# agripreneur

ISSUE 46 | SEPTEMBER 2026



# FROM KNOWLEDGE TO OWNERSHIP:

## Mr Tshilidzi Matshidzula

*A Journey of Innovation, Leadership and*

***Dairy Excellence***

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# THE AGRIPRENEUR:

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION PRODUCED BY THE NAMC

# PREFACE

Welcome to the 46th 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 46TH EDITION OF AGRIPRENEUR, WE HAVE FEATURED THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:


1. Editor's note
2. Agri-highlights
3. Buhlebemvelo Dube Shines at the 63rd AEASA Conference, Secures Third Position
4. Collaboration instead of competition: why farm routes matter
5. SA Olive Awards 2026 celebrate South Africa's finest EVOOs and the people behind the industry
6. NAMC Successfully Facilitates Market Access for Rural Smallholder Farmers in KwaZulu-Natal province
7. From Knowledge to Ownership: Mr Tshilidzi Matshidzula's Journey of Innovation, Leadership and Dairy Excellence
8. Part 1: Mr. Sello Seloma Builds a Future in Shawela Village through Maloi piggery farm


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# EDITOR'S NOTE



Matume Maila

**Dear Valued Readers and Members of the Farming Community,**

It is with great pleasure that I present to you Agripreneur Issue 46, published at a time when the agricultural sector continues to navigate numerous challenges.

We begin this edition by reflecting on key agricultural highlights. Our agricultural highlights cover the El Niño advisory for farmers, the extension of the deadline for red meat exports to the United Arab Emirates, and the announcement by Minister Aucamp regarding the opening of the Egyptian market to South Africa's red meat sector. We also highlight private sector assistance for local Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccine production. Furthermore, we celebrate the remarkable milestone achieved by Mr Dube at the 63rd Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa (AEASA) Conference.

Our agri-tourism series continues with an exploration of why farm routes matters. We also bring readers valuable insights from SA Olive, focusing on the 2026 SA Olive Awards and their contribution to recognising excellence within the olive industry.

At the heart of this issue is a NAMC success story highlighting efforts to facilitate market access for rural smallholder farmers in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings draw attention to the persistent market-access challenges faced by smallholder dry bean farmers.

This edition also features Mr Tshilidzi Matshidzula's inspiring journey of innovation, leadership, and dairy excellence, showcasing the dedication and vision required to build a thriving agricultural enterprise.

We conclude this issue by introducing Part 1 of the story of Mr Sello Seloma, who is building a future in Shawela Village through Maloi Piggery Farm.
As you explore Agripreneur Issue 46, we hope these stories, insights, and developments will inform, inspire, and encourage meaningful engagement across the agricultural sector.

***Thank you for your continued readership and support.***

*Matume Maila*

**EDITOR IN CHIEF**

***Enjoy the read!***

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Agri-highlights (July – September 2026)

# El Niño advisory



El Niño is a natural climate pattern that results in a shift in global atmospheric circulation. In South Africa, the typical impacts of El Niño are lower-than-normal rainfall during summer coupled with high temperatures.

Typical winter conditions have prevailed in summer rainfall areas. However, the winter rainfall areas have experienced a shortage of rainfall, which will be challenging moving into the summer months that will require risk reduction focus. During the 2025/26 summer season, above-normal rainfall was received which improved levels of dams and soil moisture in most summer rainfall areas.

The Seasonal Climate Watch issued by the South African Weather Service, dated 31 August 2026, mentions that the El Niño is occurring and will continue through the 2026/27 summer season. The Climate Watch further indicates that the summer season is showing many areas of below-normal rainfall associated with the expected El Niño during summer.

In the agricultural sector, El Niño conditions might result in below-normal rainfall and high temperatures that may lead to dry conditions and heat stress. This often contributes to crop failure and livestock mortalities, especially where risk reduction measures are not implemented. Water restrictions also come into effect when rainfall is low and usually affects irrigation farmers.

The other issues of concern are pests and diseases associated with these conditions.
In general, when the winter season ends and the spring season begins, rain is experienced throughout the summer rainfall areas. However, this is not the case, especially when below normal rainfall and high temperatures are forecast – particularly in an El Niño season. Crop farmers are encouraged to implement climate smart agriculture that will ensure that soil moisture is conserved. They should utilise implements that are in line with Conservation Agriculture principles that will further preserve the moisture and minimise soil erosion.

