

agripreneur

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INSPIRING AGRICULTURAL STORIES



CULTIVATING DREAMS: NOSIPHO
VUTHELA'S PATH FROM
GRADUATE TO AGRIPRENEUR

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Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE AGRIPRENEUR QUARTERLY:

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

PREFACE

Welcome to the 36th edition of the Agripreneur, the National Agricultural Marketing Council's (NAMC) publication that creates a platform for agripreneurs and farmers, particularly smallholders, to share their knowledge, skills, challenges, experiences, and insights. This publication provides a platform for smallholders to share lessons learned with one another and assists them in developing strategies, adopting models, and becoming part of the value chain through the marketing of commodities and products that meet market standards and are safe for consumption. The Agripreneur publication promotes and profiles aspects of South African agriculture and packages the sector as an attractive brand for aspiring agripreneurs. Each edition features good news stories that will hopefully generate interest in the reader to #LoveRSAAgric.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

In this 36th issue of *Agripreneur*, we share a snapshot of some news headlines in the agricultural sector between January and March 2024. The headlines were dominated by coverage in the following segments: diseases, floods, drought, market enquiry, sugar industry, trade, farm insurance, and land reform, among others. The news coverage begins with the Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak in the Free State province near Frankfort. The KwaZulu-Natal flooding and severe weather events, along with their effect on land and infrastructure, are also covered, with a preliminary assessment estimating approximately R500 000 in damages, and eight fatalities of farm workers were reported. The coverage includes the effect of drought on the summer grain crop, followed by the Competition Commission's enquiry into the poultry sector and the challenges surrounding the sugar industry. Lastly, the reflection on news headlines concludes with South Africa's trading opportunities with the BRICS+ countries, the farm asset insurance provided by Land Bank, and the progress of land reform in relation to the number of settled land claims.

The Agri-tourism series continues, and we are now in part 6, covering outdoor recreational activities. These include hiking trails/nature trails, mountain climbing, rock climbing, abseiling, cave visits, visits to geological phenomena, wildlife viewing and photography, animal rides (e.g., horse riding), water activities (e.g., boat rides), farm maze routes, helicopter tours, golf courses, fishing, hunting, cycling, bird watching, camping, picnicking, clay bird shooting, off-road vehicle driving or 4x4 routes, petting zoos, paintball, and tractor rides.

The Mohair Empowerment Trust series also continues. This edition covers mohair's essential components, including animal welfare, the Responsible Mohair Standard, and traceability.

We also examine the effect of the El Niño-induced drought and heatwaves on summer grain production in the 2023/24 season. The latter includes an analysis of the possible impact of the drought on trade in the Southern African region and the price of grain and animal products (due to animal feed prices). It is also projected that a lower summer crop harvest will negatively affect agricultural performance in 2024.



Kayaletu Sotsha

We will also cover the awe-inspiring stories of youth participating in the agricultural sector. The feature begins with the venturesome Nosipho Vuthela's successful farming journey. Nosipho, a 27-year-old female farmer from Mount Fletcher, Eastern Cape, is determined and works hard to become one of the main producers in the future.

She is also a co-founder of the award-winning Gedlumhlanga Youth Cooperative.

