agripreneur

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RAYON FARMS:

A Model for Sustainable Agriculture, Community Development, and Food Security

NAMC

Promoting market access for South African agriculture

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The Agriculture and Agroprocessing Master Plan is a product of negotiations between government, business, labour and civil society organisations in the agriculture and agro-processing sectors.

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Department:
Agriculture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE AGRIPRENEUR:

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION PRODUCED BY THE NAMC

PREFACE

Welcome to the 45th 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 45TH EDITION OF AGRIPRENEUR, WE HAVE FEATURED THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

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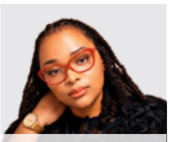
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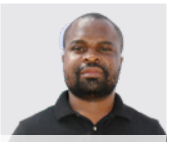
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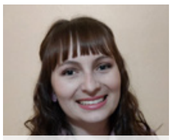
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Matume Maila

Warm greetings to the farming community, agricultural partners, and all our valued readers. It is my pleasure to present to you Agripreneur Issue 45, our quarterly publication dedicated to sharing insights, developments, and inspiring stories from the agricultural sector.

This edition features key agricultural highlights, including the appointment of the new Minister of Agriculture, Honourable Willie Aucamp; updates on new foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) control measures; changes to the status of Goss's Wilt; the Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan (AAMP) strategic session; and highlights from the 58th NAMPO Harvest Day.

This edition highlights important developments in agriculture and recognizes the resilience, innovation, and contributions of farmers and industry stakeholders.

Our Agritourism series brings worldwide insights to South Africa, including "Six Lessons Learned at the Global Agritourism Conference" and opportunities for agritourism development.

The Olive Oil Industry series continues with an inspiring feature on Ubuntu Extra Virgin Olive Oil, exploring its journey in building a foothold within South Africa's growing olive industry.

This edition also features an article on why dry bean farmers in the KwaNondabuya Community, located in the uMkhanyakude District, continue to require market access support to strengthen their farming enterprises and improve their participation in agricultural value chains.

At the centre of this edition, we feature the inspiring story of Rayon Farms, owned by young agripreneur Ms Blessing Sadiki. Her journey highlights the determination, innovation, and commitment required to build a sustainable farming enterprise while contributing to food security and community development.

We conclude this edition with the inspiring story of Shartlot Mathebula's spinach farming journey, showcasing how resilience, vision, and hard work can transform challenges into opportunities and create a pathway towards sustainable agricultural entrepreneurship.

Matume Maila
EDITOR
Enjoy the read!

LOVE SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURE

NAMC partnered with ARC, FABCO Primary Cooperative Limited (FABCO), and TIPS to conduct a feasibility study on cassava value chain.

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AGRI-HIGHLIGHTS (APRIL - JUNE)

NEW FMD CONTROL MEASURES GIVE FARMERS A CLEARER PATH TO RECOVERY WHILE PROTECTING TRADE

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) has approved new national Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) control measures.

These measures provide farmers, veterinarians, and veterinary authorities with a clear, practical, and science-based framework for preventing, controlling, and managing FMD outbreaks while minimising unnecessary economic losses.

The updated approach is intended to strengthen disease control efforts, protect livestock health, and support the continuity of agricultural production and trade.

The measures, which will take effect upon publication in the Government Gazette, consolidate and replace previous directives issued under Section 9 of the Animal Diseases Act, including the 2019 FMD Contingency Plan, subsequent amendments and related protocols. For the first time, South Africa will have a single, integrated set of national control measures that clearly outline how outbreaks must be managed from detection through to recovery.

FMD remains one of the most economically devastating animal diseases facing livestock producers. An outbreak can disrupt production, restrict market access, threaten jobs and place immense financial pressure on farming families and rural communities.

The new measures seek to strike a balance between protecting animal health and ensuring that farming businesses can continue operating safely wherever the scientific evidence allows.

Importantly, the measures clarify that animals which have been vaccinated but have never been infected and have not been subject to quarantine remain healthy animals and may continue to be traded and moved in accordance with normal requirements.
To read more on new FMD measures, click here.

PEST ALERT:

