

agripreneur

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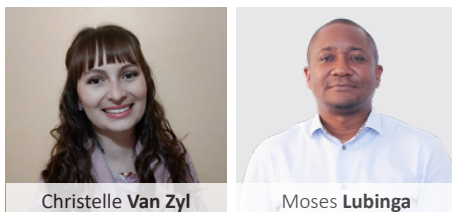
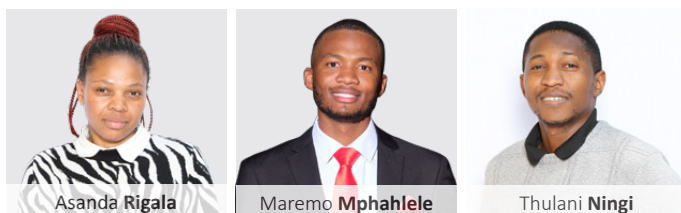
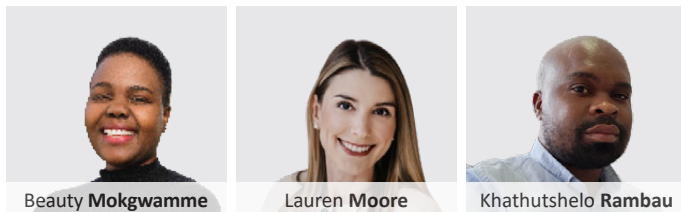
THE AGRIPRENEUR QUARTERLY:

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

PREFACE

Welcome to the 37th edition of the Agripreneur publication from the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC). The NAMC aims 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. 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.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Kayaletu Sotsha

Dear Readers,

This 38th edition of the Agripreneur provides a summary of some of the agricultural sector's news articles from July to September 2024, beginning with an outline of policies required to unleash South Africa's agritourism potential. The Land Bank's implementation of a debt restructuring solution is also discussed, as is the opening of the Mpumalanga Fresh Produce Market, South Africa's import of yellow maize following low maize production locally, the Biden administration's

support for South Africa's renewed participation in the AGOA, the opening of an opportunity for South Africa's meat export to Saudi Arabia, and the new Minister's budget, among other things.

Part 8 of the Agritourism Series, centred on entertainment, continues. Part 4 of the Mohair Empowerment Trust Series covers best practices in the mohair industry. Part 1 of the third series on the South African olive industry discusses the sector's new era.

Issue 38 also discusses the bird flu and how it is spreading around the world, including the risks to humans; e-commerce in South Africa and the benefits and opportunities it provides for smallholder farmers facing market access challenges; new developments in the South Africa-China trade; and cassava's potential as a resilient staple food source in the face of climate change.

The Agripreneur continues to feature success stories, such as the Matlou siblings' joint venture and the inspiring story of Mashudu Badane, who suffered health issues and had to transition from corporate employee to captivating producer of hemp and cannabis products, which helped her recover from illness.

Issue 38 finishes with the Grain South Africa Day of Celebration on October 18, 2024, at NAMPO Park.

Enjoy the reading!

Kayaletu Sotsha

AGRO-FOOD CHAIN UNIT

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

NAMC
Promoting market access for South African agriculture

**FOOD BASKET
PRICE MONTHLY**

NAMC FOOD BASKET: 28 SELECTED FOOD ITEMS PRICES
Issue 109 – December 2024

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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:

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2024

POLICIES NEEDED TO UNLOCK SA'S AGRITOURISM POTENTIAL

Agritourism is gaining momentum this month, focusing on connecting people with agriculture and promoting rural life appreciation. While agritourism can diversify farmers' income and support local economies, South Africa faces challenges like fragmented policies and limited rural focus from tourism associations. The Western Cape's Tourism Blueprint 2030 aims to address this by promoting ethical farm parks, cultural experiences, and local events. Jacqui Taylor from Agritourism Africa highlights the need for unified government policies and rural tourism incentives. Successful agritourism ventures, like Naledi Farm, showcase the sector's potential to attract global visitors and boost rural economies.

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/policies-needed-to-unlock-sas-agritourism-potential/>



LAND BANK IMPLEMENTS LANDMARK DEBT RESTRUCTURING SOLUTION

The Land Bank has successfully concluded its long-awaited debt restructuring, ending years of financial difficulty and its debt default status. Starting next week, the state-owned agricultural bank will begin scheduled repayments to lenders, with support from the government's R10 billion fiscal allocation. This restructuring aims to restore the bank's financial stability and renew its vital role in supporting South Africa's agricultural sector. Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana emphasized the need for Land Bank to meet its obligations and collaborate closely with government departments to strengthen its impact on agriculture. The plan is expected to position Land Bank on a sustainable path, benefiting farmers and the country's food security.

<https://landbank.co.za/>



MPUMALANGA FRESH PRODUCE MARKET OPENS AFTER A DECADE

After a period exceeding ten years and an investment surpassing one billion Rand, the Mpumalanga Fresh Produce Market has been officially transferred to the provincial government's control. This development marks the commencement of operations, aiming to facilitate market access for local farmers to domestic, regional, and international markets, with a particular emphasis on Mozambique and Swaziland.

www.freshplaza.com





FRESH PRODUCE MARKETS SUFFER UNDER BARRIERS TO ENTRY

Agropreneur and agricultural economist Mahlogedi Thindisa argues that South Africa’s fresh produce value chain is hindered by barriers to entry, production constraints, and a burdensome regulatory framework. He says the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan (AAMP) is the primary solution to these challenges.

