2025**

Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Corner Constitution and Linare Roads, P. O. Box 24, Maseru 100, Lesotho. Tel: (+266) 22322741. Attention: **Procurement Manager**.
- The submissions should be clearly marked: **“(Testing of Agricultural Soil in Lesotho for Enhanced Agricultural Productivity)”**. It is the Service Providers' responsibility to ensure that their proposals are received on or before the closing date whether posted or hand delivered.
- The selection criteria shall take both technical quality and costs into consideration to determine the overall preferred Service Provider. Therefore, it should be noted that technical proposals will be opened first and evaluated and only those companies attaining the technical scores above the minimum pass mark will qualify for financial proposals opening and evaluation.
- Interested Service Providers from different firms may submit as an association or partnerships or joint ventures provided, they submit a letter of intent signed by all parties with a clear indication of the representative of such association or partnership or joint venture.



TENDER NOTICE

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL RISK MITIGATION FOR DREDGING OF RASEBALA DAM IN MAFETENG
Reference: **WASCO/SCM/10062025**

Water and Sewerage Company (WASCO) invites interested and qualified Individual Consultants to submit bids for **‘STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL RISK MITIGATION FOR DREDGING OF RASEBALA DAM IN MAFETENG’**.

All interested bidders must be in possession of a proven track record and must be licensed for providing services of this nature.

All bidders must attach certified copies Company Registration Licenses, as the quotations without these documents shall be disqualified.

Interested bidders shall access Terms of Reference for the RFQ from WASCO
Website: www.wasco.co.ls or through a request from supplychainmanagement@wasco.co.ls

Conditions:

- Tender is free of charge and one envelope **Request for Quotation (RFQ)**.
- The price quoted in the bid must be in LSL (Lesotho Loti) and include all applicable taxes and duties.
- The Quotes must be submitted in English.
- Tenders received later than the mentioned deadline below and electronic tenders **shall not be accepted**.
- Detailed tender packaging and labelling requirements in the Request for Quotation (RFQ) must be adhered to.
- Bidders (bidding company directors or individual consultant) must be WASCO services debt free throughout bidding and duration of the contract; otherwise, non-adherence shall lead to **disqualification**.

7. Important dates:

Action	Date
Issue RFQ	17th October 2025 @ 09:00am
Final date to submit written questions only (email format)	24th October 2025
Distribution of questions and answers to all bidders (email format)	28th October 2025
Final date for submission of bidder quotations in response to the RFQ	3rd November 2025 @ 09:00am: WASCO Head Office, Technical Boardroom
Public opening of the quotes	3rd November 2025 @ 09:30am: WASCO Head Office, Technical Boardroom

- All tenders should be delivered and deposited in the tender box situated at **WASCO Head Office, Technical Boardroom**, not later than the stated date above. The Quotations submission address is as shown below.

WASCO Head Office
P.O. Box 42
Industrial Area, (off Moshoeshoe Road)
Maseru, Lesotho 100
Tel: +26622262151; +26622262130; +266622262132

Any queries concerning this tender should be addressed to the Supply Manager at this e-mail address: supplychainmanagement@wasco.co.ls. All queries and questions shall be attended in writing and submitted to the bidders who purchased the document.



Vacancy Announcements

WFP is supporting the Government of Lesotho to implement a five-year Adaptation Fund project aimed at improving the adaptive capacity of vulnerable and food-insecure populations (IACoV phase II). A key component of this project is the effective implementation of climate change adaptation programme that enhances community resilience to chronic food insecurity and climate change impacts in Mafeteng, Quthing, Mohale's Hoek, and Thaba-Tseka districts. WFP therefore seeks applications for positions listed below for project implementation.

Title	External candidates link	Deadline
Programme Officer -SAMS (SC8)	https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/Programme-Officer---SAMS_JR116789	25 October 2025
Administration Assistant (SC4)	https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/Administration-SC-G_JR116719	
Communications Associate (SC6)	https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/Communications-SC-G_JR116724	
Procurement Associate (SC6)	https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/Procurement-Associate_JR116741	
Programme Associate-Knowledge Management (SC6)	https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/Programme-Associate---Knowledge-Management_JR116795	
Programme Officer - Field Coordination (SC9)	https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/Programme-Officer---Field-Coordination_JR116791	
Driver x 4 (SC2)	https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/Driver-1_JR116743	

NB.: It's important to us to create an accessible, inclusive workplace for everyone, so please email global.inclusion@wfp.org if you are shortlisted and need any disability related adjustments for your interviews/test/technical assessment. Our reasonable accommodations team will then connect with you to confidentially discuss your options.