Farmers should implement risk reduction measures such as not expanding land under production unnecessarily and prioritising suitable cultivars that will withstand dry and hot conditions. Farmers are further advised to prioritise cultivars listed in the National Varietal List in compliance with the Plant Improvement Act, 2018 (Act No. 11 of 2018) and remain within the planting window.
To read more about recent forecast on El Niño, click here.



# **Registration deadline** extended for supplying livestock for red meat Export to the United Arab Emirates



In a step aimed to continue uninterrupted red meat exports and safe key agricultural trade, the Minister of Agriculture, Willie Aucamp, announced an extension of the registration deadline for farms and feedlots supplying red meat to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Farms and feedlots supplying livestock for slaughter for the export of red meat to the UAE will now have until 31 December 2026 to ensure they have put the necessary systems in place to comply with the Veterinary Procedural Notice 59 (VPN-59) regulations.

"This extension is critical for our livestock sector and agricultural trade relations with the United Arab Emirates. By allowing trade to continue smoothly while our state veterinarians and farmers complete the registration process, we are protecting local livelihoods, supporting market continuity, and ensuring our red meat industry can meet all international standards without unnecessary disruption", Minister Aucamp said.

He added that the Ministry and the Department of Agriculture remain fully committed to supporting South African producers as they expand their reach in key global markets.
During this extended period, exports may proceed only where:

- the facility has been inspected by the responsible provincial state veterinarian;
- compliance with the applicable requirements has been verified; and
- a compliant application form for registration of the farm or feedlot has been submitted to the Directorate: Animal Health for processing.

"This extension is intended to facilitate the completion of the registration process and prevent unnecessary interruptions to trade. This however does not exempt any farm or feedlot from the applicable registration requirements," Minister Aucamp explained.

It is further important to note that after 31 December 2026, farms and feedlots that have not been registered will not be eligible to supply livestock for slaughter for the export of red meat to the UAE. Exports originating from unregistered facilities will therefore not be supported or endorsed.

For more information **click here.**

# **Minister Aucamp** announces milestone opening the Egypt market for the South African red meat sector



The Minister of Agriculture, Mr Willie Aucamp, has announced a breakthrough in export negotiations with Egypt that is set to deliver a significant boost to South Africa's red meat industry. Minister Aucamp made the announcement at the Agri North West Congress on Thursday, 3 September 2026.

"This is a major milestone for South Africa's agricultural sector, which has been facing one of the biggest foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks in decades," said Minister Aucamp. "I sat with my team on Monday and emphasised that we have to get this right as our red meat farmers need this, and I am pleased that the team made it happen."

South Africa and Egypt have successfully concluded negotiations on the Veterinary Health Certificate (VHC) governing the export of red meat from South Africa to Egypt. This paves the way for South African beef and livestock producers to access Egypt's substantial consumer market. Shipments will be cleared to move once the final signatures have been formally appended to the agreement.

Minister Aucamp thanked the negotiating team for its efforts, emphasising that government's role is to support and enable the agricultural sector to succeed, rather than be a stumbling block.

"The outcome of these negotiations was achieved through constructive engagement with the Egyptian veterinary authorities.

Government remains committed to strengthening international trade relations and expanding market access opportunities for South Africa's red meat sector," said Minister Aucamp. To read more about the strengthening international trade relations and expanding market access opportunities for South Africa's red meat sector," said Minister Aucamp., **click here.**

# **Minister Aucamp** announces private sector to assist in local FMD Vaccine production




A proposal by the Minister of Agriculture, Willie Aucamp, to allow qualifying private companies to make use of the ARC's intellectual property (IP) regarding Foot and mouth disease (FMD) vaccines and for them to join in manufacturing the ARC's FMD vaccine at a large scale, have been unanimously agreed to by the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and its Board on Monday 21 September 2026.

The ARC vaccine is a very effective defence against the domestic FMD strains and requires only a single annual administration. However, due to manufacturing constraints, the ARC is currently not able to manufacture their FMD vaccine at scale.

Allowing local and/or international companies to manufacture the ARC vaccine, under conditional IP licensing agreements with the ARC, will therefore help the ARC to overcome the current manufacturing constraints that they are experiencing.

Following the board meeting, Minister Aucamp said: "Partnering with the private sector to manufacture the ARC vaccine marks a decisive breakthrough in safeguarding South Africa's livestock sector, strengthening national biosecurity, and securing food supply chains."

"I've listened to the concerns of farmers and other stakeholders in the sector, and I appreciate that they want swift action to deal with this Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak.