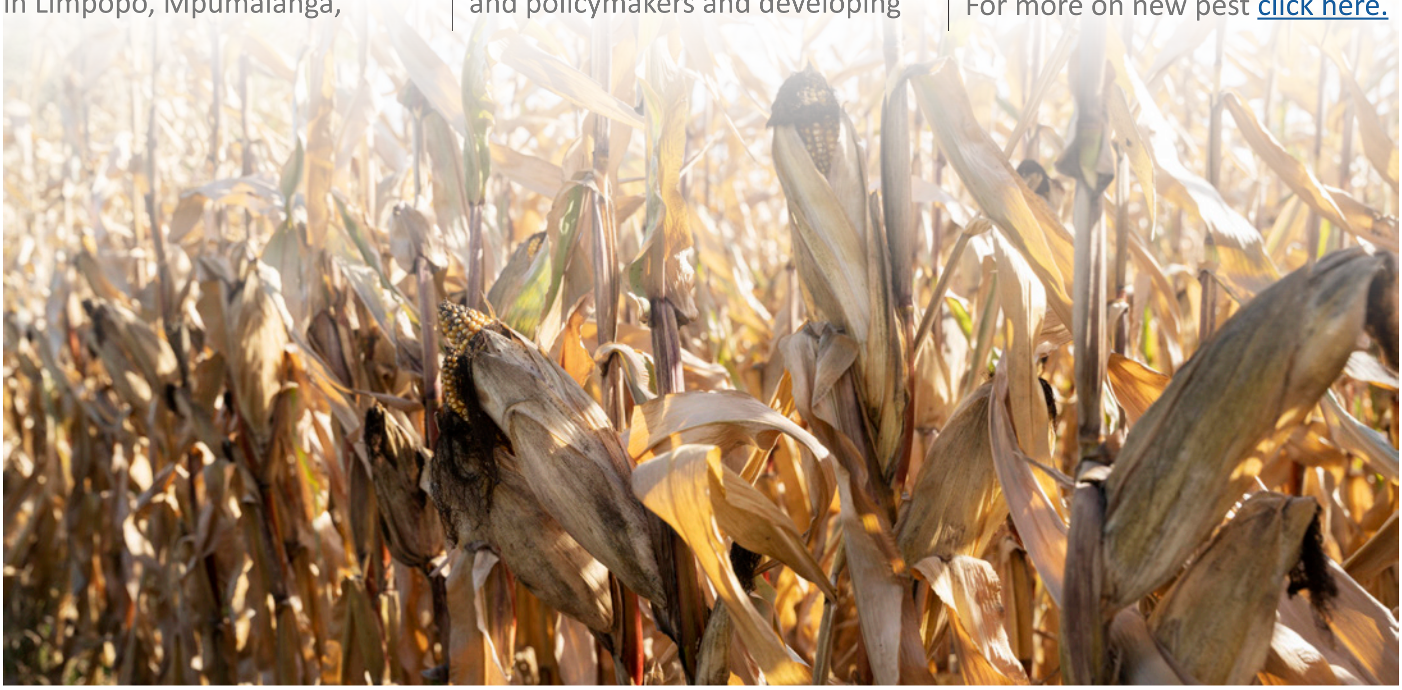
CHANGE IN STATUS OF GOSS'S WILT (CLAVIBACTER MICHIGANENSIS SUBSP. NEBRASKENSIS) OF MAIZE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The DoA hereby notify growers, farmers, community members and all South African citizens on the change in distribution status of Goss's Wilt (Clavibacter michiganensis subsp. Nebraskensis) in South Africa.
Goss's Wilt was first detected in four provinces of South Africa in 2024, namely, Free State, North West, Gauteng and Eastern Cape. Following a comprehensive delimiting survey conducted in 2025 to assess the extent of its spread, the disease was subsequently confirmed in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and Western Cape. To date, no detections have been recorded in KwaZulu-Natal.

The department, in collaboration with research and industry partners, continues to advance efforts to manage the disease. This includes building a culture collection of Clavibacter isolates representing South African strains, enhancing diagnostic and surveillance capacity for bacterial diseases in maize, identifying tolerant or resistant cultivars suitable for local conditions, promoting knowledge exchange between farmers, researchers and policymakers and developing practical and region-specific management guidelines.

Goss's Wilt is regulated under the Agricultural Pests Act, 1983 (Act No. 36 of 1983) and Control Measures R.110 of 27 January 1984, as amended in 2025. The primary objective of regulating Goss's Wilt is to prevent the spread of the regulated pest to pest-free areas in the Republic by restricting movement of host material and agricultural equipment such as harvesters from infected areas to non-infected areas.

For more on new pest click here.



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THE 58TH NAMPO HARVEST DAY: RESILIENCE THROUGH INNOVATION

Matume Maila

The NAMC was pleased to attend the 2026 NAMPO Harvest Day, hosted by Grain SA, from 12 to 15 May 2026 at NAMPO Park in Bothaville, Free State.

The event was held under the theme "Resilience Through Innovation" and provided a platform for stakeholders in the agricultural sector to engage in innovations, technologies, and developments aimed at strengthening resilience within the agriculture sector.

The 2026 NAMPO harvest day welcomed over 80 000 visitors over the four eventful days, filled with exhibitors showcasing the latest agricultural machinery, technology, inputs, services and innovations to producers and stakeholders from across the agricultural value chain.

Beside the exhibition of the latest innovations and technology, NAMPO remains a strategic industry platform for the entire agricultural value chain to reflect on the resilience, sustainability and competitiveness of South African agricultural sector.

In addition, thought-provoking conversations were held during the week. The conversations touched on critical issues that the sector is currently confronted with.