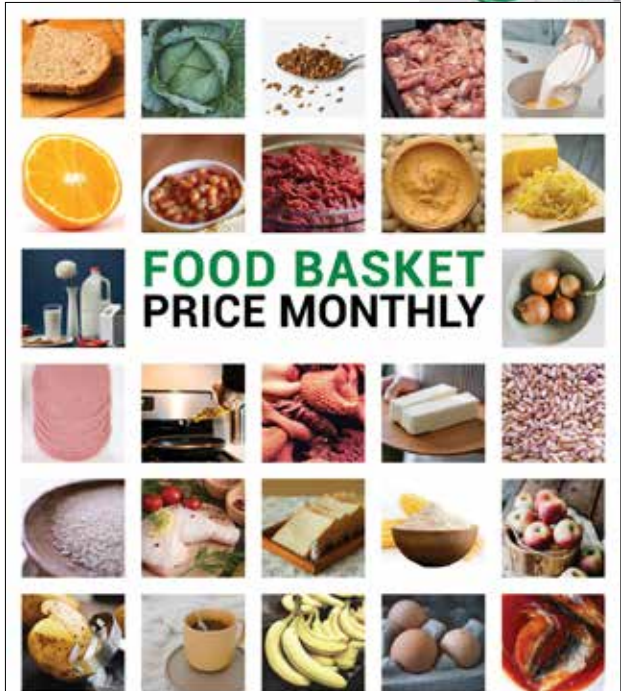
Furthermore, we focus on the story of the unfazed Dintle Maphala, a 30-year-old female farmer raised on a farm and given land to farm by her parents.

Enjoy the reading!

Kayaletu Sotsha

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AGRI-HIGHLIGHTS:

JANUARY – MARCH 2024



OUTBREAK

New FMD outbreak reported in Frankfort, Free State

A new Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak has been reported in the Free State, confirmed on a farm near Frankfort. The source remains unknown as investigations continue. The affected farm is under mandatory quarantine, and surrounding farmers have also been placed under precautionary quarantine to prevent further spread. Livestock on these farms is being examined and tested. The outbreak underscores the challenges in South Africa's biosecurity system, affecting the livestock value chain and agricultural exports. Agbiz's Chief Economist highlights the challenges of FMD outbreaks and calls for collaborative efforts to overcome biosecurity challenges.

Source: farmersweekly.co.za

NATURAL DISASTER

KZN floods put strain on farmers

Severe flooding in KwaZulu-Natal has caused significant losses for farmers, affecting crops, livestock, and infrastructure. The calamitous rains and lightning strikes killed farm workers in several regions. Cleanup efforts are underway, but forecasts of more adverse weather conditions suggest further damage. Disaster response teams remain vigilant across the province. Ugu, KwaDukuza, eThekweni, and Ndwedwe are among the hardest-impacted municipalities, with eight fatalities. The Department of Agriculture's preliminary estimates predict approximately R500 000 in damage to land and infrastructure, although a comprehensive assessment is ongoing. The UThukela and UMGungundlovu districts are severely affected, with farmers facing losses in crops and livestock and tragic fatalities among

workers. The aftermath of the floods raises concerns about food security and soil quality, prompting collaborative efforts to assess and address the situation.

Source: farmersweekly.co.za

* Photo: farmersweekly.co.za

DROUGHT

Grain producers struggle amid severe drought

A severe drought is wreaking havoc on South Africa's grain producers, exacerbating existing challenges in the agricultural sector.

Prolonged dry spells and extreme temperatures have led to reduced expected yields and financial strain, threatening the viability of operations. Both commercial and emerging producers are facing dire circumstances, with many struggling to maintain their farms amid mounting debts. Grain South Africa (Grain SA) urgently calls for government support, including financial relief, access to credit, and income insurance, to help producers weather the crisis and sustain their livelihoods. The situation highlights the importance of addressing climate-related challenges in agriculture and ensuring food security for the nation. Without swift intervention, the crisis risks deepening, with significant implications for producers and consumers alike.

Source: foodformzansi.co.za

MARKET ENQUIRY

Competition Commission launches probe into SA's poultry market

The Competition Commission's market enquiry into the poultry industry aims to address concerns regarding market concentration and promote competition, especially for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The Competition Act empowers the Commission to investigate

restrictive business practices and advocate for economic equity and efficiency. The poultry industry appears highly concentrated and vertically integrated, hindering transformation and new market entrants. The importance of the poultry industry, as highlighted in the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP), underscores the need for inclusivity and competition. However, current industry dynamics favour large firms, limiting opportunities for small-scale farmers and agribusinesses. The market enquiry seeks to assess competition levels, investigate business practices, and identify barriers to entry, aiming to foster a more inclusive and competitive poultry industry.