It is against this background that we are now, for the first time, going to allow the private sector to make use of the IP of the ARC to enhance the availability of the ARC vaccine."

For more information **click here.**

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# **Buhlebemvelo Dube** Shines at the 63rd AEASA Conference, Secures Third Position

**Matume** Maila




Mr. Buhlebemvelo Dube, Economist: Trade Research at the NAMC has achieved an impressive milestone by securing third position at the AEASA Conference was held from 29 September to 1 October 2026 at the Legend Golf & Safari Resort in Mokopane, Limpopo, showcasing dedication, hard work, and a commitment to academic excellence. This achievement highlights Dube's contribution and determination to excel in an academic environment.

Mr. Dube, presented collaborative paper authored by the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), and the University of Fort Hare (UFH).

The paper, titled ***"Assessing Agricultural Employment Adjustment in South Africa,"*** investigates how structural changes within the economy are influencing employment patterns in the agricultural sector.

The research provides important insights to support evidence-based policymaking, strengthen understanding of agricultural labour trends, and contribute to the sustainable development of South Africa's agricultural sector. Mr. Dube's achievement during the conference underscores the value of collaborative research in generating knowledge that informs policy, addresses emerging challenges, and supports the long-term growth and transformation of agriculture in South Africa.

At the 63rd AEASA Conference, more than 30 research papers were presented, examining the increasing influence of geopolitical dynamics on agriculture, trade, technology, climate governance, and food systems. The presentations highlighted emerging challenges and opportunities shaping the future of these interconnected sectors.

# **Collaboration instead** of competition: why farm routes matter

**Christelle** Van Zyl



One of the strongest messages at the recent the Global Agritourism Conference in Scotland was that successful agri-tourism does not depend on one farm doing everything on its own. Across the conference, through both farm visits and international discussions, the importance of collaboration was mentioned repeatedly. For South Africa, this message is especially relevant, because many of our farming regions already have strong individual products, but these are not always connected into a clear visitor experience.

South Africa has wine farms, fruit farms, livestock farms, olive farms, game farms, guest farms, farm stalls, cultural attractions, food experiences and more. In many areas, these businesses operate close to one another, but tourists may not always know how to find them or how to link them into a day trip or weekend route. This is where collaboration becomes important. Agri-tourism grows stronger when farms, local businesses, tourism offices, municipalities and communities work together.

A single farm does not have to offer everything. One farm may have accommodation, another may offer tastings, another may have animals, another may offer farm walks, local food, children's activities or educational tours. On their own, each experience may be short. Together, they can become a full visitor journey.

This was clear in Scotland, where farms are often part of broader local networks. A cashmere goat farm, for example, has developed tours, events and links with wool partners. A berry farm focuses on pick-your-own experiences, farm stalls and family-friendly activities.

A whisky farm offers visitors the opportunity to see how ingredients grown on the farm

become part of the final product. Each farm has its own identity, but together they contribute to a wider agri-tourism destination, making a perfect day trip.

For South African farmers, this should be encouraging. Many farms may feel that they are not “ready” for agri-tourism because they do not have accommodation, a restaurant or a large tourism facility. However, a farmer can start with what is already available on the farm and then link with others in the area. A wine farm can work with an olive farm, a guest farm, a local restaurant, a craft producer, a farm stall or a nearby cultural experience.

Farm routes and tourism corridors can help visitors stay longer and spend more in rural areas. A visitor may not travel far for one short activity, but they may travel for a full day or weekend of connected experiences. In South Africa, this can support not only farmers, but also farm workers, local guides, small food producers, artists, accommodation providers and rural towns.

Collaboration also creates space for farmers to share ideas, challenges and lessons. This is something South Africa needs more of. Without a formal national agri-tourism structure or clear policy framework, local cooperation becomes even more important. Farmers can learn from one another, refer visitors to one another and build trust within a region.

Agri-tourism should not be seen as competition between farms. If one farm attracts visitors to an area, neighbouring farms and local businesses can also benefit. The real opportunity for South Africa lies in creating reasons for visitors to stay longer, explore more and understand the richness of our farming regions.
Agri-tourism is not only about one farm opening its gates. It is about building a destination. When South African farms work together, they can offer something richer, more practical and more memorable than any single farm could offer alone.



# **SA Olive** Awards 2026 celebrate South Africa's finest EVOOs and the people behind the industry

**Wendy** Petersen



South Africa's Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) industry gathered at Grande Roche in Paarl on the 15 of September for the SA Olive Awards 2026 to celebrate the producers, agricultural workers and industry professionals whose dedication continues to raise the standard of locally produced olive oil.

