

# agripreneur

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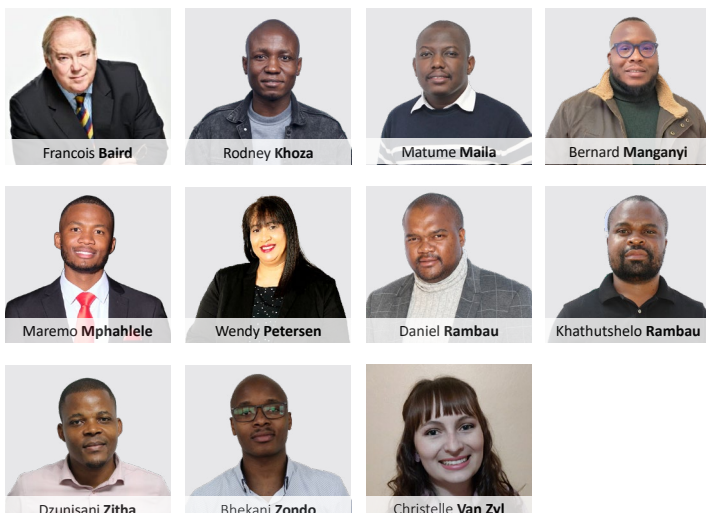
# PREFACE

Welcome to the 44<sup>th</sup> edition of the Agripreneur, a publication produced by the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) to create a platform where agripreneurs and farmers, primarily smallholders, can share their knowledge, skills, challenges, experiences and insights. This publication is intended to assist smallholders to learn from other agripreneurs, develop strategies, adopt models and become part of the value chain by marketing commodities and products that meet market standards and are safe for consumption. The Agripreneur also promotes and profiles aspects of South African agriculture as a brand. Each edition features compelling stories that aim to persuade readers to #LoveRSAAgric.

## IN THIS 44<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF AGRIPRENEUR, WE HAVE FEATURED THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

1. Editor's note
2. Agri-highlights
3. Trade Export Awareness Webinar for fresh fruit farmers
4. NAMC's TRC oversight visit to transformation projects funded by statutory levies in the Western Cape
5. More than a meal: The value of the experience
6. Against the odds: South African Olive Oils are champions
7. Fuel hikes threaten food prices
8. Vision, grain, livestock: Matheta's journey in agriculture
9. Vhadau Premium Piggery: Building a sustainable future through pig farming
10. Chicken exports the key to industry growth
11. Ndlovukazi: Cultivating legacy, and feeding communities
12. VAT-free chicken will address growing food insecurity

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



Matume Maila

## Greetings to the farming community and all our readers.

It is my pleasure to introduce Agripreneur Issue 44, our quarterly publication. In this Issue, we feature Minister Steenhuisen's message of hope for the new year (2026), which emphasises the opportunities that await. The message emphasises a renewed commitment to increasing agricultural production, enhancing rural safety, increasing exports, and building a sector that is inclusive, resilient, and globally competitive.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) being flagged as a "real threat" in this issue's agri-highlights isn't just

a routine warning, it signals a situation that can quickly escalate from a veterinary concern into a national economic problem.

The publication also highlights a Trade Export Awareness Webinar targeted at fresh fruit farmers, as well as an oversight visit conducted by the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) Transformation Review Committee (TRC).

We also explore the benefits of agritourism and South African olive oils, which continue to be international champions.

This Issue also features articles on fuel price increases, chicken exports as a significant driver of industry growth, and VAT-free chicken as a solution to rising food poverty.

Matheta's Journey in Agriculture, which emphasises the passion and insights of a Radijoko-based farmer and agricultural consultant, is also covered.

We also present the inspiring story of Zwivhuya Mudau, who founded Vhadau Premium Piggery after completing her Logistics and Supply Chain Management studies.

Finally, we highlight Siphindile Phumelele Hlengwa, the founder of Ndlovukazi, who is breaking the boundaries of agriculture and redefining what it means to be an agripreneur.

Colleagues, together we can grow an inclusive agriculture sector and ensure that opportunities, growth, and prosperity are available to all players, from smallholder farmers to emerging agripreneurs.

*Matume Maila*

# AGRO-FOOD CHAINS UNIT

Tracks and report food price trends in South Africa to advise the Minister on any possible action that could be taken when national and household food security is threatened

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## AGRI-HIGHLIGHTS (JANUARY – MARCH 2026)

# MINISTER STEENHUISEN'S MESSAGE OF HOPE FOR 2026



\*JH Steenhuisen, MP  
Minister of Agriculture

Every year, as the new year starts, the hardworking farmers of South Africa do what they have been doing for centuries. They watch the sky, check their animals, till the soil, and make decisions based on the unknown and the risks involved. In this context, the new year message by the Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, takes on a sense of urgency. Steenhuisen spoke to the agricultural sector, which is perhaps more familiar than any other sector with the challenges of pressure and endurance. He reminded us that agriculture is not just an economic activity.

Agriculture is a lifestyle that allows families to survive, feed the population of South Africa,

and hold rural communities together. The message acknowledges that each meal in South Africa is the result of the shared effort of all stakeholders including farmworkers, veterinarians, researchers, agricultural advisers, agribusinesses and rural households. Steenhuisen did not ignore the heavy burden placed on the sector by climate uncertainty, rising input costs, animal disease and global instability. All these factors influence every single decision made by farmers in all commodity groups.

