

Telling successful smallholder farmer stories

# Agripreneur

Issue 12 | March 2018

## *Nondumiso* Phaahla

**A Zulu  
woman  
making a  
Pedi tea**

The  
case of  
Ngqasa  
Eastern Cape  
communal  
wool  
producers  
are proving  
their farming  
ability



**The land reform beneficiary:** proving his  
farming excellence

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# ***PREFACE***

This is the twelfth edition of the Agripreneur publication from the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC). Through this publication, the NAMC seeks to create a platform where farmers, particularly smallholders, share their knowledge and skills, challenges, experiences and insights with one another. It is believed that this publication will assist smallholders to learn from one another other, develop strategies, adopt models, and become part of the value chain by marketing commodities that meet quality standards and are safe for consumption.

Presented in Agripreneur 12 are the following topics:

- (1) A Zulu woman becoming a Pedi woman day by day – a story of Siyaphila Support Services in driving the “Bapedi A re Boeleng Setšong” initiative.
- (2) The land reform beneficiary proving his farming excellence
- (3) Maruleng agricultural exhibition and auction
- (4) The Eastern Cape communal wool producers are proving their farming ability: the case of Mr Ngqasa

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# *A Zulu woman becoming a Pedi woman day by day – a story of Siyaphila Support Services in driving the Bapedi A re Boeleng Set song initiative.*

– a story of Siyaphila project in driving the “Asibuyele Setsong” initiative

*By Matsobane Mpyana, Fezeka Matebeni, Khathutshelo Rambau and Kayaletu Sotsha*



## **Background**

Siyaphila Youth Support Services is an organisation that seeks to restore, inspire and maintain the traditional Bapedi food and culture. This led to the inception of an initiative branded “Bapedi A re Boeleng Setšong”, hence some of the products (mainly tea) are branded “Setšong”. The project is central to numerous other projects among the communities around the Marble Hall area, under the Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo Province. “Bapedi A re Boeleng Setšong” focuses mainly on producing indigenous teas (Diya and Tepane), while the remainder of the projects focus on traditional Bapedi attire, beadwork, herbs, organic chicken breeding, vegetable farming, etc. – the main idea being to promote the traditional Bapedi culture and food.

**Mrs Nondumiso Phaahla**





**Mrs Nondumiso Phaahla (left) and Miss Dorah Motedi (right)**

**S**iyaphila Youth Support Services is the baby of a Zulu woman, Mrs Nondumiso Phaahla, who got married into the Bapedi clan. After years of working in the City of Pretoria, she decided to retire and go to the village to live there. It is then that she observed a woman picking leaves from a tree and then processing and mixing them with hot water to drink. One day she enquired about this and the woman said the drink was actually tea. The reasons for drinking the homemade tea include health benefits and it offers an alternative to buying tea in the case of low household income. Mrs Phaahla tried the tea one day and was mesmerised by its taste. Surprisingly, the source of the tea was some trees in the backyard.

This triggered her interest in this organic tea, and she also found out that there were many people in the community who were drinking it. The tea is rich in minerals and it boosts the immune system. A living testimony to this is the father of one of the members of “Bapedi A re Boeleng Setšong”, Mrs Mabukwe Phaahla. Her father is 95 years old and still going strong. He can walk and do some household chores by himself. He can even read

without reading glasses. The main contributing factor is consuming organic food (traditional food). The elder is part of the heritage project, where he does motivational talks and emphasises the importance of restoring and maintaining cultural values. Mrs Nondumiso Phaahla says that elderly Bapedi people are shy and reserved, but are a hub of indigenous knowledge. For one to access this knowledge, one has to be humble and interact with the elderly. Mrs Phaahla thanks God for giving her the courage to leave city life, join the villagers and learn and understand their cultural values and traditions. “I see myself as a Zulu woman who is becoming Pedi day by day,” she says.

### **Production**

The project is situated on land that was inherited from Mrs Phaahla’s uncle-in-law. The piece of land she inherited is 217 hectares and she had no plan on how to use it. That is when she decided to bring some people in so that they could assist one another in putting together ideas, skills and knowledge for production, as well as the development of the community. Fortunately, there was a woman by the name of Lerato with whom she had worked in the city. Lerato had also retired from city life and returned to the village where she began working with women in community projects. Through their interaction, Mrs Phaahla was able to get 17 women to join her in

starting a new venture.

