

TEKULIMA

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MPUMALANGA EXPLORES

HYBRID RICE PRODUCTION

MPUMALANGA
INTERNATIONAL
FOODMARKET

OPENS ITS DOORS TO
FIRST CLIENT



agriculture, rural development,
land & environmental affairs
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





TABLE OF CONTENT

ABOUT US	2
EDITOR'S NOTE	3
Mpumalanga International Foodmarket Opens Its Doors To First Client	4
Mpumalanga Explores Hybrid Rice Production	5
2026/27 Research Projects Evaluated	6
Government Will Continue Investing In Youth Development – says MEC	7
Health and Wellness: Hypertension	8
Dialogue On Air Quality In Highveld Priority Area A Great Success	10
Sakhile Residents Foster Long-Term Environmental Stewardship	11
Karan Beef And Dardlea Partnership Benefits Lothair Farmers	12
Panaar Farmers Day Empowers Grootvlei Farmers	13
PPEs For Oakley Waste Pickers	14
Fresh Produce Agents Complete Online Training Programme	15
Research Corner	16



ABOUT US

The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs is guided by a vision, mission and values developed to inspire and ensure alignment towards achievement of the department's objectives.

Our Vision

Our Vision is to be a vibrant, equitable and sustainable communities with a united and transformed agricultural and environmental sector.

Our Mission

To facilitate an integrated, comprehensive, sustainable environmental and agricultural development in communities through ensuring social cohesion and collaboration by all sectors of society.

Our Values

Guided by the principles of Batho Pele, we will render services particularly based on the following values:

Result oriented, diligent and professional staff; Responsive to the needs of all citizens, particularly the poor, women, youth, elderly and persons with disabilities;

Driven by community-based development; A learning organization that is participatory in its approach and grows from its experiences and new knowledge and innovations; Promote and improve effective, efficient and responsive departmental systems and use of resources. Act with honesty, ethical, impartial and with integrity.

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This edition showcases the collective efforts of government, industry partners, research institutions, communities, and farmers in advancing agricultural development, environmental sustainability, and economic growth across Mpumalanga.

From the operationalisation of the Mpumalanga International FoodMarket (MIF) and the province's exploration of hybrid rice production, to impactful youth empowerment initiatives and environmental stewardship programmes, these stories reflect our commitment to building a resilient and prosperous future.

We are particularly encouraged by the growing partnerships that continue to unlock opportunities for emerging farmers, young people, waste pickers, and local communities. The successful implementation of research projects, Climate Change awareness campaigns, infrastructure support for livestock farmers, and capacity-building pro-

grammes highlight the importance of collaboration in achieving sustainable development.

As we look ahead, the Department remains dedicated to promoting innovation, food security, environmental protection, and inclusive economic participation. We trust that the stories featured in this newsletter will inspire stakeholders to continue working together towards a thriving agricultural sector and a healthier environment for all.

We thank our partners, communities, and stakeholders for their ongoing support and contribution to the success of these initiatives.

Enjoy the read!



MPUMALANGA INTERNATIONAL FOODMARKET OPENS ITS DOORS TO FIRST CLIENT



The 08th of June 2026 marked the first day of operationalisation of the Mpumalanga International FoodMarket (MIF) with the onboarding of first client, Green Farms Nuts Co, for storage of macadamia nuts in kernels. Green Farms Nuts Co. is one of the biggest producers of macadamia in South Africa, an industry with export value more than \$130 million annually, about R2,1 billion in local currency. Prior to relocating to MIF, Green Farms Nuts Co had their products stored in warehouses in Gauteng.

This was despite the bulk of their produce being grown in Mpumalanga, with their processing facility located in White River. Their switch to MIF will significantly cut the cost of business in terms of logistics, thus helping improve efficiency.

