

Agriculture and Development

Issue 10

Tekulima

Nentuthuko

A State-of-the-Art VET
Clinic for Marapyane

Efforts to boost the
Apple Industry in
Mpumalanga underway.

HOD face up to fuming
emerging livestock farmers



agriculture, rural development,
land & environmental affairs

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





“ Phezukomkhono mlimi”

CONTECTS

- 01** Editorial
- 02** Foreword from the HOD
- 03** Foreword from the MEC
- 04** Efforts to boost the Apple Industry in Mpumalanga underways.
- 06** DARDLEA Sign SLAs with beneficiaries
- 07** Agriculture Sector still recovering from drought – says HOD
- 08** Hygiene must come first – says MEC Shongwe
- 09** Efforts to boost the apple industry in MP underway
- 10** HOD face up to fuming emerging livestock farmers
- 11** DARDLEA Welcomes 24 VET through CCS Programme
- 12** MBOMBELA scoops the 2018 Greenest Municipality Award
- 13** Conservation Agriculture Equipment for Study Groups
- 14** The Climate Change Schools Programme attracts more schools
- 15** A State-of-the-Art VET Clinic for Marapyane
- 16** DARDLEA aims at forging business relations with Serbia
RiseFM cements relations with government departments
- 17** New Technology as part of Smart Agriculture
- 18** Research Corner

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Editorial

Letter



Bheki Nyathikazi

The year 2019 promises to be one hectic year for Government Communications because, amongst others, it is the election year.

It calls for the rolling up of sleeves, as we go about communicating government's programmes and the good work done so far, to improve our people's lives.

In Government Communications, there needs to be real attention to detail when it comes to issues of service delivery, and customer relations.

This needs professionalism. It needs one to be very courteous. I make mention of this because, in all honesty, we do have officials who are determined not to be accountable and/or committed to their work.

This is compounded when citizens complain about those who are actually the face of government, those who deal directly and interact more often with those very same citizens on the ground.

This is a challenge. Attitudes must change. The culture of carelessness must stop.

It is my belief that government services are not just about service delivery, but they are about our attitude while we deliver those services.

Sadly, the year 2018 ended on a very low note for the Communications fraternity in the province when we lost the late spokesperson for the Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison Mr Joseph Mabuza.

A champion of note, a father to his kids, a loving husband to his wife and a good friend to many, Mabuza was a road safety ambassador who sang nothing but road safety as he often graced our TV screens and radio interviews.

His demise touched many, because of the nature of the incident that took his life. With a befitting memorial service and a special send-off, sure his spirit will continue to shine and inspire us, as we serve our people.

Indeed, the spear has fallen, we must pick it up. May his handsome soul continue to rest in eternal peace.

As I conclude, I urge all of us to pray for the 20019 general elections; let us pray for peace and tolerance as political parties continue to woo potential voters in their favour.

That's democracy. Most importantly, let us take advantage of this right and privilege most of us were deprived of back in the day...to go and make that cross.

Ngiyabonga



Foreword

from the HOD



Mr LS Monareng

Our Department is in its final stages of consultations with relevant stakeholders on the Agricultural Master Plan Framework which is going to be a long-term plan detailing activities to be accomplished within the next 10 to 30 years. This Master Plan will be aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP).

The consultations started in earnest last year, and we have since established a Task Team that will take the process forward, with an aim to ensure that these final stages produce a final draft by the end of this 2018/19 Financial Year.

Ours is to walk this journey with all stakeholders and key role players within our sector. We have also embarked on consulting both organised agriculture and commodity associations, after we adopted the notion that says: "Nothing about us, without us". Hence our meetings with farmers from across the four Districts, that were aimed at ensuring that we respond to their interests in all categories.

We also embarked on a drive to encourage ordinary households, through Phezukomkhono Mlimi programme, to play a part in food production.

This programme encourages people and ordinary households, to establish backyard gardens and fight hunger. Pyramid Tower gardens are part of the solutions in this regard.

They save water, space, while conserving the environment; and they are also user-friendly for People Living with Disabilities. In all honesty, there is no reason why a family should buy onions, tomatoes, spinach, lettuce, because these can be home grown.