The uncle used to farm with cattle and he had built housing structures and fenced some of the land. Mrs Phaahla donated 15 hectares to the community and her idea was to remove the bush on the remaining land so that they could produce vegetables, thanks to the knowledgeable team that saw the treasure hidden in the trees. The women who had joined her from the community saw the potential for tea production, as many of the trees on the farm were a source of Diya and Tepane tea. Having heard about and tasted the tea from the traditional herbs, Mrs Phaahla was excited about this revelation. There are even marula trees from which they produce a marula drink.

In 2012, they started harvesting the leaves and roots and processing them into tea. However, as it often happens in rural cooperatives, people started to quit the project one by one, the reason being that people tend to anticipate quick benefits and therefore tend to be impatient when their endeavours are not yielding gains in the short term. As a result, the team was reduced. "Only people who decided to follow the purpose remained and persevered," says Mrs Phaahla. These include (some of whom are pictured below) Mr Exen Maledimo, Mme Nondumiso Masebopela, Mme Mabokwe and Mme Dorah Motedi, of whom Mrs Phaahla is extremely proud. Currently, these women are leading various activities on the production chain such as the harvesting of Tepane, the harvesting of Diya, processing and quality control.



**Some of the co-founders of Siyaphila project**

The team approached the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) to assess the products. They have already worked with a number of stakeholders that are assisting in various ways as follows:

- Agricultural Research Council (ARC) – assisting with plantation and promulgation
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) – assisting with the business plan and there are engagements on the processing plant
- Egoli Bio – assigned by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to offer incubation services
- National Agricultural Marketing Council – assisting with distribution of the product

The role of the ARC is both short-term and long-term support in the sense that the tea is currently being harvesting from naturally grown trees. It is estimated that

the project can harvest for the next 10 years. Therefore, it is required that they plant their own trees now for continuation when the old trees' production begins to decline.

It is noteworthy that the project has not received financial support from any stakeholder. In other words, support received thus far has been in the form of services. This is commended by the team, citing that money tends to create conflicts and tension among a group of people. Hence, they are happy to receive services that would enable them to run and grow production and marketing activities. They highlighted that financial contributions will come in the form of profits in the long term. This way, people are able to focus on achieving the goals of the project, more than anything else.





## Marketing

There are two youth teams that are involved in the marketing aspect of the products. The first team is led by Ms Makhukho Ramoloto. Her team is involved in the value addition and packaging of the tea. The second team is led by Ratang Phaahla and Katlego Sethosa and is under incubation by the Chamber of Commerce. This team is involved in promoting the tea. They do exhibitions, lead communication on social media platforms, and assist in negotiating with markets. On the day of the interview (13.02.2018) this team was exhibiting tea to the German nationals who had come to visit the Chamber of Commerce. As a result of this sterling work, the project is in the Brown Sense open market in Midrand, the Bryanston organic market (every Thursday and Saturday), Selina's Food Store in Parkhurst and Rosebank market (every Sunday) and it has been affiliated on the Izindaba Zokudla dialogue, normally hosted by the University of Johannesburg. This is viewed by the elderly members of the project as an immense contribution, which has resulted in the huge popularity of the products. In addition to promoting tea, the youth are also trained to promote the Bapedi culture, and this has attracted a lot of support from the market.



Ms Makhukho Ramoloto, the Director of Resource Mobilisation





Some of the tea products and beverages

### Future plans and current challenges

Mrs Phaahla says the aim of “Bapedi A re Boeleng Setšong” is to serve as a pivot for knowledge transfer. They are working with other projects within the community to bring different aspects of the Bapedi culture together to form some sort of a cultural village where tourists can come and learn about the Bapedi people. Such tourists could be accommodated within the village, eat Bapedi food, drink the Bapedi tea, get massages, and so forth. Currently, there is a facility nearby that offers accommodation and there are people trained to do massages. There is no doubt that such initiatives have a potential impact on job creation within the communities. For example, the “Bapedi A re Boeleng Setšong” project has thus far created 22 jobs in tea production.