However, the message is not one of despair. Rather, it identifies the opportunities presented by the new year. There is a renewed commitment to grow production,

improve rural safety, increase exports, and build an agricultural sector that is inclusive, resilient and competitive. For many farmers, this message indicates that there is an acknowledgment of the need for both practical assistance and long-term security for the future of their farming businesses.

South Africa's agriculture has earned a world-class reputation for quality, traceability and reliability. Trust earned in the global market gives South Africa access to markets and creates jobs along the value chain, from farm gate to port. The minister's message emphasises the importance of preserving and expanding South Africa's access to international markets.

In 2026, significant steps will be taken to open new markets, protect existing markets, and comply with international standards. To achieve this, farmers will continue to concentrate on producing high-quality products to ensure that their sales today will create opportunities for the future of the sector. The future of agriculture is dependent upon young people. Therefore, the minister's message clearly states that supporting young farmers is not optional; it is compulsory. To read more, Click [here](#).

# FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE (FMD) IS A REAL THREAT, **BUT SO IS OUR UNITY**



*\*JH Steenhuisen, MP  
Minister of Agriculture*

**M**inister John Steenhuisen calls on South Africa's livestock sector to stand together and protect what feeds the nation.

For many livestock farmers, the past few months have brought sleepless nights, difficult decisions, and growing uncertainty. The FMD is not just a national crisis; it is a deeply personal one. It threatens years of hard work, carefully built herds, and the livelihoods of families who depend on them every day.

Recognising the severity of the situation, the State has

categorised the outbreak a national disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002).

Categorisation is a step towards declarartion. It allows for a faster, more coordinated response and ensures that the necessary resources can be directed where they are needed most. It sends a clear message that this is a serious challenge, and that the government is fully committed to standing with farmers and protecting the sector. At the centre of this response is Minister John Steenhuisen, who has placed farmers at the heart of the national effort. His message has been clear: the government understands what farmers are going through, and it is

acting with urgency. However, success will depend on all of us working together. He has spoken directly to farmers, acknowledging the pressure they are under. For many, livestock is more than a business. It is a legacy built over generations. It represents pride, identity, and survival.

The impact of FMD, from movement restrictions to market disruptions, has made an already demanding sector even more difficult to navigate. "I know what you are going through, and I want you to know that the government is standing with you," he said.

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Nevertheless, this is not only a message of support; it is also a call to act. A key part of the response is the rapid scaling up of vaccination. South Africa has already received initial shipments of FMD vaccines funded by the government, with more expected to arrive as the fight intensifies.

This growing supply is enabling a broader rollout, especially in affected and high-risk areas, to contain the spread of the disease. Vaccination is at the heart of the country's plan to recover and return to FMD-free status.

It is the most effective way to protect the national herd and restore confidence in the livestock sector. On the ground, this work is being conducted by state veterinarians, private veterinarians, and animal health technicians. These teams of professionals are working long hours, often in tough conditions, moving from farm to farm to ensure that animals are vaccinated and protected. From communal areas to commercial operations, their actions send a clear message: no farmer is being left behind.

Minister Steenhuisen has reinforced this in every engagement: Every herd matters, regardless of size or location.

For more on FMD-free click [here](#).



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# TRADE EXPORT AWARENESS WEBINAR FOR FRESH FRUIT FARMERS

Matume Maila and Khathutshelo Rambau



The Department of Agriculture (DoA), in collaboration with the NAMC hosted the **Trade Export Awareness Webinar for fresh fruit** farmers on 18 March 2026.

This webinar, which focused on increasing awareness and understanding of fresh fruit trade and export opportunities, provided a comprehensive platform for unpacking key enablers in the export ecosystem. From financial assistance programs to market access, compliance requirements, and inclusive participation. The webinar emphasised the critical importance of coordinated efforts in advancing South Africa's fresh fruit export sector.

The webinar began by emphasising the strategic importance of export readiness and stakeholder collaboration in accelerating growth in the fresh produce industry. This was followed by a presentation on Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) incentives, which provided valuable and practical insights into the financial and non-financial support programs available to exporters.

During this webinar, fresh fruit farmers were advised to remain agile, informed, and competitive amid ongoing uncertainty and the dynamic nature of global markets. The webinar's emphasis on transformation and inclusivity within the export value chain was a standout feature. In this regard, the Citrus Growers Association

Grower Development Company (CGA-GDC) gave a presentation about their recent successes in integrating emerging farmers into the export value chain. This presentation was essential to ensure that the benefits of export growth are distributed more broadly and sustainably throughout the sector.

The level of participation and thought-provoking questions provided a considerably increased the value of the discussions and reflected a strong commitment to learning and development within the fresh fruit export sector.

***Please stay tuned for our next market information day.***

For more information about market information days **contact:** [krambau@namc.co.za](mailto:krambau@namc.co.za)

# NAMC'S TRC OVERSIGHT VISIT TO TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS FUNDED BY STATUTORY LEVIES **IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

Maremo Mphahlele



**F**rom March 2 to 6, 2026, the NAMC's TRC undertook an oversight field visit to the Western Cape's horticulture sub-sector. The visit was part of NAMC's mandate to monitor transformation programs funded by statutory levies, assess the effectiveness of industry support, and identify both constraints and growth opportunities within supported initiatives.

