



NAMMC

Promoting market access for South African agriculture

Agripreneur

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Think convenience, cost-cutting, smallholder farmers and affordable fresh produce; think the Black Farmer Group Fresh Produce Market

**Makhunda Capital
Regeneration:
Making a living out of a tree
of life**

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A PUBLICATION BY THE SMALLHOLDER MARKET ACCESS RESEARCH UNIT OF THE NAMC

PREFACE

W

elcome to the twenty-fifth edition of the Agripreneur publication of the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC). Through this publication, the NAMC seeks to create a platform where agripreneurs and farmers, mainly smallholders, can share their knowledge and skills, challenges, experiences and insights. It is believed that this publication will assist smallholders in learning from one another, developing strategies, adopting models, and becoming part of the value chain through the marketing of commodities and products that meet market standards and are safe for consumption. The Agripreneur publication also serves to promote and profile aspects of South African agriculture as a brand. Each issue features good stories that will hopefully convince the reader to #LoveRSAAgric.

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Editor's note

The Quarterly Labour Force Survey results indicated a rise in South Africa's official unemployment rate, from 32,5 % in the last quarter of 2020 to 32,6 % in the first quarter of 2021. The 0,1 % rise was due to a net decline of 28 000 in total employment. While other industries positively contributed to job creation, the jobs created in these industries were outweighed by the losses made in construction, trade, private households, transport and agriculture. The latter lost 18 000 jobs, which according to Wandile Sihlobo (2021), is despite the fact that the sector is in its second consecutive year of good performance. Sihlobo (2021) further indicates that 792 000 people employed in the sector were the lowest since 2014, a drought year. However, the decline was noted to be concentrated within the industries that were adversely affected by the extended lockdown period because these industries experienced similar regulation even under lockdown levels 4 and 3, including the wine and game industries.

With the economy still in the recovery phase after the COVID-19 pandemic, small businesses remain one of the critical drivers of inclusive economic growth and one of the major sources of employment. According to

the Banking Association of South Africa (BASA, n.d.), small businesses contribute to diversification by developing new and unsaturated sectors of the economy. BASA (n.d.) also notes that the innovative

and technology-based small and medium enterprises can provide a platform for local, regional and international growth for the BRICS countries' economies.

Issue 25 of the Agripreneur touches on some small initiatives with the potential to grow and create jobs. The common characteristics of these initiatives are that the owners have just started (businesses are less than three years

old) and funding in start-up capital is one of the main challenges. Despite this, these initiatives seem undeterred and the owners are trying, by all means, to make it work. Already, there are jobs created that show that, given strong support, such initiatives can become labour absorbers.

Enjoy the reading!!

Think convenience, cost-cutting, smallholder farmers and affordable fresh produce; think the Black Farmer Group Fresh Produce Market

By Kayaletu **Sotsha**

In October 2020, Mr Reabetswe Malema and his partners, Mr Samuel Nkuna and Mr Mpho Makgatho opened a fresh produce market known as the Black Farmer Food Group. The market is located in factory stand number 11 in Ga-Rankuwa. The fresh produce market is an initiative that was born of market access challenges faced by smallholder farmers. In as much as this initiative may be viewed as competition to the existing Tshwane and Johannesburg fresh produce markets in a way, Mr Malema acknowledges that those two markets are giants and they cannot compete with them.



Figure 1: Mr Reabetswe Malema (left) and Mr Samuel Nkuna (right)

The market sells vegetables from the local farmers and farmers from various other provinces, operating on a leased 1 800 square metres in an industrial zone owned by the North West Development Corporation (NWDC). The motive behind opening a new market, with the Tshwane and Johannesburg fresh produce markets in close proximity, was to minimise the risk and the cost for the local small farmers while at the same time reducing the transport costs incurred by the local resellers who buy from the Tshwane market. In a way, this reduces the cost of doing business for the resellers, thereby keeping the prices down and improving the affordability and availability of fresh food and money circulation in the local areas. In other words, the local hawkers, cooks, retailers and other buyers are saving on a trip to the city to buy fresh produce and can instead buy the produce conveniently in their locality. The farmers also cut down on agent fees.