Source: [foodformzansi.co.za](https://www.foodformzansi.co.za)

SUGAR INDUSTRY

The future of Mzansi's sugar industry hangs in the balance

Amid uncertainties in 2023, including the pivotal business rescue proceedings for major milling companies like Tongaat Hulett and Gledhow Sugar, optimism persists among agricultural leaders and farmers for a brighter outcome in 2024. Dr Siyabonga Madlala underscored the critical importance of these business rescue processes, as they hold the key to the future of the sugar industry. Rodney Mbuyazi, a sugarcane farmer, expressed frustration over the challenges but remained hopeful for positive results in 2024 with government support. Mbuyazi anticipated potential increases in sugar prices despite the challenges of adverse weather conditions and production costs. However, he pointed out that farmers might not always reap the benefits of these price fluctuations.

Source: [foodformzansi.co.za](https://www.foodformzansi.co.za)

TRADE

SA ploughs path to BRICS+ agricultural market domination

South Africa aims to enhance its agricultural exports by strategically expanding into key markets within the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and other countries (BRICS+) coalition, advised by economist Wandile Sihlobo. Sihlobo emphasised the importance of preserving existing trade ties and steering clear of protectionist policies while pursuing growth opportunities. The targeted BRICS+ countries include China, India, Saudi Arabia and several other key markets. Both government and private sector efforts are aligned on export expansion, focussing on lowering import tariffs and addressing trade barriers. Sihlobo underscored the significance of understanding these imperatives within South Africa's foreign policy framework to ensure sustainable agricultural growth and economic resilience.

Source: [foodformzansi.co.za](https://www.foodformzansi.co.za)

INSURANCE

Land Bank's agri asset insurance safeguards farm prosperity

The Land Bank Insurance Company (LBIC) has evolved into a crucial asset insurer for South Africa's agricultural sector, offering customised coverage to protect farmers of all sizes against uncertainties. LBIC, a subsidiary of the Land and Agricultural Bank of South Africa (Land Bank), provides comprehensive short-term insurance tailored to the sector's specific needs. Pascal Siphugu, LBIC's managing director, emphasised the importance of insurance in providing financial stability and protecting farmers' investments in crop production and agricultural assets. LBIC offers a comprehensive suite of agri-insurance solutions, encompassing

crop insurance, agri-asset insurance, and credit life insurance, to safeguard farmers' assets against fire, theft, and natural disasters. The insurance policy covers various assets crucial to farming operations, promoting long-term sustainability and peace of mind for farmers. Land Bank continues to support farmers and agribusinesses by offering innovative finance solutions and bespoke insurance products to facilitate personal and commercial viability in a sector critical to South Africa's economy.

Source: [foodformzansi.co.za](https://www.foodformzansi.co.za)

LAND CLAIMS

Didiza: Government settled nearly 1 500 land claims

Minister Thoko Didiza revealed the research outcomes of South Africa's land restitution programme, emphasising its multifaceted impacts during a presentation in Pretoria. The study, conducted in collaboration with academic institutions, highlighted the successful settlement of 94% of old land claims, representing a significant investment of R25 billion and the transfer of 3.9 million hectares. Didiza underscored the psychological and social dimensions of land restitution, noting the deep-rooted trauma experienced by victims of land dispossession and the importance of community integration programmes. The research indicated a 16% increase in economic power among beneficiaries and a reduction in depression risk by up to 15% following settlement, emphasising the programme's positive effects on psychological well-being and cognitive capacity. However, challenges persist, with pending land claims requiring expedited resolution and an increased governmental workforce for effective implementation.