Vacancy Announcement

Title	External candidates link	Deadline
M & E Associate G6	https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/M---E-Associate_JR116602-1	23 October 2025
IT Assistant SC5	https://wd3.myworkdaysite.com/recruiting/wfp/job_openings/job/Maseru-Lesotho-The-Kingdom-Of/IT-Assistant_JR116514-1	22 October 2025

NB.: It's important to us to create an accessible, inclusive workplace for everyone, so please email global.inclusion@wfp.org if you are shortlisted and need any disability related adjustments for your interviews/test/technical assessment. Our reasonable accommodations team will then connect with you to confidentially discuss your options.



Senawi Farm Breaks New Ground in Thaba-Tseka

By Topollo Tlali

It was a day of cheers and celebration of a long tiresome journey that started a doubted dream.

When Teleko Senauoane started Senawi Horticultural Farm in 2016, he had nothing but a small shack, 100 chickens and a dream that many dismissed as unrealistic.

A teacher by profession, Teleko had always wanted to feed his community and build a business that would one day sustain itself, but the road to success was anything but easy.

“I had a very small layer house, a shortage of water and poor egg production,” he recalled during a field day at his farm in Mophlaneng, Thaba-Tseka, held to celebrate his latest milestone.

“The chickens laid eggs on the floor, and sometimes they broke them. I was getting only about three trays of eggs a day, it wasn’t profitable at all.”

Back then, Teleko was trying to run a farm with limited resources and no real structure.

He grew vegetables on the side, kept pigs and ran a poultry project, learning through trial and error.

For years, he says, he lost more than he gained.

But his turning point came in 2019, when he heard about the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project II (SADP II) — a government programme supporting small farmers to become more productive and market-oriented.

“I applied for the grant and was lucky to be selected in 2020. Even then, it wasn’t easy. I had to raise 25 percent of the project contribution before I could get the support. It took sacrifice, but it was worth it,” he said.

Through SADP II, Senawi Farm received the tools and infrastructure that completely changed its operations, a proper chicken house, improved equipment and most importantly, a reliable water system.

“Before SADP II, I struggled to get enough water for my chickens, now we have a steady supply, and that alone has improved egg quality and the health of the chickens.”

The farm’s transformation was visible to everyone who attended the celebration. Where there was once a small, crowded structure now stands a well-ventilated poultry house.

The number of chickens has multiplied and egg production has more than tripled.

With steady income and a growing business, Teleko has been able to employ four permanent workers and hire others on busy days.

“I am proud to be creating jobs and producing food at the same time. This farm has become my life’s work.”

The event, which marked Senawi Farm’s graduation from the SADP II support programme, was attended by farmers, local leaders and agricultural officers.

Maisaka Litsefane, the project facilitation officer for SADP II in Thaba-Tseka, commended Teleko for his determination.

“We congratulate Senawi Farm for reaching milestone four. This success shows what can happen when farmers and government work together. SADP II is here for every Mosotho, we must join hands to fight hunger.”

Instead of hosting the usual speeches, the field day turned into a learning experience. Teleko and his team demonstrated how their new equipment grades eggs into medium, large and jumbo sizes, and how proper feeding and housing influence production.

“We chose to display eggs rather than live chickens,” Teleko explained saying chickens are sensitive to noise, and too much disturbance can cause stress that affects production.

“...Eggs, on the other hand, tell the story of our success.”

Farmers from across the district asked questions about breeding, feed and animal health. One participant asked how the farm prevents health complications among hens that lay extra-large eggs.

“Proper feeding is everything,” Teleko answered confidently.

“When you take care of your chickens, they take care of you.”

District Agricultural Officer Makhala Phalatsa praised Teleko’s perseverance, noting that his journey had inspired other farmers to see beyond traditional farming methods.

“When Senawi Farm started, many doubted that a horticultural farm could also succeed in poultry, but today, we have proof that with support and discipline, it’s possible. This farm is now a model of what smallholder transformation looks like,” she said.