Figure 2: Potatoes

The farmers get paid for deliveries, which is made possible through their relations and communication with the buyers, which means that in most cases, the produce is purchased before it is even delivered to the market. The peak hours in the market are between 05:00 am and 07:00 am, with minimal produce being sold between 07:00 am

and 10:00 am. The main product sold in the market is potatoes. Other products include onions, ginger, tomatoes, spinach, butternut, maize, and fruit. The only products which are largely excluded are salad leaves and herbs due to low demand in the local areas of the market.



Figure 3: Ginger

Being a start-up, the market has limited capacity due to the small space available. In dealing with this challenge, Mr Malema and his partners created an online platform to facilitate the sale of products from their clients. The platform allows them to have the product sold directly from the farmer to the buyer without being delivered to the market. The market does not make any money through this platform, but the main idea of all of this effort is to improve the convenience with which food is procured, thereby also reducing wastage, in addition to other benefits that were mentioned earlier. The platform also goes beyond selling fresh produce by facilitating livestock sales. As a result, Mr Malema and his partners have also been investing in cold rooms, mainly to accommodate chicken, especially for resellers, cooks and caterers.



Figure 4: One of the workers

**The market will be
hosting an expo.
Date to be confirmed!**

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Makhunda Capital Regeneration: Making a living out of a tree of life

By Kayaletu Sotsha



Figure 5:
Mr Sebastian Taurai

The Moringa tree is dubbed a miracle tree, probably due to its multi-usage, health benefits and general contribution to food security. Patterson (2021) argued that the tree is a miracle tree due to its amazing nutrient quality. The tree contains more vitamin C than an orange, more vitamin A than a carrot, more calcium than milk and more potassium than a banana. As a result, the tree could provide missing nutrients to hungry people in underdeveloped countries. According to the African Farming (2020), the tree is known to be native to India and the Middle East. It is an adaptable plant that thrives in tropical and subtropical conditions and is grown globally for commercial purposes. There are over 13 species of the tree, with the *Moringa oleifera* and *Moringa stenopetala* being used for commercial purposes. All parts of the tree (roots, stem, leaves and seeds) can be used for food or medicine. In South Africa, several co-operatives and projects use Moringa to economically uplift communities and supplement nutrition in poor areas.

This is the story of Makhunda Capital Regeneration, which grows Moringa trees and processes the leaves into Moringa leaf tea, powder and vegan capsules. This initiative is led by Mr Sebastian Taurai, who framed the idea while still pursuing his Land Bank career. When asked what motivated him to start this initiative, Mr Taurai said, “I love plants and I feel at home when walking in the fields seeing the lush green colour.” Mr Taurai heard about Moringa from his brother and he did some more research on it and how the plant could be used commercially. This interest was fuelled by the old desire to venture into some entrepreneurship initiative that involves producing something beneficial to others at an extensive scale. The search led Mr Taurai to meet with Dr Ashwell Ndhlala, who was leading the Moringa research team at the Agricultural Research Council. Following such engagements, Makhunda Capital Regeneration was eventually born and registered in October 2018. In September 2019, the Moringa planting trials officially started.



Figure 6:
Moringa trees planted by Makhunda Capital Regeneration

The idea also came at a perfect time when people are more concerned about their health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr Taurai explained, “Being a natural food supplement high in antioxidants,

Moringa was just the perfect product as it can be used by many people in the country and internationally. Moringa is a natural immune system booster and the venture would not have come at a better time than now when the world is battling a lot of ailments including COVID-19. Employment creation has always been at the core of my heart and Moringa production presents a great opportunity, as it is very labour intensive. Lastly, I have always yearned for an opportunity to fully express myself using all the knowledge I gained from school and the corporate environment. This venture has given me an opportunity to consolidate all the knowledge gained and also engage other like-minded people with great networks and a wealth of knowledge in marketing and communication like Mr Congress Mahlangu.”