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/fresh-produce-markets-suffer-under-barriers-to-entry/>

SOUTH AFRICA TURNS TO BRAZIL FOR MAIZE IMPORTS AMID LOCAL SHORTAGE

In a significant move to ensure food security, the South African government has approved the import of yellow maize from Brazil, a decision driven by shrinking local production and rising prices. The National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) had earlier estimated the need to import around 383,000 tonnes of yellow maize – a crucial component in animal feed – due to lower rainfall affecting the country’s maize-producing regions.

<https://agrinews.co.za/south-africa-turns-to-brazil-for-maize-imports-amid-local-shortage/>



SA SECURES BIDEN ADMINISTRATION BACKING FOR AGOA RENEWAL

South Africa gained backing from the Biden administration for the renewal of the AGOA. The mission, led by minister Parks Tau, focused on securing long-term stability to boost agricultural exports and investment opportunities

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/sa-secures-biden-administration-backing-for-agoa-renewal/>

SA MEAT EXPORTS SET TO SOAR WITH LUCRATIVE SAUDI ARABIA DEAL

The door to Saudi Arabia’s \$5-billion market is open. Experts say South African meat producers can tap into this lucrative market with the right strategies and certifications.

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/sa-meat-exports-set-to-soar-with-lucrative-saudi-arabia-deal/>



NEW MINISTERS UNVEIL BUDGETS TO BOOST AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM

South Africa’s new agriculture and land reform ministers unveiled ambitious plans for 2024/25. Minister John Steenhuisen’s R1.7 billion plan supports 6 000 farmers, while minister Mzwanele Nyhontsho focuses on land restitution and CPA training.

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/sa-secures-biden-administration-backing-for-agoa-renewal/>

AGRICULTURE MUST BUILD ON GAINS FROM PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATIONS

Dr Simphiwe Ngqangweni, CEO of the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), explores the sixth administration’s successes in agriculture and outlines key strategies for inclusive growth. He advises the new agriculture minister, John Steenhuisen, to prioritise accelerating AAMP implementation for continuity and sector stability.

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/agriculture-must-build-on-gains-from-previous-administrations/>





CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO NW MAIZE YIELDS

Climate-smart farming is making waves in North West. New research reveals that small-scale farmers are improving maize yields and securing their livelihoods by adopting innovative techniques like mixed cropping and zero tillage.

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/climate-smart-agriculture-breathes-new-life-into-nw-maize-yields/>

BLACK FROST AND RAINS CAUSE WIDESPREAD CROP DAMAGE ACROSS SA

Farmers across several provinces are facing severe crop damage after a weekend of black frost and heavy rains. Reports indicate significant losses in key agricultural areas, prompting calls for government intervention and support from financial institutions.

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/black-frost-and-rains-cause-widespread-crop-damage-across-sa/>



THUMBS UP FOR STEENHUISEN'S BUDGET VOTE SPEECH

Minister John Steenhuisen's budget vote speech focused on quickly implementing the Agriculture and Agro-processing Master Plan, with key support and innovation. Agbiz chief economist Wandile Sihlobo praised the plan's clear direction and teamwork.

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/thumbs-up-for-steenhuisens-budget-vote-speech/>

FARMERS FEEL THE HEAT OF ESKOM TARIFF INCREASE

Farmers are grappling with a 12.74% hike in municipal electricity tariffs, further straining an already burdened agricultural sector. The increase, effective from 1 July 2024, raises concerns over the affordability of electricity, with experts warning of potential impacts on food production and economic stability.

<https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/farmers-feel-the-heat-of-eskom-tariff-hike/>



PART 8:

ENTERTAINMENT

By: Christelle Van Zyl



Following outdoor recreation and educational experiences, entertainment is the third agritourism category. While agritourism entertainment is provided in South Africa, it is still limited. As a farmer, you have the opportunity to expand into this unique farm offering in your area.

The are four general examples of agri-tourism entertainment:

(1) Festivals

Many communities celebrate their agricultural practices through annual festivals. These events often highlight the local harvest, for example, wine grapes and other crops. An internet search for farm festivals identified the Annual Aloe Festival, Ubali Pomegranate Festival and trail run/walk, the South African Cheese Festival, the Solms Delta Oesfees (Harvest festival), and the

Murati Harvest Festival. Each of these farm festivals are linked to an agricultural product, and goes beyond to typically include food, drinks, music, entertainment, tours, and the opportunity to socialise.

(2) Expo/Exhibition

Many farmers with suitable facilities host agricultural expos or exhibitions on their farms. These events showcase various aspects of the farming industry and provide opportunities for networking and development. A good example of this is the annual NAMPO Harvest Day (agricultural exhibition). While it exhibits various agricultural facets, it can also be classified as a festival.

(3) Barn dances

While this is a popular practice in other countries, especially in

the USA, it is another form of farm entertainment. Barn dancing typically features square dancing with a cowboy theme and country music. There are a few places to learn barn dancing in the cities, but do you know of any farms offering it?

(4) Concerts

Many farms with open fields have embraced the opportunity to host concerts or outdoor movie screenings. These events attract tourists and offer visitors a unique and enjoyable experience. Farmers can choose to host standalone concerts or enhance the experience by offering picnic baskets or refreshments for an additional fee. These concerts can also evolve into a festival.

Each of these entertainment examples requires you to open your farm to a large number of tourists. While it may only be a small section, it requires detailed planning. Elements to consider carefully are the event's layout, parking, accessibility, environmental impact, having an extensive risk management plan, security, health and safety, budgeting, marketing plan, personnel, and any permits you may need.

Remember to always do your homework before starting any agri-tourism event or offering any product/service. The key is to work with what you already have on your farm.