The engagement included a wide range of commodity groups,

including deciduous fruit, fynbos, olives, wine, pomegranates, and table grapes, and provided a comprehensive overview of transformation in the Western Cape's horticultural landscape.

During the visit, the NAMC engaged with farms and industry bodies, including levy administrators, to acquire a better understanding of the ground realities. In the deciduous fruit sector, the committee visited Thandi Estate and Protea Farm, where transformation is

being implemented through community land ownership and blended finance models. These conversations demonstrated both progress and major constraints, including underutilised land and financial pressures linked to high debt levels.

The visit also featured packhouse operations like Williams Bros Fruits, where large-scale aggregation, logistics,

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and export systems showcased the impact of transformation initiatives supported through statutory levies.

In the fynbos industry, the NAMC assessed emerging enterprises, including Lubbie's Farm and the Bergland Development Trust. These case studies demonstrated the vital role of training, mentoring, and institutional support offered by organisations such as Cape Flora SA and the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) in advancing transformation.

At the same time, substantial constraints were identified, including limited access to water rights, inadequate electricity supply, and inefficiencies in port logistics, which all pose significant barriers to scaling production and improving competitiveness.

Engagements in the olive industry, including visits to Willow Creek and Bellissimo Olives, provided valuable insights into successful value addition methods and the integration of black farmers into established enterprises.

In the wine and table grape industries, the committee assessed transformation projects such as the Rockbelt Ridge, as well as other Black-owned wine brands supported by SA Wine. These engagements highlighted the vital role played by SA Wine in promoting export orientation and supporting strong social development initiatives, such as bursaries, community upliftment, and skill development.

Despite these accomplishments, several challenges were noted across these industries, including a lack of adequate packhouse infrastructure, high marketing costs, and a need for improved market intelligence, all of which require targeted intervention to enable continued growth and sustainability.

Additionally, the NAMC observed social investment initiatives undertaken by the Pomegranate Producers Association of South Africa (POMOSA), such as funding for kitchen infrastructure at Greenberg Primary School. This initiative emphasises the broader role of statutory levies in promoting rural development and community development.

Overall, the March 2026 Western Cape visit enabled the NAMC to effectively oversee, monitor, and assess the utilisation of transformation levies. While significant progress has been made, particularly through partnerships, enterprise development, and increased participation of black producers, persistent structural challenges remain.

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*\*NAMC colleagues at Fynbos*

## BERGHOFF FYNBOS



# MORE THAN A MEAL: THE VALUE OF THE EXPERIENCE

Christelle Van Zyl



**A**tomato is no longer just a tomato once a tourist has walked through the field, heard the story behind the crop, and tasted it at the table.

This is where farm-to-table goes beyond just food. In an agri-tourism context, the value lies not only in what is given on the plate, but also in everything surrounding it. The tourist sees where the product comes from, meets the people who make it, and gains an understanding of the time, effort, and care that goes into its creation.

In summary, the dinner is part of a larger agricultural experience.

This gives a real and authentic experience for the tourist. Many people are no longer simply seeking a place to eat. They want to know where their food comes from, how it was produced, and what distinguishes it from something purchased at a supermarket. A fresh lunch on a farm, prepared with food items grown or produced nearby, provides a sense of connectedness that is sometimes lacking in daily life. It is simple yet meaningful.

For the farmer, this adds value to what is already on the property. A vegetable, fruit, cheese, olive oil, or cut of meat is no longer just a product to be sold. It becomes part of a story. After seeing the

orchard, vineyard, tunnel, kraal, or vegetable garden, tourists are more likely to appreciate the final product. They are not only paying for the food, but also for the experience that comes with it.

This is also where trust begins to develop. When tourists can see the source of the food for themselves, ask questions, and speak directly with the farmer or host, they gain confidence in the product. It gives the food a face and a location. This can result in increased customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth marketing, and improved support for on-farm sales.

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South African farms are linked to various landscapes and a diverse range of commodities. Whether it's a Karoo lamb meal (my hometown), fresh fruit in season, homemade preserves, locally produced olive oil, or a simple farm breakfast made with local ingredients, there's a potential to provide tourists with something authentic and unforgettable. The farm does not need to become a high-end

restaurant. Often, the strength rests in its simplicity.

The most important thing is that the experience feels natural on the farm. Tourists can typically detect the difference between what is real and what is staged. It may be a shared table, a seasonal cuisine, a quick walk before a meal, or a conversation about what is growing and why. These small details are often what people remember most.

At the end of the day, farm-to-table agri-tourism is beneficial because it transforms food into a connection. It gives tourists a greater understanding of farming, and it allows farmers to contribute value in a way that is authentic to their land and way of life. Agri-tourism entails more than just food. It is an experience.

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# AGAINST THE ODDS: SOUTH AFRICAN OLIVE OILS ARE CHAMPIONS

Wendy Petersen



South African Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) producers are proving, year on year, that quality, not scale, is what defines true excellence. In 2025, local olive farms earned some of the highest honours at major international competitions, outshining global heavyweights despite South Africa representing only **0.99% of the global olive oil market** in 2024 / 2025.

In a worldwide industry dominated by Mediterranean powerhouses such as Spain, Italy,

and Greece, countries responsible for roughly **95% of global olive oil** production, South Africa's achievements are extraordinary. For comparison, in 2020 Spain produced over 1.8 billion litres of olive oil, while South Africa produced just 1.6 million litres in 2024, 90% of which is sold and consumed locally.