### The project faces numerous challenges such as:

- Cash flow – the project is still trying to find its feet and therefore the expenditure outweighs the income received. This has been a challenge as the funds are mainly raised by the members of the project.
- Lack of the processing plant – the demand has grown so much that there is pressure to produce larger quantities per day than before. But because processing is done by hand, it is difficult to increase the quantities produced. This implies some opportunity missed in terms of the sales volume. A processing plant could make a difference. Further than slow production, there is an issue of post-harvest losses. The Tepane and Diya usually change colour after four days from harvesting. This implies loss of quality and it means that particular harvest cannot be processed. One way of alleviating this problem could be access to a cold storage facility.
- Lack of access to formal markets – although the informal market access is growing the members of the project feel that there is a need for formal market arrangements







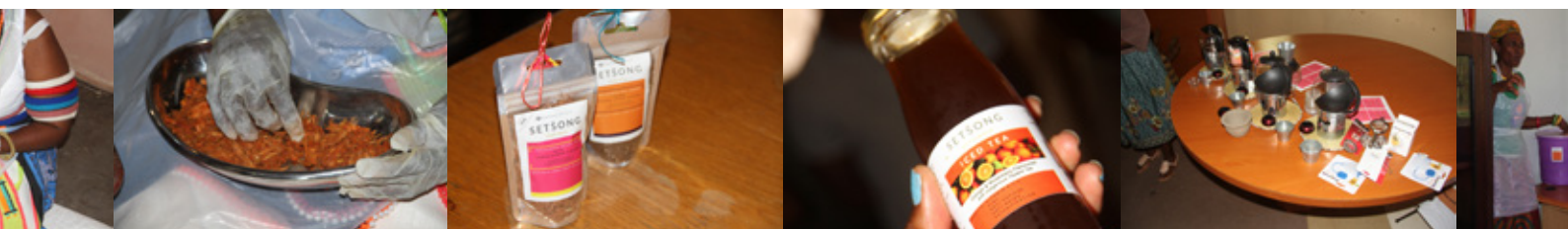
### A demonstration of phase 1 processing of Tepane root

The pictures show the first phase of processing. The demonstration clearly indicates that processing by hand is a daunting task. However, very interesting is the fact that these people use protective clothing and are quite cautious of the hygienic requirements. This implies the consideration of food safety standards to ensure their products meet the quality standards.

The project aims to promote a healthy lifestyle through the consumption of traditional food. The motto of the project is “Bapedi Are Boeleng Setšong ka Sepedi”, meaning “let us go back to our culture”. Hence, their products are branded “Setšong”. This is coupled with the goal of maintaining and promoting the cultural values and tradition of the Bapedi people. The long-term objective is to have all

the different project working together to achieve these two goals and creating jobs and promoting a healthy lifestyle for the communities. In addition, the project seeks to teach the youth that there are opportunities within their localities too. One needs to take time to study and understand the environment and find ways in which the people can take advantage of the opportunities each particular locality is presenting. The project has set an example by showing how indigenous plants can contribute to the socio-economic status of the community.

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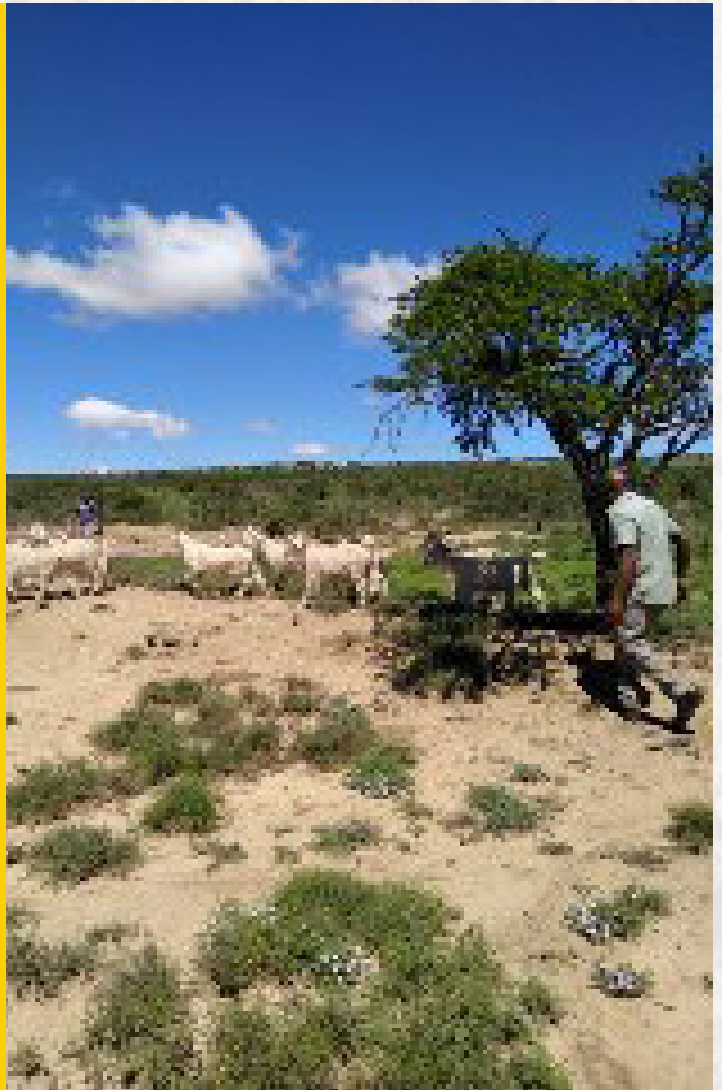