It is a fact that the agriculture sector, like other sectors in society, has its own challenges; but working together, we can overcome them. Natural phenomenon like drought, floods, insects, disease outbreak, high costs of production and fertilizers, in many ways, affects the yield for crop farmers and can lead to livestock mortalities.

As part of the solutions to mitigate the impact of Climate Change, we have shifted our thinking towards what is called "Climate-Smart Agriculture". Hence we encourage farmers to use the No-till Oxen-drawn planters. The Department donated these to 14 study groups late last year as a pilot exercise.

The feedback from the beneficiaries is overwhelming. More exciting news is on the commitment by the Deciduous Fruits Development Chamber (DFDC) to pay particular attention to apple producing farmers in the province, such that some projects in the Gert Sibande District are already reaping the fruits of that commitment.

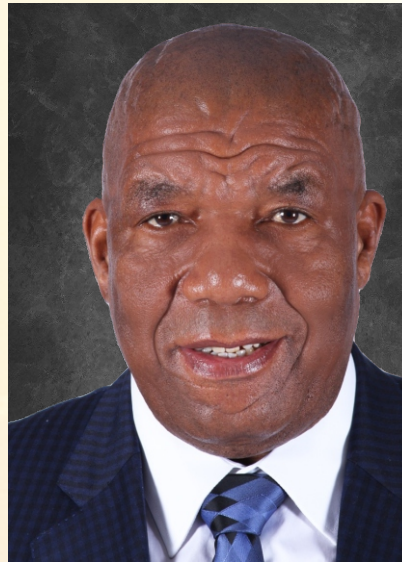
As I conclude, let me register my disappointment caused by infighting among beneficiaries that I personally come across whilst visiting government-supported projects around the province. Infighting is an enemy, and it should be avoided at all cost.

Land is desperately needed for food production, but we have projects that are dysfunctional because beneficiaries choose to fight among themselves. Let us all work together in achieving what seems impossible: Let us use the land and be food-secure.

I thank you...

Foreword

from the MEC



MEC VR Shongwe

It is often said that time waits for no man (or woman) and the speed at which this financial year is racing by is certainly proof of that. The last quarter seems to have gone by in a blur, well certainly for us, as we are preparing for year-end. Yet through this unavoidable flight of time we have remained focussed on the tasks at hand.

The HOD has been driving the delivery on our Annual Performance targets, ensuring that when 31 March 2019 comes around, it would bring with it some exciting and positive performance results for the Department.

The CFO has been uncompromising in the year-end financials preparation with a steadfast commitment and dedication that is admirable and greatly appreciated.

Corporate Services, under the leadership of Dr Mabelane, has been working tirelessly to maintain the positive brand image and reputation that DARDLEA has built over the last few years amongst our stakeholders, through ensuring our participation at key sector events, that our systems are functioning optimally and that staff members are the right fit in terms of culture, work ethic and strategic focus.

Over the past four and half years of having these staff members steer the ship with such vision, the fruits that we as DARDLEA staff members and you as our stakeholders are enjoying, has been a direct result of our hard work, commitment to our mandate and unwavering leadership.

I wish to convey my deep felt appreciation to all Management and staff members and wish to thank them for raising the bar in the department as we conclude the five-year term.



Efforts to boost

THE APPLE INDUSTRY IN MPUMALANGA UNDERWAY

MEC Vusi Shongwe visited apple producing projects in the Gert Sibande District on 30th November 2018, to assess progress and possible challenges faced by the beneficiaries.

He was accompanied by the acting HOD Mr Lucky Monareng, the CEO of the Deciduous Fruits Development Chamber (DFDC) Ms Thembi Xaba and its national Deputy Chairperson, Dr Job Mthombeni.

The DFDC leadership assured the MEC of a multi-million Rand injection that has already been confirmed for two Apple producing projects in the District.

MEC Shongwe and his entourage visited the Sinalo Apple Project just outside Amersfort, before they headed to Kraanskop Farm near Carolina.

The DFDC, working with the Department, have committed to take the deciduous fruits industry in Mpumalanga to another level, by rendering all the necessary support to see the emerging farmers graduating into commercial farming.