Source: [foodformzansi.co.za](https://www.foodformzansi.co.za)



PART 6: OUTDOOR RECREATION

By: Christelle Van Zyl

In Part 1, we explained that agri-tourism can be divided into five categories: outdoor recreation, educational experiences, entertainment, hospitality services, and on-farm direct sales (Bernardo, Valentin and Leatherman, 2004). This section discusses outdoor recreational activities.

Examples include hiking trails/nature trails, mountain climbing, rock climbing, abseiling, cave visits, visits to geological phenomena, wildlife viewing and photography, animal rides (e.g., horse riding), water activities (e.g., boat rides), farm maze routes, helicopter tours, golf courses, fishing, hunting, cycling, bird watching, camping, picnicking, clay bird shooting, off-road vehicle driving/4x4 routes, petting zoos, paintball, and tractor rides. Can you think of more?

NB: These activities must take place on a working farm to be classified as agri-tourism.

For most of these agri-tourism activities, the farmer does not need specific structures or buildings to host them. For example:

- **Fishing:** Use an existing pond, and tourists bring their own fishing gear.
- **Picnicking:** Use an open space, and tourists bring their own picnic setup.

- **Hiking trails:** Tourists can walk anywhere on the farm; alternatively, specific hiking trails can be designed (no buildings are needed).
- **Cycling:** Tourists can cycle anywhere on the farm; alternatively, specific cycling trails can be designed (no buildings are required).
- **Birdwatching:** Birds roam free in nature; however, a bird hide may be built if needed.
- **Hunting:** For agribusiness owners who offer hunting experiences, ensuring compliance with wildlife ownership regulations is essential. Tourists can arrive equipped for hunting excursions with the wildlife already established on the farm.



* Photo: Supplied

Other activities may require a structure, building, or additional resources. For example:

- **Abseiling:** Specialised equipment is required for safety.
- **Water activities:** Specialised equipment, such as boats, canoes, or jet skis, is required for specific activities.
- **Petting zoo:** Enclosures will be required for the animals if they are not already on the farm.
- **Farm maze routes:** While the route may not be a structure, it requires additional resources, such as large plants, to guide the different routes.
- **Golf facilities:** While a golf course may not require buildings, various resources, such as drainage and irrigation, are needed to develop it.

Several activities also require human resources (staff). Depending on the activities, the farm owner/manager may be able to manage the agri-tourism activities independently. For example, fishing and picnics only require a guide to show tourists where to go. Signage or a farm map can also accomplish this, minimising human interaction. However, greeting tourists upon their arrival at the farm is an optional yet valuable touch.

Certain activities may require staff members or specialised personnel. For instance, abseiling is a specialised activity that requires a person with special training, including safety training, to operate. Hunting regulations require that tourists be accompanied by a professional hunter with a valid PH licence.

Understanding the legal implications of hosting tourists on a farm, particularly for high-risk activities, is crucial. Liability insurance and risk disclaimers (enter at own risk) are necessary. Other legal considerations may involve housing animals (e.g., CapeNature manages the requirements for wildlife in the Western Cape Province), building new structures (e.g., municipal requirements), permits (e.g., liquor licence), and health and safety requirements.

While a long list of outdoor activities can be offered on a farm, farmers must consider the implications for themselves and their farms before developing them. Creating a formal or informal business plan is always beneficial for evaluating the different elements of agri-tourism product development.



PART 2: ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF **MOHAIR**

By: Lauren **Moore** & Beauty **Mokgwamme**

Angora goats thrive in the Karoo's hot, dry summers, cold winters, and semi-desert vegetation. This combination of best-practice farming and the prime environment for Angora goats has set South Africa apart. Given the importance of sustainability in the industry, Mohair South Africa (MSA), a global non-profit organisation, is committed to promoting responsible and ethical mohair production in South Africa.

Caring for Angora goats – respect for animal welfare

Angora goats are shorn twice yearly under strict standard requirements, ensuring that special care is taken and the animals are not harmed.