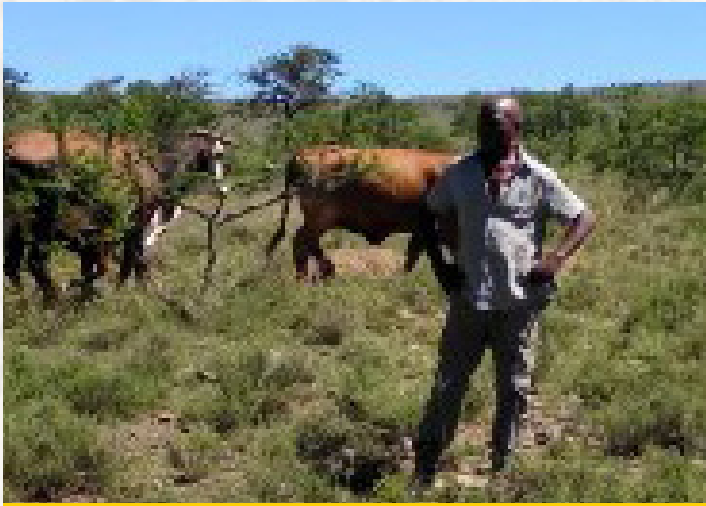
# The land reform beneficiary proving his farming excellence

By Thulisile Khoza and Kayaletu Sotsha

The South African government has done a lot of work in attempting to identify and address challenges that hinder the integration of smallholder farmers – the majority of whom are black – into South Africa's mainstream economy. One of the goals has been to ensure that enterprises are profitable and sustainable across the value chain. Despite these efforts, black South African farmers are still struggling to graduate from the smallholder to the commercial farming sector. This raises concerns as to whether black South African farmers have the capacity to feed the nation. This doubting of the farming potential of black farmers is underlined by the notion that white commercial farmers in South Africa are central to the country's food security status. What we seem to forget is that the white commercial farmers achieved their current state of affairs through many years of support in several ways including subsidies, market controls, extension services, cheap labour, etc. The truth is that black South African farmers are capable of feeding the nation – they have proven so in many instances. But the thing is, how often do we tell their success stories? Secondly, does the government support get to where it is needed and on time? There could be a hot debate coming out of these questions, but this article narrowly zooms into the story of Mr Linda Fani, a land reform beneficiary in Somerset East, Eastern Cape.



