

Potatoes SA collaborates with DALRRD for Limpopo information day

By Rachichi Marokane, national transformation co-ordinator, Potatoes SA

On 30 May this year, Potatoes SA hosted a potato information day in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). This event was aimed at disseminating information on potato production at a development level. This allowed locals to interact with other potato industry role-players and developing producers in the Capricorn district of Limpopo.

The information day came just a day after Potatoes SA learned of the passing of its transformation manager, Nomvula Xaba. Nomvula was known for having made a significant contribution towards the inclusive production of potatoes in the region. The industry shall continue to remember her efforts and attained deliverables which sustained transformation objectives within the potato sector.

A collaborative effort

Part of Potatoes SA's transformation mandate is to partner with various

stakeholders, including public sector departments, in developing a model that will assist developing potato producers in improving their practices. The DALRRD has been very supportive of Potatoes SA in this regard.

This remarkable journey included the continuation of various informative events, including an information day held at Mohodi ga Manthata in the Molemole Local Municipality to disseminate information regarding primary potato production. The day saw companies such as Standard Bank, Khula!, Genesis Potato Solutions, and Hello Choice exhibiting

to show producers and the community their relevant products and services.

The host farmer, Mr Rapeta of Nkukueng Vegetable Farming, welcomed over 150 locals who attended the event. The day was planned following extensive collaboration with the Molemole extension offices who offered tractors and implements for proper land preparation as well as grading services.

Six potato cultivars – Mondial, Sifra, Panamera, Tyson, Foxy and Valour – were planted in an attempt to show the community the differences between the cultivars. Part of the demonstration included spacing specifications and using the necessary tools required for adequate land preparation for both the commercial and subsistence forms of production.

Demonstrations of fertiliser applications were also conducted by Potatoes SA as well as Luther Mkhonto of DALRRD. The 2022/23 production season saw most of the developing producers achieving excellent yields. Most of them managed to expand production during the current season, said Regina Ramalla of DALRRD.

Activating the rural economy

Over the years, Potatoes SA has emphasised the fact that viable potato production requires sufficient land which is at least four times the



Attendees at the potato information session recently held in Mohodi ga Manthata.



Walter Mathidi. Potatoes SA transformation committee member.

targeted maximum annual capacity. In the case of developing producers in the Capricorn district, the majority undertake farming activities on communal land after having been granted permission by the tribal authorities. Although the lands cannot be ceded as collateral under

traditional forms of lending by most commercial banks, they remain pivotal in ensuring that producers have adequate land to produce potatoes.

Vincent Rapeta of the Nkukeng Vegetable Project is a good example of a producer who has access to land after having procured permission to occupy from the local traditional authority of Manthata. This land has allowed him to access support from DALRRD in terms of irrigation infrastructure. He recently joined the Potatoes SA Enterprise Development Programme following a feasibility and viability benchmarking. This offers support in the form of a seed subsidy over a period of four years, as well as training and mentorship.

Welcoming the attending producers during the information day, Rapeta said he felt privileged that the Nkukeng Vegetable Project is recognised and has potential to commercialise. To bridge the market access challenge, Potatoes SA took the initiative of inviting service providers (Khula! and Hello Choice)

who offer digital/online selling platforms for fresh produce.

Cluster development

As was the case in most rural areas of the Blouberg local municipality, Potatoes SA and DALRRD presented the 2023 potato information day with the aim of disseminating information on potato production and increasing interest in commercial potato production in the Molemole local municipality.

The aim is to form a liquid farming cluster in coming years. Access to machinery and implements for potato production remains a hindrance for most developing farms. The farmer production support unit (FPSU) model will hopefully in future allow producers to enjoy access to machinery and implements through this secondary co-operative approach. 📍

For more information,
email the author at
rachichi@potatoes.co.za.