As the day ended, Teleko used the moment to reflect on the lessons of his journey, from frustration to fulfilment, from scarcity to self-sufficiency.

“We in Thaba-Tseka know our district struggles with food shortages, however, that can change if we all take farming seriously. Agriculture is not just about survival at a home stead level.”

Today, Senawi Horticultural Farm stands as more than just a business. It is a symbol of hope and proof that with the right support, dedication and knowledge, small farmers in Lesotho can grow from hand-to-mouth survival to self-sustaining success.

“My story is simple,” Teleko smiled as he watched his workers pack trays of eggs. “Don’t give up when it’s hard. If you love the land, it will eventually love you back.”

Ntseo Seedlings Farm Blooms with Pride as It Graduates from SADP II



Different Seedlings at ntseo Seedlings and vegetables farm

By Topollo Tlali

It was a day of music, colour and heartfelt celebration at Ponseng, in the district of Thaba-Tseka, as farmers, nutrition clubs and community members gathered to honour the remarkable journey of Ntseo Seedlings and Vegetables Farm.

Smiles filled the air, hands clapped to the rhythm of ululations and the energy was unmistakable, this was not just a graduation, but a story of triumph born from resilience.

After years of hard work and perseverance, Palesa Ntseo, founder of Ntseo Seedlings, stood proudly beside trays of healthy and appealing seedlings as her farm celebrated its graduation from the Smallholder Agricultural Development Project II (SADP II) — marking the end of a transformative chapter that began in 2020.

“This day means everything to us. We’ve walked a long road and today, we finally celebrate what patience and partnership can achieve,” she said joyfully.

The event brought together a spirited mix of farmers, SADP II representatives and local nutrition clubs, each recognising the farm’s contribution to food security and livelihoods in one of Lesotho’s most challenging farming regions.

Speaking on behalf of SADP II, Maisaka Litsetsane described the celebration as a moment of pride not only for Ntseo but for all farmers who have worked tirelessly to adapt to climate challenges.

“Today we celebrate Ntseo Seedlings for completing a long and demanding journey. From a group of eighteen, seventeen farmers, including Ntseo, have reached this stage. It took discipline, resilience, and passion, we are very proud of them,” she said.

She added that as climate change continues to alter farming conditions, SADP II’s support helps farmers adopt new and sustainable methods that keep production alive in both highlands and lowlands.

Representing Thaba-Tseka’s nutrition clubs, Masello Sehlabaka praised the partnership between farmers and nutrition activists, saying their collaboration is vital in tackling malnutrition, which continues to affect many children in the district.

“We are proud of Ntseo Seedlings. Without farmers, our work in nutrition has no meaning. You are feeding lives and giving hope to Thaba-Tseka.” Sehlabaka said.

For Palesa, the day marked a victory that was two decades in the making.

“Ntseo Seedlings started in 1999 with only five trays,” she recalled.

“It was just me, working alone under the open sky. The sun, pests and diseases would destroy my plants. Sometimes I wanted to give up.”

Her fortunes changed in 2020, when she applied for and joined SADP II. By January 2021, Ntseo Seedlings had be-

gun its transformation.

“SADP II gave us shade nets that changed everything. Suddenly, our seedlings survived, grew faster and looked healthier,” Palesa said, smiling.

“It was the start of real progress.”

The programme later supported her with a borehole, ending years of drought-related struggles and ensuring steady irrigation. With access to water and modern infrastructure, Ntseo Seedlings began supplying farms and businesses beyond Thaba-Tseka reaching Maseru, Leribe, Mokhotlong and Qacha’s Nek.

“We now grow a variety of seedlings — tomatoes, peppers, chillies, onions, spinach, lettuce, beetroot and cabbage, however, because of the desired volumes, we cannot even meet all the demand! That shows how much potential there is in this business.”

But Palesa was quick to note that challenges remain eminent.

“Our highland climate delays production, especially during cold spells. Even with a borehole, drought can still affect us. But we have learned to adapt and stay strong,” she said.

During the field day, Ntseo Seedlings turned the celebration into a hands-on learning session.

Palesa and her team demonstrated how they fill seed trays, use drip irrigation systems and classify seedlings by size and strength. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and observe every stage of the process.