Throughout the week, Grain SA used NAMPO to facilitate high-level engagements between organised agriculture, government, financial institutions, agribusinesses and industry stakeholders on the urgent pressures facing grain producers and the long-term competitiveness of the sector.
Some of the critical themes discussed during the week include the growing pressure on producer profitability amid rising input costs and low commodity prices, financing pressure and the impact of debt restructuring requirements on producers, and commercialisation pathways and title deed access for developing farmers.

The 58th NAMPO Harvest Day, concluded on a high note, once again reaffirming its position as the largest open air agricultural trade exhibition in the Southern Hemisphere and one of the most important agricultural gathering points in the world.

To read more about the 58th NAMPO Harvest Day, click here.

HONOURABLE WILLIE AUCAMP, APPOINTED AS THE NEW MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

Matume Maila

*Honourable Willie Aucamp

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced changes to his Cabinet, appointing Mr Willie Aucamp as the new Minister of Agriculture.

Mr Aucamp is a Member of the National Assembly and previously served as the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. He now takes over an agricultural sector that continues to show steady growth despite ongoing challenges facing the industry.

The department is currently addressing several critical issues, including outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease, the impacts of climate change, strengthening support for smallholder farmers, and expanding agricultural exports and market access.

Continuity and stability are essential within the agricultural sector, as any disruption could pose risks to food security, efforts to expand export market opportunities, and the progress made by the department in advancing transformation and improving market access.

Various stakeholders within the agricultural sector have shared their views on the appointment of Mr Aucamp, while the Department of Agriculture has warmly welcomed the President's decision to appoint him as the new Minister.

In addition, stakeholders believe that Mr Aucamp will build on the work initiated by Honourable Steenhuisen, particularly in combating the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, strengthening partnerships between government and industry stakeholders, and expanding market access opportunities for agricultural products.

ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-PROCESSING MASTER PLAN (AAMP)

Matume Maila

*Dr. Simphiwe Ngqangweni

The NAMC and the Department of Agriculture held AAMP strategic planning session on 29 June 2026 at Southern Sun, Arcadia, Pretoria.

This session brought together all the social partners to to: (i) prioritize the interventions that will deliver the highest impact over the next four years (2026-2030), and move from broad commitments to measurable actions and targets; (ii) develop a common transformation framework for the AAMP, move beyond beneficiary numbers towards measurable economic inclusion, and align transformation reporting across value chains; and (iii) To develop a practical funding framework for implementation, improve coordination of public and private finance, and identify resource mobilization opportunities.

The AAMP, signed in 2022 and now in its fourth year of implementation, represents public-private partnership framework for agricultural transformation and sectoral growth. The period since its launch has produced significant milestones, while simultaneously highlighting persistent structural challenges that require coordinated, multi-stakeholder resolution.

A full day session started on a high note with opening remarks highlighting how the AAMP can accelerate inclusive growth, while a keynote address set the scene by touching on economic realities in the agricultural sector.

Dr. Ngqangweni, the CEO of NAMC, provided a comprehensive overview of the road travelled in the AAMP implementation, reminding colleagues where the AAMP is at, the processes that were set and the issues that still to be looked at going forward.

Presentation on Reflections on Priority Interventions for the Period to 2030 (Value Chain Round Tables (VCRTs), Agro-processing and Cross-cutting Priorities) dominated the session, where attendees, both in person and virtually were even given the opportunities to discuss Priority Interventions, targets, and key deliverables for VCRTs.

This session provided a clear direction in terms of the priority intervention areas. The presentation on Transformation Guidelines and Regulatory Framework by Mr. Maremo Mphahlele and Dr Solly Molepo sparked the debate on transformation outcomes and indicators.

The AAMP strategic session ended on a high note with discussions and presentations on government funding programmes and draft AAMP funding framework.

The session marked an important milestone in accelerating the AAMP implementation. With clear priorities, strengthened partnerships and a renewed commitment to delivery, stakeholders are now better positioned to accelerate the implementation of the AAMP.

The challenge ahead is no longer defining what needs to be done but ensuring that the agreed priorities are translated into coordinated action that delivers tangible benefits for farmers, agribusinesses, workers and rural communities across South Africa.

SIX LESSONS FROM THE GLOBAL AGRITOURISM CONFERENCE: INSIGHTS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Christelle Van Zyl

*Christell Van Zyl during farm visit

The Global Agritourism Conference, held in Aberdeen, Scotland, from 23 to 25 June 2026, brought together 550 delegates from 55 countries, including South Africa. Through farm visits and international speakers, the conference highlighted key lessons that South African farmers can apply.

Below, each lesson is compared to the Scottish experience, along with how we can apply it in South Africa:

1. Start with purpose

A Scottish cashmere farm began farming with goats to regenerate the land, and this has grown into a tourist attraction with tours and "Goats and Coats" festivals.

For South Africa, this means a deeper mission, whether conservation of farmland or community involvement, can evolve into unique agri-tourism offerings that can be shared with tourists.