This, as final tests of the facility and systems are being conducted, as the market gears up to soon open its doors for physical trade in fresh produce. Once fully operational, the MIF will serve to fill the existing gap/ space where agriculture produce from the province and across the country intersects with traders, buyers and consumers. South Africa is the top producer

of macadamia nuts, contributing over 25% to total worldwide production. Globally, along with China and Australia, South Africa forms part of the three-pole market that dominates global output.

During her 2026/27 Policy and Budget Speech on 11 June 2026, MEC Khethiwe Moeketsi applauded the decision by Green Farms to concentrate their full operation in Mpumalanga, saying it was a direct consequence of impactful investment made by the province in establishing the MIF infrastructure.



MPUMALANGA EXPLORES HYBRID RICE PRODUCTION



The DARDLEA has partnered with the Hainan Tropical Rice Agricultural Technology Co. Ltd from China, and the University of Mpumalanga, in forming a joint research team that has hit the ground running on a pilot project for hybrid rice production. During her 2026/27 Policy and Budget Speech at the Legislature on 11 June 2026, MEC Khethiwe Moeketsi announced that the initiative is a commitment to innovation, food security and diversification of agricultural production, that will create thousands of job opportunities.

The research team has already visited potential suitable sites in the Nkangala District, collecting soil samples in Roodepoort, Rietvlei, Syferfontein, Haartebeespruit, Boschklouf, Wonderhoek and Lefiso. This will allow for a thorough assessment on the suitability of the soil, climate conditions and water availability. The research project aims to explore rice farming opportunities in Mpumalanga and provide farmers with scientific data to improve crop production and food security.



2026/27 RESEARCH PROJECTS EVALUATED

Experts in different fields of Agriculture, who are members of the Mpumalanga Agricultural Research Committee (MARC) converged in Graskop from 18-19 June 2026 for a special meeting to evaluate Research Projects for the 2026/27 financial year. MARC is comprised of experts from the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), the national Department of Agriculture, the University of Mpumalanga, Stats SA and the DARDLEA.

For two days, fourteen projects were presented by Researchers to MARC members who robustly scrutinized them individually, and gave guidance as part of their responsibilities to help maintain the integrity of the research approval process. This process is key as the studies conducted forms part of the Annual Performance Plan. Research in Agriculture is key; results are beneficial to farmers, helping them maximise productivity depending on their commodities.

The MARC engagements with the Researchers saw the approval of 3 closed-up reports on work already conducted. The research projects vary, covering crop and animal production and aquaculture, among others. The outcome of these research projects will help small-scale farmers, as end-users, to improve and maximize production for food security purposes.





GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE INVESTING IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT – says MEC

The DARDLEA is actively driving youth development through modern and smart farming practices, while fostering strategic partnerships that grant youth direct access to financial literacy, start-up funding, and comprehensive mental health and wellness support. That's according to MEC Khethiwe Moeketsi during her address at the Departmental Youth Event held in Manzana on 25 June 2026. MEC Moeketsi reaffirmed government's commitment to continue investing in youth development through a wide range of targeted interventions and programme like the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative.

At the event, the Department brought some wealth of resources directly to the youth to ensure they are fully equipped for opportunities.

*****Old Mutual** challenged the young people to take control of their financial destinies through Planning, Budgeting and Discipline.

*****The Department of Social Development & Department of Health** addressed issues of Wellness and Mental Health respectively.

*****The NYDA** reminded young people about the Grant Funding opportunities for start-ups, encouraging them to apply using their online ERP platform.

*****And the Youth in Agriculture and Rural Development (YARD)** inspired attendees to dig deep and start their own farming enterprises.

The message of the day was clear: Young people must

become innovators, not spectators. This, as Agriculture stands as one of the most powerful instruments for job creation and rural development, offering young people the chance to be true sector leaders.



HEALTH & WELLNESS

WORLD HYPERTENSION AWARENESS MONTH

The theme for World Hypertension Day 2026



“Controlling Hypertension Together!”, which highlights the importance of collective efforts in managing high blood pressure. It focuses on the role of individuals, families, healthcare providers, and communities in improving awareness, encouraging regular monitoring, and supporting better control of hypertension to reduce the risk of long-term complications. World Hypertension Day, marked annually on 17 May, raises awareness and promotes hypertension prevention, detection and control.

