



**Meraka e fana ka tšireletso lisoseng  
tse lateng tsa tahleho ea mehlape**



**Letsetsa: 2221 5600**



Alliance ke bafani ba litšebeliso tsa lichelete ba ngolisitsong ka molao. Melao le lipheho li teng.



# SEAHLOLO

- we grow together -

Vol. 3 Issue 9

27|03|2026 - 30|04|2026



# Stakeholders Explore Crop Insurance to Protect Lesotho's Farmers

**Page 2**

**AUDIT REVEALS  
SERIOUS FINANCIAL AND  
PROCEDURAL FAILURES IN  
SADP II**

**Page 5**

**MAKHALANYANE PUSHES  
FOR POLICY SHIFT ON  
FARMING INPUTS  
PROCUREMENT**

**Page 6**

**FREE DIGITAL PLATFORM  
LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT  
FARMERS ACROSS LESOTHO**

**Page 15**



**Pick Smart.  
Play Sporty14**

**Win up to  
M100,000  
Play with M5 Only!**

Dial \*303\*01# or visit [www.sporty14.com](http://www.sporty14.com)

Ts & Cs Apply



Scan the QR code  
to Predict Now

66 100 100

# OUR TEAM

## Managing Editor

Lerato Matheka

## Production

Bataung Monaheng

Khosi Matheka

## Reporters

Ntsoaki Motaung

Seabata Mahao

Thoboloko Ntšonyane

Lungile Maseela

Topollo Tlali

## Sales & Marketing

Tefa Sello

Tumelo Ramots'oane

## Videographer

Tumelo Taale

Khosi Matheka

## IT & Innovation

Fusi Hlaoli

## Distribution And Admin

Lehlohonolo Mantsoe

## Reach Us

(+266) 2231 4267

6242 5157

(WhatsApp)

5092 0676

admin@seahlolo.co.ls

## Website

www.seahlolo.co.ls

## Publisher

Newsday Media

## Printers

RISING SUN PRINTERS

# Stakeholders Explore Crop Insurance to Protect Lesotho's Farmers



Withered Maize - Picture Courtesy Bloomberg

## By Lungile Maseela

Stakeholders from Lesotho's agriculture sector, including government officials, development partners and private sector representatives, met in Maseru on March 26 this year to explore the introduction of crop insurance as a tool to protect smallholder farmers from climate-related losses.

The meeting, convened by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition in collaboration with the World Food Programme and other partners, forms part of ongoing efforts under the Second Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II) to strengthen agricultural resilience.

Crop insurance, still in its early stages in Lesotho, is expected to serve as a financial safety net by compensating farmers in the event of crop failure. The initiative aims to reduce production risks and encourage farmers to invest more confidently despite the uncertainties posed by climate change.

Speaking at the meeting, Mamoeketsi Loke, standing in for the Director of Planning and Policy Analysis, emphasised the importance of protecting farmers from both climate and production risks.

"Farmers continue to face persistent challenges, including irregular rainfall, drought and unexpected disasters. The smart subsidy programme was introduced to help them manage these risks and improve productivity," she said.

Discussions focused on findings from monitoring and evaluation activities related to smart subsidies, as well as practical strategies for implementing crop insurance in a way that is accessible and beneficial to smallholder farmers.

Participants reviewed survey results, analysed data, and assessed pilot interventions

carried out under SADP II.

Presentations highlighted progress made during the pilot phase, outlining successes as well as areas requiring improvement. Stakeholders identified gaps in implementation and proposed ways to refine the programme as it moves into its next phase.

Despite promising results, several challenges were raised. These include stock shortages among agro-dealers, limited awareness and understanding of insurance among farmers, and concerns around trust in insurance systems. Participants also stressed the need to ensure greater inclusion of youth and persons with disabilities in agricultural programmes.

Director of Field Services, Thabo Sekhonyane, underscored the importance of collaboration.

"The Ministry cannot work in isolation. All stakeholders must come together to develop a clear strategy that effectively supports farmers," he said. "This initiative will increase production and allow farmers to focus on what they do best."

He described the programme as a long-term commitment to improving livelihoods and building a more resilient agricultural sector.

Climate change continues to pose a significant threat to food security in Lesotho, with erratic rainfall patterns and recurring droughts disrupting farming cycles. For many smallholder farmers, these conditions have resulted in repeated crop failures, reduced incomes and increased vulnerability.

Through SADP II, stakeholders are promoting the integration of smart subsidies with innovative financial solutions such as crop insurance. This combined approach is expected to improve productivity while strengthening sustainability and resilience.

Maleseli Tšiu, Head of Underwriting at LNING Hollard, highlighted the importance of partnerships between insurers and government.

"Our collaboration is not just about profit, but about helping farmers manage risk and secure their livelihoods," she said.

Insurance providers are expected to play a key role in designing products that are affordable, practical and tailored to the needs of Basotho farmers, ensuring that crop insurance schemes are widely adopted across rural communities.

Stakeholders also emphasised the need for awareness and education, noting that many farmers remain unfamiliar with how insurance works. Investment in outreach programmes will be essential to build trust and improve understanding.

For smallholder farmers, the introduction of crop insurance could mark a turning point. With a reliable safety net, farmers may be more willing to adopt improved seeds, fertilisers and modern farming techniques, ultimately boosting productivity and strengthening food security.

However, affordability remains a major concern, particularly for small-scale farmers with limited financial resources. Accessibility, effective implementation and sustained coordination among stakeholders will be critical to the initiative's success.

Despite these challenges, the meeting signalled a strong commitment from the government and its partners to transform Lesotho's agricultural sector.

By combining policy support, financial innovation and collaboration, the country is taking meaningful steps toward building resilience against climate shocks.



# MERAKA LIVESTOCK COVER



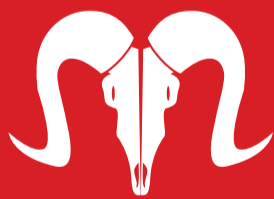
**Meraka e fana ka tšireletso lisoseng  
tse lateng tsa tahleho ea mehlape**



**Bosholu**



**Likoluo**



**Mafu**



**Likotsi**



**Letsetsa: 2221 5600**



**ALLIANCE**

Always there for Basotho



Dairy cattle

By Topollo Tlali

Lesotho Dairy Products temporarily suspended milk collection in March this year to carry out essential maintenance at its processing plant, leaving many farmers with surplus milk and nowhere to sell it.

The halt, which ran until 1 April, was necessary to repair the plant's Cleaning-in-Place (CIP) system and fix machinery faults affecting milk handling quality.

The company said the shutdown was aimed at repairing the plant's Cleaning-in-Place (CIP) system, vital for maintaining hygiene during milk processing, and addressing faults in processing machinery that impact milk handling quality.

While milk collection was initially scheduled to end on February 25, 2026, the deadline was extended to accommodate final

deliveries. Full operations resumed on April 1, 2026.

During the suspension, milk collection was limited to certain lowland districts, including Botha-Bothe, Leribe, Berea, Matsieng, Mazenod, Mafeteng, and Lithabaneng (Maseru). Farmers in Mokobolo had a designated collection window from 21 to 31 March 2026.

The company also emphasised strict safety and hygiene measures at its Lithabaneng facility, including restricted access, mandatory protective clothing, vehicle disinfection, and enhanced disease control.