PART 4: BEST PRACTICES FOR THE MOHAIR SECTOR

By: Dineo Chiloane, Beauty Mokgwamme & Lauren Moore



In continuation of our series on the Mohair Empowerment Trust, this article delves into best practices that enhance sustainability and quality within the Mohair sector. It focuses on animal welfare, sustainable farming techniques, efficient processing methods, and proper shearing and tattooing practices.

Animal Welfare

It is crucial to handle Angora goats with care to minimise stress. Employ low-stress handling methods to create a calm environment for the animals, which helps maintain their health and productivity.

Conduct routine health checks and vaccinations to monitor the well-being of the herd. Early detection of health issues can reduce reliance on antibiotics and promotes overall herd health.

Sustainable Farming Practices

Embrace regenerative agricultural practices that improve soil health, capture carbon emissions, and enhance water retention. These practices not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also support the long-term viability of mohair production.

Implement rotational grazing systems to prevent overgrazing

and promote pasture recovery. This practice helps maintain biodiversity and soil quality while ensuring that goats have access to nutritious forage.

Shearing Process

Shearing should be performed twice a year using humane techniques. The process begins with careful preparation of shearing equipment, ensuring all tools are in good working condition and properly oiled before use.

The goats are positioned in a seated position for shearing, with gentle handling to avoid stress.

The shearing process involves clipping the fleece from various parts of the goat, including the chest, legs, and head, with attention to avoiding injury. Proper grip techniques help ensure control over the blade while minimising pressure on sensitive areas like the neck and airways.

Specific areas are targeted during full body shearing to prevent complications, such as fly strikes which ensures easy access for kids to find their mother's teats. This meticulous approach not only protects the goats but also maintains the quality of the mohair.

Tattooing Process

Tattooing is an essential practice for identifying individual goats within a herd. It ensures traceability and helps maintain accurate records of each animal's health and breeding history.

The tattooing process should be conducted with care to minimise discomfort. It is typically

performed on the inner ear or other discreet areas where it is easily visible but does not interfere with the goat's daily activities. Proper hygiene practices must be followed to prevent infections.

Efficient Processing Methods

After shearing, mohair should be carefully sorted based on length, diameter, and quality. Meticulous classing adds value to the product and ensures that only the finest fibres are processed further.

Education and Training

Collaboration with organisations like the South African Mohair Growers' Association (SAMGA) and the Mohair Empowerment Trust (MET) is needed to provide training days and workshops. These programmes should focus on best practices in goat handling, health management, sustainable farming techniques, shearing, and tattooing.

Also to assist in developing educational materials, such as manuals and videos in multiple

languages to ensure accessibility for all producers. This initiative enhances knowledge sharing within the industry.

Community Engagement

Engage with various stakeholders in the mohair sector to share knowledge and resources. Collaboration fosters innovation and encourages the adoption of best practices across the industry.

By implementing these best practices—including ethical shearing and careful tattooing—stakeholders in the mohair sector can contribute to a more sustainable industry while ensuring high-quality production. The commitment to animal welfare, environmental stewardship, and continuous education will not only benefit individual producers but also enhance the reputation of the entire mohair sector. Through collaboration with organisations like SAMGA and MET, along with community engagement efforts, we can cultivate a thriving future for South Africa's mohair industry.



PART 4: A NEW ERA FOR THE SA OLIVE INDUSTRY

By: Wendy Petersen



The South African (SA) olive industry may be small in comparison to other agricultural sectors and its international contemporaries, but it is beautifully formed. The SA olive market is robust, and represents the highest quality, and, critically, it has grown in stature, significance and size over the past few decades. Represented by the SA Olive Industry Association, the olive sector reports that, despite numerous obstacles in the past year particularly, it is thriving and handling a myriad of inherent challenges head on. It was also victim to the worldwide decline in olive production last season – for example, the world’s largest producer, Spain, was 40% down on its production – but the SA olive industry weathered the climatic storm that caused

the low yields, tackled crippling loadshedding schedules, and rose to the challenge to again produce the highest quality extra virgin olive oil and table olives. SA is making a name for itself in the global olive arena, winning award after award on the international stage, in competitions where it is up against some of the world’s most established territories and brands.

These accolades have contributed to promoting international demand for South Africa’s extra virgin olive oil, as verified by the statistics. Ranked 28th globally for olive oil exports, SA exports increased by 131% from R37 million in 2013 to R86 million in 2023 (Source: WCDOA - Market Intelligence Report/South African Olive Industry 2024). Within Africa, SA is the third

biggest exporter, after Tunisia and Morocco. SA’s main export markets for extra virgin olive oil include Namibia, Botswana and Zambia and now the United States of America (USA).

However, SA is still very reliant upon the European Union (EU) for olive oil imports (59% from Spain and 34% from Italy) and when considering that there is increased competition from countries within southern Africa, notably Mozambique, SA is vulnerable to global market fluctuations.

Enter SA Olive, its newly appointed CEO who is shaping a bold new strategy for this sector’s deserved continued success and expansion. Wendy Petersen understands that to tackle the challenges, one needs to look at the opportunities they present, to grow the industry and to create an inclusive and transformed agricultural sector in SA. She knows that new thinking and initiatives are needed. Therefore, she has set out and is busy implementing interventions that will help integrate the SA olive industry into the wider agricultural programme, promote its economic significance and potential, and attract new entrants and investors into the market.

She says, “We want to help transform the SA olive sector by attracting budding and

established 'agripreneurs' to an industry with the potential to grow exponentially and quickly. We are at an exciting crossroad. After 100 years of olive growing in SA, and now that the industry is being taken seriously as an important and growing agricultural sector in the country, we are on the threshold of a new chapter."