The annual awards recognize excellence across three EVOO styles: delicate, medium and intense, and producers from across the country received gold, silver and bronze medals, with the results once again demonstrating the diversity and quality of South African olive oil.

Altogether, 33 oils from 18 producers received gold medals. Included among them were well known brand names and new producers, including Andante Olives Porterville, Babylonstoren, Brown Badger, Buffelsdrift Farm, Darling Olives, De Rustica Estate, Het Vlock Casteel, Kielder South Africa, Kleinbergskloof, Lions Creek Estate, Mardouw Investments, Morgenster, Petra

Olive, Greenleaf, Slo Harvest, Terre Paisible, Tokara and Willow Creek. From more delicate and aromatic oils to robust, peppery expressions, the results highlighted the different growing regions, production styles and expertise that reside within South Africa's olive industry.




The silver and bronze medal recipients also form an important part of the 2026 results, reflecting the depth of talent and commitment across the local industry. These medals recognize oils that demonstrate strong quality and distinctive sensory characteristics during the judging process. For producers, achieving silver or bronze is a meaningful acknowledgement of the careful work involved at every stage, from cultivating and harvesting the olives to milling, storing and presenting the finished oil. Often, silver and bronze winners go on to win gold medals in future years and, together with the gold winners, these producers reflect the consistency and variety of South African EVOO.




Entries were assessed by an experienced panel of local and international olive oil specialists. International judges Marcelo Scofano from Brazil and Dr Müge Nebioğlu from Türkiye joined South African judges Reni Hildenbrand, Gerrie Duvenage, Benedetta Lami, Gill Lanham, Marelie Erasmus, Mare Groenewald and Theresa Louw. During the judging process, each oil was evaluated according to established sensory criteria,






including its aroma, flavor, balance, complexity, bitterness and pungency.

While the SA Olive Awards annually recognize excellence among the producers, SA Olive also supports quality and transparency across the wider industry through its Commitment to Compliance (CTC) Scheme. The voluntary, integrity-based CTC Scheme is managed by SA Olive and verifies that participating producers are committed to certain standards which are based on international quality standards. The seal indicates that the oil is 100% South African, displays its year of harvest and has been verified as Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Participating oils undergo chemical analysis and are tested by the SA Olive panel to confirm that they meet the Extra Virgin classification and are free from sensory defects. The scheme also promotes honest, transparent labelling and gives consumers added assurance about the origin, freshness and quality of the oil they are buying.

Beyond acknowledging all the outstanding EVOOs, the SA Olive Awards also celebrate the people whose knowledge and hard work support the industry. Denise Bergman from Het Vlock Casteel was named the 2026 Agri Worker of the Year. The award honors an individual whose expertise, dedication and contribution make a meaningful difference to South Africa's olive sector. Bergman's award celebrates her individual contribution while also highlighting the agricultural workers whose efforts support the success of South African olive farms and producers.

Another significant recognition is the Lifetime Achievement Award which, this year, was presented to John Scrimgeour for his contribution to the South African olive industry over more than two decades. Scrimgeour spent 24 years as Farm Manager at Buffet Olives

and served as Chairman of SA Olive from 2002 to 2005. He has been a member of the SA Olive Technical Committee since 1996 and is an Honorary Member of SA Olive. He continues to share his knowledge and experience with established and emerging farmers, contributing to the technical development, transformation and long-term growth of the sector.

**Double wins**

The awards also provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress being made by individual producers, including Buffelsdrift Farm outside Ladismith in the Klein Karoo. Buffelsdrift won two gold medals at this year's SA Olive Awards for the first time. Its Frantoio Extra Virgin Olive Oil was entered into the medium category, and its Coratina Extra Virgin Olive Oil, was entered in the intense category, and both received gold medals. Buffelsdrift's local success follows international recognition after the farm also received a gold award at the Carthage International Olive Oil Competition in Tunisia. Acknowledgement in a country with a long-established olive-growing tradition reaffirms South African producers' right to compete and belong on the international stage.

A working olive farm with a history extending beyond olive production, Buffelsdrift is also known for its carefully restored 18th and 19th century farm buildings and distinctive Klein Karoo setting. When Greg and Nancy Truen first encountered the property, they knew the importance of preserving its historic buildings and surrounding landscape. Their careful restoration returned the farm to active life while retaining its character, history and sense of place. Today, the farm cultivates varieties including Coratina, Frantoio and Nocellara and manages production from grove to bottle. Its focus on quality, regenerative farming practices and respect for the landscape have helped shape oils that reflect the character and growing conditions of the region.