Farmers were advised to manage uncollected milk by processing it into dairy meal or disposing of it safely to prevent contamination and reduce the risk of livestock diseases such as mastitis.

For many, the suspension created a cri-

# Dairy Farmers Face Losses During Temporary Milk Collection Suspension

sis. "I feel like I am working just to throw everything away," said Mpho Sekonyela, in an interview with this publication in March. Sekonyela is a dairy farmer from Ha Moruthoane.

"Receiving notice that my last delivery would be my final one until next month was devastating. My cattle produce a lot of milk daily, and I don't know where to deliver next." He typically delivers 700 liters daily, and no less than 300 liters during low production.

Thabo Selwane, a dairy farmer from Koalabata, described the emotional and financial toll of relying on a single buyer. "We prided ourselves on contributing to the nation's food supply, and now we are forced to throw milk in trenches, feed it to pigs, or let it spoil.

People in villages don't have money to buy large quantities, so even selling locally isn't an option."

Many farmers operate on loans or credit, relying on daily milk sales to support household expenses, school fees, and basic needs. The temporary halt, they said, would disrupt entire household economies and compound the stress.

Speaking on behalf of the Lesotho National Dairy Board, CEO Abiel Mashale said the board had not received a formal announcement about the suspension but expressed sympathy for affected farmers. "We understand the pain farmers are facing as their businesses incur financial losses and milk is wasted," Mashale noted.



Representation of Basotho cattle affected by lumpy skin disease ....picture ; Facebook .Agriworld farm supplies

By Lungile Maseela

Ha Qamo, a village in Peka, Leribe, has taken decisive action against the spread of Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) following a large-scale vaccination campaign launched on March 18, 2026.

The initiative, spearheaded by local entrepreneur and Member of Parliament (MP) for Peka Constituency, Mohopoli Monokoanane, vaccinated over 200 cattle on the first day, with plans to reach more than 4,000 cattle across the village within a week.

In a notable move, Monokoanane confirmed that the campaign is being funded entirely from his own resources, citing delays in government response as the motivation for his intervention.

He has also hired a private veterinarian to assist farmers and ensure that both infected and healthy cattle receive timely attention. Plans are underway to extend the campaign across the wider constituency.

"I could not wait while farmers continue to lose their livestock. I am funding this vaccination campaign myself and have hired a veterinarian to assist. Farmers from neighbouring villages are already bringing their cattle for vaccination, and we will continue to ensure all cattle are protected," Monokoanane said.

The campaign targets both infected and uninfected cattle, aiming to contain the outbreak and prevent further transmission. Vaccination teams are moving systematically across the area to maximise coverage, especially as concerns grow over the speed at which LSD spreads.

Previous reporting has highlighted the rising threat of LSD in Lesotho, particularly during warmer months when insect activity is high. The disease, transmitted by biting insects such as flies, mosquitoes, and ticks, causes fever, enlarged lymph nodes, and characteristic skin nodules.

Infected cattle often experience severe weight loss, reduced milk production, and, in

# Peka Leads Local Response to Lumpy Skin Disease Outbreak

extreme cases, death. This reduces both the market value of livestock and the financial stability of farmers who rely on cattle for income and food security.

In Lesotho, cattle farming remains a cornerstone of rural livelihoods, meaning outbreaks of LSD can have far-reaching economic and social impacts.

Restrictions on livestock movement, reduced productivity, and limited market access continue to threaten the sector's stability during outbreaks.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, however, has defended its response, stating that nationwide vaccination efforts are underway. Chief Information Officer Lereko Masupha noted that veterinarians have been deployed across the country, with 27 vehicles moving teams between districts to vaccinate livestock efficiently.

Monokoanane's intervention underscores gaps in localised coverage, suggesting that while the national campaign is active, some areas, such as Ha Qamo, may have experienced delays before the outbreak escalated locally.

Experts emphasise that timely and widespread vaccination remains the most effective method of controlling LSD. When combined with isolating infected animals and controlling insect vectors, rapid vaccination can significantly curb the spread and impact of the disease.

The efforts in Ha Qamo highlight both the urgency of the outbreak and the importance of coordinated responses across national and local levels. As vaccination continues nationwide, the effectiveness of these combined strategies will be key to protecting livestock, supporting farmers, and minimising economic losses in Lesotho's livestock sector.

# Audit Reveals Serious Financial and Procedural Failures in SADP II

By Topollo Tlali

The Consolidated Financial Statements of the Government of Lesotho for the year ended 31 March 2023, tabled in Parliament last month, have exposed a series of serious financial and procedural lapses within the Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II) during the 2022/23 period.

The report showed that SADP II spent M143,750 to hire an accounting firm, Sera Holdings, to prepare financial statements without adhering to mandatory government tendering rules.

The firm, not selected in accordance with the Accountants Act of 1977, reportedly lacked the required public sector accounting expertise. This contributed to a failure to submit financial statements for both the 2022/23 and 2023/24 years, alongside major errors in recording bank accounts and financial notes.

The audit also highlighted significant irregularities in contract awards. Sefali Suppliers (PTY) Ltd received a M462,000 contract to supply fruit trees to nutrition clubs in Be-

rea, Leribe, Maseru, and Mafeteng without any competitive bidding process.

Similarly, four other companies, KB Express, Master Suppliers, Dicler, and Shezy Consultancy, were awarded contracts for shade net structures totalling over USD 515,000, bypassing the legal requirement for competitive tenders for projects exceeding USD 10,000.

Beyond these spending irregularities, the report pointed to a breakdown in leadership and oversight. The Finance Manager position remained vacant for nearly a year, from March 2023 to January 2024, leaving project finances without proper supervision.

The Project Steering Committee has also been non-operational since the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in annual work plans, budgets, and procurement strategies being executed without formal approval.

In one of the most striking findings, the audit revealed that seventeen employees continued to receive salaries totalling M547,500 despite their contracts having expired and never being renewed.



## FARMERS PITSO AWARDS GALA DINNER

MPILO BOUTIQUE HOTEL

12<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2026 | 6:00PM

THEME | BLACK TIE

TICKETS

**GENERAL**

Single = **M700** | Couple = **M900** |

**VIP**

Single = **M1 300** | Couple = **M1 700** |

Table | **Normal**  
**M6 800**

Table | **VIP**  
**M8 800**

Tickets available at <https://etickets.co.ls>

Call us: (+266) 6242 5157 | 5092 0676



# Maluti Fresh Produce Market faces closure

... LNDC refutes this, claiming the facility is merely relocating

... Ministry of Agriculture is unaware of either closure or relocation



**By Thoboloko Ntšonyane**

**B**arely five years into operations, Maluti Fresh Produce Market is reportedly facing closure, a decision that is likely to directly affect local fresh-produce farmers.

According to insider information obtained by this reporter, the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC), which manages the centre, has instructed employees to prepare for closure, with the facility set to shut down on March 31, 2026.

Launched in October 2021, the Fresh Produce Market employs approximately nine full-time staff members.

"They were informed verbally that March 31, 2026, would be their last day at work, following a management decision to close the facility due to its lack of sustainability," a source familiar with the situation revealed.

"They were told that the market would remain closed pending an investor to finance daily operations," the source added.

Maluti Fresh Produce Market was established to provide farmers with market access, offer post-harvest services (washing, sorting, packaging), primary processing (peeling, cutting, dicing), cold room storage, a transparent trading platform, consultation and advice, job creation, and advantageous location and facilities.