"Through partnerships and collaboration, we can redouble our impact and increase our share of voice. We are engaging with government, lead agencies, our international counterparts and with all our stakeholders to push SA Olive's agenda and help establish a bigger platform for growth."

"At the same time, we need to ensure that our member producers are aligned in terms of this new focus, and to create a central point for raising investment to implement industry priority initiatives. I believe that this intent, this plan, will lead to widening the possibilities of attracting not only new entrants to the industry but will greatly contribute to generating awareness of a dynamic industry with masses of potential for growth and prosperity."

Within this, SA Olive perceives its role as actively influential, providing guidance and support. To ignite the new strategy, there needs a new imperative and momentum. As Wendy explains,

"We need to demonstrate – through market research, analytics and a full understanding of the market – just how and where the potential exists, based on information and data. We also want to support our members and guide them through the change management processes. In our support role, we have an enormous task at hand, not the least of which is providing vital agricultural data and information."

We have developed several training programmes for farmers and for workers – and this can be anything from how to plant an olive tree to providing technical soil analysis, how to market products, how to fundraise and more."

Wendy asserts that while there is this massive potential, it will be through the partnerships, the shared vision and the understanding of the stakeholders that the new plan will roll out effectively. "We have realised that to shift the SA olive industry into another gear, we need the goodwill and commitment of the wider stakeholder audiences, and why we are now engaging with government at a high level. We can create jobs, we can create businesses, we can create economic opportunities for a diverse and shared populace."

To combat the threat of vulnerability from outside competition, while further

promoting its quality message and delivery, SA Olive is also investigating how it can extend its highly successful 20-year-old 'commitment to compliance' certification process to both regulate and control imported products, to ensure they are cohesively integrated within the overall South African quality standard.

As Wendy says, "This will help educate the market too – from supermarket buyers to consumers – about the differences between, for example, a blended olive oil and extra virgin olive oil and between one table olive cultivar and another. Once you have an informed audience, the message is easier to convey and a compelling way to do this is through verification of the standard."

While the itinerary for SA Olive's next journey has been planned, Wendy says so much has already been done. "All the good work now needs to be consolidated and built upon. The plan, going forward, needs to take cognisance of the achievements so far and use them to the best advantage. Together with our partners in government and commerce, we see an extremely bright future for this industry. I am so happy to be helping drive its transformation and to help realise its true worth and value."

HOW BIRD FLU SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD

By: Francois Baird



The global impact of avian influenza, commonly known as bird flu, has been significant yet often overlooked.

The numbers have been pulled together by London's *The Guardian* newspaper, which calls bird flu "the forgotten epidemic." More than 280 million poultry birds have died or been culled since October 2021, it says, based on data from the World Animal Health Information System.

The highly infectious H5N1 strain of avian flu has "devastated poultry and caused the biggest sudden drop of the world's wild bird population in decades," the newspaper reported. "The millions of wild birds killed includes tens of thousands of endangered and endemic species – and tens of thousands of

mammals have died too." The article tracks the spread of bird flu from China in 1996 to Antarctica this year. The virus has reached the world's southernmost tip, with new data published in *Nature Communications*.

The highly pathogenic (disease-causing) H5N1 bird flu strain was first found at a goose farm in China in 1996. Since then, it has spread to every region in the world, including, most recently, Australia. New Zealand is so far unaffected, but is preparing for outbreaks.

After devastating outbreaks in Europe, bird flu reached North America in November 2021 and

South America in October 2022, spreading down the 6,000 km length of the continent in less than six months.

In South America, bird flu caused mass die-offs of mammals such as sea lions and elephant seals, the *Guardian* reported. In March this year, it started spreading among US cattle, with more than 100 herds affected.

What is the risk to humans?

As the virus evolves, it could become more of a threat to people, according to a recent report by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

There have been nine cases of H5N1 in humans in the US (although symptoms have been relatively mild) and officials said they expected to see more.