Figure 7:
Moringa tea

With the experience of starting this venture and working at the Land Bank, Mr Taurai feels that there is still a huge gap in terms of small business support from both the private sector and the government, implying that start-up capital remains a major challenge for such businesses. This was no different for Makhunda Capital, a situation that propelled Mr Taurai to take equity from his mortgage properties and draw from his pension to finance the initiative. However, he warns that because capital is hard to come by, one must test one's concept first before going all out. And that is exactly what he has done thus far.



Figure 8:
The established 1-hectare portion of the farm

Makhunda Capital is currently operating on a 21-hectare farm, but only 1 hectare is fully established. This 1 hectare is able to produce 240 kg of Moringa leaf tea, 90 kg of Moringa leaf vegan capsules and 210 kg of Moringa powder. However, Mr Taurai says that the current quantities are limited by the capacity to harvest. He believes that the one hectare could yield at least three tons in one cycle if he had full capacity to harvest. The limiting factor is that the operation is labour intensive, and with no start-up capital, Makhunda Capital can only afford the minimum labour requirements. There are currently four permanent employees and 15-20 more people employed during the peak season, mostly around the harvesting period.

Makhunda Capital supplies individual buyers, the All-Health Pharmacy Sunnyside and Spar Celtis Ridge. Recently, more markets have been unlocked, including Pharma Valu (10 pharmacy outlets), Van Heerden Pharmacies (17 outlets), Faithful to Nature (mainly online), Spar Mall @55 (tea only) and the Lyttleton Fresh Produce Market (tea only). Makhunda Capital aspires to reach other big retailers such as Pick n Pay, Spar Distribution Centre,

Dis-Chem and Clicks. All the products are certified organic by Ecocert and can be exported to the European market. Makhunda Capital manages all the processes, right up to the packaging – the products leave the farm ready for the retail shelves.

However, the revenue is still very low, mainly due to the fact that most of the clients are serviced on a consignment agreement, which makes it challenging to cover the operational costs. This means that it is still difficult to get through some certification hoops required by major retailers, as some retailers want safety audits, SAHPRA certification (particularly for the Moringa capsules) and the development of inserts for capsules. The costs of these requirements are quite steep for a start-up business like Makhunda Capital and they remain one of the prohibiting factors to the prospects for expansion. Hence, the business hopes to get some funding opportunities to meet these requirements, expand, and create more employment opportunities. In addition to the costs mentioned above, the packaging costs and transport costs are quite exorbitant.



Figure 9:
Moringa capsules

Mr Taurai remains positive, given the demand for the products in the markets. He further explains that people have become more health conscious, which creates an opportunity for natural immune boosters like Moringa oleifera, particularly for the vulnerable population living with comorbidities. He also refers to the studies that have been carried out on the incorporation of Moringa leaf powder in the daily diets of children in schoolyards. “This certainly indicates that the Department of Basic Education understands and recognises the potential use of Moringa in schools for alleviating malnutrition among children due to its nutritional benefits,” he said.

Makhunda Capital is proud of the progress made so far and believes that having an organic certification is one factor that sets the business apart from its competitors. The certification allows the business to have access to the international market when opportunities arise. The ability to employ people despite the fact that the business operates on only 4.76 % of the available land is another crucial aspect to be proud of.

Mr Taurai believes that retailers play a pivotal role through supplier development and that the missing link is mainly that of support to small start-up businesses.

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Figure 10:
Moringa powder

The way you start could determine the way you finish

By Kayaletu Sotsha

It is often said that it's not how you start that is important, but how you finish. However, I think how you start could determine how you finish. The Nongculas (Mr Mfundo Nongcula and Mrs Sithabile Nongcula) have started very strongly on their Entryway Trading (Pty) Ltd venture, backed by a humble understanding of the challenges of a farming initiative, along with passion, motivation, ability to network, vision, optimism and service knowledge. The new venture is located in Randjesfontein in the Gauteng Province.