2. Let visitors take part

A Scottish berry farm operates on a pick-your-own model, with farm stalls and family-focused spaces. The experience focuses on the interaction between the tourist and the agricultural product, while using all five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell in the experience. For South Africa, this means creating hands-on activities where the tourist can be involved.

3. Education creates value

A Scottish whisky farm educates tourists on how they grow 90% of the ingredients used in their whisky on-site and offers distillery tours. For South Africa, this means letting visitors see the production, whether winemaking or olive pressing, to enrich the experience. Tourists want to understand your agricultural process and what it takes to run a farm.

4. Collaboration extends visits

These farms are part of broader local networks, whether wool partners or tourism routes. They share ideas, strategies and challenges, and ultimately, no farm has to offer it all. They work together in the area to support each business, allowing tourists to stay in the area longer and take part in activities on various farms. For South Africa, this means building regional routes, or tourism corridors, which could extend tourists' stays and boost local economies. The support of a community can greatly strengthen your agri-tourism business and provide you with a safe space to share ideas and grow.

5. Know your market

Several speakers stressed the importance of understanding your visitor and being easy to find online. "You cannot make everyone happy" is an important reminder to know your target market and make sure your offerings meet their needs. One speaker suggested using online blog posts with the right keywords, supported by analytics, to help search engines find your farm or agri-tourism experience when tourists search online. The use of AI was also discussed as a tool to support marketing and better understand visitor needs. For South Africa, this means refining your niche and ensuring the right audience finds you online.

6. Authenticity beats luxury.

The most memorable farms offer genuine experiences, not fancy facilities. Even if you offer a 5-star experience, your tourists will be disappointed if they feel that the experience is not authentic. Tourists visit the farm for a reason. In South Africa, this means inviting guests into real farm life, be it working with the animals or walking the fields. They want to see the realities of what agriculture has to offer. In Italy, agri-tourism is governed by strict regulatory laws. In Poland, agri-tourism is linked to farm stays, while in the United States, some discussions question whether agri-entertainment should always be considered an authentic agri-tourism experience. South Africa has no set policies or framework yet, which currently offers flexibility. While each nation's agri-tourism differs, the conference showed that many challenges we currently face have already been faced and overcome elsewhere. With time, collaboration, and purpose, South African agri-tourism will flourish. The global community is passionate, and we are part of that journey, ready to build our own success stories.

For more about the conference, [click here.]

*Farm visit

PRESSING FORWARD: UBUNTU EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL AND BUILDING A FOOTHOLD IN SOUTH AFRICA'S OLIVE INDUSTRY

Wendy Petersen

South Africa's olive industry remains a relatively small but technically advanced segment of the agricultural economy, concentrated largely in the Western Cape.

It is characterised by high capital requirements, long lead times before orchards reach full production, and strict quality standards, particularly in the extra virgin category.

Within this environment, Mr Loyiso Manga, founder of Ubuntu Extra Virgin Olive Oil, is establishing a vertically integrated business built on processing capability, quality control and deliberate market positioning.

Entering a niche, high-barrier industry

Mr Manga's entry into olives followed a structured search for a viable niche within agriculture. "I was looking for something unique, something people use every day, but where there was still room to grow and differentiate," he says.

With industries such as wine already saturated, olives offered an opportunity in value addition rather than primary production. "The olive industry is not easy to enter. It requires patience, technical knowledge and a strong focus on quality, but that challenge is exactly what attracted me," Manga says.

His early exposure came through

extensive farm visits across the Western Cape. "I spent time visiting farms, learning and understanding how the industry and the value chain works. That is where I began to see where I could fit in," he says.

He later engaged with SA Olive to better understand compliance requirements, industry standards and the technical demands of producing extra virgin olive oil.

Strategic positioning in the value chain

Recognising the long-term capital demands of olive farming, Mr Manga chose to enter through processing and branding rather than orchard ownership. "Olive farming takes years before you see returns. I focused on sourcing olives and building a product that could reach the market immediately," he says.

This approach reduced entry barriers while allowing him to retain control over product quality and brand identity. Operating in the Western Cape also ensured proximity to raw material, processors and established industry infrastructure. "You need access to good fruit and the right expertise. That is why being in the Western Cape is important," he says.

Production discipline and quality standards

Ubuntu Extra Virgin Olive Oil is built on strict adherence to quality protocols, from sourcing to final packaging. "In olive oil, quality is everything. How the olives are handled and how quickly they are processed determines the final product," Manga says.

The business uses cold extraction methods and prioritises rapid processing after harvest to maintain low acidity levels and preserve flavour. "You are working against time. Delays affect quality, so efficiency is critical," he says.

He added that consistency is also essential, particularly for retail supply. "If you want to compete in formal retail, your product must be consistent in quality, packaging and availability," Manga says.

Funding constraints and structural barriers

Despite growing demand, access to funding has remained one of the business's biggest obstacles. "Funding has always been the biggest challenge, and it still is. You can have a strong market, but without capital you cannot scale or meet demand," he says.