The nine employees were reportedly waiting for an announcement regarding their relocation to the Masianokeng/Basotho Cannery Facility, a move announced last year. However, to their shock, they now face unemployment in the coming month.

Affectionately known as Tikoe, the market served as a hub for various Basotho farmers producing cash crops. Some farmers have confirmed to this paper that they were turned away when attempting to deliver their consignments since last Monday, being informed that the facility is closing down.

Many farmers have invested significant resources in production, as this centre served as a one-stop shop for the country's farming value chain.

"This shutdown will threaten our income and disrupt our businesses. What is worse is that no one thought it necessary to inform the farming community about this; it is very angering," said one farmer who wished to remain anonymous.

Maluti Fresh Produce Market is a unique facility in Lesotho, designed specifically to meet the needs of local farmers and ensure they have a reliable marketplace for their fresh produce. It also provides agricultural producers with solutions for storage, processing, and trading under one roof.

The market allows farmers to bring their produce directly to consumers, ensuring prompt payment for their goods. This has enabled farmers to scale their operations and engage in international trade as well as with established retailers.

The construction and establishment of this facility were made possible through the support of funders and LNDC via the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Project, initiated by the International Trade Centre (ITC).

It plays a vital role in meeting market demands and supporting the sustainability of local farmers.

In response to questions from this publication, Tiisetso Moremoholo, the LNDC's Corporate Communication Manager, denied reports of the market's closure, stating that the facility is instead relocating.

"The Lesotho National Development Corporation has not decided to close the Maluti Fresh Produce Market Centre. Rather, the Market Centre is being relocated to the Masianokeng Cannery building. The equipment at the Market Centre will be dismantled and reassembled at the new location, which will necessitate a temporary halt in input from Basotho farmers, as the

produce would spoil without adequate storage facilities.

"This move has been prompted by the opening of a textile factory that will commence immediately after the refurbishment of the outgoing Market Centre, creating 500 jobs," said Moremoholo.

She further emphasised that the Maluti Fresh Produce Market Centre remains a priority for the LNDC and will continue to serve farmers across the country while assisting them in accessing markets.

"The Corporation is also seeking a private investor to acquire and optimally operate the market centre at its new location," Moremoholo revealed.

However, Moremoholo did not address questions regarding stakeholder involvement in the LNDC's decision regarding the Market Centre.

When contacted for a reaction on the impact of the relocation, Lekhoee Makhate, the Director of Marketing in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, expressed ignorance of any developments.

Makhate stated that, to his knowledge, there have been no decisions regarding either the relocation or closure of the Market Centre.

"While there is a new directive that all communications to the ministry be routed through the office of the Principal Secretary, I am not aware of this issue you are mentioning.

"My department is responsible for licensing market centres in the country, and if any changes were to be made, I trust we would have been officially informed. As far as I know, we do not have any information regarding this matter; however, I have heard the naysays, and I am not at liberty to take them to heart as I believe LNDC would have officially communicated any decision that would directly impact farmers," he said.

## Makhalanyane pushes for policy shift on farming inputs procurement



Hon Mokhothu Makhalanyane

**By Thoboloko Ntšonyane**

**C**hairperson of the Social Cluster Portfolio Committee, who also serves as the Chair of Chairpersons in Parliament, Mokhothu Makhalanyane, has called on the government to stop procuring farming inputs.

Makhalanyane, the Member of Parliament for Mokhethoaneng Constituency No. 27, made the remarks during the Committee of Supply debate on the 2026/2027 Estimates of Expenditure from the Consolidated Fund in the National Assembly. The session followed the budget presentation by the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi.

He argued that exemptions should be made for those who cannot afford farming inputs, while those with the means should be required to pay.

The Ministry of Agriculture told the House that agriculture has the potential to drive national development, strengthen food security, improve nutrition, and enhance rural resilience.

Thuathe Constituency MP, Voeswa Tsheka, had questioned Makhalanyane whether he agrees with previous parliamentary debates suggesting that the ministry should withdraw from procuring farming inputs.

"We are not talking about discussion. We are talking about policy now. We want to see discussions translated into policy," Makhalanyane said.

He added that there is a need to prepare for the future, warning that many could find themselves at a serious disadvantage if reforms are delayed.

He also referenced the stance of the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Dr Retšelisitsoe Matlanyane, that government must align its actions with its commitments.

Makhalanyane further noted that only a few people currently benefit from the existing arrangement.

Meanwhile, Minister Mofosi told this publication that the government plans to outsource the procurement of farming inputs to the private sector.

Mofosi has requested a recurrent budget of M548 million to accelerate key agricultural programmes.

Presenting the budget, he said the funds will support extension services, improvement of merino and angora breeds, pest control, and nutrition initiatives. The ministry also plans to assist emerging businesses, provide subsidies for farming inputs, and strengthen the agricultural value chain.

He added that part of the budget will go towards soil testing and improving farming practices.

Mofosi explained that the budget is divided into three main categories: M191 million for salaries, M39 million for travel, documents and transport, and M310 million for operating costs.

The ministry expects to generate M72 million in revenue. The minister also raised concerns about the role of middlemen, accusing them of charging farmers exorbitant prices.

MP Machesetsa Mofomobe argued that there is no justification for procuring directly from the source, adding that the ministry does not want to invoke the 15 percent preference margin provided for under procurement laws.

Concerns over food security have intensified this year and could be worsened by the ongoing conflict involving Iran, Israel and the United States, which erupted on 28 February 2026.

In its analysis, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has raised alarm over disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical corridor that transports about 13 percent of the world's fertilisers and other agricultural chemicals.

The Strait of Hormuz facilitates a significant share of global trade, including crude oil, liquefied natural gas and fertilisers.

# 26 Mokhotlong Farmers Graduate from Field School Programme

By Topollo Tlali

The Smallholder Agricultural Development Project II (SADP II), in collaboration with the Department of Agricultural Research under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, has awarded certificates to 26 members of the Itjareng Farmers Field School in Mokhotlong after three years of training.

The graduation marked a significant milestone, highlighting the farmers' journey of practical learning, knowledge-sharing, and skills development aimed at improving agricultural productivity.

Farmers' Field Schools (FFS) were introduced in 2021 under the Agricultural Productivity Programme for Southern Africa (APPSA), through a sub-project focused on driving technology adoption and enhancing profitability through the dissemination of improved agricultural practices.

Guided by the principle of "learning by doing," the Itjareng group underwent hands-on training in soil preparation, fertiliser and manure application, seed selection, pest management, harvesting, storage, and market access.

The celebratory mood among the graduates reflected the programme's impact, with many farmers noting that the training has enabled them to make more informed decisions in their daily farming activities compared to before joining the initiative.

They expressed gratitude to APPSA, the Department of Agricultural Research, extension officers, local leadership, and the broader community for their support throughout the programme.

One of the graduates, Joalane Motlelehi, was overcome with emotion during the ceremony.

"I am finally holding my first school certificate. I cannot believe it," she said.

Motlelehi recalled that, for three years, there were doubts within the community about the value of their work in the fields.

"All the early mornings have paid off. There were times I thought I would never graduate, but the extension officers supported me through difficult days. I am here because of their encouragement," she said.

Declaring herself proudly as "a graduate of the Farmers Field School," she added that the certificate symbolises perseverance and will inspire her children for years to come.

"This is not just a piece of paper. It is a testament to hard work and collaboration. I am a farmer, a mother, and a provider," she said.