What is Hypertension?

Hypertension, commonly known as high blood pressure, is a condition in which the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries remains consistently higher than normal. Hypertension is often called the “silent killer” because it usually has no symptoms but significantly increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney disease and premature death.

Common Signs of High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure often develops without clear symptoms, especially in the early stages. When signs do appear, they tend to be mild and may not immediately point to a serious issue.

Frequent Headaches: Headaches, especially in the morning, may occur due to increased pressure in the blood vessels. **Dizziness Or Lightheadedness:** A feeling of imbalance or faintness can sometimes be linked to changes in blood pressure levels. **Blurred Vision:** High blood pressure can affect the small blood vessels in the eyes, leading to temporary vision changes. **Chest Discomfort:** A sense of tightness or uneasiness in the chest may be noticed in some cases and should not be ignored. **Shortness Of Breath:** Difficulty in breathing during routine activities can occur if the heart is under strain. **Fatigue Or Weakness:** Ongoing tiredness without a clear reason may be linked to the body working harder to manage increased pressure. **Nosebleeds:** Occasional nosebleeds may occur, especially when blood pressure levels are significantly high.

Causes of High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure can develop due to a combination of different factors rather than a single cause. It usually builds up over time and is influenced by:

Unhealthy Diet: High intake of salt, processed foods, and unhealthy fats can raise blood pressure levels. **Lack Of Physical Activity:** A sedentary routine can lead to weight gain and reduced heart health, increasing the risk of hypertension. **Excess Weight:** Being overweight puts extra strain on the heart and blood vessels, which can raise blood pressure. **Chronic Stress:** Ongoing stress can affect the body’s hormone levels and contribute to increased blood pressure over time. **Family History:** A genetic tendency can make some individuals more likely to develop hypertension. **Ageing:** Blood vessels become less flexible with age, which can lead to higher pressure within them. **Underlying Health Conditions:** Conditions such as kidney disorders, diabetes, and hormonal imbalances can contribute to high blood pressure. **Smoking and Alcohol Intake:** Tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption can damage blood vessels and

HEALTH & WELLNESS

How Can Hypertension Be Managed?

Managing high blood pressure involves a combination of lifestyle changes and medical support as listed below:

Healthy Diet: A balanced diet that is low in salt and rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can help in maintaining healthy blood pressure levels.

Regular Physical Activity: Engaging in activities such as walking, cycling, or light exercise on most days of the week supports heart health and helps lower blood pressure.

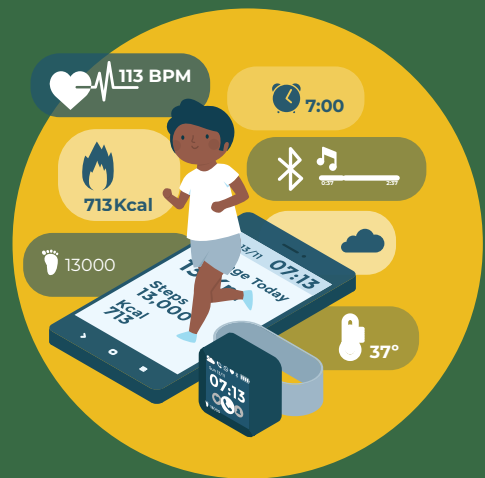
Weight Management: Maintaining a healthy weight reduces strain on the heart and can lead to better blood pressure control.

Stress Control: Managing stress through relaxation techniques, proper sleep, and daily routine adjustments can help keep blood pressure stable.

Limiting Tobacco and Alcohol: Reducing or avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol intake can improve blood vessel health and lower blood pressure.

Regular Monitoring: Checking blood pressure at regular intervals helps in tracking changes and identifying any rise early.