Mr Manga explains that smaller businesses often struggle to meet institutional requirements linked to trading history, security and supply guarantees. "Private sector funders could not support us because we were not making R50 000 or more monthly, even though we demonstrated strong letters of interest and commitments from restaurants, hotels and retailers," he says.

According to Mr Manga, private sector finance processes are generally faster, but often inaccessible to emerging businesses without a long financial track record. "Government is more lenient on historical trade, but approvals can take months if they happen at all. That is the dichotomy we face. The private sector moves quicker, while government takes forever to make decisions," he says.

Supplier relationships also presented structural disadvantages for new entrants. "Suppliers often give preferential treatment to established clients. We were expected to pay upfront for bulk olive oil, sometimes around R200 000, while established businesses received 30 to 90 days credit," Manga says.

He further mentioned that entrenched market relationships continue to limit opportunities for new participants in the sector. "We have been rejected from farmers' markets across the Western Cape because established brands have occupied those spaces for years. That gatekeeping prevents diversity in offerings and limits access to markets," he says.

At the same time, Mr Manga says consumer demand for olive oil continues to rise. "People are becoming more health-conscious, and olive oil fits into that lifestyle. The challenge is making sure the product reaches them consistently," he says.

Early validation and market traction

The Ubuntu Extra Virgin Olive Oil officially launched in December 2019 following several years of groundwork. "In our first month, we sold between 800 and 900 bottles. That was clear proof that the market was there," Manga says. Early traction was supported by a relationship with a farmer who assisted him with consignment stock and packaging guidance. "I did not have capital to buy stock, but I received olive oil on consignment and guidance on where to source packaging. That made it possible to start," he says.

The arrangement reduced financial risk while allowing the business to test market demand. "That first batch confirmed that we had a viable product and a receptive market," Manga says.

Building a processing facility

A major turning point for the business has been the establishment of its own agro-processing and bottling facility in Capricorn Business Park in Muizenberg in the Western Cape.

The facility was motivated by the need to improve production capacity, reduce reliance on third-party processors and secure greater control over quality, supply consistency and turnaround times.

Mr Manga describes the funding process behind the facility as prolonged and difficult. "We applied for funding in November 2024 and only received approval on 4 September 2025, with the first disbursement taking place on 3 October 2025. It was a long, discouraging and depressing process," he says.

He says repeated delays were often attributed to internal processes within funding institutions. "I still cannot explain the delay. It seems normal within institutions such as the IIndustrial Development Corporation (IDC)and the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) that these transactions take nine to 10 months or more, and whenever I asked for urgency, I was told the deal needed to go through four or five committees," Manga says.

The delays had direct commercial consequences. "We lost close to R900 000 in purchase orders because we did not have the capacity to fulfil them," he says. The facility now includes 20 000 litres of stainless-steel storage and a modern bottling line, funded through a partnership involving the NEF and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition.

"Thanks to the National Empowerment Fund and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the support of SA Olive, we are now manufacturers, not just a brand. We can process, bottle and package our own product. We have moved from labelling in our garage and selling from my car boot to being the first black olive oil manufacturer in the history of Southern Africa," Manga says. The facility also has co-packing capability. "We can process, bottle and package our own product and even co-pack for other businesses," he says.

Local processing and value retention

Mr Manga says ownership of processing infrastructure has fundamentally changed the company's operating model. "Having your own plant gives you full control over quality and how your product is presented," he says.

The facility has also improved financial efficiency by retaining more value within the business. "When you outsource, part of your margin goes to third parties. Now we are able to keep that value internally and invest further," Manga says. He adds that asset ownership has strengthened the business's credibility with funders and partners. "When you have infrastructure and equipment, institutions take you more seriously. It changes how they assess your business," he says. Operationally, the facility has improved reliability and responsiveness. "We can meet orders faster, maintain stock levels and ensure consistent supply to retailers," Manga says.

Expanding capability and access

Beyond Ubuntu's own production, Mr Manga says the facility creates opportunities for smaller businesses lacking access to processing infrastructure. "We can now bottle products for other small businesses. That is important because many do not have access to this kind of infrastructure," he says.

The co-packing model creates additional revenue streams while broadening participation in the olive value chain. The facility will also support consumer education and product awareness. “We want to create a space where people can learn about olive oil, from tastings to understanding quality,” Manga says.

Industry dynamics and transformation challenges

Mr Manga says the olive industry has steadily been growing, but growing still constrained by structural barriers linked to land access, funding and entrenched commercial networks. “There is progress, but it is not as fast as it could be,” he says.

He says the cost of agricultural land, limited access to infrastructure and long-standing supplier relationships continue to make it difficult for new entrants to establish themselves sustainably. “Land is expensive, and established relationships within the industry make it difficult for new entrants to access supply on fair terms,” Manga says.