Another graduate, Mareneloe Motlelehi, noted that the programme has strengthened unity within the village.

"We are now able to work together as a community. The lessons from the field school extend beyond the fields to our home gardens, where we now plant with clear planning," she said.

The Itjareng Farmers Field School began with four demonstration plots, where farmers experimented with different soil treatments. Some plots used both manure and fertiliser, others used only one input, while one plot used neither, allowing farmers to observe differences in crop growth. Participants also conducted early morning field visits to monitor pest activity and crop development.

According to the Department of Agricultural Research, improving food production remains critical for Lesotho and the wider Southern African region.

For Lesotho to achieve its 2030 development targets, significant progress in the agricultural sector is essential. Farmers seeking to transition from subsistence to commercial farming are increasingly eager to adopt modern technologies and practices, positioning them as key drivers of national development.

A 2024 United Nations report on food security in Lesotho revealed that more than 699,000 Basotho are facing food insecurity, underscoring the urgent need for investment in sustainable agriculture and climate-resilient farming methods.

The Farmers Field School approach is equipping farmers with practical tools to respond to the challenges posed by climate change. Currently, Lesotho has eight such schools, with many farmers already benefiting from the programme.

This initiative offers hope for reducing the country's reliance on food imports, particularly from South Africa, while contributing to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, and Climate Action.

As the programme expands, more farmers are expected to benefit from modern, sustainable farming techniques. Success stories like those of the Itjareng graduates demonstrate the transformative potential of targeted training and support for smallholder farmers.

With continued backing from APPSA and other stakeholders, Lesotho's agricultural sector is poised for growth, offering a pathway toward improved food security and sustainable development.



Itjareng graduates in Farmers Field School



Graduates Celebration in Farmers Field School



Horse riders during the Farmers Field School graduation ceremony in Mokhotlong





# Molupe Ts'oeu Farm

*In Pictures*

**M**olupe Ts'oeu's Lesotho Seed, in collaboration with Lake Agriculture, yesterday hosted a seed demonstration day at Tlametlu, Ha Leutsoe in Maseru. The event showcased the production of maize, sorghum, beans, and sunflower crops.

Speaking at the event, the Director of Field Services in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition, Thabo Sekhonyana, highlighted a major concern regarding national food production. He noted that Lesotho currently produces an average of 0.2 tonnes per hectare, which falls significantly short of the estimated requirement of at least 6 tonnes per hectare needed to ensure food security.

The demonstration aimed to provide farmers with practical insights into high-quality seed varieties recommended by the Government of Lesotho. These seeds are specifically selected for their resilience to harsh weather conditions. Additionally, the initiative serves as a model for farmers, encouraging them to adopt the farming methods and procedures implemented by Molupe Ts'oeu.

The event was attended by several high-profile dignitaries, including the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, Thabo Mofosi; the Minister of Law and Justice, Richard Ramoetsi; and the Commander of the Lesotho Defence Force, Lieutenant General Mojalefa Letsoela, among others.





# JOIN SEAHLOLO

## ON OUR TRIP TO MZANSI YOUNG FARMERS INDABA

**DATE: WED. 8 TO THUR. 9 APRIL**

**VENUE: CHOOSE LIFE CHURCH, 589 RUBENSTEIN  
DRIVE, MERELETSA PARK, PRETORIA EAST**

Level up your skills, connect with  
game-changing opportunities



**SEAHLOLO**  
we grow together

**PACKAGE  
PER PERSON  
SHARING  
M2870**

**REGISTER YOUR SPOT  
(M500)**  
(NON-REFUNDABLE)

**PRICE  
COVERS:**

1. TRANSPORT
2. ACCOMODATION
3. FOOD
4. ENTRY FOR 2 DAYS

foodformzansi.co.za  
THE NEW FACE OF SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURE



**MZANSI YOUNG  
FARMERS  
INDABA**

POWERED BY FOOD FOR MZANSI

- BIG BRANDS, BIGGER OPPORTUNITIES.
- MASTERCLASSES THAT MATTER.
- REAL PARTNERSHIPS, FUNDING AND OPPORTUNITIES UP FOR GRABS
- MEET WITH DIVERSE, DRIVEN COMMUNITY

### CONTACT DETAILS

(+266) 5092 0676 | 6242 5157

### PAYMENTS METHODS

9080001310220 | 3551 | 92669



EcoCash

POWERED BY:  foodformzansi.co.za  
THE NEW FACE OF SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURE



# FARMERS AWARDS

*Putso*

'MANTHABISENG CONVENTION CENTRE

FRI.-SAT.  
**11-12**  
SEPTEMBER  
**2026**



**ITINERARY**

**FRIDAY**  
SCHOOLS EXHIBITIONS & COMPETITIONS | **PRIZES TO BE WON**

**SATURDAY**  
FARMERS AWARD CEREMONY | **PRIZES TO BE WON**

**SATURDAY**  
GALA DINNER (BLACK TIE EVENT) | **FOOD, MUSIC, AWARDS**

MORE DETAILS LOADING...





**LESOTHO COMPETITIVENESS AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION PROJECT  
(LESOTHO HORTICULTURAL INCUBATION & TRAINING CENTRE)**

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST  
FOR  
INCUBATION OF LESOTHO DECIDUOUS FRUIT FARMERS**

The Government of Lesotho, through the World Bank financed Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project, is supporting the establishment of Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre (LHITC), located at Mahobong in Leribe district, with the objective of scaling and replicating existing deciduous fruit commercial orchards and attracting new investments into the horticulture sector. The pilot farms established under the first and second World Bank financed Private Sector Competitiveness and Economic Diversification projects (PSCEDP) have successfully demonstrated the commercial potential to produce deciduous fruits in Lesotho for both the domestic and export markets, and there is already significant interest from investors in commercial horticulture. However, these investments can only be realized with a coordinated effort to address land administration challenges including the availability of land parcels of adequate size for commercial scale production and adopting a transparent leasing system to achieve a credible land ownership. There is also a need for coordinated infrastructure investments in irrigation, electricity, roads, packhouses, phytosanitary inspection systems and grading, and private-public partnerships to deliver effective training and skills, and impactful extension services. It is against this background that the Government of Lesotho has established the Lesotho Horticultural Incubation and Training Centre.

The LHITC is in an existing facility which is owned by the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and it is adjacent to the two existing pilot commercial farms. The Centre is operated in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, and the National University of Lesotho (NUL).

The objective of LHITC is to provide support for scaling commercial horticulture farming in Lesotho, building on the experience of the current pilot commercial farms and addressing gaps in the value chain, access to suitable land, infrastructure, extension services, skills, finance, and markets while promoting climate smart agricultural practices.

The LHITC is currently incubating the first cohort of 7 deciduous fruit farmers.

**The CAFI Project Management Unit, now invites farmers and companies to indicate their interest to participate in the second cohort of the full horticultural incubation program of deciduous fruit.** Interested farmers should provide information demonstrating that they meet eligibility criteria below.

**The selection criteria will be based on the following key requirements:**

Applicants (individual farmers or registered companies ) must have:

1. Access to suitable land minimum of **3 ha** and maximum of **5 ha** owned or rented for a period of at least 30 years if rented, **with a proof of land ownership documents in the name of**

**the farmer or registered entity.** The required acceptable documents are Form Cs, Leases, or subleases (if the land is rented). The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition must confirm the land size in hectares.