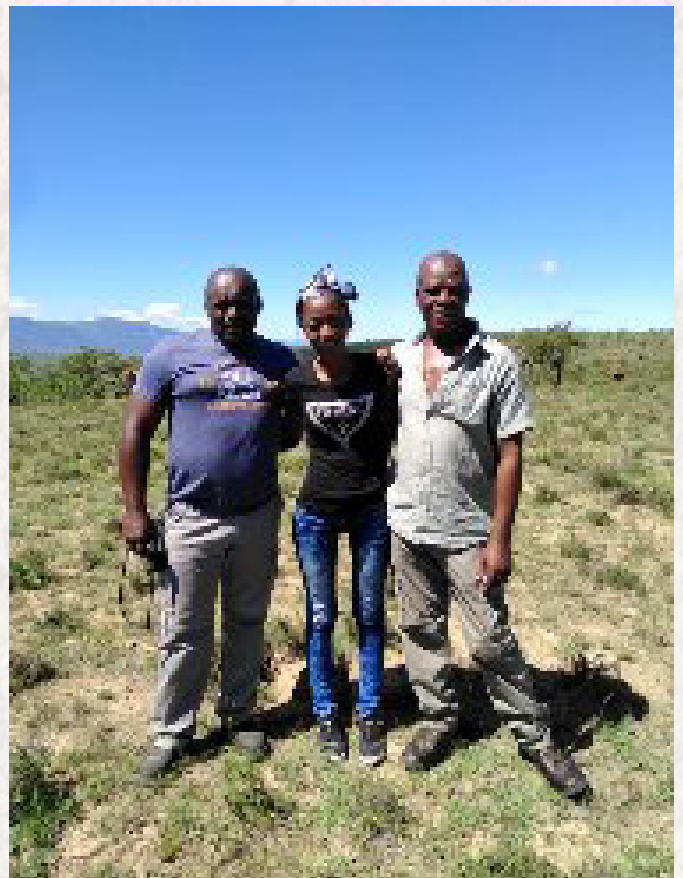




**Mr Fani in one his camps**

**Mr** Fani grew up in a farming household. He started his own farming venture with two heads of cattle at a commonage in the Erowel Township in 1998. In 2000, he applied for a land lease on the Prinsloo farm through the Department of Land Affairs. He secured the lease agreement in the same year, but he was part of a group of 40 beneficiaries. During that same year, the Land Bank offered the beneficiaries a loan of R12 000 each to increase their stock. As such he managed to increase his herd size to six heads of cattle. As the farmers progressed and their herd sizes increased, the department made a decision that those farmers showing some level of determination and commitment would be moved onto another farm where there was a bigger piece of land available. One of the ways whereby Mr Fani proved himself was by repaying his loan within a period of two years. Indeed, he made it into the group that was moved onto the Kakoskraal farm in 2005.

Five beneficiaries were moved to the Kakoskraal farm, which was 2 000 hectares in size. At the time, Mr Fani had 20 heads of cattle. Unfortunately, the new beneficiaries found it impossible to work well together. Mr Fani then decided to apply for a farm from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform in 2007. Following a lengthy process, he finally received his farm in 2012. The name of his farm is Dorengrivier and it is about 4 000 hectares in size, divided into 42 camps. Mr Fani inherited 11 windmills (only one was functional) and four families who had been permanently employed by the previous owner. In addition to the four families, he currently employs six seasonal labourers (up to 18 during the shearing season). He also receives managerial assistance from his brother, Simphiwe Fani. Moreover, he is grooming his son who will take over in the long term.



**Mr Simphiwe Fani, Ms Thulisile Khoza and Mr Linda Fani**

started, on this new farm with 86 heads of cattle, 15 Boer goats and a promise from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform to provide assistance through the Recapitalisation and Development Programme. He subsequently produced a business plan from which nothing emerged. Not prepared to sit back and wait, he decided to sell the calves in the meantime to assist with cash flow. Later, he managed to buy 45 sheep and continued to sell cattle and buy more sheep (mainly through auctions). The reason for doing so was the realisation that sheep generate a relatively quicker cash flow than cattle do. He currently owns 1 050 sheep from which he produces wool.

In parallel to increasing the stock of sheep, Mr Fani received support from Mohair South Africa, offering to assist him with a herd of 1 000 Angora goats in 2013. The arrangement was that Mohair South Africa would get 20% of whatever the farmer made from the goats as the repayment rate. However, Mr Fani was determined to keep his debt as low as possible, so he offered to take 20% and let Mohair South Africa take 80% to settle his debt as quickly as possible. His offer was accepted and the contractual arrangements commenced in 2014 after the first 500 goats had been delivered to Mr Fani's farm. Thereafter, another 500 goats were delivered in





2015. The repayment rate enabled Mr Fani to repay his debt in full by 2017. This means that in 2017, Mr Fani's contract with Mohair South Africa ended and he was no longer indebted. To date, Mr Fani has 1 052 Angora goats. Mohair South Africa not only provided market opportunities to this agripreneur, they also provided training as form of capacity building, including financial management, mohair production and land management training.

## Marketing Cattle



Currently, Mr Fani owns 135 heads of cattle – a herd composed of heifers, cows, four Bonsmara bulls and one Boran bull. The reproduction cycle of cattle is timed so well that the cattle are kept based on their level of productivity. The mating season runs from the first week of December to the first week of March. Cattle that are ready to mate are separated from the rest of the herd and a certain number of bulls are selected for mating. Usually, two bulls get rested for a certain period while the rest get to service the females that are ready to mate.

## Bonsmara bull

The calving percentage so far is standing at around 90%. The selection process begins at a weight of 230 to 250 kilograms, where only the best 10 weaners are kept for replacement while the rest go to the market. There is a neighbouring white commercial farmer who assists with the selection. Cows that have given birth to five calves are also taken to the market. A heifer that fails to conceive the first time is given only one more chance. If she fails again, she is also sent to the market. The markets for cattle include Austin and Evans' Feedlot, Mr Paul Hobson Auctioneers and Swarthoek Association Auctioneers.

