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Promoting market access for South African agriculture

Agripreneur

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EC Agri Student Camp

JOURNEY: TIYISANI
FARM



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THE AGRIPRENEUR QUARTERLY:

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

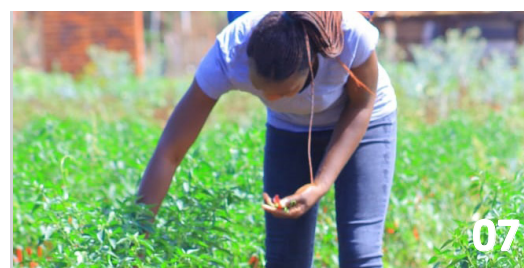
PREFACE

Welcome to the twenty-seventh edition of the Agripreneur publication of the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC). The NAMC seeks to create a platform where agripreneurs and farmers, mainly smallholders, can share their knowledge and skills, challenges, experiences, and insights through this publication. 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

It is about 6 years ago when the NAMC started the Agripreneur quarterly publication. So far, the publication has covered 113 stories in smallholder farming, of which 33,3% are on livestock, 3,5% on crops, 10,5% on poultry, 18,4% on fruits and vegetables, 7,8% on agro-processing, 5,2% on capacity building, 3,5% on norms and standards, and the rest (17,5%) on other developmental aspects. The latter includes lessons from female farmers from other African countries, lessons of application of technology in China's agriculture, smallholder certification programme, and the enhancement of youth participation in agriculture, among others. The enhancement of youth participation in agriculture (Y-agriculture) is another NAMC initiative started in 2014 (find more about it [here](#)).

However, it is only in 44 of the 113 stories where one could categorize the farming initiative by gender. As such, 59,1% of the 44 smallholder farming initiatives were headed by men, the rest headed by women. Furthermore, the youth (both men and women) headed 50% of the 44 smallholder farming initiatives that could be categorized by gender. The majority of men were in livestock production, while women featured a lot in poultry, fruits, and vegetables as well as agro-processing.

The Agripreneur 26 covered 4 stories of young female agripreneurs. One of the agripreneurs

has been covered in 2 of the previous issues of the publication. On the first encounter, she was leasing land and farming with vegetables. On the second encounter, she was running a company known as the Farmers' Choice, which places students and graduates on farms. On the last encounter, she is starting rooftop farming in Gauteng while growing seedlings in Mpumalanga. The latter has been achieved through partnerships with other agripreneurs. Only the sky is the limit for this agripreneur whose name is Andile Matukane.

Overall, it is encouraging to see the youth emerging (with innovative ideas) in agriculture which has been labelled as a dirty job during the olden high school days, resulting in many of my peers finding it to be unattractive as a career choice, even though we grew up in farming households.

The sector and other relevant stakeholders should do more to support such initiatives, thereby attracting more youth. The gender gap, at 59,1% women and 40,9% men at a smallholder level in the sector that is known to be dominated by male farmers at a commercial level indicate the effort of women to become part of the sector.

Enjoy the reading!!



Eastern Cape Agricultural Student Camp promoting agriculture as a career

By Nomantande Yeki and Nokhanyo Maceba

Birthing ideas during a global pandemic which has many constraints on how business is done and, on our livelihoods, can be demotivating. However, it is not the case for AGRUSE, as they began a student camp, one of its kind in the province of the Eastern Cape despite the pandemic. AGRUSE is an agricultural consulting company based in Queenstown in the Eastern Cape. It was founded in 2020 by Ms Nokhanyo Maceba. The company's vision is to provide cutting-edge support to aspiring farmers.

On 23 and 24 September 2021, AGRUSE held its first annual agricultural student camp in Middleburg. The student camp aims to promote agriculture as the career of choice and to instill the spirit of agribusiness and entrepreneurship in the minds of the youth in the Eastern Cape Province. It is visionary companies like AGRUSE that make the mark and lead the youth out of the bondage of seeking the 9-5 employment opportunities but to breed a battalion of aspirant agripreneurs who will produce food and create employment for others and wealth for themselves.

The student camp was honoured by several high school students as well as their teachers from Clarkbury, Abambo, Arthur Mfebe agricultural high schools, and Mount Arthur girls' school. Speakers came from various agricultural organizations including the NAMC and the MEC for Rural Development and Agrarian Reform honourable Ms Nonkqubela Pieters.

The event was held over 2 days and comprised of different activities both formal and informal. The high school learners had some team-building activities that forced them to think and come up with creative solutions to different problems. On



Figure 1: Ms Maceba. Founder and Director of AGRUSE

the formal side, the programme was jam-packed with informative sessions from agricultural industry role players. The industry role players gave an overview of different focus areas within agriculture, presenting to the students what is available within the field of agriculture and exposing them to the possibilities.