2. The site must be close to a reliable source of quality irrigation water that will provide adequate water to irrigate an orchard of **3ha to 5ha** depending on availability of site.
3. Access road linking the site with the main road and should be in a good condition and not longer than 2 km.
4. The orchard site must be less than 0.5 km to electricity supply or other sustainable sources of power for irrigation and other functions of the orchard.
5. The company must have a formally registered entity for the application process.
6. The registered company must submit a CV of the Managing Director of the entity.
  - Experience in commercial farming will be an added advantage.
  - Suitable sites that are located within 50 km radius from LHITC at Mahobong, in Leribe district will be prioritized.

**Format of EOI submissions**

The applicants should include at least the following information in their submissions to enable objective assessment of the expressions of interest:

- Entity information including name, address, cell phone, working e-mail, website (if any), names of a Project Manager (if different from applicant).
- Certified copies of land ownership documents.
- Proof of hectareage from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.
- Description of the location of the site where the orchard is intended to be established.

**Further information and suitability maps can be obtained at the address below during office hours [08h00 to 16h30 local time].**

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form, in sealed envelopes labelled **"Incubation of Lesotho Deciduous Fruit Farmers"** to the address below in person or by e-mail on or before **April 16, 2026, at 16h00.** E-mail submissions should be sent to [tmohejane@cafi.org.ls](mailto:tmohejane@cafi.org.ls) with a copy to [nleutsoa@cafi.org.ls](mailto:nleutsoa@cafi.org.ls) and [Itsoinyane@cafi.org.ls](mailto:Itsoinyane@cafi.org.ls)

Managing Director  
Lesotho Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion Project  
1st Floor 'Matanki House  
P.O. Box 747,  
Maseru 100  
Lesotho  
Tel.: (+266) 22 315 100



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



Investing in rural people

**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST  
(Consulting Firms)**

**LESOTHO**

**WOOLAND MOHAIR VALUE CHAIN COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT**

Assignment Title: **Establishment of the WMF-WME**

Reference No: **LSO-2000003942-0138-CS-QCBS**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition has received a financing from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) towards the cost of Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the recruitment of consulting services.

The use of any IFAD financing shall be subject to IFAD's approval, pursuant to the terms and conditions of the financing agreement, as well as IFAD's rules, policies and procedures. IFAD and its officials, agents and employees shall be held harmless from and against all suits, proceedings, claims, demands, losses and liability of any kind or nature brought by any party in connection with Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project.

The consulting services ("the services") include establishment of Corporate Management System (CMS) that complies with international standards for the Lesotho WMF-WME Consortium: Solution Architecture, Corporate Governance System Framework, a befitting business model and strategy for the WMF-WME Consortium: Business Plan, etc., as stated in the PTORs. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition ("the client") now invites eligible consulting firms ("consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the services. Interested firms should submit their expressions of interest to the address indicated below.

The attention of interested consultants is drawn to IFAD's Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Policy and the Revised IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption its Activities and Operations. The latter sets forth IFAD's provisions on prohibited practices. IFAD further strives to ensure a safe working environment free of harassment, including sexual harassment, and free of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in its activities and operations as detailed in its IFAD Policy

to Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. By entering in this document, you certify to have read, understood, and agreed to be bound by the Privacy Policy of IFAD.

The consultant shall not have any actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest. A consultant with an actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest shall be disqualified unless otherwise explicitly approved by the Fund. A consultant including their respective personnel and affiliates are considered to have a conflict of interest if they a) have a relationship that provides them with undue or undisclosed information about or influence over the selection process and the execution of the contract, b) participate in more than one EOI under this procurement action, c) have a business or family relationship with a member of the Purchaser's board of directors or its personnel, the Fund or its personnel, or any other individual that was, has been or might reasonably be directly or indirectly involved in any part of (i) the preparation of this REOI, (ii) the shortlisting or selection process for this procurement, or (iii) execution of the contract. The consultant has an ongoing obligation to disclose any situation of actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest during preparation of the EOI, the selection process or the contract execution. Failure to properly disclose any of said situations may lead to appropriate actions, including the disqualification of the consultant, the termination of the contract and any other as appropriate under the IFAD Policy on Preventing Fraud and Corruption in its Projects and Operations.

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

- a. No member of the client's board of directors or current employees of the client (whether part time, or full time, paid or unpaid, in leave status, etc.) shall be proposed or work as, or on behalf of, any consultant.
- b. Except as provided in sub-clause 8.6(d), no current employees of the government shall work as consultants or as personnel under their own ministries, departments or agencies.
- c. Recruiting former client or government employees to perform services for their former ministries, departments or agencies is acceptable provided no conflict of interest exists.
- d. If a consultant proposes any government employee as personnel in their technical proposal, such personnel must have written certification from the government confirming that: (i) they will be on leave without pay from the time of their official proposal submission and will remain on leave without pay until the end of their assignment with the consultant and they are allowed to work full-time outside of their previous official position; or (ii) they will resign or retire from government employment on or prior to the contract award date. Under no circumstances shall any individuals described in (i)

and (ii) be responsible for approving the implementation of this contract. Such certification shall be provided to the client by the consultant as part of its technical proposal.

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

A consultant will be selected in accordance with the Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method set out in IFAD' project procurement handbook that can be accessed via the IFAD website at [www.ifad.org/project-procurement](http://www.ifad.org/project-procurement).

The shortlisting criteria are:

Criteria #	Description	Allocated Marks
1	General Experience of Firm/Company	20
2	Specific Experience of a Firm in Similar Assignment	50
3	Organisation and availability of technical staff & supporting staff	10
4	Financial Capacity	20

Consultants may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub-consultancy to enhance their qualifications.

Any request for clarification on this REOI should be sent via e-mail to the address below no later than 16:00hrs, **08 April 2026, Lesotho time.** The client will provide responses to all clarification requests by 16:00hrs, **10 April 2026, Lesotho time.**

Expressions of interest must be delivered in written form using the forms provided for this purpose. EOIs shall be submitted to the address below no later than 12:00hrs, **17 April 2026, Lesotho time.**

Wool and Mohair Value Chain Competitiveness Project

Attn: Procurement and Contracts Manager

P.O. Box 24

Department of Livestock Services

Old Airport Road, Moshoeshoe II

e-mail: [procurement@wamcop.org.ls](mailto:procurement@wamcop.org.ls) and cc: [mlejota-thakong@wamcop.org.ls](mailto:mlejota-thakong@wamcop.org.ls)

1. The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/document-detail/asset/41942012>.
2. The policy is accessible at [www.ifad.org/anticorruption\\_policy](http://www.ifad.org/anticorruption_policy).
3. The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/document-detail/asset/40738506>.
4. The policy is accessible at <https://www.ifad.org/en/privacy>.



# SADPII

## Smallholder Agricultural Development Project (SADP II) Matching Grant Programme

### 4th Round Call for Applications

**Background:** The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security of Lesotho, with the support of the World Bank has established within the SADP II, a Matching Grants Programme (MGP) to support investment by small and medium agriculture-related businesses, farmers, farmer groups, cooperatives and rural youth seeking to increase climate resilience, raise productivity, improve commercialization and increase production and consumption of high nutrition food products.