## Simphiwe Fani and Kayaletu Sotsha Mohair



Goats are sheared twice a year, with the summer shearing producing 1 300 kg and the winter shearing 1 100 kg of wool. Mr Fani has a contract with OVK; however, the contract does not have specifications in terms of time and quantity for delivery. Importantly, the contract has insurance for wool. Unfortunately, OVK takes the wool to auction and therefore Mr Fani gets paid after the auction. However, there is an annual schedule for auctions and Mr Fani is up to date as to when the auctions take place.



## Angora goats Sheep



Sheep are sheared once a year, giving 1 500 kg of wool. The market for sheep wool is BKB. The challenge here is the distance to the market, particularly in the situation where the farmer does not have his own transport to deliver the products to the market.

### Challenges

Challenges indicated here show that the farm business did not have sufficient start-up support. These include:

- Fencing – the fence is old and not in a good condition.  
This is risky when farming with livestock
- Lack of a shearing shed
- Housing for employees – the housing structures for employees need to be renovated or rebuilt.
- Lack of sufficient water on the farm – one or more boreholes are needed. The main reason is the provision of water in the camps for livestock.
- The increasing herd sizes is putting pressure on the number of camps available, implying that more land is needed to accommodate the growing numbers.
- Long distance to the market.

### Achievements

In 2017, Mr Fani became a provincial winner (Eastern Cape Province) of the Kenafatso di Kgomo Beef Award under the National Emerging Beef Farmer of the Year Awards.

### Mr Fani's message to other farmers

Mr Fani testifies that starting a farm business is challenging, particularly when there are insufficient start-up resources at your disposal. He alludes that farmers need to not depend solely on government support to achieve their goals of being successful farmers. He says that if you are lucky, support will find you somewhere along the journey. In his words, he says: "Do not sit back and fold your arms." He thanks God for guidance, for revealing opportunities and for giving him wisdom in executing his plans and taking advantage of the opportunities that have come his way. He mentions examples of training and loans (from the Land Bank and Mohair South Africa). He says key to achieving some level of success is having a clear goal and the determination to work towards achieving your goals. He also is grateful for the support of his brother, Mr Simphiwe Fani, and Mohair South Africa for the role they have played in the incredible success he has achieved. He still hopes to get support through Recap one day.

### Conclusion

Black South African farmers have the capacity to feed the nation. Mr Fani is one of many examples. He is proving his farming excellence, without post-settlement support. Such stories throw the ball back into government's hands, asking: is government doing enough to ensure that new entrants are supported and that they farm in a sustainable manner?



# Maruleng agricultural exhibition and auction

*By Hangwelani Mathagu*

The Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (LDARD) held a three-day event, from 7 to 9 March 2018, at Turkey Auction Kraal in the Maruleng Municipality, Mopani District. The first two days were allocated for an exhibition while the last day was allocated for a cattle auction. The event was graced by the presence of farmers, Grade 10 - 12 learners from the surrounding high schools, and several stakeholders including Eskom, ROSSGRO, SEDA (Small Enterprise Development Agency), Angel Feeds, Human Resource Development from the LDARD, Lima, ABSA Bank, University of Limpopo, MSD Animal Health, NuPro and the Livestock Association.

The main objective of the expo was to expose learners to agriculture in general, but also to serve as an eye-opener for them regarding different fields of study they can follow after finishing matric, together with the bursaries that are offered by the Department of Agriculture. In addition, the expo aimed to:

- Teach the learners about the importance of agriculture
- Make them aware that it is possible to be an agripreneur
- Teach them how to physically judge functional efficient breeding livestock

The local farmers also had an opportunity to learn from one another through networking. The Maruleng Municipality is one of the five municipalities (along with Greater Tzaneen, Greater Letaba, Greater Giyani, and Ba-Phalaborwa) that fall under the Mopani District, which is one of the five districts (along with Vhembe, Sekhukhune, Capricorn and Waterberg) in the Limpopo Province. Maruleng Municipality is widely populated by Northern Sotho-speaking people. The agricultural

portfolio of the municipality is under the management of Ms Morotha Dipela. Although the municipality is suffering from a severe drought, there are still farmers who are working themselves to the bone to put food on the table every day.