Having successfully held its first annual student camp in September 2021, AGRUSE aims to spread its wings and hold the event on

an annual basis. The target is mainly Grades 11 and 12 agricultural scholars who aspire to pursue agricultural careers but in the main who aspire to be farmers in their own right. The goal is to expand and reach all agricultural schools in all the six districts of the Eastern Cape, viz Chris Hani, O.R. Tambo, Alfred Nzo, Amathole, and Sarah Baartman.



Figure 2: Student camp of 2021

The net will not be cast to only agricultural schools but to any school which has agriculture as a subject and students who aspire to make a living out of it. The event will be packaged to offer mouth-watering activities and exposure to opportunities in the industry post their schooling. AGRUSE intends to lobby bursaries to camp participants that have done well in their grade 12 and to monitor their progress in universities, Technikons, and agricultural colleges. AGRUSE as an accredited AgriSETA company will also offer training to those that will not pursue the academic route and assist them to get start-up capital to start their agricultural businesses/enterprises. The idea of the student camp has never been more relevant given the latent but potential of agriculture as the key economic driver in the Eastern Cape.

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Tiyisani farm business's journey

By Khathutshelo Rambau

Figure 3

Wisani Chauke is a young female Agripreneur from Malamulele in the Limpopo Province. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture Plant Production from the University of Limpopo as well as a Master's degree in Plant Breeding from the University of Venda. She is currently employed by P&A Seeding in Mooketsi as a Technical and Field sales representative.

She and her partner Mr Tiyani Mabasa ventured into a farm business in April of 2017, driven by an ambition to create jobs and improve food security. They grow vegetables such as chilies, okra, tomatoes, cabbage, and beetroot. They began with 500 cabbage seedlings donated to them by a friend. They are currently working in a 1- hectare plot, but the chief has demarcated them 3-hectares, which they are busy clearing and fencing.



Figure 4: Tomatoes ready for the market

They do not have a borehole, but they do have a 1000-liter tank from which they get water. They are using a drip irrigation system. As such, they are efficient in their water usage and delivery of nutrients to the growing crops as the system delivers water and nutrients directly to the plant's roots zone, in the right amounts, at the right time, so each plant gets exactly what it needs for growth.

At this stage, they harvest chilies once a week and can produce approximately 190 bags of 3 kg; tomatoes every third day, producing 20 crates; 18 kg of okra, and 572 kg of beetroot. They sell their fresh produce to the locals, Malamulele hawkers, and fresh produce markets.