**Priorities:** The MGP invites applications for investment projects, with a maximum duration of one year, which focus on the adoption and use of appropriate technologies and business initiatives by smallholder farmers and small and medium-scale private agri-business enterprises in Lesotho. These investments should: increase climate resilience, raise farm productivity and improve commercialization among smallholder farmers; increase competitiveness and profitability, increase value-added to local products among agri-business enterprises and increase market opportunities for smallholder farmers; and increase the production, consumption and availability of high nutrition food products.

#### Eligible investments include:

- Improved seed and seedling varieties for vegetables under shade nets, tunnel houses, drip irrigation, water storage equipment, boreholes and pumps
- Improved piggery production
- Improved broiler production.
- Product collection, storage, post-harvest handling, processing, grading/sorting, marketing, packaging, labelling, brand development, presentation and promotion of agricultural products
- Diversification and introduction of high value-added and niche products.

**Grant financing:** Two grant windows will be available to applicants: (i) grants for smallholder farmers and farmer groups to support investment in climate smart agricultural technology and other productivity enhancing technology up to a maximum of \$US 30,000 (M400 000.00); (ii) grants for small and medium size agri-businesses up to \$US 100,000 (M1 500 000.00), to support investment in value added activities including small-scale processing and marketing as well as provision of inputs and services

**Eligible Applicants:** Applicants with farms and/or agri-business activities operating in all ten districts of Lesotho are eligible for grants. Eligible applicants include a) farmers or farm groups; b) registered cooperatives or associations; c) registered small and medium size agri-businesses; d) registered local, district and national associations and cooperatives; e) sub-groups of registered associations and cooperatives; rural youth; and f) partnerships between the above categories and registered processing/trading businesses in Lesotho. Smallholder farmers, members of farm households, rural youth and small and medium-scale agri-business enterprises will receive priority for grant support but non-farm applicants with demonstrated farming experience and a strong knowledge of the proposed investment will also be considered. Eligible applicants may also submit joint proposals up to the maximum grant stipulated above. Youth under 35 and women are particularly encouraged to apply. Employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and Nutrition, Project Financing institutions (IFAD and World Bank Group) and their direct beneficiaries are not eligible. Persons with an annual income of more than 600 000.00 Maloti and having access to more than 0.1 ha of irrigated land are not eligible to the Smallholder grant window, but only to the Agribusiness window.

**Partnership with Service Providers:** The potential applicants will be required to form partnerships with a qualified service provider(s). The service provider(s) will (i) provide technical and financial assistance and advice to the applicant to develop the business idea and prepare the application, (ii) work with the applicant to clarify different technical and financial aspects of the activity and prepare an activity implementation plan; (iii) provide technical and financial assistance to the applicant during project implementation and provide the products and services to be delivered according to an agreed schedule; (iv) support the applicant in managing grant funds, including keeping the necessary accounts and collecting contributions from beneficiaries; (v) supervise the inputs of beneficiaries/applicants and sub-contract technical assistance as necessary; (vi) monitor the progress of activities; (vii) support the applicant in the preparation and submission of the required financial

and technical reports. Eligible service providers include a wide range of specialists such as private sector technical specialists and business consultants, traders, associations, NGOs and on-going international-funded projects and programs present in Lesotho, as well as university and college faculty, and public extension and research staff outside of normal working hours. Employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security are not eligible to work as Service Providers. Service Providers will need to show that they have successfully completed a training program on the preparation and technical and financial analysis of investment projects approved by the PMU or the MGC.

**Beneficiary contribution:** In all cases, successful applicants will be required to make a co-finance contribution in cash to engender ownership and demonstrate commitment. The larger grants for agri-business enterprises will also be conditional on their willingness and ability to generate employment and build effective supply agreements with smallholder producers. Co-finance cash contributions will vary according to the grant sub-program as follows: (i) Improving smallholder production grants for farmers or farmer groups: grants up to \$US 30,000 will require a 20% co-finance contribution; (ii) Agri-business grants for registered agriculture-oriented and privately-owned enterprises, associations and cooperatives: grants in this program will require a 30% co-finance contribution. 100% of the needed matching contribution for both grant categories must be available upfront.

The participation and contribution from different partners should be confirmed by written agreement reached between the principal applicant, the service provider and/or other partners.

**Eligible Expenditures under Grant:** Of the grant amount, the indicative types of financial support are:

**Investment Acquisition, Installation and Operation:** This category must comprise at least 60% of the grant amount and may include costs associated with the purchase of improved seed, seedling and livestock varieties; the purchase and installation of equipment for cultivation, harvesting, post-harvest handling, processing, preservation, storage, grading, packaging etc; the construction of necessary buildings for livestock production, storage, processing, marketing; the purchase and installation of tunnel houses, shade nets, irrigation equipment, pumps, boreholes, tanks etc; product development; alignment with national and international food and safety standards; and marketing campaigns. Where the investor is making substantial physical investments, the costs of land surveys will be covered for smallholder farmers in order to ensure that they have secure land ownership as a means to secure the benefits of investment. Agri-businesses will not be eligible for support for land surveys. Land survey costs may not be more than 10% of the grant amount, up to a maximum of \$US 2000 equivalent. The costs of land purchase, land lease or land rental will not be covered for any grants.

**Non-Eligible Expenditures under Grant:** The following items would not be covered out of the grant amount: (a) Salaries or payment for works and services provided to the project by the grant applicants or its members; b) any expenditures made prior to the date of signature of the Grant Agreement or after closure date of the project; c) purchase, rent or leasing of land and existing buildings; d) any expenditure related to operating costs, which are expected to be the direct responsibility of the applicant; e) any expenditure made in territories of any country that is not a member of the World Bank for goods produced in or services supplied from such countries; f) any expenditure with a hazardous impact on the environment.

**Deadline and Place for Submission of Applications:** The deadline for submission of applications is not later than 17 April 2026. Applications should be submitted in four copies (one original plus three photocopies) and delivered by hand at the District Agricultural Offices in the 10 districts of Lesotho at 12:00 noon. Applications submitted after deadline will not be considered.

**Evaluation of the Applications:** All applications received within the deadline will be screened by the MGP Secretariat for compliance with the above rules. The successful applications will then be evaluated by specialized Technical and Financial Reviewers and submitted to the MGC review and field verification. The list of successful applicants will be published in SADP II website and social media pages. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed and their original project documents could be returned to them on request.

# Rain Farm Graduates from SADP II

## ... Marks Milestone in Smart Farming



Rain Farm Motlalepula Rasekoala during a showcase of his farm



Rain Farm Motlalepula Rasekoala with students

### By Topollo Tlali

Rain Farm celebrated a remarkable journey with the Second Smallholder Agriculture Development Project (SADP II) at Ha Makhalanyane with ululations, songs, poems, and smiles. The event brought together the Makhalanyane community, Sekete Primary students, and farmers from across Lesotho, marking the achievements of Rasekoala's farming venture.

"I grew up watching my mother plant cabbage and make enough profits to support my six siblings and me," Rasekoala shared. "She paid our school fees and met all our household needs. Seeing her farm inspired my love for agriculture."

Following in his mother's footsteps, Rasekoala pursued agriculture in high school, later specialising in soil science and resource conservation. "I am a hydro-pedologist by profession, and I want

to use my skills at Rain Farm to contribute to food production for Lesotho," he said.

Founded in 2019, Rain Farm started on 7,000m<sup>2</sup> of land. Rasekoala recalled the early challenges: "Producing thousands of tomato and cabbage seedlings in open fields exposed them to pests and diseases.