Figure 11:
Mr and Mrs Nongcula

The Nongculas refer to themselves as intuitive botanists who spend the better part of their leisure time planting and nurturing plants. Their desire to start farming came after they moved onto a two-hectare plot, where they started growing crops for more than home consumption and have since regarded farming as a lifestyle.



Figure 12:
The Nongculas' backyard where the farming takes place

The Nongculas are currently farming in their backyard and have used their own income to build some infrastructure. As such, they are using just under a hectare and all of it under irrigation. One of the key success factors has been the continuous improvement of knowledge through research and learning from other farmers. The Nongculas say they have adopted a long-term view by employing lean methods of running their farm operations that fit the current purpose. They also adopted a demand-based approach which entails planting in alignment

with the demand patterns of their customers. The official farming initiative began in 2020 and has completed three successful successive planting cycles, rotating red onions and beetroot, and currently growing Swiss chard (Ford Hook Giant). Despite the current production scale, the farm business employs one permanent worker and has tapped into seasonal labour, employing four people.



Figure 13:
Beetroot

The Nongculas are building a profile to generate leads on Instagram and do many store visits, and the latter has proven to be very effective so far. The main challenge regarding market access thus far is meeting the quantities required by the retailers every week and the cost of moving the produce to the fresh produce markets. A further challenge is that the markets – both the retailers and fresh produce markets – dictate the price, which gives the bigger players dominance and the unintended consequence of squeezing the smaller players out of the market. In addition, the competition in the vegetable space offers the markets the ability to shop around, which tends to put pressure on prices and limits the ability to secure supplier contracts



Figure 14:
Beetroot

To overcome this, the Nongculas believe that farmers must work hard to manage their relationships with their customers – which is what the Nongculas are doing. They also believe that collaboration among farmers is very important to create partnerships that allow farmers to buy inputs in bulk and align on planting schedules to improve and manage the marketable quantities at specific times. Although this could work well for small-scale farmers, it requires trust and co-operation from all the parties involved, including deciding how much risk the farmers are willing to take jointly. As part of this collaboration, farmers must demonstrate the ability to deliver the quality that a customer wants and the quantities

required at a specific time. Managing quality, partnerships and relations with the markets is what the Nongculas are currently thriving on.

In the expansion plan, the Nongculas hope they will have the ability to acquire infrastructure that will help them manage the risks of pests and adverse weather and to manage water and fertiliser use. In addition, they are looking at agro-processing, particularly with red onions and beetroot. Although there are no particular achievements to be proud of at this stage, the Nongculas are happy with the way they have started.

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CGA-GDC transformation endeavours: Exposure and visit to citrus farmers in the Eastern Cape

By Fezeka Matebeni and Ndumiso Mazibuko

FruitSA is an umbrella body for the South African fruit industry, aiming to strive for a competitive, equitable and sustainable South African fruit industry. In partnership with other players, the industry is committed to the transformation mandate, which entails an inclusive development based on a value chain approach. To achieve this, various associations under FruitSA have their own tailor-made initiatives for transformation, including their own strategies and implementation plans.

One of its associations is the Citrus Growers' Association of Southern Africa (CGA), which

established the Grower Development Company (CGA-GDC) in 2016 to enhance its commitment to transforming the citrus industry. The company's focus is on making a significant impact in the transformation of the citrus industry by addressing the challenges faced by black growers. Each year, the CGA-GDC sets aside funding from statutory levies to support black farmers with critical needs to develop their enterprises. The conditions for approval are that 70 % of the total levy income is used for industry generic functions (such as research, promotion and consumer education), 20 % for transformation and 10 % for administration.



Figure 15:
Stakeholder visit to Ripplemead

The transformation strategy implemented through the CGA-GDC focuses on the four pillars of transformation: enterprise and supplier development, skills development, management control and ownership, and socio-economic development. **Black-owned citrus enterprises are assisted in developing business plans to enable them to apply for loans and grants.**

The CGA-GDC has further established a support fund to provide blended finance (in collaboration with the Jobs Fund and the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform) to black-owned citrus enterprises.