He also mentioned the role of SA Olive in promoting transformation and technical support, although he noted that industry bodies themselves face funding limitations. “With limited funding, organisations cannot fully support ownership and access to land,” he says.

Manga says both government and industry have a responsibility to improve inclusion within the sector. “Government needs to support with land and incentives, and the industry needs to support emerging farmers with technical and mentorship support,” he says. He encouraged aspiring entrants to align themselves with industry organisations. “Align yourself with SA Olive to ensure that you get expert support and assistance,” Manga says.

SA Olive on transformation, funding and sector development

SA Olive CEO Ms Wendy Petersen says that transformation in the olive industry depends on closer cooperation between government, industry bodies and private partners, particularly in addressing funding gaps and entry barriers for new producers. SA Olive as an organisation is working with both government and industry partners to improve access to funding in the sector but also leverage funding to support both established businesses and emerging producers,” Petersen says.

Ms Petersen adds that the organisation is also looking beyond local sources to strengthen long-term support for the industry. “We are exploring opportunities to access international funding to help develop and grow the industry,” she says.

On market dynamics, she points out that South Africa continues to rely heavily on imports, which creates space for local producers if production can be scaled effectively. “South Africa is a net importer of olive oil, and there is clear opportunity to shift more of that demand into local production of high-quality standards,” Petersen says.
She adds that competitiveness remains key if local producers are to gain market share. “It is important that we remain price competitive in the local market, otherwise imported products will continue to dominate shelves,” she says.

Ms Petersen also mentions the role of research in strengthening the sector, particularly as climate conditions become more unpredictable. “We are encouraging research into new cultivars that can support innovation and improve resilience to climate change,” she says.

She says access to land and processing infrastructure continues to be a major barrier for new entrants. “Access to land and manufacturing assets is still one of the biggest challenges for emerging producers entering the industry,” Petersen says.

On transformation, both government and industry need to take a more practical approach to supporting new participants. “Government and industry need to understand the real challenges that emerging farmers face and respond to those challenges in a meaningful way,” she says. Ms Petersen adds that support should go beyond funding and include technical guidance as both pre and post support.

“Emerging farmers need technical support and information, especially in the early stages when they are still building their businesses,” she says.

Rethinking production geography

Manga also challenged perceptions that olive production is limited to the Western Cape. “There are successful examples of olives being grown outside the province, including in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng,” he says.

He says that naturally occurring olive trees in parts of the Eastern Cape as evidence of wider production potential. “We need more research and trials across different regions to unlock that potential,” Manga says.

Market strategy and pricing

Ubuntu’s primary focus remains the domestic market, although Mr Manga sees long-term export potential. “We want to build a strong foundation in South Africa before expanding further,” he says.

The brand is positioned within the local price range, balancing quality and accessibility. “Our pricing is competitive within the South African market, and we have aligned it with the value we offer,” Manga says.

Consumer awareness around health has contributed to demand growth. “Many customers understand the health benefits and use olive oil in ways that suit their needs,” he says.

He says that export markets offer stronger premium pricing opportunities. “In export markets, there is a higher willingness to pay for quality, which creates strong opportunities,” Manga says.

* Loyiso Manga

Ubuntu as a guiding principle

The philosophy behind the brand is rooted in accessibility, inclusion and social responsibility. “We try to remain fair in our pricing and mindful of the communities we serve,” Manga says.

This includes supporting smaller distributors and community initiatives. “We work with entrepreneurs and support community efforts where possible. That is part of who we are,” he says.

Drawing from his own experience, Mr Manga says success in agriculture requires patience, relationships and discipline. “Learn from those who are already in the industry, build relationships and invest in knowledge,” he says.

He added that growth should be approached steadily and strategically. “Start small, focus on doing things right and grow steadily. Agriculture rewards consistency,” Manga says.

RAYON FARMS: A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND FOOD SECURITY

Khathutshelo Rambau and Matume Maila

Rayon Farms is in Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa, on a 15-hectare leased farming property. The business is owned and managed by Ms Blessing Sadiki, a full-time farmer and agripreneur who established the farm in the winter of 2025.

Driven by her passion for agriculture, food production, and entrepreneurship, Ms Sadiki ventured into farming with the vision of contributing to food security while building a sustainable agricultural enterprise.

She has developed her a farming knowledge and skills through hands-on practical experience, participation in agricultural workshops, networking with experienced farmers, mentorship programmes, and continuous self-development.

Ms Sadiki also holds a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) in Accounting from the University of the Free State. Her academic background, combined with her entrepreneurial mindset and practical agricultural training, has equipped her with the financial management and business skills needed to successfully manage and grow Rayon Farms.

Rayon Farms was established with the vision of contributing to food security, creating employment opportunities, and building a sustainable and commercially viable agricultural enterprise.

The farm primarily focuses on the production of fresh vegetables, including cucumbers, capsicums, cabbages, and other seasonal crops, while continuously exploring opportunities to diversify its production and expand its operations.