A group picture with beneficiaries at Sinalo Apple Project outside Amersfort.



from L-R is CFDC CEO Ms Thembi Xaba, MEC VR Shongwe, Dr Job Mthombeni, HOD LS Monareng, Dr Maanda Dagada and Mr George Xaba seated with one of the workers at Kraanskop Farm.

from page 4.....

A national DFDC Summit was launched at Ingwenyama Conference Centre outside White River a month earlier. Held under the Theme “Transforming the Deciduous Fruit Economy”, the Summit had presenters focusing mainly on ideas to transform the industry. Calls were made for the transformation agenda to be speeded up and addressed. It was revealed that the industry is export-driven, with about 70% of South Africa's fresh fruits being exported.

MEC Shongwe called on the levelling of the playing field in the industry, saying previously disadvantaged people, women and the youth in particular, must be incorporated in the entire value chain. The Summit was attended by stakeholders from as far as the Western Cape. This, as the DFDC looks at doubling the industry by 2050, regardless of challenges like the effects of Climate Change, pests, and the high costs of production and fertilizer.





DARDLEA SIGNS SLAs WITH BENEFICIARIES

The Head of Department Mr Lucky Monareng says the signing of Service Level Agreements with beneficiaries and/or cooperatives that receive assistance from the Department, will go a long way in ensuring a smooth operation of projects. This, as he signed the SLAs with four Cooperatives at Letolo, near Sybrandskraal outside KwaMhlanga in Nkangala District, who are beneficiaries of four huge chicken broiler houses, each with a capacity of 45-thousand chicks.

The Coops, which includes a Fortune-40 Young Farmer Incubation group of 10, are Pure Vision, Esiqongolweni, Khonz'izwi and Ziyatinyela Agric & Projects Primary Coop. The HOD also denounced infighting among the beneficiaries, saying that has a tendency to render a project unsuccessful.

“These SLAs will ensure that we, as a Department, are able to zoom in and intervene in the projects that we support, in case the need arise. Remember we cannot spend millions on infrastructure, and look the other way. Otherwise this is one of the reasons why operationalizing projects tends to be a challenge.

We can't fold arms and watch our infrastructure becoming white elephants due to infightings. We want to have access, monitor progress, assist and intervene if a need arises”, said Monareng.

The signing of the SLAs yesterday was the first, and HOD Monareng has committed to ensure that all beneficiaries of DARDLEA-supported projects throughout the province sign similar agreements. “Yes, you have a sense of ownership, but we also expect you to look after the infrastructure; safeguard it against any theft and vandalizing. After all, somebody must be held accountable if something goes wrong here”, concluded Monareng.



Beneficiaries at Letolo signing SLA 's.



HOD LS Monareng listens attentively to presentations with other delegates at the symposium.

AGRICULTURE SECTOR STILL **RECOVERING FROM DROUGHT** – says HOD

Head of DARDLEA Mr Lucky Monareng says the agriculture sector in Mpumalanga is still bearing the brunt after the drought that ravaged the province and the country in 2015, adding that the sustained effects are due to Climate Change.

Monareng says the sector is yet to recover, after the drought caused damage to pastures and grazing land, small-holder farmers, crops & agriculture yields, livestock mortalities, dam levels and its impact on poor rural households.

HOD Monareng made the comments as he officially opened a 3-day South African National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (SANCID) Symposium at Ingwenyama Sport Resort outside White River on 13 November 2018.

The Bi-Annual Symposium was attended by Scientists from various disciplines throughout the country, held under the Theme: **“Opportunities to Manage Climate Change”**.

Theme:

**“Opportunities to Manage
Climate Change”**

Among others, the Scientists shared knowledge and ideas, including interacting with policy makers and various government departments on means and strategies to help mitigate the effects of climate change.

Amid all of that, HOD Monareng added that the effects of alien invasive plants, and the Fall Army Worm also affected most emerging farmers.

“In the wake of climate change and water shortages, the Department is already implementing climate-friendly and smart-agriculture initiatives that are aimed at sustaining agriculture, yet ensuring that the environment is also well looked-after in the process”, said Monareng.