People love a 'David and Goliath' story, and South African EVOOs are proving that they are a gentle force to be reckoned with on a mammoth international olive oil stage. While the SA 'Davids' might

not be taking on the Goliaths directly, they are beginning to make their mark and score highly against the very best in the world. This is a sign of better things to come because every year the tally of awards being won by South African producers increases. It's just getting better.

Attesting to the dizzying effects of winning on the international EVOO stage, Eleanor Stoker of Willow Creek says: "These local and international awards are more than just accolades;

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they are a profound validation of our belief that excellence is in our nature.”

Rio Largo Master Miller, Nick Wilkinson, says that Rio Largo enters specific reputable International Olive Oil competitions each year because “they are a good barometer for how we compare with other suppliers. Our awards give credibility to our product and assurance to consumers that they are buying ‘the real deal’ and, of course, they generate a feel-good factor knowing we can compete with the best internationally.”

Karl Lambour at Tokara says, “receiving awards charges our commitment to continue pursuing excellence from our olive groves to the table.”

Wendy Petersen, CEO of SA Olive, is enormously proud of the industry’s accomplishments: “Winning medals and accolades from the world’s leading olive oil competitions reinforces the exceptional quality of locally produced EVOO and showcases South Africa’s growing influence on the global olive oil landscape. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to every producer whose hard work and dedication have earned international acclaim this year, as we do to all the local winners of the SA Olive Awards and the Absa Top Ten.”

Awards are necessary – they keep competition alive and well, and they are a vital component of SA Olive’s

marketing strategy to promote the industry’s professionalism, success, and overall commitment to high quality and excellence. Without awards – both local and international – there would be no benchmark for success nor any reason to believe that South African EVOOs are of value.

The SA Olive Awards is an annual competition that recognizes the best gold, silver, and bronze medal-winning Extra Virgin Olive Oils in the country. Special merit, because it’s deemed to be essential, is also given to agri-workers in the SA olive farming industry. The Absa Top 10, which selects the crème de la crème of the Gold Medal winners of the SA Olive Awards that year, is a further accolade that gives the producers an additional boost and something more to boast about.

Awards are not mere medals because they can also be a benchmark for how the industry ‘regulates’ itself through an official quality control mechanism. Since SA Olive introduced its Commitment to Compliance (CTC) scheme over a decade ago, it has created a failsafe strategy that grows in stature every year.

International success reflects this because while being a tiny competitor in volume terms, South Africa’s EVOO is becoming a veritable global giant in competitive terms. This is because it is crafted to the highest standards, and the SA Olive CTC Seal ensures every bottle meets stringent and strict criteria for authenticity, purity, freshness, flavour, and sensory excellence,

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allowing South African oils to stand out. It assures consumers that they are buying a product of the highest integrity and quality, and it is a symbol of compliance that is now being recognized around the world, too.

The SA Olive label on a bottle of EVOO is a seal of confidence. It confirms that the EVOO is 100% locally (South African) produced, is authentic Extra Virgin Olive Oil, and is produced in the harvest year displayed on the seal. It also means the consumer may experience all the enjoyment and benefits of fresh juice extracted from newly harvested olives.

From a health viewpoint, the CTC seal also confirms that the SA Olive Organoleptic Tasting Panel considers the content free of organoleptic defects and that it complies with the International Olive Council (IOC) chemical analysis standards for free fatty acids (FFA) and peroxide value (PV).

The CTC scheme also aligns with SA Olive's overall mandate to support a healthy future for its members, healthy growth and development for the industry, and a healthy lifestyle for all South Africans. The winning of local and international awards is a culmination of all the effort, hard work, and professionalism that South African EVOO producers have brought to bear ... they are the proverbial cherry on top and crown the quality perfectly.

**More international distinction for SA**

The SA Olive Association

has received a distinctive international endorsement of its overall commitment to quality and is now confirmed as one of the top tasting panels in the world, having been accredited by the International Olive Council (IOC).

For a laboratory to achieve IOC recognition, it must meet extremely stringent technical and operational standards. This includes adhering to requirements for test rooms and tasting glasses, submitting manager qualifications and training programs documentation, and complying with mandatory ongoing competency checks.

The IOC sensory panels evaluate olive oils and classify them into four distinct grades (extra virgin (EV), virgin (V), ordinary virgin (O), and lampante (L)). This grading system was introduced in 1987 and was included in the European regulations in 1991.

IOC-recognized laboratories must follow strict protocols, including controlled testing environments and regular proficiency tests, to guarantee reliable results. In addition to national compliance protocols, SA Olive, as an IOC-recognized laboratory, must also participate regularly in proficiency tests to maintain this status. It is a rigorous process, but one that ensures that the SA Olive tasting panel operates consistently and maintains the high standards outlined in IOC training and quality control protocols.

**For any questions or comments, please contact:**

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# FUEL HIKES THREATEN FOOD PRICES

Francois Baird



*As the war in the Middle East pushes up fuel prices, concerns are rising about agricultural costs, profitability and food price inflation*

Steep fuel price rises are in the offing, affecting industry, agriculture and consumers. Food price inflation, which had been moderating, could come under pressure.