Ramasiti Mahori (top) from LDARD and Eskom



representatives (bottom) presenting to learners

Mr Rasimati Mahori from LDARD under HRD (Human Resource Development) explained different agriculture fields (Agriculture Engineering, Agricultural Economics, Veterinary, Crop Production, Soil Science, Agronomy, Pasture Science, and Animal Production) and bursaries that are offered by the Department of Agriculture in these fields.

Eskom also got an opportunity to present to the learners about careers opportunities they are funding through bursaries, particularly in agriculture.





**Paris Mhlanga from LDARD presenting on some of the basic components of agricultural engineering**

It was also emphasised that is necessary to have land care programmes for the sake of maintaining good productive soil, and the learners were also educated on land care issues. The advantages of land that is cared for include improved grazing capacity, restored landscape, good soil fertility, high yield and improved grazing for animals. The picture below displays learners showing interest in natural resource management.



**Tshidi Baloyi from LDARD presenting to learners**

The learners also had an opportunity see animals they often learn about in class (e.g. the bulls, broilers, layers and free-range chickens). The veterinary team also had an opportunity to showcase on how to take care of livestock by vaccinating and injecting correct doses.

### **Kgomotso Mokgope presenting about small stock**



Livestock should always be taken care of, as it also takes care of us. The picture below shows LDARD official emphasizing to the learners on how to take care and protect livestock from diseases. She showcased some of the medical equipment: diagnostic and surgical instruments, vaccines and other medicines.

### **Thenjiwe Maponya from LDARD presenting about veterinary services**



Companies like Nutri feeds, Angel feeds and ROSSGRO also exhibited their different feed stuff for livestock.



**Nutri Feeds, Angel Feeds and ROSSGRO exhibition**





## Auction

On the last day of the three-day event, farmers and buyers came out in their numbers for the auction. The pictures below show some of the members of the Livestock Association (farmers) preparing the kraal before the auction.

## Members of livestock association (farmers) preparing the kraal

It was interesting to see some of the learners coming on the day of the auction as well. Learners were taught about how the auction works, before the actual auction commenced.



## Paris Mhlanga doing an introduction about the auction, including how the animals are weighed

While the LDARD officials were busy demonstrating to the learners, the farmers were busy registering their cattle with the auctioneers.



## Badenhorst auctioneers registering farmers

For learners who have not been at the auction before, this was a fascinating experience.

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### **Badenhorst auctioneers in action and sold cattle ready for pickup**

About 48 farmers participated in the auction in which 121 cattle were sold, the lowest price being R3 300, while the highest price stood at R9 700.

### **Conclusion**

The LDARD, in collaboration with several stakeholders, took the initiative to reach out to learners of the surrounding high schools in the Maruleng Municipality. The aim was to disseminate information on different fields of agriculture, as well as the bursary opportunities available. Such events are valuable, particularly at the level of high school learners who tend to view agriculture as an “unattractive career”. In some cases, learners may be interested in the field because they have grown up in farming households, but often do not have information on funding options they could explore to help them follow their dreams. This event had it all and, although agriculture may not seem to be an appealing career for many youngsters, learners seemed to have been inspired by the event. We acknowledge the efforts of the LDARD and all the stakeholders who made this event such a success. It is hoped that there can be many more such initiatives throughout the country.

# *The Eastern Cape communal wool producers are proving their farming ability: the case of Mr Ngqasa*

*By Kayaletu Sotsha and Thulisile Khoza*

It is generally understood that the unjust historical system deliberately caused structural imbalances for the farming sector, as well as other sectors of the South African economy. Under the system of communal livestock farming, farmers found themselves in difficult conditions with limited access to land, no fenced camps, minimum or (in some cases no) ability to carefully manage grazing and to avoid overgrazing, informal marketing, etc. Wool-producing farmers under such conditions would inevitably produce wool of poor quality. As a result, they would shear and keep the wool in their homes in maize sacks and wait for speculators to come. Unfortunately, the speculators would completely undercut the farmers and pay them well below the market price. This meant that in addition to the poor economic base to which these farmers were exposed by the system, they could not even benefit from their communal farming endeavours. However, these farmers did not abandon their farming tradition when they had to sell themselves for cheap labour in the mining sector and the commercial farming sector (completely dominated by white farmers). Hence, it is with great pleasure that we hear of or read about the success stories of this group of farmers, prevailing under the some difficult conditions. There is no doubt that these farmers have proven and are still proving their farming excellence.