Delegates at the Symposium also discussed the impact of climate change on the irrigation sector, groundwater management, conservation agriculture, including the effective water management and food production, policies and legal framework on water management, and the revitalization of irrigation schemes. |

CID President Mr F Reinders said water sustains agriculture, energy and life. “With water shortages, climate-sensitive sectors in the country, like Agriculture, will continue to suffer the most”, concluded Reinders.

HYGIENE MUST COME FIRST

– says MEC Shongwe

Best performing abattoirs in the province were honoured for their role in ensuring food security and maintaining hygiene during the 2018 Provincial Abattoirs Rating Scheme (PARS) award ceremony. The glittering ceremony took place on 15 November 2018, at Nooitgedacht Research Farm in Ermelo. Venter Plaashoenders Abattoir were announced as the 2018 PARS overall winner. Other abattoirs walked away with trophies for winning in different categories. They include Karan Beef, Ramburg Beef, Bergendal, Ramburg Pork, Lydenburg, Barberton, Glen Aggy, G3, Super D, Godi Poultry, Daybreak Sundra and Zaytoon.

Speaking at the awards, MEC Vusi Shongwe called on previously disadvantaged women and the youth, to participate in their numbers in the abattoir industry, as part of efforts to transform the industry. He called on the youth and women to take the industry by storm, while working with current players and well established abattoir owners to get the skills and best practices. PARS is a voluntary scheme registered under the Meat Safety Act as a Meat Safety Scheme, focusing mainly on Hygiene Assessment Systems (HAS).



MEC VR Shongwe with G3 Abattoir official who won 1st Runner-up in Low Throughput Red Meat category.



MEC VR Shongwe and HoD LS Monareng in a group picture with the DFDC leadership.

EFFORTS TO BOOST THE APPLE INDUSTRY IN MP UNDERWAY

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MEC Shongwe called on the levelling of the playing field in the industry, saying previously disadvantaged people, women and the youth in particular, must be incorporated in the entire value chain. The Summit was attended by stakeholders from as far as the Western Cape. This, as the DFDC looks at doubling the industry by 2050, regardless of challenges like the effects of Climate Change, pests, and the high costs of production and fertilizer.



Emerging apple producers at the summit.

HOD FACE UP TO FUMING EMERGING LIVESTOCK FARMERS

A rather hostile meeting with livestock farmers in Thulamahashe in the Bohlabela District on 29 November 2018, ended on a positive note when acting Head of Department Mr Lucky Monareng took the bull by the horns, and engaged the fuming farmers. The meeting, which lasted into the night took place at the Thulamashe Showgrounds, and saw some farmers staging a walk-out after they felt that some of their issues raised were not resolved according to their expectation.

The meeting was preceded by one with another group of livestock farmers from the same areas, but held at the DARDLEA offices in Bushbuckridge earlier in the day. The splinter group, demanded to be addressed by the DARDLEA management in their area, after initial plans to hold the meeting in Thulamahashe were changed on last minute due to continued service delivery protests which made the area inaccessible.

Among some of their grievances, was their frustration caused by the impact of drought on their livestock, saying they also lack grazing land, fencing, and fodder. "We also call on the Department to compensate us for the losses we have suffered so far. Our livestock, especially cattle, keeps dying daily because of the drought", said one farmer during the meeting. On the same day, the Head of Department held a meeting with staff from the District, with an aim to encourage and motivate them.



HOD Monareng engaging live stock farmer after a heated meeting. Insert: Vet officials chatting after a staff meeting with the HOD.

DARDLEA WELCOMES 24 VETS THROUGH CCS PROGRAMME

A new group of 24 young Veterinarian graduates who are part of the 2019 Compulsory Community Service (CCS) programme in Mpumalanga has been officially welcomed by the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs. The CCS Programme, which started in 2016, is rolled out by the national Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). It is aimed at promoting accessibility of veterinary services particularly in under-served and resource-poor areas, and to distribute the veterinary profession in an equitable manner.

The new graduates, who come from different provinces but chose Mpumalanga for the year-long contract, are the products of the 2018 class of the University of Pretoria's Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute. Their 12-month contract will see them rendering community service until the end of December 2019. Amongst others, they

closely monitor any possible outbreak of diseases of economic importance such as Foot and Mouth Disease, Rabies and Anthrax, but also attend to pets, as patients, in their respective municipalities where they have been placed.