Much depends on how long the conflict lasts, said agricultural economist Wandile Sihlobo. If the duration was relatively short, Sihlobo believed his hopes of moderating food price inflation would still be valid. The next big demand period for fertiliser is not until October, when summer crops are planted.

He **pointed out** that, while farmers would be affected

by increased costs for both fuel and fertiliser because of higher oil prices, they would be unable to pass these on to consumers because they are price takers. "This also means farmers will be under immense strain if the fertiliser prices remain elevated for some time. Fertiliser accounts for 35% of grain farmers' input costs."

The latest inflation figures, for February 2026, were compiled before the Iran conflict precipitated a sharp rise in fuel prices. StatsSA showed consumer food price inflation slowed to 3.7% in February, down from around 4% in January.

"In essence, we expect South

Africa's consumer food price inflation to slow in 2026, but fuel prices remain a major upside risk, as they account for a substantial share of the distribution costs of food products," Sihlobo said.

In a **later post**, Sihlobo said that, while he had not changed his view that food price inflation was likely to be moderate this year, "I am increasingly concerned that prolonged conflict in the Middle East could drive up fuel prices, disrupting my optimistic projection."

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# VISION, GRAIN, LIVESTOCK: MATHETA'S JOURNEY IN AGRICULTURE

Matume Maila



\*Gontse Matheta

**G**ontse Matheta, a dedicated farmer and agricultural consultant, resides in Radijoko, a small village in Marapyane. He leads an enterprise that specialises in the agricultural value chain, with particular focus on livestock and grain production planning. Mr. Matheta, with his expertise and practical experience, is committed to empowering black farmers, particularly those in rural communities, by providing knowledge, guidance, and support to improve productivity and sustainability.

His work is driven by an

overwhelming desire to promote inclusive agricultural growth and long-term community development.

Mr. Matheta's agripreneurial journey began in 2015, following the passing of his grandfather, who left goats and other livestock at the family homestead. Taking responsibility for these animals reignited his passion in livestock and grain farming, prompting him to pursue agriculture as his career path.

The enterprise concentrates on both grain and livestock production. Within the livestock segment, it operates a trading

model in which animals are sourced and sold at auctions. "We do not engage in feeding; instead, we strategically select livestock at the appropriate weight to maximise market value and sell accordingly," says Mr. Matheta.

For more than 14 years, Mr. Matheta has grown maize and sunflower on a 200-hectare leased farm using rain-fed farming. His harvest ranges between 300 and 400 tons per season, depending on climatic conditions. "With my partner, and my uncle,

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I leased property to improve our cattle herd. We were recognised by the Department of Agriculture for our livestock because we built on existing resources rather than beginning from nothing,” explains Mr. Matheta.

To develop his enterprise, Mr. Matheta has partnered with an agricultural economist who assists with production planning, cost analysis, and value optimisation, ensuring the business’s viability and sustainability. This collaboration has substantially increased the efficiency of his operations. He, like many other smallholder farmers in the country, has benefited from government support such as maize seed and fertiliser distribution.

Mr. Matheta’s passion for farming stems from his recognition of agriculture as the backbone of the economy, considering its critical role in feeding the population daily.

He was inspired to become part of the agriculture value chain and be recognised among those who provide food for the nation. “Through completing agricultural short courses, I have developed a clearer vision and a deeper passion for this career path, while gaining practical knowledge that supports and improves my work in livestock and grain farming,” says Matheta.

In terms of market access, Mr. Matheta sells his livestock through auctions.



*Gontse Matheta at auction*

He additionally utilises social media platforms to market his products, which has significantly boosted sales and brand visibility. Mr. Matheta’s initiatives have resulted in various part-time employment opportunities for individuals in his local community. “Most of our products are self-financed, and because the market is not always stable, we sometimes face challenges in generating consistent revenue, which directly impacts our cash flow,” adds Matheta.

He is also passionate about mentoring young people in agriculture. “One opportunity that I would like to share with young people is that you don’t need to own land to start farming. The agricultural value

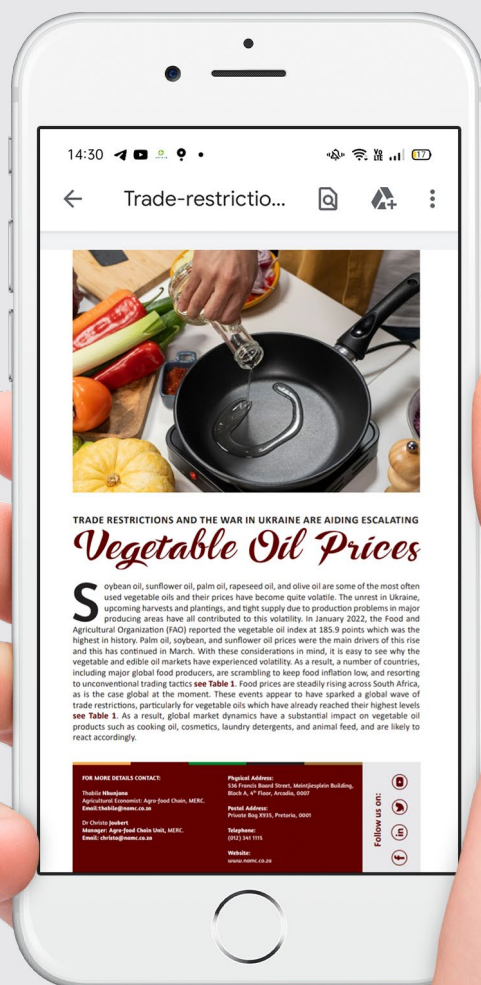
chain is extensive—you can get contracts, sell products, or aggregate produce from other farmers to establish a profitable business,” he explains.