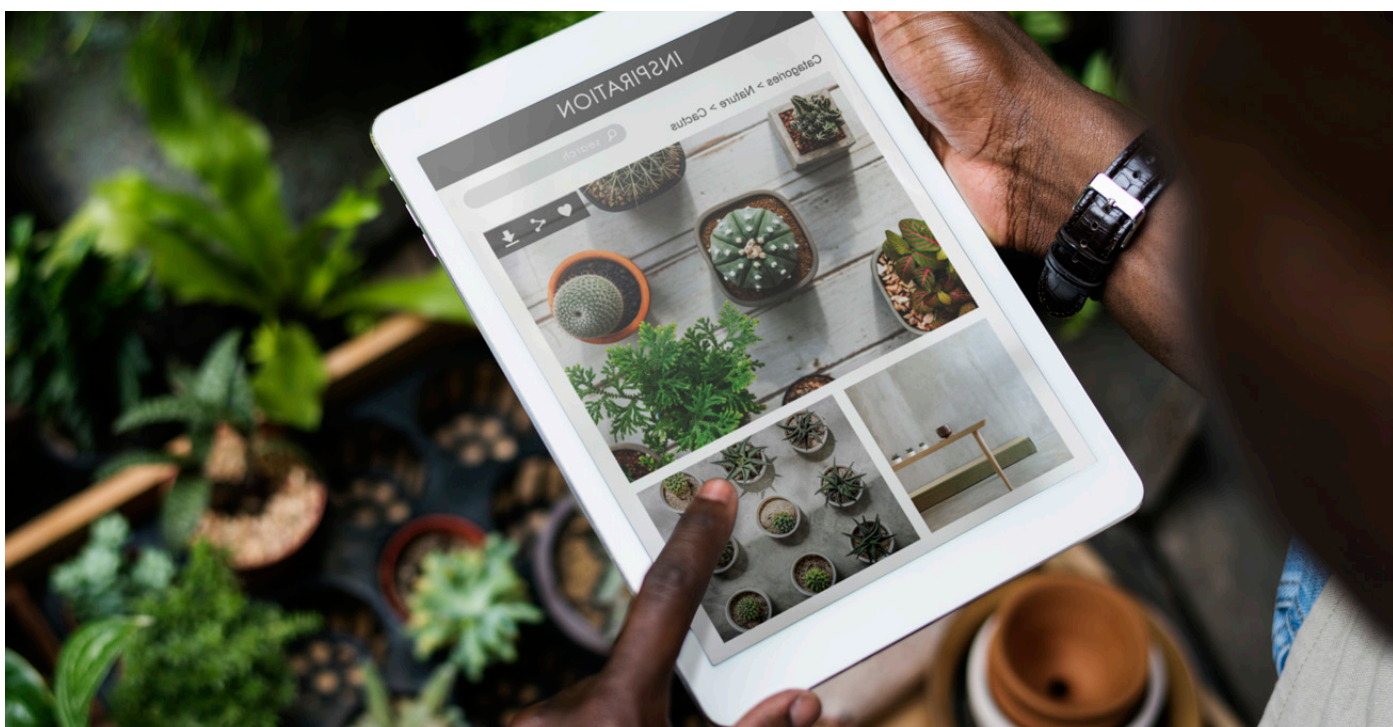
The UN health agency's chief scientist has also said the risk of bird flu spreading to humans is an "enormous concern."

"So far, there is no evidence that H5N1 is spreading between humans. But in the hundreds of cases where humans have been infected through contact with animals over the past 20 years the mortality rate is above 50%," *The Guardian* reported.



EMPOWERING SMALLHOLDER FARMERS THROUGH E-COMMERCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

By: Bernard Manganyi



E-commerce is transforming the landscape for smallholder farmers in South Africa, providing new opportunities to expand market reach, enhance efficiency, and improve livelihoods. This digital shift connects farmers directly with consumers and businesses, simplifying traditional value chains and reducing reliance on intermediaries. As a result, farmers gain increased market access, higher profit margins, and provide fresher produce. They can reach a larger customer base and retain a greater share of their profits, while lower marketing

and distribution costs contribute to improved margins. Valuable market insights and analytics offered by e-commerce platforms help farmers make informed decisions and align production with market demand.

However, challenges still exist, including limited digital literacy and unreliable internet access in rural areas, which can hinder the adoption of e-commerce.

Quality assurance is another concern; however, some platforms address this through partnerships with food inspectors and quality verification services.

Logistics also present significant hurdles, particularly in managing transport and maintaining cold chains for perishable goods. Building trust in digital marketplaces and ensuring fair practices are crucial for long-term success.

Platforms such as Khula, Spaza Eats, and HelloChoice are relaxing traditional barriers by providing farmers with direct access to diverse customer bases. E-commerce bridges the gap between rural farmers and urban consumers, overcoming geographical barriers that have

historically limited market access. For instance, the extensive networks such as Khula's 130 depots and 190 crop advisors nationwide enable farmers across major agricultural regions to participate in the digital economy, fostering growth and sustainability in smallholder farming communities.

These platforms enhance transparency and ensure fairer prices by allowing farmers to bypass intermediaries, resulting in higher income and reduced wastage. The reduction in marketing and distribution costs further benefits farmers. Platforms such as AgriKool and SwiftVee streamline supply chains and offer various transport options, helping farmers manage rising fuel prices and logistical challenges more effectively, ensuring their produce reaches consumers faster and fresher.

Access to market insights and analytics provided by e-commerce platforms is vital in today's digital landscape. These tools enable farmers to make data-driven decisions about production and pricing, thus reducing overproduction risks and maximizing returns.

Financial innovations, including crowd-farming models from livestock wealth and digital payment systems, support farmers by facilitating investments in advanced inputs and technologies. Platforms such as Trigga and Nile help farmers offer processed or value-added products, expand their market reach, build their brands, and gain recognition in competitive markets.

E-commerce is set to become a dominant trading platform for smallholder farmers in South Africa

and across Africa. The growing adoption of digital technologies and increasing demand for sustainability and traceability in agriculture make e-commerce a viable and promising option for the future.

To fully realise its potential, efforts must address the digital divide, improve logistical networks, and ensure robust quality assurance measures. The success of platforms like KHULA, Spaza Eats, Nile, and Twiga illustrates that e-commerce is not merely a trend but a transformative force in agriculture.

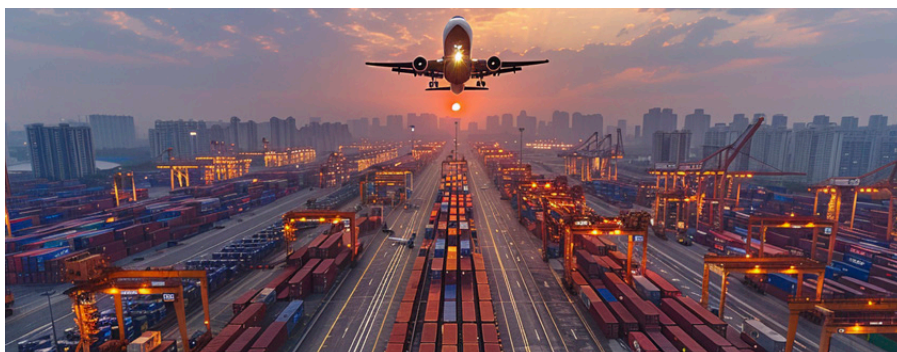
Embracing this digital shift will help smallholder farmers unlock new opportunities, enhance their livelihoods, and contribute to the nation's food security, paving the way for sustainable agricultural development across Africa.