The farm currently employs two permanent workers and recruits additional seasonal workers during peak production and harvesting periods. Through its operations, Rayon Farms contributes to local economic development by generating employment, supporting agricultural value chains, and supplying fresh produce to surrounding communities and markets.

Ms Blessing Sadiki began her farming journey by securing access to a 15-hectare leased property and making effective use of the resources available to establish production. Her involvement with experienced mentors in crop production provided valuable guidance and practical knowledge, helping her develop the skills and confidence needed to build a successful farming enterprise.

The establishment and growth of Rayon Farms have been financed primarily through her personal investment, financial support from family and friends, and the reinvestment of income generated from farming activities. This approach has enabled the business to grow steadily while laying a strong foundation for long-term sustainability and expansion.

Rayon Farms is committed to implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) to maintain high productivity, minimise crop losses, ensure consistent quality, and improve the enterprise's overall profitability.

The farm produces its vegetables in tunnels, which provide greater control over growing conditions, protect crops from adverse weather,

pests, and diseases, and support year-round production. This production system enables the farm to consistently supply fresh, high-quality vegetables that meet market standards for freshness, appearance, and reliability. By adopting sustainable farming practices and modern production techniques, Rayon Farms enhances operational efficiency while ensuring a stable, reliable supply of nutritious vegetables.

Rayon Farms supplies fresh produce to local consumers, street vendors, community members, informal traders, and local markets, thereby contributing to local food availability and supporting the informal economy.
Despite its growing market presence, the farm continues to face challenges, including high transportation and fuel costs, fluctuating market prices, and limited access to larger, more lucrative markets.
In addition to its commercial operations, the farm demonstrates a strong commitment to social responsibility through a dedicated community garden. Vegetables harvested from this garden are donated to old age homes and children's homes in and around Mamelodi, helping to improve food security and provide nutritious meals to vulnerable members of the community.

Social media plays an important role in promoting Rayon Farms, creating awareness about its activities, and building relationships with customers and aspiring farmers. Ms Sadiki has developed a strong online following of individuals who are interested in learning more about agriculture and farming. She enjoys sharing her farming experiences, while also using these platforms as an opportunity to learn from other farmers and agricultural professionals.

She further highlighted the importance of farm insurance in protecting agricultural investments, infrastructure, and production assets against potential risks. She also emphasized the value of participating in commodity organisations, which provide opportunities for networking, skills development, knowledge exchange, and improved access to markets.

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WHY DRY BEAN FARMERS IN KWANONDABUYA COMMUNITY FROM UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT STILL NEED MARKET ACCESS SUPPORT

Buhlebemvelo Dube, Ricardo Smith, and Nonhlanhla Gwamanda

South Africa often approaches smallholder agriculture through a production lens. This approach tends to focus on increasing production support, providing inputs, and distributing infrastructure, thus resulting in improved productivity. Yet the evidence emerging from dry bean farmers in uMkhanyakude District in KwaZulu-Natal suggests a different economic reality. The principal challenge, beyond farmers' ability to produce, is how to build the capacity of these farmers to participate in commercial markets.

Our recent development support assessment of 49 dry bean farmers paints a revealing picture of a farming system with strong potential but weak coordination. The farmers collectively cultivate approximately 193 hectares, with an average of 3.9 hectares per producer. Women account for most participants, while youth participation remains excessively low. Market access emerged as the biggest constraint, affecting 42.9% of farmers. Input and chemical costs followed at 30.6%, while climate-related risks accounted for 24.5% of reported challenges.

The rest include infrastructure constraints, such as fencing.

From a commercial perspective, weak market access extends far beyond the absence of potential buyers. It often reflects a lack of aggregation systems, limited market information / intelligence, inconsistent supply volumes, quality issues and weak alignment with market specifications. Under such conditions, even productive farmers remain exposed to localised oversupply, unstable prices, and uncertain income streams. Thus, achieving unstable profits.

There is also an important lesson for extension systems and development programmes. Traditional extension models have historically focused on advisory support, often concentrating on agronomic recommendations. While technical support remains essential, the evidence increasingly suggests that extension must also function as an economic coordination mechanism. Production support without market linkage creates underutilised capacity, as farmers don't participate in the entire value chain.

Infrastructure without demand signals low yield returns. Encouragingly, the opportunities are equally clear. Strengthening aggregation models, creating structured offtake arrangements, improving access to seasonal finance, expanding irrigation support, and strengthening public-private partnerships can substantially improve outcomes.

Market actors, processors, buyers, financial institutions, and public agencies each play a crucial role in building commercially viable pathways for smallholder producers.

The future of smallholder agriculture in districts such as uMkhanyakude may therefore depend on improving the systems surrounding production.

Farmers do not simply require better-aligned support so that when production capacity and markets move together, they can transition from periodic output to commercially sustainable participation.

The challenge facing South African smallholder farmers is ensuring that what they increase yields, profit and participate in viable economic opportunities.