Reflecting on his progress in the sector, Mr. Matheta says, “I have learnt a lot in this sector and am now at a point where I can help farmers with market access and production planning. I am proud of the accomplishments I have achieved; I no longer need to be on the field all the time because I understand the dynamics and can guide farmers using data and spreadsheets to attain optimum yields. I am quite proud of my journey thus far.”

His current focus is on bringing farmers together and developing export market channels to increase their access and profitability. “I have observed that many farmers are deeply involved in production, but accessing markets is a challenge—having more products without proper channels frequently drives prices down.” That’s why I shifted my focus to creating market opportunities. I’m no longer as active in ground-level work; instead, I farm with spreadsheets to ensure that production and market needs align effectively,” explains Mr. Matheta.

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# OUR ECONOMISTS HAVE BEEN AT THE CENTRE OF OFFERING INSIGHTS INTO CURRENT **AGRICULTURAL** DISCOURSE



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# VHADAU PREMIUM PIGGERY: BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE THROUGH PIG FARMING

Dzunisani Zitha, Khathutshelo Rambau and Bernard Manganyi

*Vhadau Premium biltong*



**V**hadau Premium Piggery is a modest but expanding livestock farm in Ha-Ramantsha, Vhembe district, Limpopo. The business is owned by Zwivhuya Mudau, a 30-year-old entrepreneur who started pig farming after completing her studies in Logistics and Supply Chain Management.

Like many young graduates facing unemployment, she took the difficult decision to leave the city and return to her

village, where she now lives with her grandparents. What began as a challenge quickly became an opportunity to establish a sustainable agribusiness that benefits both her family and the local community.

Zwivhuya was determined to succeed despite the difficulties of starting an agricultural enterprise. With money borrowed from her family's pizza business, she established a small piggery in her grandparents' backyard. With the support of her parents

and grandparents, she was able to construct basic housing structures and acquire her first pigs. Although the beginning was difficult, her enthusiasm for farming kept her determined.

Zwivhuya began pig farming in October 2024, and while the business is still growing, she has gained valuable experience in breeding, feeding, animal health, and general piggery management.

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Her academic background in business administration and logistics has enabled her to better manage the farm, notably in terms of planning, record-keeping, and productivity.

The primary goal of Vhadau Premium Piggery is to produce high-quality pork for the market while also establishing a sustainable livestock enterprise. In addition to selling fresh pork, the business produces value-added products such as pork biltong, pork wors, and pork mince for local consumers.

Zwivhuya also sells live pigs and piglets to other farmers looking to start their own piggery enterprises. Her goal is not only to generate profit but also to create opportunities for young people.

Her farm currently has 24 pigs, including breeding sows that will soon produce more piglets. The herd comprises breeds including Landrace, Duroc, and F1 crossbreeds, which are known for their strong growth, fertility, and mothering abilities.

These breeds were carefully chosen to ensure consistent output and high-quality meat.