BIG BOOST FOR SA-CHINA TRADE

By: Francois Baird

In a significant development for South Africa's agricultural sector, the country has expanded its access to the Chinese market. Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen announced new agreements during the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held in Beijing, which will allow South African dairy products and wool to enter China. Notably, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will enable provincial compartmentalisation for beef exports following foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks, limiting restrictions to affected provinces only.

With China being the world's second-largest economy, this access presents substantial growth opportunities for local agriculture. President Xi Jinping committed to investing \$50 billion in Africa over the next three years, supporting various sectors including infrastructure and trade. Last year, China surpassed the European Union as South Africa's largest trading partner, with two-way trade reaching \$55.2 billion.



CASSAVA: ONE OF THE CLIMATE-SMART CROPS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

By: Walter Shiba, Buhlebemvelo Dube and Moses Lubinga



*Cassava crop under irrigation



*Cut and dried cassava



*Manual processing of cassava

Cassava is the third-largest source of carbohydrates in food in the tropics, after rice and maize, making it an important staple. More than 500 million people depend on cassava globally. Other than food for human consumption, cassava's versatile uses are well documented – including its use in animal feeds, pharmaceuticals, and energy generation, among others. It offers the advantage of being exceptionally drought-tolerant, and able to grow productively on poor soil. The largest producer is Nigeria, while Thailand is the largest exporter of cassava starch.

Cassava has the ability to grow in a wider range of climatic conditions and soil types, in comparison to other tropical staple crops. Relative to grain crops, cassava is more tolerant of low soil fertility and is more resistant to drought. Hence, cassava can provide South Africa with options for adaptation to the hastening phenomenon of climate change, given that the available literature suggests that major staple crops like maize and wheat are bound to be adversely affected.

As shown in the picture, a cultivated cassava field that is ready for harvesting, has over 20 hectares of land at the Gxakra

Properties Investments (Pty) Ltd farm in the Mpumalanga province. The farm uses water from a borehole to water the cassava to ensure consistent growth, the pipe is used to collect water from the borehole and transfer it to JoJo tanks within the farm. This practice is important for achieving optimal yields, especially in areas where natural rainfall is insufficient or irregular. The cassava plants are in good health, indicating proper growth using modern agriculture practices to boost productivity and ensure food security.

Cassava can produce a viable crop, indicating that even in less-than-ideal growing conditions, cassava can still produce a substantial yield. Furthermore, this indicates the resilience of the cassava crop to thrive in difficult growing conditions. Thus, cassava is an important food security crop, especially in regions prone to drought or where other crops may fail.

Post-harvest, cassava tubers can be processed into various products. The picture shows cassava tubers being processed into flour. The operation is manual or semi-mechanised, reflecting a small-scale processing unit. This stage is crucial in the cassava value chain, transforming raw cassava into a storable and



*Cassava processing plant under construction



*Stakeholder engagement



*Dried cassava ready for milling

marketable product, which can then be used for various food products or sold in markets.

Farming in the Mpumalanga province, the Gxakra Properties Investments (Pty) Ltd has a total of 275 hectares of land, divided into two farms; one is located in Mjejane with a total of 25 hectares with 5 hectares devoted to the construction of a cassava processing factory with offices, and the 20 hectares is used for cassava production.

There is an additional 250 hectares located in Mangweni, being used for cassava production, while one of their farms is also located at Mount Frere in a village called Silindini, within the Eastern Cape province, where field experimental trials were conducted. The Gxakra Properties Investments (Pty) Ltd currently employs seventy three (73) people on the farm alone, predominantly women. Thus, the farm contributes to job creation for people living within the surrounding communities.

The company's drive to embark

on cassava production was to a great extent sparked by food security concerns, particularly during the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak when stringent restrictions were implemented, coupled with the eminent effects of climate change on the agricultural sector in general.

When completed, the cassava processing plant will be the first one in South Africa. Mr. Phosa, an official from the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA), commended the outstanding work done by Gxakra Properties Investments (Pty) Ltd.

There is fast-growing interest in the ongoing research work aimed at further developing the emerging cassava value chain, which necessitates stakeholder engagement. Hence, the ongoing engagement between the Gxakra Properties Investments (Pty) Ltd Company, a research team from the NAMC and officials from Mpumalanga's DARDLEA.