Shearing is essential to the animals' well-being, and if not performed regularly, it can expose them to parasites and illnesses. Overgrown hair can obstruct their vision and movement, potentially hindering their ability to eat and drink and making it difficult for them to suckle.

After shearing, the farmers provide shelter for the goats to protect them from the weather. Angora goat farmers depend on the health and well-being of their animals to produce quality mohair; therefore, dedication and meticulous care are essential for the sustainable production of high-quality fibre from these animals.

To protect Angora goats against parasites, they are washed and occasionally dipped in swim-through tanks. Specially formulated solutions enable the treatment of hard-to-reach areas like under the tail and inside the ears.

Strict legislation ensures the dipping process is free from harmful agents, protecting the Angora goats. The goats swim through the water, rinsing the



soapy mixture from their fleece. Goats are natural swimmers, and a trained handler is always present to guide them. They are usually dipped in summer when a cooling dip is welcomed, and the fleece can dry quickly in the sun.



The Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS) also aims to provide a traceability system throughout the entire value chain—from the farm to the finished product

- Lauren Moore & Beauty Mokgwamme

The Responsible Mohair Standard (RMS)

The RMS standard, launched on 17 March 2020, aims to provide the industry with tools to recognise farmers' best practices and ensure that mohair comes from farms that take an advanced approach to land management, animal welfare, and social responsibility.

Beyond the farm, the RMS also aims to provide a traceability system throughout the entire value chain—from the farm to the finished product. Growers, manufacturers, and brands continue to adopt the RMS widely.

It is exciting to witness a growing number of manufacturers and brands rapidly embracing the RMS and registering with the standard. Over a thousand companies worldwide, including numerous entities throughout the mohair value chain, have been RMS/RWS/RAS Post-Farm Gate certified, enabling RMS mohair to reach the end consumer.

In addition to the international adoption of the RMS at the production level, Textile Exchange has launched a herding pilot project applicable to some international producing countries. Producing mohair ethically and sustainably is non-negotiable for the South African mohair industry, and the roll-out of the RMS remains a priority. Traceability

With a commitment to sustainability, the highest levels of social and ethical production,

and product traceability, Mohair South Africa partnered with Oritain, a world leader in using forensic science to verify the origin of products and raw materials. Oritain's technology, which combines forensic science and advanced analytics, provides a robust and enhanced traceability of mohair fibre, giving manufacturers, brands and consumers peace of mind regarding the content of their mohair purchases. This robust, enhanced traceability helps underpin broader product claims related to sustainable and ethical production.

Mohair South Africa, a steadfast proponent of knowledge sharing, continuous improvement, and progressive, ethical, and sustainable practices, firmly believes that these values play a crucial role in the success and longevity of the mohair industry. The industry must embrace and promote mohair as a fully traceable natural fibre. In this context, the transparency offered by Oritain's technology is paramount, enhancing the industry's future in sustainable sourcing. Mohair South Africa's partnership with Oritain aligns with the progressive uptake of the RMS. Oritain offers a fully operational fit-for-purpose database for South African mohair, available to brands and retailers upon request.

Part 3 will delve into the essential components of mohair, covering regenerative agriculture, education and training, mohair characteristics, and the harvesting, processing, and use of mohair.

DROUGHT STANDS TO NEGATIVELY IMPACT **GRAIN PRODUCTION**

By: Bhekani Zondo, Thabile Nkunjana & Ricardo Smith

Summer grain crop production is under severe pressure from recent El Niño-induced unfavourable climate conditions (heatwaves and little to no rains since February), which are expected to reduce yields.

Most summer crops, including maize, sunflower seeds, and soybeans, are often in the pollination stage between January and March. They may not yield good harvests if exposed to high heat during this period. Maize is one of the most important staple crops for feeding animals and humans.

Given the critical role of maize in ensuring national food security, the potential yield reduction is particularly concerning. Soybean and sunflower seeds, also essential for animal feed production, are similarly affected. As a result, farmers may experience significant crop and



financial losses, while consumers may face higher prices for staple goods such as maize meal and samp.