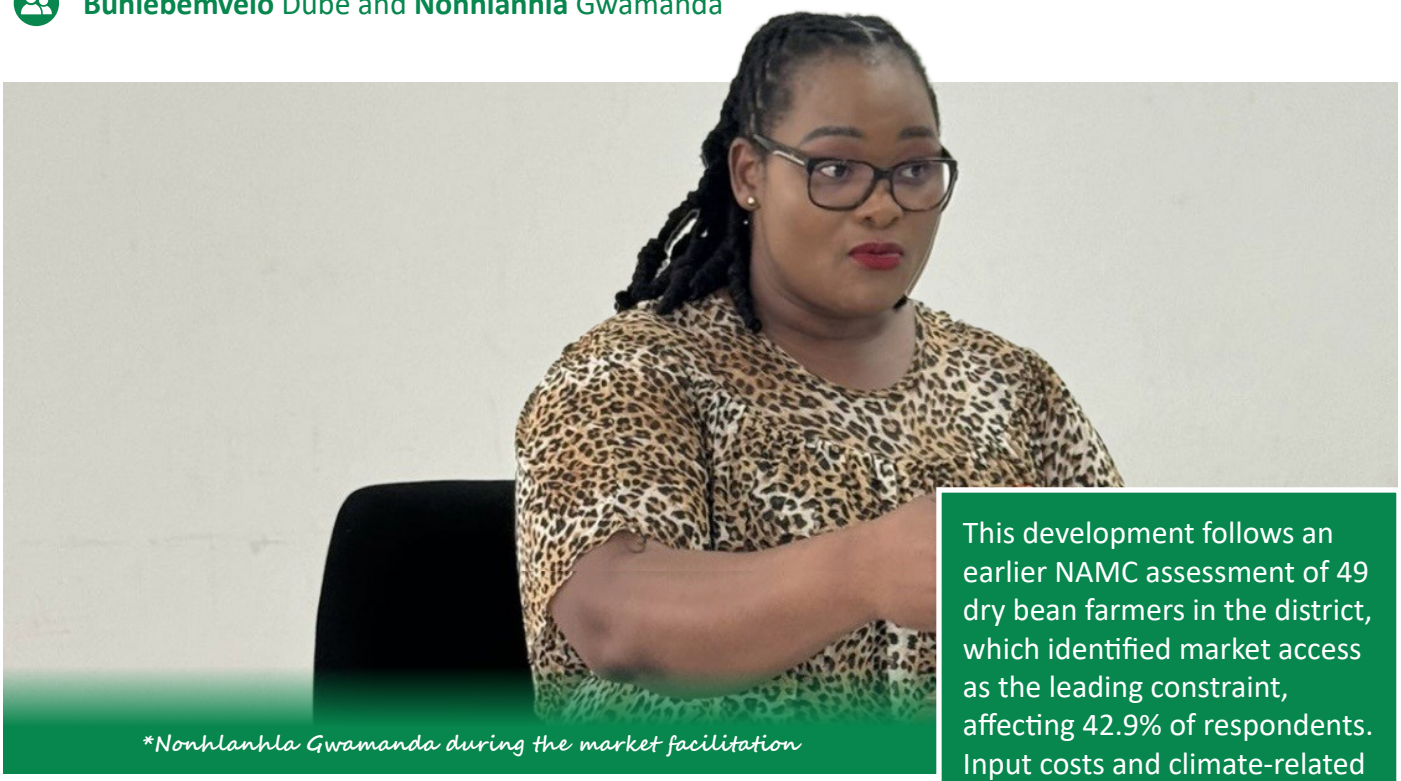
Although Buffelsdrift's double gold marked a significant first for the farm, its achievement also reflected the progress being made by olive producers across the country. The results reinforce the value of supporting locally produced olive oil. Behind every winning EVOO is a network of growers, agricultural workers, millers, technical specialists and producers whose combined expertise is helping South African olive oil compete on the global stage.

All 33 gold medal-winning oils will now be re-evaluated for the Absa Top 10 Olive Oil Awards. The final ten EVOOs will be announced at the awards ceremony on 15 October 2026, placing yet another spotlight on exceptional South African Extra Virgin Olive Oils.