Credit is also due to the National Wool Growers' Association (NWGA) for its contribution in this regard. The NWGA is a producers' organisation representing wool sheep farmers in the country. Its interest lies in promoting the interests of wool sheep farmers thereby supporting the sustainability and profitability of the South African wool sheep industry at large. Noteworthy is the participation of black communal and emerging farmers in the organisation. In fact, they are not only participating, but also leaving a footprint. One of the many examples of this is the article that was published in the Daily Dispatch in September 2015, indicating that the Eastern Cape Communal Wool Growers' Association (ECCWGA) had produced over 3.5 million kilograms of wool, cashing in over R130.8 million in the 2014/15 season. This was accompanied by a remark from the NWGA officials that the quality of wool coming from communal lands was good. At the 19th annual congress of the ECCWGA Region 20, which we attended in 2016, the NWGA was acknowledged for the role they had played in organising the Eastern Cape communal wool farmers into a grower association, as well as their efforts in facilitating shearing sheds, partnering in genetic improvement programmes, etc. Such efforts are slowly opening up opportunities for communal wool farmers to benefit from their wool production endeavours through market participation.





**Mr Ngqasa**

This article provides a brief profile of one of the communal farmers from Mount Frere in the Eastern Cape. Mr Ngqasa is a retired man who relies on farming and a social grant for income. He is doing both crop and livestock production. He has been involved in farming activities since his early childhood years when he helped his parents with minor tasks. He believes that farming is a way of life and that it is an important livelihood strategy, particularly for poor rural households. He keeps a herd of 25 heads of cattle, with an interesting herd composition of nine cows, eight heifers, seven weaners and one bull. He says there are two reasons for him to keep cattle: the first is to cushion his family against shocks (selling when there is a need), while the second is for household consumption. Although he does not sell much of his stock (selling on average three heads of cattle per annum), he plans to increase the size of the herd. This way of farming, to some degree, puts pressure on the already stressed grazing land in the communal areas.

The marketing channel he uses for his cattle is informal – selling to people within the local communities. From his own observation, he thinks the use of this marketing channel by communal farmers has been increasing over the years, and he is also of the opinion that prices have been increasing too. Some of the selling arrangements he

mentioned include payment and transport arrangements, who determines the price and what determines the market value of the animal when he decides to sell. He says he usually gets the money immediately from the buyer; the buyers arrange their own transport, not included in the price of the animal; the seller determines the price, although he may be open to negotiation; and for him, the market value is determined by the condition of the cattle in terms of the body score. In his opinion, the informal marketing channel is fair, easily accessible and convenient, and has a certain degree of flexibility. He alluded that the communal farming system poses a number of challenges in terms of uncontrolled grazing and exposure of stock to diseases due to uncontrolled interaction with other farmers' herds, highlighting that farmers in the rural areas may not always be able to afford vaccinations and medication for diseases.

With respect of sheep farming, Mr Ngqasa owns a flock of 130 sheep. He is affiliated under the Lugangeni Wool Growers' Association, which also falls under the District Association of Wool Growers. The advantages of joining the association include marketing and access to medication and vaccinations. Each member contributes a certain amount on a monthly basis and it is this money that is used for marketing activities, as well as medication and vaccinations. He emphasises the importance of collective action because he believes the current marketing channel (BKB) pays better than speculators. Mr Ngqasa gets two bales of wool per year and the selling arrangement is that each farmer shears, weighs and sells separately to BKB. However, the association has to ensure that all the farmers are ready on the day of collection by BKB. In 2017, the Lugangeni Wool Growers' Association had about 25 farmers, producing 30 bales. However, Mr Ngqasa feels that the farmers need a shearing shed in the area, even if it could be shared by a number of associations within the vicinity.



### **Wool collected from communal farmers of Dutywa**

In conclusion, this article shows the potential that communal farmers have in their farming endeavours. It is widely understood that these farmers are traditional (to some degree) in the way they farm. For example, they keep livestock for numerous reasons, which in many cases outweigh the marketing aspect of farming. Therefore, interventions that seek to tap into this potential should be guided by this sort of understanding, and they should focus on slowly changing the ideology of farming in parallel to enhancing productivity, promoting formal market participation, or even better in the case of cattle, improving and promoting the informal market system.

Furthermore, the structural imbalances in the farming sector remain prominent, and the communal wool producers are proving that they could emerge quite successfully, should they be exposed to equal opportunities as other farmers in terms of access to land (particularly fenced grazing camps), shearing sheds and other equipment used in sorting and packaging wool.



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