The Crops Estimates Committee (CEC) forecasted the summer harvest of grains and oilseeds to reach 17.4 million tonnes, a 13.48% decrease from the previous year. This decrease occurred despite a 1.19% increase in the area planted for summer crops in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23. Notably, the reduction in harvest figures differs by crop type because of the distinct effects of unfavourable weather conditions on each crop, contributing to the overall predicted decline.



The white and yellow maize harvests are estimated at 14.3 million tonnes, down by approximately 12.5% from the 2022/23 harvest. Notably, 5.02 million tonnes and 6.52 million tonnes, respectively, are anticipated to be consumed domestically for white and yellow maize. Even though the anticipated harvest is expected to be less than the previous season, South Africa will be able to meet its local maize needs and export the excess.

Between 2022/23 and 2023/24, the area sown with sunflower seeds increased slightly from 555 700 hectares to 559 500 hectares, but the total crop production is anticipated to drop from 720 000 tonnes to 671 100 tonnes, a decrease of 6.79%.

The area planted with soybeans decreased slightly from 1.15 million hectares in 2022/23 to 1.12 million hectares in 2023/24. However, the total crop production is estimated to drop from 2.77 million tonnes to 2.14 million tonnes, representing a 22.76% reduction. These events will significantly impact domestic producers.

Zambia, the region's second-largest exporter of maize after South Africa, is reported to have banned maize and its product exports due to the recent heatwaves. The current drought severely affects Zimbabwe's maize production; consequently, at least 1.1 million tonnes of maize are projected to be imported.

Malawi's severe crop shortages stem from poor maize production

in the previous season and a ban on maize imports from Tanzania due to disease protection measures. Zambia, its second maize supplier, has also banned maize exports. Due to the current regional drought, these countries would likely import more maize than usual from South Africa.

Consequently, consumers are likely to bear the brunt of higher prices for grain and animal products, driven by the escalating feed costs. The government's role becomes crucial in monitoring the drought's impact on these commodities and being prepared to intervene, if necessary, to mitigate the effects on consumers.

The existing circumstances draw attention to the realities of agricultural production and the influence of weather patterns on food costs and security. The effects of the weather are felt in South Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. It is evident that certain farmers are risk-prone and will require assistance to ensure medium-term food production within the grain industry.

To support farmers, buffer food production, and stabilise prices, government programmes and actions play a crucial role in drought response situations like the present one. Possible interventions by the government are as follows:

- Financial assistance through an agricultural disaster fund; and
- Crop insurance to compensate farmers for drought losses.



EL NIÑO IS BURNING UP OUR GRAIN PRODUCTION

By: Francois Baird

After a delayed arrival, the El Niño weather phenomenon has begun to affect Southern Africa. Hotter and drier conditions are expected to reduce grain harvests, spreading hunger and poverty in the region.

El Niño appears every few years, affecting weather patterns in many parts of the world. In Southern Africa, it raises temperatures, decreases rainfall, and can cause severe drought. The region has had good rains and record harvests for the past three years, but El Niño has returned.

Agricultural Economist Wandile Sihlobo warned of difficult times ahead. He said 2024 started favourably, with excellent rains, but dryness intensified from the end of January, and significant damage had been caused to crops since then.

Sihlobo said heatwaves and dryness could put the entire Southern African maize supply at risk.

Harvest estimates are being reduced across the region. While South Africa should still have enough maize for local demand, with a small surplus for export, most other countries will

probably have to import maize to supplement local supplies.

“Given that South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are among the largest maize producers within the Southern Africa region, a potential decline in the harvest in these countries suggests an increase in the risk of food insecurity. Importing maize would likely become necessary to address the shortfall in the region’s supplies.”