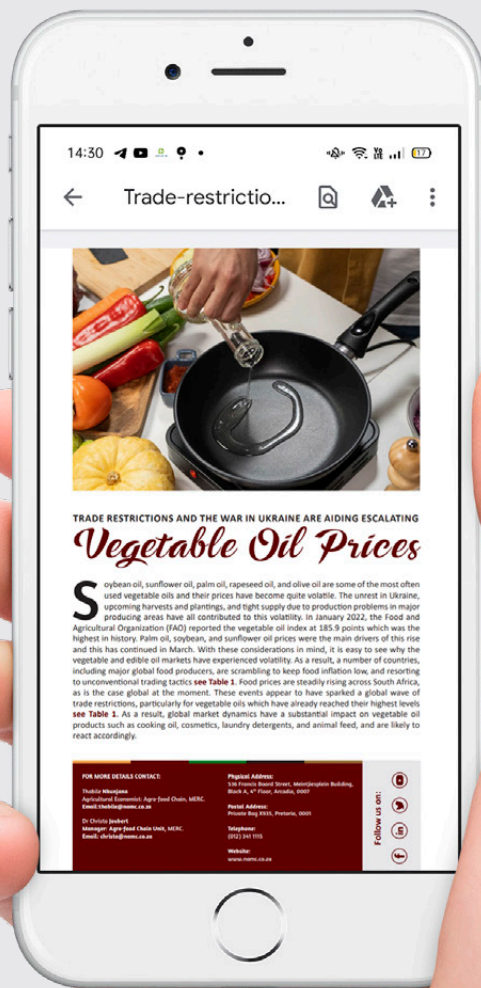
The main objective of the

engagement was to exchange information pertaining to market opportunities along the cassava value chain, and explore how the NAMC, DARDLEA and Gxakra Properties Investments (Pty) Ltd might strengthen their working relationships to develop the cassava value chain while empowering the neighbouring communities.

It emerged that there is a strong need to foster stronger private-public partnerships, especially in terms of financial support towards business initiatives directly impacting the livelihoods of the communities, most especially women and the youth. Strong and inclusive private-public partnerships are bound to spur inclusive economic growth and improved welfare at various levels.

Lastly, given the hastening effects of climate change, coupled with the need to diversify both South Africa's staple food basket and sources of industrial raw materials among other concerns, cassava exhibits enormous potential in addressing such.

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



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MATLOU SIBLINGS

STRIVING TO PRODUCE HIGH-QUALITY VEGETABLES

By: Khathutshelo Rambau & Dineo Chiloane



*The Matlou siblings: Mfiso (left) and Hloniphile (right)

In the heart of South Africa, where the soil is rich and the spirit of entrepreneurship thrives, Mfiso Matlou stands as a dedicated agripreneur. The Director of Ngwetsana Skills Development, a company he founded in 2012, Mfiso, alongside his sister Hloniphile Pride Matlou, who is Director of Ngwanalamola Academics, are reshaping the

landscape of fa The joint venture (Matlou Farming) was established mainly to cater to farming activities. Mfiso and Hloniphile, both graduates with B-Tech qualifications in Crop Production from Tshwane University of Technology, embarked on their farming journey in 2016. Their initial farming endeavours were marked by resourcefulness;

they rented tractors for soil preparation and diligently saved to acquire their own implements. Today, they proudly own three (3) tractors, two (2) of which are brand new, showcasing their commitment to investing in their future. They started farming operations on family-owned land under a lease agreement from their mother. Their operations



*Planting at Matlou Farming

began on a half-hectare plot and are currently operating on more than twenty (20) hectares, using pivot and sprinkler irrigation systems. This remarkable growth is a testament to their dedication and strategic planning.

In 2017, Mfiso made the bold decision to leave his job and dedicate himself fully to the growth and improvement of their farm—a choice that has proven to be immensely rewarding.

Their commitment to quality is reflected in the diverse range of vegetables they cultivate, including lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, Swiss chard, cabbage, squash, pumpkins, and butternut. Each crop is a testament to their

passion and perseverance in transforming their vision into reality.

Their business has primarily been funded from their own pockets since it started. They only received financial aid from the government this year (2024), through the construction of a packhouse. Furthermore, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development has provided insecticides and fertilisers over the years, which has been greatly appreciated.

With the village's worrisome unemployment rate, they set out on a quest to ensure that people were employed so that they could have hope and pride. As

a result, the farm employs nine (9) permanent employees and an average of eighty (80) casual workers per annum.

Currently, they are supplying fresh produce to marketplaces such as Tshwane and Springs Market, hawkers, school nutrition, and local stores, with the hope of securing contracts in the future.

Theft and vandalism are among some of the issues faced by the siblings. This prompted them to hire security to patrol.

Their major accomplishment was when they were able to successfully grow and sell one hundred and seventy thousand (170,000) cabbage heads. "Our objective is to expand, lease more land, and be able to effectively produce and sell 2 to 5 million cabbage heads per year."

Mfiso and Hloniphile's message to aspiring farmers is that

"anything is achievable if you set your mind to it. Be prepared to go through the steps, and be open to learning new and inventive methods."



*Packhouse



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FROM CORPORATE HEIGHTS TO CANNABIS FIELDS: THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF MASHUDU BADANE

By: Maremo Mphahlele and Thulani Ningi



*Ms Mashudu Badane promoting her business at the Astronomy 2024 Cape Town exhibition

Mashudu Jennifer Badane once thrived as a Senior Manager in the banking sector, but she decided to trade her corporate heels for work boots to pursue a deeply personal passion — agriculture and natural wellness. This life-changing shift was motivated by her own experience with epilepsy, which she overcame with the help of cannabis. Her personal journey highlighted the plant's powerful healing potential, igniting her commitment to the cannabis industry. At the heart of this transformation is Joanne Herbs Farm, led by Mashudu, which stands as a testament to healing, resilience and community upliftment. With deep roots in a lineage of traditional healers, Mashudu's journey is more than a career — it's a continuation of her connection to ancient herbal practices.

Founded in 2013 and officially registered in 2021, Joanne Herbs Farm has made incredible strides despite significant challenges such as limited land availability, funding shortages

and the societal stigma surrounding cannabis. One of its key achievements includes leveraging modern extraction technology through a partnership with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), funded by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI). This collaboration has led to the successful launch of innovative products and brought international recognition, with the farm gaining exposure at prominent events like the International Astronomical Union General Assembly, Bio Africa 2023, and through participation in the Limpopo Research Forum.