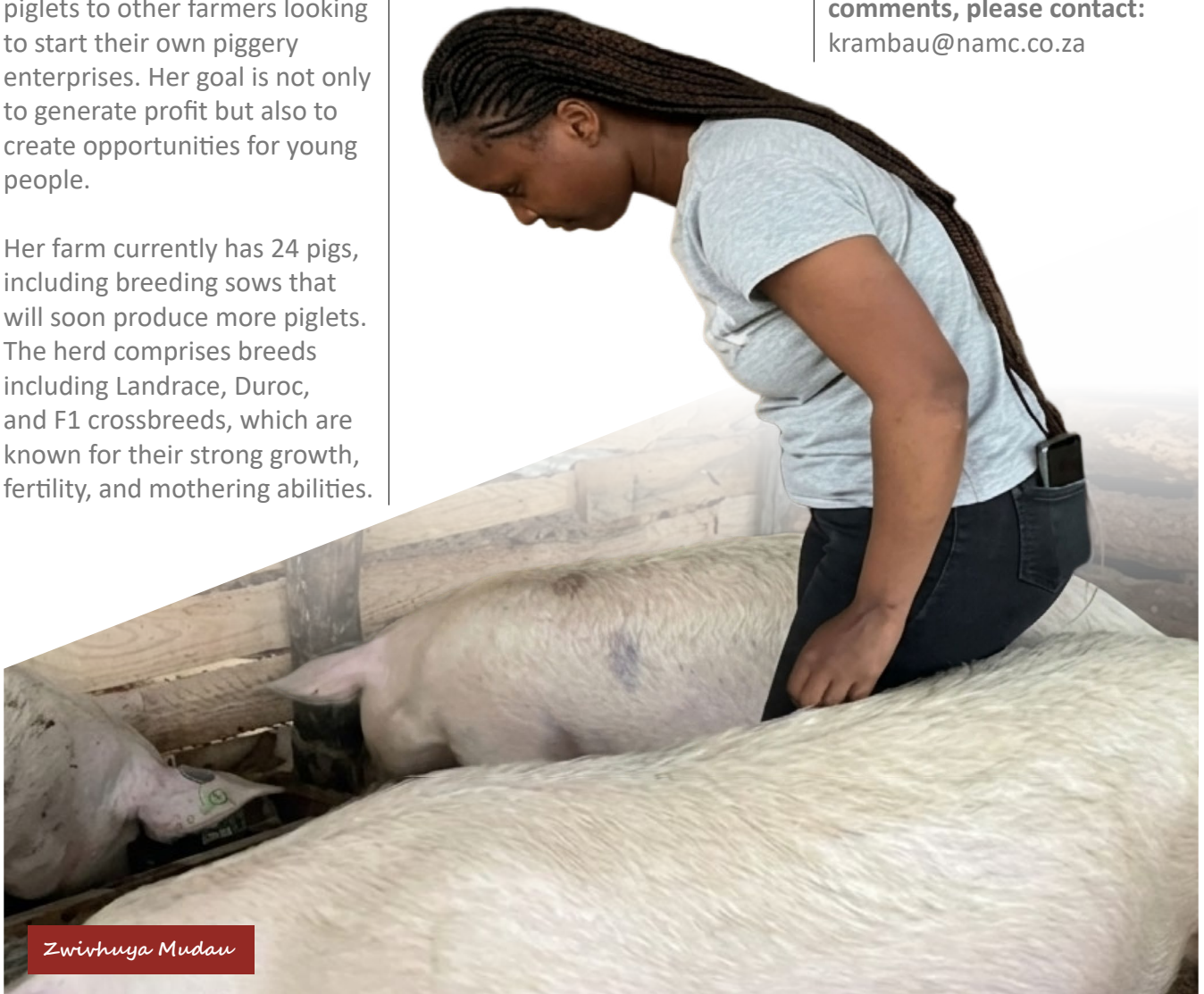
Zwivhuya, like many other small-scale farmers, is facing several challenges. One of the main challenges is a shortage of land, which makes it difficult to expand the farm and enhance productivity. Another challenge is access to dependable markets. Selling to larger buyers necessitates large volumes, robust distribution networks, and tight quality management. Competition from other producers makes it tough to grow quickly.

Although the journey has not been straightforward, Zwivhuya is

proud of her accomplishments thus far. Growing the herd to 24 pigs, producing value-added products, and training young people are significant milestones that demonstrate the business's progress. She feels that with additional funding, access to land, and better market opportunities, the piggery may go even further.

Vhadau Premium Piggery is more than just a farming business; it represents determination, community development, and the notion that agriculture can improve lives.

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*Zwivhuya Mudau*

# CHICKEN EXPORTS THE KEY TO INDUSTRY GROWTH

Francois Baird



**C**ontinued growth in South Africa's poultry industry relies on expanding exports and opening new markets, according to Izaak Breitenbach of the SA Poultry Association (SAPA).

He highlighted that chicken exports are one of two strategic priorities for the sector, with the other being the resolution of issues delaying a mass bird flu vaccination. Breitenbach

shared these insights during an online media event with Dr Tracy Davids of the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy (BFAP), organised by FairPlay. The BFAP recently released a report indicating a continued improvement in the global competitiveness of the South African poultry industry.

According to the BFAP report, the cost of producing chicken in South Africa is now second only to Brazil, the world's largest chicken exporter. South Africa consistently ranks ahead of European countries, and the 2025 BFAP report shows it has become more competitive than the United States as well.

This price competitiveness positions South Africa strongly for export markets, according to Breitenbach. He added that increased chicken production and higher export volumes would also help the industry continue providing affordable chicken for the local market.

The export objective is to sell cooked chicken at premium prices to higher-income consumers abroad.

"Our counterparts overseas get a premium for their breast meat, and if we can get that premium, we will, in a way, cross-subsidise the brown meat that we produce," Breitenbach said.

"It is strategically imperative that we open the export market for

two reasons. The one reason is that we have a limited market growth in terms of consumption. And the second one would be that we need to earn additional revenue to be competitive in terms of carcass income."

In 2025, South Africa exported 41,000 tonnes of chicken, most of which went to neighbouring countries. The industry now aims to expand exports to the United Arab Emirates and open new markets in Saudi Arabia, Europe, and the United Kingdom. Breitenbach noted that this growth could happen relatively quickly, citing Russia as an example: "Ten years ago, Russia didn't export a single kilogram of chicken meat. Today, they export a significant amount...in 10 years they've grown their export volumes significantly."

Dr Davids added that expanding chicken production for exports would create jobs and benefit related industries. Currently, half of South Africa's maize production and three-quarters of soybean processing are used for animal feed. She explained, "If we can grow our poultry industry faster, because we can export competitively, then we can produce more maize, process more maize, produce more soybeans, and process more soybeans."

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# NDLOVUKAZI: CULTIVATING LEGACY, AND FEEDING COMMUNITIES

Bhekani Zondo

*\*Siphindile Phumelele Hlengwa*



In the rural village of Imfume, a new generation of agriculture is taking root; one led by passion, purpose, and resilience. At the centre of this movement is Siphindile Phumelele Hlengwa, founder of Ndlovukazi Agriculture Multipurpose (Pty) Ltd, a fast-growing smallholder enterprise with a powerful story behind it.