Sihlobo concluded with some policy considerations for governments facing rising hunger levels, starting with advice not to cap maize prices or export volumes, as this would affect future plantings. Governments could also look to the private sector in regions such as Mexico that produce white maize and ask the World Food Programme to help the least well-off countries with maize imports from the world market.

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POOR MAIZE CROP TO DRIVE UP **FOOD PRICES**

By: Francois Baird

Business Day warns of potential food price inflation due to heat-damaged crops in South Africa's main grain regions, exacerbating challenges for poorer households heavily reliant on staple foods. The financial newspaper Business Day highlighted the link between heat-damaged crops and food price inflation

An editorial comment stated that crop damage due to warm, dry conditions in South Africa's main summer grain regions could accelerate food price inflation, which has consistently outpaced the headline consumer inflation rate for the past two years.

This year's current maize crop estimate is 14.4 million tonnes, the lowest since 2019. However, if crops have deteriorated faster than expected, the harvest could drop below the 12 million tonnes needed for domestic consumption. Imports would then push up maize prices.

Business Day noted, "High maize prices also drive up the price of animal feed, which in turn drives up meat and egg prices. Inflation of staple food products such as maize meal has a much larger impact on poorer households, which rely heavily on such products to meet their basic food needs".

The newspaper further noted that while food price inflation had slowed significantly from

approximately 14% in March and April 2023, the latest reading of 7.2% for January was still higher than the headline consumer inflation at 5.3%.

"Poor households spend a third or more of their total income on food. With little wiggle room, high food prices drive them to include more staples such as maize meal in their diet. But when the prices of these staples start to increase at an even faster pace than more expensive options, the last resort is to buy less food — a daunting prospect in a country where about a quarter of the population already suffer from dire food insecurity." Business Day stated.

February 2024 was identified as the warmest February on record globally. Business Day said, "As the effect of climate change intensifies, leading to harsher and more frequent droughts for parts of Southern Africa, governments in the region will have to show some urgent and practical responses to the high food prices and food shortages that can result from more frequent crop failures."



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FROM A **GRADUATE TO AN AGRIPRENEUR:** NOSIPHO VUTHELA'S JOURNEY – PART 1

By: Bernard Manganyi

Meet Nosipho Vuthela, a 27-year-old from Mount Fletcher, Upper Ngxasha location, who is changing the face of farming in the Eastern Cape. Her successful farming journey, a source of hope and encouragement for young farmers, started with her training at the Fort Cox Agriculture and Forestry Training Institute, where she specialised in animal and crop production.

After graduating, she wasted no time transforming her knowledge into action. She founded Bright Rainbow Enterprise, an agricultural enterprise specialising in poultry production, feed manufacturing and medicinal plants.

Chicken packaged for the market

Vuthela's journey began with a deep belief in the power of agriculture. She saw personal success and the opportunity to be part of the solution for food security, job creation, and national development. "I want to become one of the top producers of food. I can and I will, so keep an eye on me! The development of the country depends on us, and great rewards await those who work the land," she confidently remarked.

Vuthela's leadership extends beyond her ventures. She holds the Chairperson position for the African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA) in the vegetable commodity industry within the Eastern Cape's jurisdiction. This role involves working with the government to connect Eastern Cape farmers with markets and funding opportunities.

She recognised the power of collaboration and co-founded the Gedlumhlanga Youth Cooperative, an award-winning youth-led initiative focussed on crop and livestock production. This cooperative approach allows them to share resources and expertise, thus creating a valuable training ground for aspiring young farmers.



* Chicken packaged for the market

Vuthela's dedication to giving back is deeply ingrained in her. The Gedlumhlanga cooperative trains high school learners, employs seasonal workers and ensures that surplus produce is donated to those in need.

Vuthela believes, "Youth does not have protocol; we have to work hard, knock on every door, and speak out because nobody will know you are hungry if you are quiet."