Currently, Joanne Herbs Farm supplies a range of products, including Cannabidiol (CBD) water, hair care products and cosmetics, with plans to expand into the beverage industry in the near future. The farm sources its CBD both from its own cultivation and through partnerships with other suppliers. In terms of marketing, Joanne Herbs Farm primarily promotes its products online and is actively seeking partnerships with health stores and gym outlets. The positive feedback and ongoing engagement from potential partners highlight the growing recognition of the farm's high-quality offerings and its promising future in the wellness market.

Mashudu's dedication extends far beyond the business of Joanne Herbs Farm. She is deeply involved in community building. As an active member of the Limpopo Hemp and Cannabis Farmers Association (LHCFA), she finds inspiration in helping to facilitate and support communities of cannabis growers

in the Limpopo province. Through this association, Mashudu conducts workshops aimed at educating and empowering local communities about the hemp and cannabis industry. Her efforts are focused on sharing knowledge and resources to uplift these communities, ensuring they benefit from the growing opportunities in the industry.

Mashudu plays a pivotal role in facilitating the establishment of Limpopo District Cannabis Forums in partnership with local municipalities, the provincial Department of Agriculture and other strategic partners. The primary aim of these forums is to foster collaboration, ensure regulatory compliance and create economic opportunities for local communities within the rapidly growing cannabis industry.

Through these partnerships, Mashudu is working to build a structured and sustainable framework that benefits both the industry and the communities it serves, further enhancing the economic potential of cannabis in the region.

For aspiring entrepreneurs in the Hemp and Cannabis field, Mashudu Badane offers this inspiring advice:

- 1. Understand Regulations:** Ensure compliance with all cannabis legal requirements to build a reputable business.
- 2. Develop a Business Plan:** Craft a comprehensive plan with clear goals and strategies to guide your growth.
- 3. Secure Funding:** Seek out various funding sources to support your startup and expansion efforts, as cannabis is a capital-intensive industry.

- 4. Build a Network:** Connect with industry professionals to gain valuable insights and opportunities.
- 5. Focus on Quality and Compliance:** Invest in technology and maintain high standards for your products.
- 6. Educate Yourself:** Stay updated on industry trends and continuously train your team.
- 7. Plan for Scaling:** Strategize for long-term growth to navigate challenges and seize opportunities.

Mashudu's journey from the corporate world to becoming an agricultural innovator, combined with her personal healing journey and ancestral connection to herbalism, underscores the transformative power of following one's passion. Her story is a testament to the profound impact one can make in the natural wellness industry while contributing meaningfully to society.



GRAINSA SPOTLIGHTS

FARMING TRAILBLAZERS

AT THE 2024 GRAIN FARMER CELEBRATION

By: Dineo Chiloane



The 2024 Grain SA Day of Celebration, held at NAMPO Park, was a lively tribute to South African grain farmers' hard work and successes. This yearly event brought together farmers, industry partners, and agriculture enthusiasts to recognize the sector's resilience and creativity. The ceremony began with a warm welcome from Grain SA leadership, who stressed the significance of unity and teamwork in solving agricultural issues. Attendees were reminded that every effort, no matter how small, helps to shape the future of agriculture in South Africa.

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The general atmosphere was filled with excitement as farmers told their stories of endurance and triumph in the face of adversity, including recent droughts.

The presentation of numerous awards to exemplary farmers was a highlight of the event. Alfred Gordon received the Commercial Farmer of the Year award, demonstrating determination and adaptability on his journey from hairdresser to successful farmer. Gordon's dedication to sustainable techniques and community engagement has not only increased his harvests, but

also raised those around him. In addition to Gordon, several other remarkable farmers were honoured for their contributions: Mhlangenqaba Mkizwana, from Maclear in the Eastern Cape, was recognised as the Subsistence Farmer of the Year, showcasing the vital role subsistence farming plays in local food security. Jim Besabakhe Masemola from, Groblersdal in the Limpopo province, received the title of Smallholder Farmer of the Year, highlighting his innovative approaches that empower small-scale farmers.

Ranko Petrus Sithole was

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celebrated as the New Era Commercial Farmer of the Year, reflecting his forward-thinking practices that align with modern agricultural demands.

Additionally, Alfred Gondo was acknowledged as the Potential Commercial Farmer of the Year, indicating his promising trajectory in the agricultural sector.

These awards not only recognise individual accomplishments, but also encourage others in the farming community to strive for excellence. The profiles of these winners will be published in the forthcoming issue of Agripreneur, providing further information about their experiences and contributions to agriculture. Again, collaborations were emphasised and are critical in promoting agricultural

development and market access for farmers. Collaborations are critical for increasing production and enabling farmers to compete effectively in both domestic and international markets and demonstrate a common commitment to creating a sustainable agricultural environment that benefits all stakeholders. Community involvement was also emphasized in building resilience among farmers.

The event included cultural performances that honoured South Africa's diverse farming background. Music and dance infused a celebratory atmosphere, prompting participants to remember the happiness that results from collaborating on shared objectives. The local talents,

among other performers, engaged the audience with their lively performances, strengthening the link between agriculture and culture.

At the end of the day, participants were filled with a noticeable feeling of hope. Conversations revolved around continued efforts to improve efficiency and longevity in the grain farming industry. The focus on innovation and technology as tools for growth was emphasised.

Overall, the 2024 Grain SA Day of Celebration was not merely an occasion but also a strong symbol of the power of unity in the farming sector. As challenges persist for farmers, gatherings like this promote resilience and motivate future generations to uphold the value of agriculture.



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What is SMAT?

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

Why do we need SMAT?

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

Who is going to use SMAT?

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

www.namc.co.za/about-smat