“We are producing both seedlings and knowledge. We train other farmers who want to start their own nurseries, because together, we can grow the agricultural future of Lesotho.”

The day ended with heartfelt remarks from District Agricultural Officer Makhala Phalatsa, who praised Palesa’s perseverance and the example she has set for other farmers, especially the youth.

“This week, I’ve attended two celebrations like this, both showing the determination of Thaba-Tseka farmers,” Phalatsa said.

“Palesa, your journey shows that hard work pays off. You have inspired many and I urge more young people to follow your lead.”

As the music faded and guests admired the rows of green seedlings swaying under their new shade nets, Palesa reflected on her journey with pride and gratitude.

“From 1999 to 2020, we fought hard to survive and today we have grown from five trays to 1,200 trays. That’s not just success, its transformation that was birthed by the SADP II which changed our story forever.”

Her message to fellow farmers was simple but powerful: “Farming takes time, but it rewards patience. Every seed you plant carries hope — and hope, when nurtured, always grows.”

Hope Hatches at Premier Farm

By Topollo Tlali

There was music, laughter and a deep sense of pride at Ha Ratsiu in Berea as farmers, community members and government officials gathered to celebrate Premier Farm's milestone achievement under the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project Phase II (SADP II).

The farm, owned by Mateboho Thotanyane, has officially completed Milestone Four, marking a remarkable journey of growth, resilience and innovation in Lesotho's poultry sector.

Speaking with visible joy, Mateboho shared her story of perseverance recalling how her journey began in 2019 with rearing chickens, but after her first successful season, she sold her flock and used the money for other needs.

When SADP II came, she decided to start again, this time determined to build something lasting.

Through the project's support, Mateboho began with 1,200 layer chickens, a number that has since grown to more than 3,000.

"The support changed everything. Before, I had one employee and today, I have eight people working full-time on the farm," she said proudly.

SADP II provided both technical and financial assistance, helping her modernise housing structures, secure a reliable water supply and improve feed management.

The result has been a significant increase in egg production, healthier chickens and a growing business footprint that now reaches beyond



Mateboho Thotanyane - premiere farm founder.

Berea.

"Premier Farm supplies customers in Buta-Buthe, Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka, Maseru and Berea. We work through written contracts to ensure timely delivery and avoid waste. Our dream now is to expand further and begin proper egg packaging to meet national retail standards," she said.

Thotanyane's ambitions didn't stop with poultry. With growing confidence, she ventured into pig farming and now manages more than 100 pigs. Beyond that, Premier Farm has become a model of sustainable agriculture.

"Nothing goes to waste on this farm. We use chicken and pig manure to produce biogas, which powers the farm. What remains becomes nutrient-rich manure that we use in our crop fields. It's a full circle; energy, food and fertility all in one."

This integrated system has not only reduced

costs but also turned Premier Farm into a self-sustaining agribusiness, embodying SADP II's goal of promoting productivity, sustainability and empowerment.

Mamello Sehalahala, an extension officer from Teyateyaneng, told the gathering that the day was not just about celebration but recognition.

"Today, we celebrate not only a milestone but a transformation of Premier Farm's journey with SADP II. This shows that with commitment, training and the right support, smallholders can grow into commercial producers."

The event attracted district officials, farmers and youth groups who came to witness what dedication can achieve.

Attendees toured the facilities, careful not to disturb the chickens, which are highly sensitive to noise.

The celebratory mood filled the farmyard, where each story shared reflected the hope that

agriculture can still be a path to prosperity in Lesotho.

Representing the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Labour and Employment, Tšelisio Mokhosi, commended Thotanyane for her success, describing her as a symbol of women's resilience in agribusiness.

"Farmers like Mateboho deserve more support. Her story is proof that when we invest in women farmers, we also create jobs, reduce unemployment and build food security for Lesotho," he said.

He applauded SADP II for its continued work in strengthening the agriculture value chain and urged that similar support reach other farmers to ensure a wealthier nation.

According to Food and Agriculture Organization statistics, Lesotho's total egg production reached 1.41 kilotons in 2022, a slight increase from the previous year.

While still below the record levels of 2014, the figures signal a sector on the rise, driven by dedicated farmers like Thotanyane.

The poultry industry has been identified as a vital area for fighting poverty and creating employment, as Lesotho still imports nearly 80 percent of its poultry and eggs from South Africa.