# NAMC Successfully Facilitates Market Access for Rural Smallholder Farmers in KwaZulu-Natal province

**Buhlebemvelo** Dube and **Nonhlanhla** Gwamanda



*Nonhlanhla Gwamanda during the market facilitation

Smallholder farmers in KwaNondabuya Village, in Jozini, in uMkhanyakude District, have successfully accessed commercial markets following coordinated support facilitated by the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), through its Agribusiness Development Division and its partners. The farmers have supplied about 40 tons of sugar beans to established markets in KwaZulu-Natal, marking an important step towards strengthening their participation in the agricultural value chain.

This development follows an earlier NAMC assessment of 49 dry bean farmers in the district, which identified market access as the leading constraint, affecting 42.9% of respondents. Input costs and climate-related risks affected 30.6% and 24.5%, respectively. The findings highlighted a persistent challenge: farmers had the capacity to produce but lacked reliable market linkages to translate their harvests into commercial opportunities.



*Smallholder farmers in kwaNondabuya



*Dry bean smallholder farmers

Through coordinated market access facilitation, the NAMC and its partners have supported farmers in connecting their production with commercial buyers. The successful delivery and sale of sugar beans demonstrate the importance of linking production support with market demand, particularly for rural farmers operating outside established agricultural supply chains.

The achievement also highlights the importance of product quality and meeting buyer requirements. Maintaining consistent quality, reliable supply and competitive production costs will be essential for strengthening these market relationships and securing future trading opportunities.



*Dry bean

For the NAMC, this development represents progress in addressing the market access constraints identified during its earlier assessment. The next priority is to consolidate these gains through sustained buyer relationships, improved production coordination and continued institutional support.

The experience in KwaNondabuya demonstrates that effective agricultural development extends beyond helping farmers produce. It requires connecting what farmers produce to markets that can sustain their livelihoods and support the growth of their farming enterprises

# **From Knowledge** to Ownership: Mr Tshilidzi Matshidzula's Journey of Innovation, Leadership and Dairy Excellence

**Khathutshelo** Rambau, **Khethiwe** Mnguni & **Simphiwe** Mlotshwa




**Farming journey and background**

Mr Tshilidzi Matshidzula, a dynamic and ambitious commercial cattle dairy farmer, holds a Diploma in Animal Production from the Tshwane University of Technology, which laid a strong foundation for his career in the dairy industry. He began his journey working on a dairy farm in the Eastern Cape, where he steadily advanced into a managerial position. Through this experience, he recognised the value of complementing technical expertise with strong business skills.

Motivated by this insight, he pursued and completed a BTech in Agricultural Management through UNISA. This qualification proved to be a turning point in his career, reshaping his perspective on farming. It enabled him to view agriculture not only as a production enterprise but also as a business that demands strategic planning, financial discipline, effective governance, and strong leadership. Today, this business-minded approach continues to drive the growth, sustainability, and success of the agricultural enterprises under his management.

**Building a successful dairy enterprise**

Today, Mr Matshidzula is a manager, owner and partner in three dairy enterprises: Little Barnet in Alexandria, Mountain Park Agri in Stutterheim and the recently acquired Redlands Farm in Stutterheim. Each operation follows a similar production model, with approximately 1 000 head of cattle, including around 800 milking cows, on about 300 hectares. Together, the farms produce between 5 million and 5.5 million litres of milk annually, supplying processors that serve major retailers and restaurant chains across South Africa.

The foundation of this expansion was the acquisition of Little Barnet in 2007 through financing from the Land Bank. ***"That farm has been the bedrock, and everything has been developed off the back of that."*** The success of the operation enabled him to build equity and pursue further opportunities. In 2019, he joined Mountain Park Agri as a shareholder and operational manager, with the enterprise becoming fully operational in 2020.

The latest chapter in the family's expansion came in 2023 with the acquisition of Redlands Farm, a venture that is wholly owned by the Matshidzula family. The acquisition was supported through the government's Blended Finance Scheme, which also assisted with the installation of irrigation infrastructure and the purchase of livestock. ***"My family did all the developments on the farm, and we built the dairy almost from scratch ourselves,"*** he explains. Supported by the Blended Finance Scheme and financing from Standard Bank, the family developed the dairy infrastructure, installed irrigation and expanded the herd, further strengthening their footprint in South Africa's dairy industry.