Dr Ivy Meso (in a black top) with DARDLEA Veterinarians during the welcoming of the 2019 group of CCS Vets.



Dr Nomfundo Mnisi in a group picture with the 2019 CCS Vets.



MBOMBELA scoops the 2018 Greenest Municipality Award.

CITY OF MBOMBELA SCOOPS THE 2018 GREENEST MUNICIPALITY AWARD

MEC VR Shongwe has crowned the 2018 winners of the Greenest Municipality Competition during a gala dinner on 08th November 2018.

The City of Mbombela Local Municipality scooped the overall winner, walking away with R100-thousand Rand, while Steve Tshwete Local Municipality took 2nd place and won R75-thousand and Nkomazi Local Municipality taking position 3, pocketing R50-thousand. The City of Mbombela will represent Mpumalanga at the 2019 National Greenest Municipality Competition.

The gathering also witnessed the awarding of 5 other local municipalities that performed well in various categories like Most Improved, Best practises in Waste Management, Best practises in Landscaping, Tree Planting and Beautification, Best practises in energy efficiency and conservation and Best practices in Water Management and Sanitation.

The annual Greenest Municipality Competition is aimed at recognizing the contribution that the municipalities were making to address environmental protection, social upliftment and economic growth. The ceremony was graced by representatives from various stakeholders in districts; Mayors, Councillors, MMCs, Speakers, Acting Head at Dardlea, DEA, Rand Water, Rural Development and Land Reform, and the SAPS.



MEC VR Shongwe with HOD LS Monareng at the 2018 Greenest Municipality Competition.

CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE EQUIPMENT FOR STUDY GROUPS

MEC Vusi Shongwe says the Athole Research Farm outside Amsterdam in the Gert Sibande District will have to benefit emerging farmers, agriculture students at the University of Mpumalanga and learners who will visit it for demonstrations, excursions, and on-the-field experience, for both crop and animal production.



MEC VR Shongwe congratulating one of the beneficiaries from the study groups.

The MEC made the announcement during the handing over of conservation agriculture equipment to 14 study groups on 02 November 2018, at the government farm. “This equipment is part of the Department’s attempts to align its services to farmers with smart agriculture and environmentally-friendly initiatives.

The equipment, a Single, Two and Four row No-Till Oxen and Tractor-drawn Planters, including Boom Sprayers, will ensure that no soil degradation or erosion takes place during tilling and planting”, said MEC Shongwe.

The gathering on the cold and rainy day also formed part of the farm’s revival. The MEC said Athole needed to be brought back to its former glory as a Centre of Excellence in Technology and Development. The handing over of the equipment was witnessed by the acting Executive Mayor of Gert Sibande District Municipality, Msukaligwa Local Municipality Executive Mayor, and acting Head of DARDLEA, Mr Lucky Monareng, AgriSA and the beneficiaries of the implements. Athole Research Farm has 851ha mainly used for livestock and crop research.



MEC VR Shongwe congratulating one of the young farmers who benefited from the programme

DARDLEA DEPLOYS SOIL SCIENTISTS TO OTHER DISTRICTS

The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs has committed to take three Soil Scientists for an advanced training so that they are able to operate State-of-the-Art soil testing machines at the Soil Laboratory at Nooitgedatch Research Farm in Ermelo. The three officials have always been stationed at the Lab in Ermelo.

Head of Department Mr Lucky Monareng says a decision has since been taken for only one of them to remain at Nooitgedatch, while the other two will be stationed at Head Office in Mbombela, to cover and render soil testing to benefit emerging farmers in both Ehlanzeni and Bohlabela Districts.



THE CLIMATE CHANGE SCHOOLS PROGRAMME ATTRACTS MORE SCHOOLS

Schools that are playing a part in mitigating the effects and impact of Climate Change were honoured at a gathering in Manzana, in the Chief Albert Luthuli Municipality. The Department, through its Environmental Affairs Chief Directorate, held a Climate Change Schools Programme prize giving event on 11 October 2018, which has since attracted the attention of over 500 schools throughout the province that participate in.

The programme targets schools, with an aim to encourage learners and their educators to play a part in environmental programmes, which in turn go a long way in mitigating the effects and impact of Climate Change.