Medications When Prescribed: Doctors may recommend medicines based on individual health needs to help control blood pressure effectively.





DIALOGUE ON **AIR QUALITY IN HIGHVELD** **PRIORITY AREA** - A GREAT SUCCESS

Big business that are partly responsible for air pollution must work on their Air Quality programs that are practical, implementable and with time frames, for future generations to benefit from current efforts made in ensure cleaner air. This came up at the Government–Civil Society Dialogue on Air Quality in the Highveld Priority Area held at the Hlalamnandi Community Hall in Middleburg on 10 June 2026. It formed part of the ongoing Clean Air Conversations Series led by the national Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, together with the Mpumalanga Provincial Government and municipalities.

The dialogue was also attended by Eskom, Groundwork and other Civil Society organizations, discussing topics that included Emission Reduction; Governance - Community Engagements and Outreach; and Monitoring & Information Management. Delegates agreed that the state of air quality in the Highveld Priority Area is concerning, adding that interventions through collaborations, practical solutions, community concerns such as health impacts, governance and policy interventions can lead to improved air quality in the Highveld. The ongoing engagements will culminate in a Air Quality Governance Lekgotla planned for September this year.



SAKHILE RESIDENTS FOSTER LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

A provincial World Environment Day (WED) commemoration at the Sakhile Community Stadium in Standerton on 23 June 2026 attracted both the young and old who came together to foster long-term environmental stewardship, and address pressing realities and effects of Climate Change. MEC Khethiwe Moeketsi led an entourage during a visit to Zikhetheleni Secondary School to donate more Smart Agriculture Boxes, and also monitor progress after dozens others were donated to the school. These boxes help support and augment the school's nutrition programme. They also visited an Air Quality Monitoring Station at Gugulabasha Primary School.

Addressing the crowd at the stadium, MEC Moeketsi emphasized how localized adaptation strategies can protect both livelihoods and community health against Climate Change. She said through interactive educational showcases, community members can be empowered with actionable eco-friendly habits, such as reducing waste, planting indigenous trees, and practicing water conservation.

Meanwhile, the benefits of collaboration and partnerships between government, private sector and community groups yielded positive results and became evident when the Department partnered with PETCO, Eskom and the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, to mark World Environment Day (WED) under the theme: "Taking Action Against Climate Change", at Gymnasium in Mhluzi Ext 7, in Middleburg. The day started with a mass clean-up campaign by locals in the area, officials and stakeholders. They planted trees at Mvuzo Primary School, and conducted an awareness session on climate change, waste management, and recycling. Globally, WED is commemorated annually on 5 June.





KARAN BEEF AND DARDLEA PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS LOTHAIR FARMERS

Emerging livestock farmers in Lothair and Nelspan under Msukaligwa Local Municipality received their much-needed livestock handling facilities, on 4 June 2024, thanks to a Karan Beef partnership with the DARDLEA. The collaboration aims at supporting dedicated farmers by providing infrastructure, improving animal management, safety, and market readiness.

It is envisaged that the new facilities will improve productivity, animal welfare, and the ability of farmers to meet formal market standards. The DARDLEA/Karan Beef partnership goes beyond infrastructure; it is about identifying high-need areas and fostering community collaboration, helping turn subsistence farming into thriving commercial enterprises.



PANAR FARMERS DAY **EMPOWERS** GROOTVLEI FARMERS



The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs partnered with Pannar in hosting a Farmers Day at IThuba Farming Cooperative Farm in Grootvlei under Dipaleseng Municipality on 5 May 2026. It was held under the Theme: “Managing Risks, Maximising Profit: Unlocking Maize Productivity Through Smart Hybrid Selection and Agronomic Precision”.

The day, also attended by representatives from Land Bank, FNB, Seed Capital and Ithuba, started with a field walk and live hybrid demonstrations. Farmers compared ultra-early and medium maturity maize hybrids, looking at how strong the plants stand, cob size, grain type, plant health, and how well each hybrid

handles stress and dry weather. The team from Pannar also spoke about South Africa’s seed technology, plant population, and how to choose the right hybrid, understand their land and have a plan.