Experts say success stories like Premier Farm could help reverse this dependency trend.

"Improving poultry farming fights poverty, decreases unemployment and position Lesotho at a better place to be self-sufficiency," said Malefane Tšiu the CEO of TKM Agricultural Solutions, praising the progress of local farmers supported by SADP II.

As the event drew to a close, Thotanyane expressed her gratitude, looking around her thriving farm with emotion.

"I could not have done this alone. SADP II gave me the tools, but hard work and community kept me going. My dream is to see more Basotho, especially women grow their farms and feed this nation," she said.

15-Year-Old Dog Farmer Steals the Spotlight at Farmers Pitso Awards

By Topollo Tlali

The crowd erupted in cheers as 15-year-old Mohanoe Manyane walked onto the stage to receive his award, first prize in dog breeding at this year's Farmers Pitso Awards.

His bright smile told a story of hard work, patience and an unusual kind of farming passion, one that doesn't sprout from the soil but wags its tail.

"I couldn't believe it when I heard my name," Mohanoe said proudly, clutching his certificate.

"It feels like a dream come true. This shows me I'm walking in the right direction."

Sponsored by Makhaokane Eco Hygiene, this year's Farmers Pitso celebrated innovation in animal breeding and Mohanoe, the youngest contestant, stole the hearts of many.

At just 15, he's proving that farming has no age limit, only passion and dedication.

Mohanoe's journey began in 2022, when he told his parents he wanted to rear dogs. Instead of dismissing his idea as a childish dream, his parents encouraged him and even finding him a mentor, Mr. Mochuku Chabalala, a seasoned dog breeder.

"My father went the extra mile. He spoke to nate Chabalala and asked him to guide me. My mother supported me too, she even allowed me to turn our study room into a dog house," Mohanoe recalled.

That moment marked the beginning of what would become a thriving dog breeding business in their yard.

Growing up surrounded by animals, Mohanoe was already drawn to caring for them.

"I grew up watching my father keep goats, pigs, chickens and cattle. So taking care of animals felt natural to me," he said.

When he started, Mohanoe had just two dogs,



Mohanoe Manyane, first prize winner in dog breeding awards

but now he proudly owns eleven dogs, including cross breeds of Boerboel, Neapolitan Mastiff and St. Bernard.

He chose these breeds because of their friendliness, intelligence and their protective nature.

"Boerboels are loyal and strong, they're farm guardians. They need exercise, grooming and care. I make sure they get all of that," he explained.

Each day, Mohanoe feeds his dogs meat without bones, adds supplements, ensures clean water and keeps their shelter spotless. He even plays and talks with them to strengthen their bond.

"I love spending time with them. I brush their coats, talk to them and they know my voice," he smiled. "They are like family."

Behind his success lies a deep commitment to his dogs' well-being. He consults his mentor regularly, keeps a strict feeding routine and monitors their health closely.

"My day starts early to make sure all dogs eat and drink before I go to school. In the evening, I feed them again."

It's that level of care that earned him back-to-back recognition at the Farmers Pitso Awards in both 2024 and 2025, making him one of the youngest consistent winners in the show's history.

Like all farmers, Mohanoe's path has not been without loss and challenges saying he has lost some dogs in his journey.

At the awards ceremony, his story inspired many other young attendees. Teachers and students alike watched in awe as the teenager spoke about his passion. "Seeing a 15-year-old winning an agricultural award changed how many young people viewed farming that day," one teacher noted.

"Farming isn't only about crops, you can raise animals, train them, and turn it into a business."

Mohanoe said confidently.

Today, Mohanoe sells some of his dogs to cover feed and care expenses. He also participates in dog races and competitions, which he says help him identify strengths and weaknesses in his breeds.

Looking ahead, he dreams of turning his small business into a large-scale breeding enterprise, supplying quality dogs across Lesotho and beyond.

"I want to become one of the best breeders in the country," he said, his eyes sparkling with determination to see his business growing.

He ended his speech at the ceremony by thanking everyone who believed in him.

"To all who voted for me and sponsored the award — thank you. And to young people out there, farming isn't old-fashioned. Find your strength, work on it, and success will follow."

Mohanoe also offered some wisdom for aspiring breeders:

"Start with what you have. Even a local dog can become a great breed through selective breeding and proper care. You just need patience and knowledge."