Learners and their Educators with sound Environmental Programmes walked away with Trophies, Jojo Tanks, Digital Cameras, shovels, garden forks, watering cans etc. Speaking at the prize giving event, MEC VR Shongwe appreciated the role played by learners on issues affecting the environment, at their ages, and contributing to Climate Change mitigation. The event was also graced by the Acting Mayor of the Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality, the Head in the DARDLEA, stakeholders from sister Departments, parastals and sponsors like Enviro Loo, amongst others.



MEC Shongwe and a Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality senior official with some of Climate Change Schools Programme winners.



MEC Shongwe, HOD LS Monareng and a Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality senior official with some of 2018 Climate Change Schools Programme winners.

A STATE-OF-THE-ART VET CLINIC FOR **MARAPYANE**

MEC Vusi Shongwe has called on local people in Marapyane in the Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality to take advantage of the free Veterinary services rendered at the old Marapyane College, which has since been re-opened as a Farmer Training Centre. This after a state-of-the-art Veterinary Clinic became fully operational late in 2018.

Local pet owners in Marapyane and surrounding villages have already started taking advantage of the rare Vet service at their door step, bringing their best friends for



Local people bringing their best friends for check-ups at the Vet Clinic.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries on foot-and-mouth disease in Limpopo

Foot-and-Mouth disease is a severe, highly contagious viral disease which affects livestock with significant economic impact. The disease affects cattle, pigs (domestic and wild), sheep, goats, and other cloven hoofed animals.



Note: The disease does not affect human beings.

Signs of the disease may include:

Depressed animals, sores in the mouth of animals causing reluctance to eat and lameness.

Any suspected case of the disease in animals must be reported to the local State Veterinarian immediately.



government
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



agriculture, rural development,
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MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
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DARDLEA AIMS AT FORGING BUSINESS RELATIONS WITH SERBIA

MEC Vusi Shongwe has called on his top management to prioritize accelerating the process of securing a market for local agricultural produce in Serbia. He made the call during a meeting with Mr Zarko Taric from Serbia, who paid a brief visit to the Leadership of the Department on 23rd October 2018 in Mbombela.

Taric spoke of his country's interest in agriculture products from Mpumalanga, saying they are in dire need of, amongst others, products like dried fruits and soy beans.

He said Serbia is well positioned, geographically in Europe, thereby widening the potential market for Mpumalanga to neighbouring countries like Kazakstan, Balgrade and Romania.

In June 2017, MEC Shongwe led a delegation on an out-bound mission to the province of Novi-Sad in Serbia, visiting a Tractor Assembling Plant to gather information and first-hand experience as part of plans to start a similar project in Mpumalanga.

Taric and MEC Shongwe also agreed on arranging a visit for a Mpumalanga delegation to Serbia, that will assist on a first-hand account of the Serbian market.



CFO MA Letswalo, HOD LS Monareng, MEC VR Shongwe and Serbian

RISEFM CEMENTS RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Mpumalanga's only commercial radio station RiseFM 94.3 held its annual Thanks Giving gala evening on 09 November 2018 outside Mbombela. The station handed out Certificates of Appreciation to its stakeholders, and our very own Head of Department Mr Lucky Monareng was there to accept the DARDLEA's. It was announced at the event that the station is gaining momentum and growing in listenership.

Speaking on behalf of the provincial government, Culture, Sport and Recreation MEC Ms Thandi Shongwe said "The news that the station's listenership is growing is good news for the provincial government, all Departments and parastatals, because this guarantees us that we are able to successfully communicate our programmes to the desired target and relevant beneficiaries of our services, especially the youth", said MEC Shongwe.



HOD LS Monareng with MEC Thandi Shongwe.



HOD LS Monareng with RiseFM's Cheeseboy and Mpumi Mbethe.



NEW TECHNOLOGY AS PART OF SMART AGRICULTURE

A group of women from eMagogeni in Nkomazi during a demonstration on how to plant on the pyramid tower.

The Department has started rolling-out a new farming technology called the Pyramid Tower gardens to assist ordinary households and vegetable farmers throughout the province to enhance their production. The new technology is aimed at encouraging farming in all areas; urban areas, old-age homes, disability centres and schools that do not have enough space and/or land to establish food gardens.