Carrying watering cans for 4,000 seedlings was physically exhausting, and often there were no profits after all the hard work." Climate change and market constraints further complicated production, resulting in losses.

The breakthrough came in 2022 when Rain Farm was selected for the SADP II grant. "I was thrilled to join the programme. It transformed Rain Farm and benefitted the surrounding community," Rasekoala said.

With SADP II support, Rain Farm installed shade nets, modernising operations from open fields to smart farming. "Shade

nets protect crops from direct sunlight, insects, pests, and diseases, and production has increased significantly," he explained. Boreholes were also installed, replacing manual watering with automated irrigation, making farm management more efficient.

Today, Rain Farm plants 4,000 tomato seedlings across 98,000m<sup>2</sup> and employs two permanent staff and 10–15 temporary workers. "I am proud to reduce youth unemployment while contributing to national food production," Rasekoala said. The farm supplies local supermarkets, Sekete Primary School, and outlets in Qacha's Nek, producing tomatoes, peppers, and cabbage.

Despite challenges, including early blight disease in 2023–2024, Rasekoala expressed gratitude to SADP II and the Ministry of Agriculture for their guidance and training. "SADP II is more than funding; it provides knowledge, mentorship, and tools that ensure long-term success."

The graduation was highlighted by poems from Sekete Primary students celebrating the importance of farming. Participants toured Rain Farm's shade nets, learning about crop management, soil preparation, and seed selection. Students were inspired by seeing firsthand how the farm supplies their school and returned home motivated to pursue future careers in agriculture.

Project Field Officer Lechesa Nthulenyane congratulated Rain Farm, emphasising that graduation marks the start of continued growth. "We hope every beneficiary excels after completing the programme. The lessons, workshops, and trainings are tools for future success," she said.

Looking ahead, Rasekoala shared his vision: "I aim to turn Rain Farm into an agritourism site and climate-smart agricultural centre. I have acquired enough land to create more youth employment and expand food production for the nation."



# Free Digital Platform Launched to Support Farmers Across Lesotho

By Lungile Maseela

In a bid to strengthen agricultural productivity and knowledge-sharing, Thuso Initiative has introduced a free digital platform designed to support crop and livestock farmers throughout Lesotho.

The initiative provides farmers with access to agricultural advice, learning resources, and practical guidance tailored to local conditions, and is available in both Sesotho and English to ensure wide accessibility.

According to Tim Jandrell, the platform connects farmers with information that can improve yields, manage livestock, and address common farming challenges.

For many Basotho farmers, particularly in rural areas, access to timely and reliable agricultural information has been limited, with reliance on traditional knowledge or inconsistent extension services.

Thuso aims to bridge this gap by delivering practical farming knowledge directly to farmers through a simple, affordable digital tool.

The platform operates via WhatsApp, reducing barriers such as high data costs and complex technology. Farmers can ask questions, access guidance, and learn new techniques without advanced digital skills, making it especially useful for small-scale farmers with limited resources.

“Education is at the core of Thuso,” said Tim.

“The more farmers we can educate on correct farming techniques, the better. More knowledge leads to better practices, which ultimately improve yields.”

Farmers using Thuso gain guidance on crop planning, animal health, fertilisers, pest control, and even less common activities such as beekeeping and trout farming.

The platform also encourages record-keeping, allowing users to upload photos of livestock or crops to track growth and monitor progress. Upcoming features will include the ability to upload photos for advice on pest or disease problems, as well as video tutorials.

The initiative also fosters a community of farmers who can share experiences and solutions, promoting collaboration within Lesotho’s agricultural sector. “As a store, we have been trading for over 100 years, and Thuso was developed as a meaningful way to give back to our customers and the wider community,” said Tim.

Lesotho National Farmers Union Executive Director Khotso Leaphene welcomed the initiative but emphasised that its success will depend on providing distinct and practical content. Local farmer Motsepe noted the persistent challenges faced by Basotho farmers, including unpredictable weather, frost, pest outbreaks, and limited market access. “A digital tool like Thuso could bridge the

knowledge gap and play a huge role in improving access to farming expertise,” he said.

Farmers interested in joining the platform can sign up online or connect via WhatsApp for immediate support.

As Lesotho continues to modernise its agricul-

tural systems, Thuso demonstrates the potential of technology to transform rural livelihoods.

By making knowledge more accessible, practical, and affordable, the platform empowers Basotho farmers to increase productivity, strengthen food security, and build resilient farming communities.



Tim Jandrell

# Fruit farming gains ground as CAFI scales up horticulture incubation

By Seabata Mahao

A new wave of opportunity is opening up for farmers and agribusinesses in Lesotho as the Competitiveness and Financial Inclusion (CAFI) Project rolls out the second cohort of its deciduous fruit horticultural incubation programme.

The expansion comes as the Government of Lesotho continues to position agriculture as a key driver of economic growth and diversification. Through CAFI, there is a deliberate push to strengthen the horticulture sector, particularly deciduous fruit production, as a pathway to sustainability and increased export potential.

The programme has already gained traction, supporting 10 farms across Leribe, Berea, Maseru, and Mafeteng. With the second cohort now open, farmers across the country are being invited to convert underutilised land into productive orchards.

In an interview with Seahlole, CAFI Communications Specialist Lihaelo Nkaota said the selection criteria are designed to prioritise both viability and long-term impact.

“Applicants must have access to between three and five hectares of suitable land. The land may be owned or leased, but any lease agreement must run for at least 30 years,” Nkaota explained.

She added that applicants must submit proof of land ownership or lease agreements, such as Form Cs or sublease documents, verified by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.

Access to reliable water remains one of the most critical requirements.

“Orchard sites must be close to dependable irrigation sources. Fruit production depends on a



consistent water supply, especially as trees mature,” she said.

Infrastructure is another key consideration. Farms must be within two kilometres of a

well-maintained road to allow for the efficient movement of inputs and produce. In addition, applicants must have access to electricity within a 0.5-kilometre radius or demonstrate viable alter-

native energy solutions to support irrigation and operations.

Applications for the programme close on April 16, 2026.

The first cohort has already produced encouraging results. Seven deciduous fruit farms have been established and are currently under full incubation, with more than 60,000 trees planted. A total of 190 farmers have been trained, including 46 women and 53 youth, reflecting a deliberate effort to broaden participation.

Progress has also been made on infrastructure, with irrigation systems being installed across participating farms. Agreements outlining responsibilities and cost-sharing between CAFI and farmers have been finalised, while a co-financing model is being developed to attract further investment.

These efforts are anchored by the Lesotho Horticulture Incubation and Training Centre (LHITC) in Mahobong, Leribe. The centre operates in partnership with the National University of Lesotho and sits alongside pilot commercial farms.

Since its establishment in May 2023, LHITC has focused on building farmers’ technical capacity, improving market access, and promoting climate-smart practices. It also aims to address long-standing constraints in the sector, including limited access to land, infrastructure, finance, and extension services.

The expansion of the programme signals a broader national push to move beyond traditional agriculture and build a more competitive, export-oriented sector.

By investing in high-value deciduous fruits, the initiative is expected to improve farmer incomes, create jobs, and drive rural economic activity.

# Lesotho Activates National Plan to Contain FMD Outbreak

By Lungile Maseela

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has announced a nationwide action plan to contain an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), which has so far infected more than 10 cattle across Lesotho.