According to cultural historians, dogs have long been part of Basotho life — as herders' companions, hunting partners, and home protectors. But as modern breeding practices evolve, young farmers like Mohanoe are helping shape Lesotho's new generation of animal breeders.

As he dreams of expanding his kennels and exploring English Bulldogs next, Mohanoe stands as proof that farming dreams can begin anywhere — even in a teenage boy's backyard.

"When I look at my dogs," he said with a proud smile, "I see more than animals. I see my future."

Agriculture and Journalism Take Center Stage at Kenya's Historic IFAJ Congress



Mesha CEO Aghan Daniel



MESHA chairman Bozo Jeje



IFAJ President Steven - Werblow 2025 Congress Day 1



All Photos Credit: IFAJ: Craig Stephen

By Lerato Matheka

Nairobi, Kenya – “Agriculture is the lifeblood of Africa, sustaining communities, driving economies and shaping the future of millions, yet, its stories often remain untold, hidden behind statistics and policy debates.”

The 2025 IFAJ (International Federation of Agricultural Journalists) World Congress of Agricultural Journalists, hosted by Kenya’s Media for Environment, Science, Health and Agriculture (MESHA) at Nairobi’s Ole Sereni Hotel from October 15 to 18, sought to change that narrative.

With over 250 delegates from 45 countries, the congress highlighted the vital role journalists play in telling Africa’s agricultural story to the world.

Opening the congress, MESHA Chairperson Bozo Jeje reflected on the association’s 20-year journey and the centrality of agriculture in African life; “Agriculture is more than an economic sector in Kenya. It is our heartbeat. It puts food on our tables, keeps families working and drives our economies forward.

“As journalists and communicators, we are translators of science and voices for farmers.

When we tell stories of innovation, we turn data into hope. When we expose injustice, we plant seeds of accountability and if we do not tell Africa’s agricultural story, someone else will, and they will not tell it right.”

Bozo emphasised the responsibility journalists carry in shaping public understanding and policy, urging them to highlight the contributions of youth, women and smallholder farmers.

“Let us commit to telling stories of courage, creativity and change. Our reporting must centre on those whose work makes agriculture possible, and ensure that our audiences understand the opportunities, the challenges and the innovation happening across Africa.”

MESHA Secretary Aghan Daniel highlighted how agricultural journalism has evolved over the past two decades, stressing its role in driving solutions.

“This congress brings agricultural journalists from across the globe together to witness how African journalists are transforming agriculture through storytelling.

“Twenty years ago, stories on agriculture were rare in print, on radio or on TV. Today, journal-

ists are producing solution-oriented stories that inspire action, inform farmers and influence policy,” he said, adding, “Our role is not just to report; it is to connect research, innovation and the realities of the farm to communities that depend on them.”

Speaking at the opening, the IFAJ President, Steve Werblow, reinforced the global importance of agricultural journalism stressing that agriculture knows no borders.

“Climate change, crop diseases and food security are international challenges and journalists must provide accurate, timely and accessible information so that farmers and policymakers can make informed decisions. At IFAJ, our mission is to share knowledge, defend press freedom and ensure that the voices of farmers are heard worldwide.

“While in Kenya, I encourage you to learn as much as you can, and bring that understanding home to your communities and your audiences.”

Werblow also underscored the collaborative nature of agricultural journalism.

“What we in this room, and our IFAJ colleagues around the world bring to our audiences

is understanding and perspective on how research in places like Kenya can help farmers in our own countries. Insight into the people and processes behind the crops, the livestock and the innovations that feed the world.

“Agricultural journalism is not just reporting, it is a vital service to societies globally,” Werblow said.

Over four days, delegates attended plenaries, workshops and field visits, exploring Kenya’s farms, research stations, aquaculture projects and digital agriculture innovations.

Sessions addressed climate-smart farming, youth-led initiatives, gender equity and ethical reporting.

The IFAJ–Alltech Young Leaders Programme spotlighted emerging journalists pushing the boundaries of agricultural storytelling, demonstrating how media can bridge the gap between science and the farmer’s field.

The congress concluded with a celebration of African journalists’ dedication. Delegates departed inspired to bring back stories that connect research, innovation, and farmer experiences to communities worldwide.