**Managing cows, milk quality and technology**

The farm consists of a Jersey and Holstein crossbreed, with cows averaging 450 kg and 480 kg and each producing 5500 to 5800 litres per annum. The herds are managed under a pasture based grazing system, with each farm dedicating at least with 100~120 hectares to irrigated pasture fields. Stocking rate averages 2.2 cows per hectare on dry land pastures although the more established grazing systems in Alexandria support up to 2.7 cows per hectare. Surplus pasture is conserved as fodder reserves to strengthen feed security during periods of reduced growth.

Maintaining productivity requires a combination of sound management and specialist support. Operational decisions are managed through a three-tier governance structure comprising farm management, executive management and board-level oversight. Daily herd performance and animal health are monitored through detailed reporting systems, while veterinarians and nutritionists provide ongoing technical support. Milk quality is closely monitored through daily laboratory testing, enabling continuous improvement and compliance with processor requirements.

Mr Matshidzula recognises the growing importance of technology in modern agribusiness and is proactively exploring innovative digital solutions, including artificial intelligence, to enhance operational efficiency, improve decision-making, and strengthen the long-term sustainability of the business.

**Navigating challenges in today's dairy sector**

Despite the success of his farming enterprises, Mr Matshidzula believes that significant barriers continue to limit participation in South Africa's dairy industry. ***"The dairy industry is discriminative in an unintended way," he explains. "It tends to favour people who already have exposure and experience in the sector."***

Commercial dairy farming is highly capital intensive, with the investment required for a single cow ranging from approximately R85 000 to more than R220 000, depending on infrastructure and production systems. Combined with the need to achieve sufficient scale to remain competitive, these costs create considerable obstacles for new entrants. According to him, producers often need a herd of at least 500 milking cows before they can compete effectively with long-established commercial operations.

As a result, he regards support initiatives such as the Blended Finance Scheme as critical for

expanding participation and transformation within the sector.

**Electricity**

***"Electricity is becoming a big threat to us as an industry,"*** says Mr Matshidzula. Dairy farms operate strict milking schedules that fall outside peak solar production hours. This limits the effectiveness of renewable energy systems unless farmers invest in costly battery storage solutions. As a result, many producers remain heavily dependent on Eskom, exposing them to increasing electricity prices and supply interruptions.

**Foot and mouth disease**

Among the most significant challenges faced by the business has been the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. ***"When we got infected with foot-and-mouth disease, just two weeks after commissioning our newest farm in Stutterheim, we incurred significant financial losses,"*** he says. The financial impact was substantial, and the business is still recovering from the losses. He also noted that disease outbreaks remain one of the greatest risks facing livestock farmers, with limited mechanisms available to cushion producers against the economic consequences.

**Climate change**

Climate variability, particularly drought, remains a constant challenge for business. To reduce risk, the farms have invested in water storage infrastructure and irrigated pastures, ensuring sufficient water and feed production during dry periods. In addition, surplus pasture is conserved as fodder reserves to support the herd when grazing conditions deteriorate. For him, building resilience is not a once-off investment but an ongoing process of planning for uncertainty and safeguarding the long-term sustainability of the business.

**Farmer organizations**

He attributes much of his growth as a dairy farmer to the knowledge-sharing opportunities provided by farmer organizations and industry networks. Through the Alexandria Dairy Study Group, the Milk Producers' Organisation (MPO) and AgriSA, he has been able to benchmark performance, exchange ideas and learn from fellow producers. As he explains, ***"The farming community has been instrumental in our growth. Being able to visit other farmers, share knowledge, and learn from their experiences is always to your advantage."***

**Family, employees and community impact**

For him, the success of the business is rooted in the strength of the people around. Family remains central to the business. At Redlands Farm, which is 100% owned by the Matshidzula family, his wife Ms Adivhaho Matshidzula plays a leading role in managing the dairy operation and overseeing the farm's finances. As the business continues to grow, she is expected to focus on financial oversight across the group's various enterprises. While his siblings have pursued careers in other professions, they continue to contribute as





shareholders and supporters of the family business.

Employing around 70 people across the various operations, the business is committed to fair remuneration, skills development and continuous training. Working alongside organizations such as the Milk Producers' Organisation (MPO), veterinarians and technical consultants. Employees receive ongoing training to keep pace with changing industry practices and technologies.
His management philosophy is centred on developing people and empowering others to lead. Rather than focusing on day-to-day operations, he concentrates on the strategic management of the business, using information provided by farm managers to guide decision-making. He believes in giving employees responsibility, encouraging ownership and creating opportunities for people to grow within the organisation
This people-centred approach extends beyond the farm gate. He is equally passionate about supporting the communities surrounding his farms.