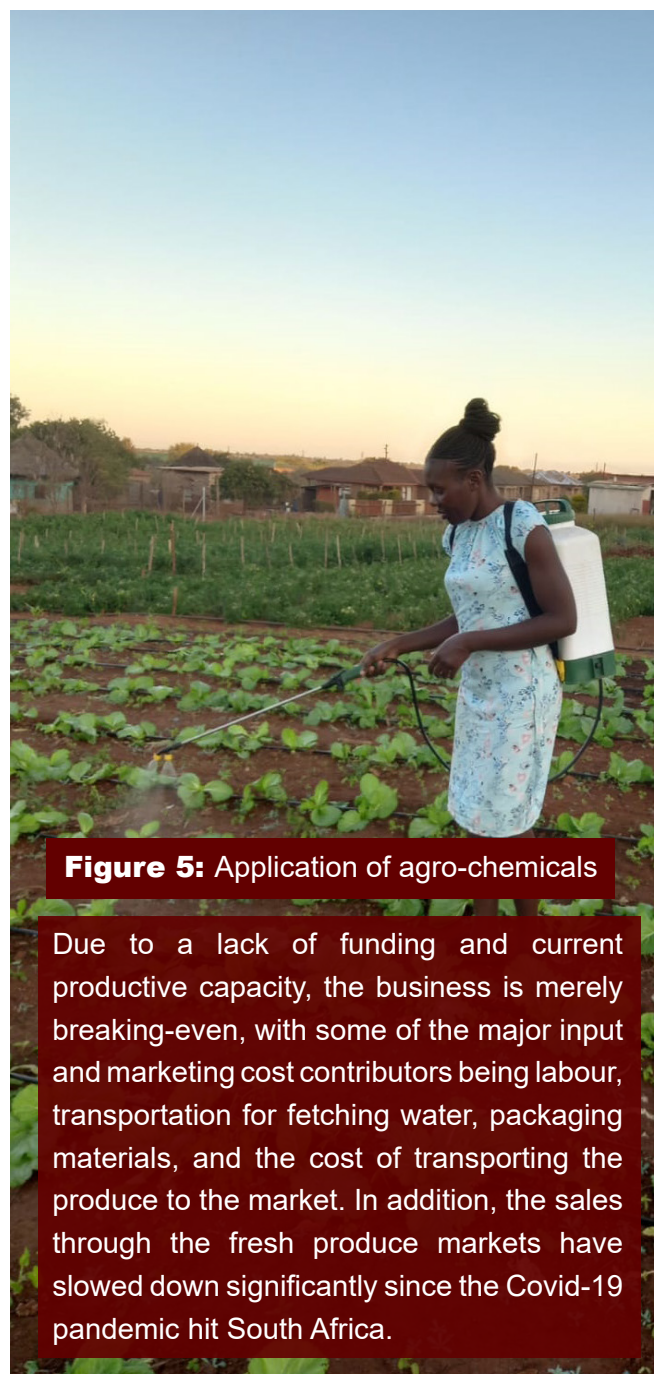


Figure 5: Application of agro-chemicals

Due to a lack of funding and current productive capacity, the business is merely breaking-even, with some of the major input and marketing cost contributors being labour, transportation for fetching water, packaging materials, and the cost of transporting the produce to the market. In addition, the sales through the fresh produce markets have slowed down significantly since the Covid-19 pandemic hit South Africa.



Figure 6: Hand-processed chilies



Figure 7: Unprocessed chilies ready for the market

However, the couple is hopeful that the additional 3 hectares will improve the economies of scale and this may bring some relief. One of the achievements that the couple is proud of so far is that they employ six seasonal workers who assist mostly during weeding and harvesting. “I am proud that I can employ people, even if it is only on a part-time basis,” says Chauke. She added that they did not expect to make a fortune yet, but they are prepared to work hard and invest in the business. “The rewards will come” she believes.

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The Covid-19 pandemic has brought new ideas for livelihood strategies of many

By Kayaletu Sotsha

“The recent bird flu did not spare us as we lost 4 batches when our chickens were 4 weeks old and had already consumed a lot of feed. We are yet to recover from this as we had to start afresh”

Figure 8: Mr Mamalema Molepo

In May 2020, Mr Mamalema Molepo and his wife Mrs Refilwe Molepo started the KwaLanga Poultry and Supplies. The idea came at the back of challenges that Mr Molepo faced throughout his adulthood, beginning from dropping out of school while he was enrolled for the National Diploma in Architectural studies – due to lack of finances. After his inability to complete his Diploma, Mr Molepo went into the taxi industry in Gauteng and later moved into the hospitality industry in the Western Cape where he served for 17 years before being retrenched in 2020. Mrs Molepo also served in the hospitality industry and resigned in 2018 to look after their newborn son. The retrenchment of Mr Molepo due to Covid-19-related challenges then meant that the family had to look at other means of livelihood.



Figure 9: Humble beginnings in KwaLanga backyard

During the transition from the taxi industry into the hospitality industry, Mr Molepo ventured into a poultry business for a year, selling his chicken to the street hawkers in Johannesburg. He was motivated by his involvement in such an endeavour while he stayed with his grandmother in the rural areas of Ga-Molepo in the Limpopo Province. It is this venture that he fell back into partly due to his experience.

The business is located in KwaLanga township in the Western Cape where the couple stayed. It started with 100-day-old chicks and quickly reached a ceiling at 200-day-old chicks per cycle. Mr Molepo could not get more space for expansion and then decided to sell their house and relocate to Lebowakgomo in Limpopo where they have access to 2 hectares and have so far managed to grow to 300-day-old chicks per cycle.

The main market is the household within Lebowakgomo. Initially, this market presented a challenge in the sense that some customers wanted to buy on credit and took time to pay, which made it difficult to manage the cash flow properly. Recently, the customer base has grown beyond the locals, and sales have picked up, enabled by the discount offered to bulk buyers of 10 or more of living or slaughtered chicken.

Mr Molepo believes the business could do better with better access to day-old chicks. To improve on this, he has bought a small incubator to hatch his chicks. This will also ensure consistent supply to the customers.



Figure 10: Potch Koekoek chicks after hatching

Another direct effect of the bird flu has been the loss of stock. “The recent bird flu did not spare us as we lost 4 batches when our chickens were 4 weeks old and had already consumed a lot of feed. We are yet to recover from this as we had to start afresh”, said Mr Molepo. As such, he has decided to also increase the stock of the indigenous chickens due to their hardiness. Moreover, he is beginning to diversify by adding small stocks like goats and sheep and planting some vegetables too.



Figure 10: Freshly slaughtered chicken ready for delivery

Adding free-range layers is also on the cards due to an observed demand for eggs. The plan is to have at least 500 free-range layers by June 2022. “We have already started by incubating and hatching Potch Koekoek chicks, which we are rearing as free-range. We shall be getting Black Australorp and Boschvelder eggs to incubate and hatch soon,” said Mr Molepo.

He is also excited that he has been able to create some job opportunities, currently employing 2 temporal workers. The hope is that the business will grow and stabilize, which will increase the possibility of absorbing the current workers and also the chance of employing more people.



Figure 11: Dorper and PEDI sheep

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