Speaking at a recent press conference, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Thabo Mofosi, said the country had not recorded any cases of FMD since 2013 until the recent outbreak.

“On 5 February 2026, in Letlapeng, Qacha’s Nek, six cattle presented with symptoms of FMD. Blood tests confirmed two positive cases. On 18 February 2026, in Mahlasela, Butha-Buthe, 17 cattle showed symptoms, of which six tested positive,” he said.

Mofosi said authorities are still awaiting results from a laboratory in Botswana to determine the specific strain of the virus, which will inform the selection or development of an appropriate vaccine.

To contain the outbreak, the ministry has established a national task team and is preparing to issue a circular outlining strict control measures for farmers and livestock stakeholders.

“In the meantime, there will be no livestock shows or auctions. Compliance with these measures and cooperation with the task force will be critical to containing the disease before it spreads further,” he said.

The minister reaffirmed the government’s commitment to supporting farmers during the outbreak and dismissed allegations circulating on social media that the ministry is selling farmers’ livestock products for its own benefit. He warned that action would be taken against those spreading misinformation.

Director General of Veterinary Services, Relebohile Lepheana, said the ministry had anticipated the risk of an outbreak following reports of FMD cases in neighbouring South Africa in 2025.

“Given the close movement of livestock between Lesotho and South Africa, the risk of transmission was high,” she said.

Lepheana noted that the ministry had already incorporated FMD response measures into its 2025 budget, conducted awareness campaigns among farmers, and researched vaccination options, including costs and potential suppliers.

Senior State Veterinarian Pabalo Nonyane urged farmers to fully comply with upcoming regulations.

“Farmers should avoid buying or selling livestock or livestock products from South Africa, as these may contribute to the spread of the disease,” she said.

She added that border post personnel have been trained to monitor livestock movements and prevent potentially infected animals and products from entering the country.

Director of Veterinary Field Operations, Mookho Ntoca, said Lesotho conducts annual disease surveillance in partnership with the World Organisation for Animal Health, including routine blood testing for diseases such as FMD.

“This year, we were still awaiting laboratory results when reports of symptomatic animals began to emerge,” he said.

Meanwhile, Director of Livestock Services, Kenouoe Lebenya, said the outbreak should serve as a wake-up call for farmers to strengthen local breeding systems.

“This situation highlights the need to reduce reliance on livestock imports from South Africa. Dependence on external markets exposes farmers to risks such as disease outbreaks,” she said.

Foot and Mouth Disease is a highly contagious viral infection affecting cloven-hoofed animals, including cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. It spreads rapidly through direct contact, contaminated equipment, feed, clothing and vehicles. While it rarely kills adult animals, it significantly reduces productivity and can trigger severe economic losses due to movement restrictions and trade bans.

The disease has become a growing regional concern in southern Africa due to frequent cross-border livestock movement. Several countries, including South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Eswatini, have experienced recurring outbreaks in recent



Cattle affected by foot and mouth disease

years.

Reports indicate that South Africa recorded more than 24,000 FMD cases in domestic livestock in 2025, one of the country’s largest outbreaks in recent history. The spread prompted strict movement controls and vaccination campaigns, with authorities also implementing quarantine zones to curb transmission.

Experts warn that Lesotho’s close trade and economic ties with South Africa make it particularly vulnerable to transboundary animal diseases if strict biosecurity measures are not enforced.

Chairperson of the National Wool and Mohair Growers Association, Mokoenehi Thinyane, said farmers are already feeling the effects of the outbreak.

“The suspension of district livestock shows has disrupted a key part of farmers’ annual business activities,” he said.

He added that movement restrictions have halted livestock sales, forcing farmers to keep animals

at home.

“This limits farmers’ ability to conduct business, but it is necessary to reduce the risk of infection,” he said.

Thinyane also called on the government to strengthen border control measures to prevent illegal movement of animals.

“One key intervention is to deploy officials along border areas to stop illegal crossings of stolen or potentially infected livestock,” he said.

The confirmed cases in Qacha’s Nek and Butha-Buthe mark Lesotho’s first FMD outbreak in over a decade. As authorities move to contain the disease through restrictions, surveillance and possible vaccination, cooperation from farmers and livestock traders will be essential.

Strengthening local breeding systems, enhancing disease monitoring, and tightening controls on cross-border livestock movement will be critical in preventing future outbreaks and safeguarding Lesotho’s livestock sector.

By Topollo Tlali

A sharp rise in fuel prices has sparked concern over Lesotho’s food security, with former Prime Minister Dr Moeketsi Majoro warning that the ongoing Iran–Israel conflict could threaten future harvests.

“The US elects its president in 2024, and he takes office in January 2025. In just over a year, missiles rain down on the Middle East. At week four of the war, our diesel price jumps by M13 per litre to about M32 per litre, and we are not at war,” Majoro recently said.

“At this price, I don’t know how farmers afford diesel. Crude oil is selling at \$115 per barrel, and this links directly to unaffordable fertiliser. Is the 2027 harvest in peril?” he added.

Majoro’s remarks came as the Iran–Israel war entered its fourth week, with its economic shockwaves beginning to affect countries far beyond the conflict zone.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) warned that the conflict is disrupting global fertiliser supply chains, largely due to instability in the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route through which about a quarter of the world’s fertiliser passes.

Rising energy prices are compounding the problem. Nitrogen-based fertiliser production depends heavily on natural gas, meaning higher fuel costs are directly driving up fertiliser prices.

Early signals from international markets show increases in the prices of staple food commodities such as wheat, rice, and vegetable oils. While still below the peaks recorded during the Russia-Ukraine War, the FAO Food Price Index begun trending upward again between February and March 2026.

For Lesotho, the impact is particularly acute. The country relies heavily on South Africa for fertilisers

## Fuel Shock Raises Alarm Over Lesotho’s Food Security



and agricultural inputs. In 2024, Lesotho reportedly imported fertilisers worth over US\$9 million, much of which originated from Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar via South Africa.

The Southern African Agricultural Initiative recently reported that fertiliser prices rose sharply in early March due to disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz. South Africa imports around 80 percent of its fertiliser needs, exposing the entire region, in-

cluding Lesotho, to global supply shocks.

Globally, production is also under pressure. QatarEnergy has halted output at major urea plants following disruptions to gas supply, while countries such as India and Bangladesh have reduced fertiliser production due to shortages of liquefied natural gas.

According to The Fertilizer Institute, the fertiliser market is highly interconnected, meaning disruptions in one region can quickly affect availability and

pricing worldwide.

For Basotho farmers, the combination of rising diesel prices and increasing fertiliser costs presents a serious challenge. Fuel is essential for ploughing, planting, and transporting produce, while fertilisers are critical for maintaining soil fertility and crop yields.

Any prolonged disruption could significantly reduce agricultural output, particularly for smallholder farmers who already face resource constraints.

The situation is further complicated by climate pressures, with the FAO warning that declining access to farming inputs could worsen yields, especially in already fragile soils.

Experts caution that Africa remains highly vulnerable due to its reliance on imported agricultural inputs. For Lesotho, the current crisis underscores the risks of dependence on external supply chains for essential farming resources.

Majoro’s warning about a potentially threatened 2027 harvest reflects a growing concern that the effects of today’s global conflict may not only be immediate, but could also shape the country’s food security in the years ahead.

As the war continues, its full impact remains uncertain. However, for Lesotho, the message is already clear: a distant conflict is beginning to hit close to home.