IThuba has planted 470 hectares of maize and 200 hectares of soya. The cooperative has 6 members who farm on a commercial scale and also keep livestock. The Farmers Day aimed at helping farmers make better choices in protecting their crops and improve profits. This, from picking the right maize seed, and using good farming practices to reduce risks like drought and poor germination.





PPEs FOR OAKLEY WASTE PICKERS

About 170 Waste Pickers received Personal Protective Equipments in a form of work suites, boots, sun hats, t-shirts and gloves in Oakley under the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, and this is all thanks to a POLYCO donation. This, as the DARDLEA, POLYCO, SanParks and the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality hosted a two-day Recycling Workshop on 5 June 2026 that focused on the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Regulations. It was presented by the national Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.

Stakeholders also aligned their presentations around the EPR as follows:

****Plastic SA** focused on the Plastic Industry's support for EPR.

****Polyco** on Driving Collection and Recycling through EPR.

****iWaste Recycling** introduced what they call "Local Packa-Ching Operator".

****The DARDLEA, Ehlanzeni District and Bushbuckridge Local Municipalities** focused on their Environmental Programs that are in response to EPR.

****SALGA** focused on its support to Municipalities

Day 2 included a visit to Thulani Primary School where

16 Wheely Bins and 3 bins made of recycled material were donated, as POLYCO launched the Sorting at Source programme at the school. SanParks donated indigenous trees.



FRESH PRODUCE AGENTS COMPLETE ONLINE TRAINING PROGRAMME



Seven newly registered Fresh Produce Agents appointed to operate at the Mpumalanga International FoodMarket received their Fidelity Fund Certificates from the Agricultural Produce Agents Council (APAC) on 13 May 2026. This after their successful completion of the APAC's online training programme that started with a 3-day induction in July 2025 in Mbombela.

The programme equipped the Agents with essential knowledge on commission-based fresh produce market operations, while promoting compliance, professionalism, accountability, and ethical conduct within the sector. APAC remains committed to strengthening governance and supporting the growth of transparent and efficient fresh produce markets across South Africa.



RESEARCH CORNER

RISING FEED AND ELECTRICITY PRICES: A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR THE SMALLHOLDER POULTRY FARMER

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Introduction

For many South African households, poultry farming is the main source of their food security. Chickens give smallholder farmers in particular, inexpensive protein and revenue. However, the existence of these businesses is in jeopardy due to rising input costs, especially those of feed and electricity. Electricity rates in South Africa have more than doubled between 2020 and 2025 (ChickenFacts, 2024), and feed alone can make up as much as 70% of overall production costs (Farmers Magazine, 2025). Notably, feed production was disrupted in several parts of the world by recent drought episodes, which raised the cost of some inputs (NAMC, 2024). Unless farmers adapt, these pressures could make small-scale poultry farming unsustainable.

Feed Costs

Due to local droughts, increased transportation costs, and worldwide rises in the price of maize and soybeans, feed prices have increased in South Africa in recent years. These price hikes hurt smallholder farmers the most since they lack economies of scale. In order to feed as many animals as possible, some farmers end up decreasing the size of their flocks. Some use low-quality grains, crop wastes, or kitchen scraps in place of commercial feed, which slows growth and lowers egg production.

RESEARCH CORNER

RIISING FEED AND ELECTRICITY PRICES: A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR THE SMALLHOLDER POULTRY FARMER

Electricity Costs and Energy Dependency

In chicken farming, electricity is essential, especially for pumping water, lighting, and brooder heating. Electricity rates in South Africa increased from 111 cents per kWh in 2020 to more than 221 cents per kWh in 2025 (ChickenFacts, 2024). Smallholders are finding it difficult to keep up with these rising expenses, as many of them already run on narrow profit margins. These difficulties are clearly visible when some smallholder farmers turn off brooders earlier than is advised, thereby exposing chicks to cold stress and increased mortalities. Production losses occur for farmers who cannot afford alternative energy sources, particularly during the winter months (Farmers Weekly, 2023).