Over the past 15 years, he has deliberately invested in mentoring aspiring black farmers and supporting the development of agricultural communities. He regards opening opportunities for others, particularly black farmers seeking to enter commercial agriculture, as one of his greatest achievements.
**"For me, the biggest achievement is helping other people come into the industry. Transformation starts with knowledge. Once people have knowledge on the industry they can move towards ownership and build successful businesses of their own."**

**Advice for emerging farmers**
Mr Matshidzula believes partnerships can provide an effective pathway into farm ownership, particularly for individuals who may not have access to significant capital. However, he emphasises that successful partnerships require individuals to bring value to the table.

He encourages aspiring farmers to focus on building their technical and business knowledge, arguing that expertise can open doors to management opportunities, improved remuneration and, ultimately, ownership. According to Mr Matshidzula, strong skills and industry experience not only increase the likelihood of attracting investment or financing but also improve the chances of long-term success.

**"Knowledge is what creates opportunities. Once you understand both the technical and business side of farming, the next challenge is financing."**
He cautions against entering agriculture without sufficient experience, noting that many people invest substantial sums in farming without first developing the knowledge required to manage a commercial enterprise. For him, acquiring skills, gaining exposure and building a strong foundation of experience remain the most

# **Part 1:** Mr. Sello Selomo Builds a Future in Shawela Village through Maloi piggery farm

**Dzunisani** Zitha and **Matume** Maila



What began as a research journey in 2021 has gradually developed into an ambitious agricultural project in Shawela Village, Limpopo, where a determined entrepreneur is working towards building a commercially viable pig and vegetable farming business. Driven by a vision to create sustainable economic opportunities, Mr Selomo began researching pig farming in 2021 while continuing with full-time employment. Rather than waiting for financial assistance, he started saving money from his salary and exploring additional legitimate sources of income to raise the capital needed to establish his own agricultural enterprise.

In 2022, he took a significant step towards realising his dream by purchasing 10 hectares of private land in Shawela Village. At the time, much of the property was covered by forestry and required extensive clearing and preparation before farming activities could begin.

The early stages of development demanded considerable financial investment, physical effort and patience. Using his personal resources, he purchased equipment for clearing the land and hired a grader to level the site in preparation for construction.

The development process also created employment opportunities for residents, particularly individuals from disadvantaged households who were willing and able to work. Eight community members were employed during the initial development phase, contributing to the transformation of the property into a farming establishment.

One of the project's most important milestones was establishing a reliable water

supply. Mr. Selomo invested in drilling a 100-metre-deep borehole to provide water for agricultural production.

He also took a practical approach to reducing construction costs by producing bricks on-site, which were used to construct the piggery. The result was a facility comprising 12 rooms, providing an important foundation for the farm's livestock operations. Today, the enterprise combines crop production with pig farming, although it remains in the early stages of commercial development. The farm produces a variety of crops, including maize, cabbage, spinach, peppers, tomatoes, chillies and eggplant. Its livestock operation currently consists of eight pigs.

With a reported production capacity of approximately one to three tonnes of crops per month, the business is working to strengthen its production systems and improve its ability to meet market demand. For Mr. Seloma, these developments represent more than physical infrastructure. They reflect years of saving, planning, research and determination to build something that can benefit both his family and the wider community.

Like many emerging agricultural businesses, the farm faces financial and operational challenges that limit its growth. The cost of pig feed, veterinary medication, electricity, employee wages, fencing, storage facilities and agricultural equipment places pressure on the business's cash flow.

Mr Selomo also reports that load-shedding affects operations because the farm does not yet have an energy backup system. Another challenge arises when vegetables intended for sale are used to feed the pigs. Although this supports the livestock operation, it reduces the quantity of produce available to customers and limits the income the farm can generate.

Maloi piggery farm currently relies on hired equipment and services for certain farming activities, including soil preparation, harvesting and packaging. While this approach helps avoid the high initial cost of purchasing machinery, it can increase operating expenses over time.

These constraints have made it difficult to reinvest consistently in production and develop the infrastructure required to supply larger markets.

Mr. Seloma says additional financial support, access to appropriate agricultural technology, practical training and improved infrastructure could help Maloi piggery farm increase productivity and move towards long-term financial sustainability. The part 2 of Mr Seloma's farming journey will be featured in Agripreneur issue 47.







## 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 policy advisory could be used (largely) by policymakers.

**https://www.namc.co.za/output/smallholder-market-access-tracker-smat/**

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