On 31 March 2021, the NAMC and other stakeholders visited two black-owned citrus farms in the Eastern Cape, namely Ripplemead (situated in the Balteni area in Peddie) and Oakden (situated near Fort Beaufort).

a. Ripplemead Citrus Farm

Mr Zukile Mgadle is the owner of the Ripplemead citrus farm. He started his farming operation in 1985 on land owned by the Ciskei Department of Agriculture and operated without a title deed until 2018 when he received his title deed. In 2008, the government assisted the farm with production inputs, land preparation and equipment. The farm produces soft citrus, as well as Navel and Valencia orange cultivars.



Figure 16:
Orchard on the Ripplemead farm

The Ripplemead citrus farm employs 15 permanent workers and about 70 seasonal workers (mainly during the harvesting season). This farm exports high volumes of its products to European, American, Asian and Middle Eastern markets through its agent. Approximately 5 % of its produce is sold in the neighbouring communities.

In 2018, the Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR) assisted in rebuilding the packhouse in the area where the Ripplemead farm is located. The packhouse accommodates the produce from three citrus farms. The department invested over R50 million in constructing this packhouse with all required machinery and equipment and compliance with local and global packing standards.



Figure 17:
Ripplemead citrus packhouse

However, the Ripplemead citrus farm is no longer utilising this new facility due to the lack of administration in the packhouse. The farm packs its produce more than 40 km away from the farm, in the Riverside packhouse (LONA). The disadvantage of this is that some of its produce get damaged along the way and transport costs are higher. Nevertheless, Mr Mgadle still believes that he has made the right decision to leave the new packhouse.

Mr Mgadle started working with LONA in 2010/2011 and is comfortable with its business. He has expressed that it has been a privilege working with LONA. The Ripplemead citrus farm has its three-year planting plan in place and the plan is to expand production by five hectares in the 2021/22 season. Trees have been procured and are ready to be planted.

b. Oakden citrus farm

The farm is owned by Mr Headman Manyota and is located in the Kat River Valley near Fort Beaufort. Mr Manyota grew up in Middelburg in the Eastern Cape and he developed a passion for farming at a very young age. As such, he studied Agricultural Extension at the Fort Cox Agricultural College in the Eastern Cape. He applied for the Oakden citrus farm in the late 1980s and he acquired the farm in 1990.

At some point, the farmer experienced some overwhelming challenges, which led him to leave the farm and seek other income sources to cope with his family responsibilities. In 2007, the farm was reignited when Mr Manyota joined the emerging farmer programme of Riverside Enterprises, predominantly owned by the LONA group and exporting mainly citrus to the international market. The Oakden citrus farm managed to secure funding through the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) to develop infrastructure and procure trees through this group. However, the contract between the IDC and the Oakden farm has led to many challenges

regarding the loan repayment between the funder, Oakden, and the LONA group. This has even affected profits on the Oakden farm due to poor cash flow management because of this dispute.



Figure 18:
Stakeholder visit to Ripplemead

c. Conclusion

The statutory measures system in South Africa plays a significant role in ensuring the country's competitiveness in global citrus markets. However, there is a lot to be done within the value chain as certain individuals still control some parts. Despite the two farms' progressive efforts, there are still some challenges that require immediate attention to ensure that they do not overshadow the industry's efforts through the levy system.



Time to turn the tide on SA's food safety regime

By Francois Baird

The time for talk is over. South Africa urgently needs to establish a central Food Safety Agency or risk paying a terrible price.


As the world slowly emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and pre-crisis global trade patterns re-establish, so too should we be racing to finally establish a food safety regulatory and testing regime that ensures the health and welfare of South African citizens. It's not as if we haven't had time to act. The idea of a statutory national Food Control Agency has been debated and considered for some 20 years after first being mooted by the then Minister of Agriculture, Thoko Didiza, as far back as 2001 (<https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/4608/>).

Despite ongoing deliberations between key departments, including Health, Agriculture, Trade and Industry and other agencies and actors, and many briefings to Parliament over the years, little appears to have materially advanced to bring such an agency to life.