Vuthela and the team's dedication has paid off, with the cooperative supplying informal markets, supermarkets, schools, hospitals, and more across the region—their success results from sheer hard work and the invaluable assistance they have received. Vuthela remarked, "We truly appreciate leaders who listen to the voice of young stars."



* Gedlumhlaba cooperative celebrating the Eastern Cape Hustlers Award

AGRICULTURE'S SURPRISE PLUNGE IN 2023

By: Francois Baird

Bird flu losses suffered by South Africa's poultry industry contributed to the country's agricultural sector contraction in the second half of 2023.

According to Paul Makube, Senior Agricultural Economist at First National Bank (FNB), while other sectors of the economy posted growth, agriculture plunged by 9.7% in the final quarter of last year. Agriculture's gross value add for 2023 was down by 12.2% year-on-year, he said in a Bizcommunity article.

Despite massive challenges, South Africa's economy will expand by 0.6% in 2023. In the final quarter of 2023, South Africa avoided a technical recession with a rebound of 0.1% quarter-on-quarter. However, the extent of the agricultural slowdown was unexpected.

Makube stated, "Although our expectations were still for a slowdown on the back of disease-induced production cuts in the livestock sector, particularly poultry, this magnitude of contraction surprised us on the downside."

"South Africa's summer crop harvest was magnificent, with maize topping 16.4 million tons (+6% year-on-year) and soybeans posting a record high of 2.8 million tonnes for the 2022/23 production season. We saw a similar feat in the sugar subsector, which outperformed the previous season by 3% to 18.5 million tonnes."

He said the agricultural outlook had turned negative following a relatively good start to the 2023/24 crop season with good rains, which saw farmers increase their planted area for summer crops by 1.2% year-on-year to 4.4 million hectares.

Makube concluded, "Inclement weather with excessive heat caused a lot of stress and wilting of crops during the critical growth stage, thus negatively impacting potential yields. A lower summer crop harvest will lead to another contraction in agricultural performance in 2024."



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CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES: A STORY OF THE GOEDEHOOP FARM

By: Khathutshelo Rambau

Ms Dintle Maphala, 30, was raised on a farm and given land to farm by her parents. She holds a Diploma in Agricultural Management and previously worked at Rainbow Chicken Limited (RCL). She resigned to pursue farming full-time and create jobs in her area.

The Goedehoop farm is located in Ward 10 of the Walter Sisulu Local Municipality in Aliwal North, approximately 35 kilometres from the town. It covers 287 hectares, including 6 hectares of arable land, and was secured through the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).

The farm specialises in Brangus beef cattle, Angora goats and Lohman Brown Layers and employs three young permanent workers. Up to fifteen more people are employed during the shearing season. Furthermore, Dintle provides mentorship training to learners from various institutions.

Dintle appreciates the infrastructure support from the Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR) through the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP). She also benefits from the services of the Mohair Empowerment Trust (see MET part 1 in Issue 35 of this publication) and has received 185 Angora goats.



* *Angora Goats*

She sells goats and cattle to nearby feedlots and abattoirs. The mohair and wool are supplied to brokers, while the eggs are sold at local markets. Dintle believes that diversification is the key to adaptability and sustainability in farming, a strategy that also boosts cash flows.

Despite the challenges of the current drought, Dintle's spirit remains unyielding. She firmly believes in her potential for growth and expansion, a conviction rapidly outgrowing the existing land under her ownership.

At the auction on 19 January 2023, Dintle was recognised as the top small-scale producer of wool in the Eastern Cape, with her product valued at R199.00 per kg. She further earned recognition from the MEC of Agriculture and placed second in the Joe Gqabi district for the Women Entrepreneur Award 2023 (Smallholder producer category). In the same year, she was selected among eleven South Africans to represent youth in agriculture at the World Food Programme held in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.



* *Lamb Dosing*



What is SMAT?

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

Why do we need SMAT?

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

Who is going to use SMAT?

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

www.namc.co.za/about-smat