Impact on Farmers

For smallholder poultry farmers, the strain of rising feed and electricity costs has had immediate repercussions. In order to feed as many birds as possible, many farmers are reducing the number of birds, which lowers their income potential (MDPI, 2023). Some households are abandoning chicken farming entirely, as a result of rising input costs that are further compressing already narrow margins (Farmers Weekly, 2023). Some producers reduce heating or dilute feed in an effort to save money, which results in slower growth, higher mortalities, and increased disease outbreaks (ChickenFacts, 2024). Rural families face more severe dietary issues as a result of the loss of an inexpensive source of protein, due to fewer poultry and eggs (Farmers Magazine, 2025). Because their main source of income is compromised, women, who comprise the majority of smallholder poultry keepers, are disproportionately impacted (MDPI, 2023).

Saving Tips

Feed

Maintain feeder lips at bird back height, fill only halfway, and make adjustments as birds become bigger to prevent feed spills. Avoid overfilling and use appropriate feeder designs. If you are exposed to feeding raw materials, you might choose to mix your own feed. To get advice on how to make your own feed, it is a good idea to speak with your Agricultural Advisor. Keep in mind that your hens will not grow or be healthy if their feed contains unbalanced nutrients. Maintaining clean, fresh water is similarly vital, because birds will eat less if the water is dirty or leaking. To avoid soft and wet litter and lost feed, maintain nipples at beak height and fix drips to prevent wet litter and wasted feed. For those using bell-drinkers, height is the most important factor in controlling spillages. It must not be too high or too low. Hang bell drinkers so the lip is at chick eye level and only raise as the chicks grow.

Purchasing feeds in bulk with neighbours, can save money. Since many smallholder farmers claim that it does not work for them, this is one area that still needs investigation. Lastly, weigh birds every week to monitor growth, make early feed program adjustments, and eliminate underperforming birds before they consume more than they should. Smallholder farmers may make every kilogram of feed last longer by combining prudent feeding practices, astute purchasing and stringent water management.

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RISING FEED AND ELECTRICITY PRICES: A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR THE SMALLHOLDER POULTRY FARMER

Electricity

With load-shedding reduced, but electricity tariffs still high, smallholder poultry farmers need to focus on cutting waste in brooding, lighting, ventilation and water use. During the brooding stage, it may be wise to curtain off a smaller area for chicks, insulate with cardboard and seal cracks so less space needs heating. For lighting, switch to LED bulbs, while painting walls white to improve brightness without extra power. Ventilation costs can be reduced by prioritising natural airflow, using fans only during the hottest hours, maintaining them well and planting shade around houses to lower heat load. Fixing water leaks, using gravity-fed tanks instead of electric pumps and keeping litter dry further cuts energy use.

Simple habits, like grouping birds in one heated area, switching off unused equipment and keeping brooders and fans in good condition, make a noticeable difference. Longer-term, those who can invest in solar panels or gas will benefit from even greater savings. In short, by managing heat, light, airflow and water wisely, smallholder poultry farmers can keep electricity costs under control while maintaining bird comfort and productivity.

Waste Reduction

Farmers are also adding value by selling poultry manure as organic fertilizer or freezing dressed birds for later sale. These extra income streams help cushion the blow of rising input prices (MDPI, 2023).

Conclusion

Rising feed and electricity costs are testing the resilience of South Africa's smallholder poultry farmers. Yet, innovation and collaboration are offering hope. By adopting alternative feeds, improving energy efficiency, and working together through cooperatives, farmers are finding ways to survive and even thrive. These strategies not only secure livelihoods, but also help ensure that chicken, South Africa's most affordable protein, remains on the table for millions of households.

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