The 2018 listeriosis crisis, which killed more than 200 South Africans, resulted in renewed promises of a Food Safety Agency, which FairPlay called for at the time. President Ramaphosa told Parliament that the government had established a process to establish a Food Safety Agency and the regulatory framework to ensure the requisite high levels of health and safety.

Parliament even established an Inter-Departmental Food Safety Co-ordinating Committee, comprising members of Parliament's portfolio committees on Agriculture, Health and Trade and Industry. This committee was set up in 2012, and by 2019 had worked on developing an integrated food safety framework and establishing a Food Safety Agency. Sadly, since 2019, nothing has happened and it appears that the committee was not re-established after the May 2019 elections. This is a matter of public health and basic national hygiene, and it is being ignored. Inaction potentially imperils the health and even the lives of South Africans who may find themselves exposed to illness and other risks, in no small part because of the flagrant and immoral dumping of food products into our market. Not only do these practices devastate local jobs, as organisations like FairPlay have repeatedly shown, but without an appropriate regulatory and testing regimen, they expose people to other risks too.

Food safety matters impact low-income households disproportionately. Poor-quality food results in higher medical costs, poorer nutrition outcomes and lower immunity. A Food Safety Agency would therefore benefit low-income households through better quality food and nutrition. The perils of inadequate regulatory control and testing are well documented in the literature, so it is not as if South Africa needs to plough new ground to solve the problem. The responses, too, are well documented.



For example, experts writing in a detailed and expansive paper, titled International Trade and Food Safety: Economic Theory and Case Studies, note that “more than 200 known pathogens are transmitted through food and pose human health risks” – among them the well-known villains Salmonella, Campylobacter, Clostridium, and Listeria. “Diseases or pathogens introduced through internationally traded livestock products may not be endemic and may pose a whole new set of problems unfamiliar to the importing country,” they warn.

The study describes the rise in concern over food safety on the back of growing global trade and in the wake of a number of well-documented public health crises, including the “mad cow” beef saga of the 1990s and various Salmonella crises involving poultry imports over the years.

Meanwhile, Mary Kenny of the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has also highlighted the food quality and safety considerations of the global food trade in a paper which concludes that “control of food imports is essential to ensure a safe food supply and to prevent the ‘dumping’ of lesser-quality food”. (<http://www.fao.org/3/W9474t/W9474t02.pdf>).

“The government’s food control agencies need to assure consumers that they have set and will enforce standards for the quality and safety of foods,” she says, adding that these agencies must work with food producers in a “cooperative and collaborative manner” to ensure quality and safety “through appropriate inspection, testing and certification methods”.

One problem that besets this is the myriad ecosystem of organisations, agencies, and regulations that preside over food safety in South Africa. These have been described to Parliament several times over the years, along with plans to establish the Food Control Safety Agency. For example, Professor Lise

Korsten of the University of Pretoria, a respected expert in food safety and regulatory control, told a parliamentary workshop five years ago that the decision to establish the agency was in line with international precedent and she also noted her own concerns about border control for food products or fresh produce entering the country illegally.

There is an opportunity now to move swiftly and build on the foundation of work that has been done over the years. We can finally establish the much-needed Food Safety Agency, based on the best international precedent offers but with a South African flavour appropriate to our circumstances.

FairPlay has pointed before to the Irish model, which seems a good starting point. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland, which falls under their Minister of Health, came into effect in the late 1990s with a mission “to protect consumers and raise compliance through partnership, science and food law enforcement”. The authority offers a solid blend of expert science, public participation, industry consultation and statutory heft, with significant powers of enforcement. We need an agency that has “teeth” to ensure that regulations are not ignored or disregarded. The private sector could help fund the body to flatten the hump of locating resources in a stressed fiscus and accepting the principle that a rising tide floats all ships. Many in the private sector are spending substantial amounts on developing their own testing and quality standards to plug the holes in the existing system.

As the world attempts to return to normal, it also raises the danger lurking at our borders. We have a chance now to prepare our defences. Let us not be accused, once again, of having been forewarned and been found wanting.

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