Founded in 2021, Ndlovukazi is more than a farming business but a tribute. After losing her mother in 2020, Ms Hlengwa transformed her grief into purpose, naming the company “Ndlovukazi,” meaning Queen

Mother, in honour of the woman who inspired her journey. What began as a deeply personal mission has now evolved into a thriving agribusiness with a strong community footprint.

With an academic background in Zoology (Genetics), Psychology and Development Studies, and Commerce, Hlengwa brings a unique blend of science, social insight, and business acumen into agriculture. Her early career in the non-profit sector further shaped her commitment to community upliftment and something that remains central to her enterprise today.

Operating across 11 hectares of arable land, Ndlovukazi produces a diverse range of crops including cabbage, spinach, sugar beans, root vegetables, and organic produce.

A key innovation has been the development of an on-site seedling nursery with a capacity of 20,000 plants, reducing input costs while supplying local farmer. This is an example of how the business integrates efficiency with opportunity creation.

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*\*Ndlovukazi trainees*

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But the real impact of Ndlovukazi extends beyond production. The enterprise is deeply embedded in its community, driving initiatives such as the 1 Home 1 Garden programme, environmental awareness campaigns, farmer training, and nutrition education. These efforts are not only improving access to fresh food but also reshaping how communities think about agriculture, health, and sustainability.

Employment is equally transformative. The farm employs about 15 seasonal workers and over 10 trainees,

most of whom are women. By prioritising female employment and skills development, Ndlovukazi is contributing to a more inclusive and empowered agricultural sector.

Like many smallholder farmers, Hlengwa faces challenges ranging from price volatility in formal markets to limited access to mechanisation and finance. Yet, through innovation such as adopting no-till organic methods and building internal capacity her business continues to grow. Recent funding support has further strengthened its expansion trajectory.

This progress has not gone unnoticed. Ndlovukazi has gained

recognition through leading entrepreneurship programmes, media features, and was named best eThekweni Farmer of the year in 2025 which was a milestone that reflects both excellence and impact. Looking ahead, the vision is bold: expand land access, move into value-added processing, and ultimately enter export markets. For Hlengwa, growth is not just about scale, but about building a legacy that will endure for generations.

Her advice to aspiring agripreneurs is simple but powerful: “Start where you are. Focus on learning, stay consistent, and allow your business to grow with time. Farming is a journey, so be patient with it and with yourself.” Today, Ndlovukazi stands as a symbol of what is possible when purpose meets perseverance; a business rooted in legacy, growing toward a future that feeds both people and possibility.

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*\*Siphesihle driving the tractor*

# VAT-FREE CHICKEN WILL ADDRESS GROWING FOOD INSECURITY

Francois Baird

FairPlay has renewed its call for the removal of 15% Value Added Tax (VAT) on frozen bone-in chicken portions, as well as on fresh and frozen offal. The measure is intended as a targeted intervention to improve nutrition and affordability for low-income households across South Africa.



This appeal was made during FairPlay's recent media roundtable on food security and trade policy. The organization is supporting an application by the SA Poultry Association (SAPA) to have VAT-free chicken included in this year's national budget. "Removing VAT from these chicken products would deliver an immediate 15% price reduction on a staple source of protein, improve nutrition outcomes among food-insecure households, and strengthen rural economies," said FairPlay founder Francois Baird.

The discussion reaffirmed FairPlay's founding mission to combat predatory trade practices, particularly dumping, which has undermined poultry industries in other developing countries such as Ghana and Cameroon. South Africa's poultry sector was highlighted as a strategic national industry,

contributing significantly to food security, employment, and rural development.

Izaak Breitenbach, CEO of SAPA's Broiler Board, noted that South Africa faces severe household-level food insecurity, with chicken making up approximately 66% of all meat consumed nationally. He also highlighted that child stunting affects nearly 28.8% of children under five, underscoring the strong link between poverty and malnutrition.

Because VAT is a regressive tax, it places a disproportionate burden on poorer households. The proposal for VAT-free chicken is therefore framed as a nutrition intervention aimed at supporting desperate mothers and children, rather than a general consumer relief measure.

Cross-party political support for VAT-free chicken is expanding, with trade unions also expressing

endorsement. The proposal has been acknowledged by President Cyril Ramaphosa, although final implementation rests with the Minister of Finance and the National Treasury.

According to Charles de Wet of law firm ENSAfrica, who authored SAPA's VAT-free submission, legal amendments to the VAT Act are technically straightforward once a decision is made. South Africa's VAT collections remain strong and growing, and the estimated revenue foregone from zero-rating targeted chicken products is relatively small in fiscal terms. De Wet also highlighted that the zero-rated food basket has not been updated in over 25 years and currently excludes all meat products, despite their nutritional importance.

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## What is SMAT?

Smallholder Market Access Tracker (SMAT) is a tool that has been developed by the NAMC, with the help of a reference group, to measure the progress in the achievement of the market access goal for smallholder farmers in South Africa.

## Why do we need SMAT?

Despite a number of interventions that seek to enhance market access (both locally and abroad) for farmers in the country, smallholder farmers still face barriers to entry into the mainstream marketing channels. Furthermore, there is no tool used currently to track market access for this group of farmers, hence there is a need for the SMAT tool.

## Who is going to use SMAT?

The SMAT seeks to provide information to assist with policy debate and the formulation of more effective programmes towards achievement of market access. As such, the SMAT could be used (largely) by policymakers.

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