SHARTLOT MATHEBULA'S SPINACH FARMING JOURNEY: A PATHWAY FROM UNEMPLOYMENT TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Dzunisani Zitha

In Welverdiend, located within the Ehlanzeni District, Ms Shartlot Mathebula is demonstrating how agriculture can serve as a powerful pathway for self-employment, food security, and community development. Originally from Burgersfort, Ms Mathebula converted a one-hectare piece of inherited land into a productive farming enterprise that now supplies fresh vegetables to local markets while creating employment opportunities and contributing to the growth of her community.

Ms Mathebula's farming journey began in 2024, during a period when she was unemployed and searching for a sustainable way to create opportunities for herself.

Instead of waiting for employment opportunities, she chose to become an entrepreneur by transforming her inherited family land into a productive agricultural enterprise.

Driven by her passion for farming and the desire to contribute to food security, she identified spinach production as a viable business opportunity. Her decision was influenced by the increasing demand for affordable and nutritious food options within her community.

She recognised that many households could not always afford meat and required accessible alternatives to maintain a healthy diet. Through spinach farming, Ms Mathebula has been able to provide fresh, nutritious produce to consumers while generating an income and building a sustainable livelihood. Her journey reflects the potential of agriculture to empower individuals, improve local food systems, and create economic opportunities in rural communities.

Despite having completed only Grade 7 and without formal agricultural training, Ms Mathebula has successfully established a farming operation through determination, hands-on experience, and a commitment to continuous learning. Her journey demonstrates the importance of resilience, adaptability, and practical knowledge in building a successful agricultural enterprise.

The farm currently focuses primarily on spinach production, with a smaller area allocated to onion cultivation.

Through her efforts, Ms Mathebula produces between 10 and 15 tons of vegetables annually, supplying fresh produce to local customers and, occasionally, retail outlets such as Boxer stores. Her achievements highlight the potential of small-scale farming to create sustainable livelihoods and contribute to local food security.

Quality remains a key priority in Ms Mathebula's farming operation. Each harvest undergoes careful grading to ensure that only produce meeting the required standards reaches customers. The selection process focuses on key quality indicators such as leaf crispness, deep green colour, and uniform size. By maintaining these standards, the farm continues to build customer trust and strengthen its reputation for supplying fresh, high-quality vegetables.

Water for production is sourced primarily from a well, with additional support occasionally provided by a neighbouring property with access to a borehole. The farm also makes use of a tractor to assist with various production activities, improving operational efficiency and reducing labour demands. Although the farm continues to operate with limited resources, Mathebula remains committed to investing in improvements that enhance productivity, sustainability, and future growth.

The business currently employs three people, providing valuable employment opportunities within the local community. In addition to creating jobs, the farm contributes significantly to local food security by ensuring that fresh, nutritious vegetables are accessible to households, consumers, and surrounding markets.

Like many emerging farmers, Ms Mathebula faces several challenges that influence the growth and sustainability of her enterprise. These include limited access to finance, restricted land availability for expansion, marketing challenges, and cash-flow constraints.

Despite these obstacles, Mathebula remains determined to expand her farming enterprise, improve productivity, and implement practical solutions that will strengthen the long-term sustainability and resilience of the farm.

Ms Mathebula has achieved several important milestones that reflect her determination and commitment to growing her farming enterprise.

One of her proudest accomplishments has been purchasing a bakkie, which has greatly improved the transportation of produce and enhanced the efficiency of deliveries to customers and markets. She is also in the process of drilling her own borehole, an investment that will add on to the existing irrigation capacity
For aspiring farmers, Ms Mathebula shares practical advice based on her own experiences: "Never plant a seed without knowing exactly who will buy your harvest.

Spinach is highly perishable and can spoil quickly, so farmers need to understand their markets before producing. Farmers should also invest in drip irrigation systems to improve water management, increase efficiency, and enhance productivity."

Her journey highlights the importance of planning, market awareness, resource management, and continuous improvement in building a sustainable farming business.

As she continues to expand her enterprise, Ms Shartlot Mathebula remains committed to producing high-quality vegetables, creating employment opportunities, and contributing to South Africa's food security goals. Her journey serves as an inspiring example of how determination, vision, and hard work can transform unemployment challenges into meaningful opportunities.

By turning inherited land into a productive and sustainable farming enterprise, Ms Mathebula has demonstrated the potential of agriculture to empower individuals, strengthen local economies, and create pathways for rural development. Her story highlights the impact that small-scale farmers can make in building resilient food systems and improving livelihoods within their communities.

What is Policy Advisory on Smallholder Market Access and Integration?

The Policy Advisory Report on Smallholder Market Access and Integration is a tool to measure the progress in the achievement of the market access goal for smallholder farmers in South Africa.

Why do we need Policy Advisory on Smallholder Market Access and Integration?

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 this Policy Advisory.

Who is going to use Policy Advisory on Smallholder Market Access and Integration?

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

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