Through its Phezukomkhono Mlimi programmes, the department formally introduced the new technology to the beneficiaries at Ekujabuleni Centre for the Disabled, in Emjindini in November 12, 2018. A demonstration was also conducted at the centre to showcase how the pyramid tower garden works.

The Ekujabuleni centre is one of the many projects that has already benefitted from the department's smart agriculture initiative, after receiving 5 (five) pyramid towers from the department. The beneficiaries welcomed the initiative, and they are positive that the new technology will really change their lives.

The pyramid tower garden is easy to assemble and can be placed anywhere, even in a balcony. It saves water, and is user-friendly for people with disabilities and elderly persons. With its preferred bag of potting soil, the pyramid can take up to 56 seedlings, which, in a normal food garden, requires a lot of space. The recommended vegetables that can be planted in a pyramid tower garden are leafy plants such as spinach, lettuce and green onion.

The Pyramid Towers were first introduced at the launch of the 2018 Planting Season in eMagogeni, in the Nkomazi Local Municipality.



A pyramid tower garden.

RESEARCH CORNER

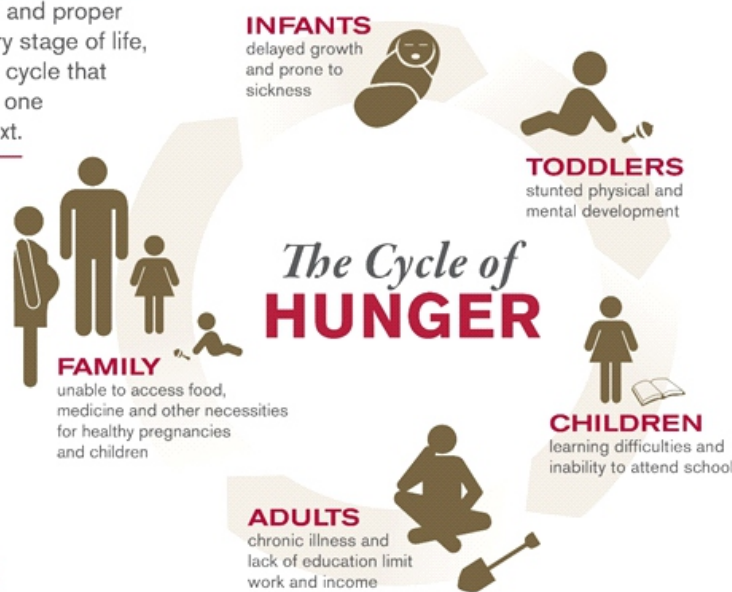
Rabbit Production: Nobody needs to go hungry



Food insecurity is one of the gravest manifestations of poverty and child poverty in particular in SA. A third of children is stunted as a result of chronic malnutrition.

We also have a high underweight for-age incidence with 21.3% occurrence nationally in 2016. 13-14 Million people go hungry in SA.

Lack of healthy food and proper nutrition affects every stage of life, trapping people in a cycle that passes hunger from one generation to the next.



Could the rabbit contribute in solving this problem of malnutrition and hunger?

It is a fact universally acknowledged that rabbits reproduce at a rapid rate. But did you know that rabbit meat is kosher, halal and acceptable for Hindus who decline beef for religious reasons? All of that is good news for the world-wide war on hunger

Rabbit is a solution for protein-energy malnutrition in the developing world. Rabbits, are easy to raise, procreate, are relatively disease-free, more easily digestible than some other proteins, are low-fat and have a pleasant taste. While wild rabbits are a little gamier, domestic rabbits taste—okay—a lot like chicken and can be adapted to a wide variety of international culinary tastes. But perhaps the most important element in popularizing rabbit production is that the animals can be raised on a grain-free diet. In a world of rising prices and increasing demand for grain, the ability to raise a good protein on garden forage is a plus in poor countries.

Ten females and one male can produce around 200 offspring per year. That's enough to provide high protein meat for the family and have some left over to sell at the local market. Rabbits feed on grass, their manure is a great addition to the vegetable garden and their meat is a healthy protein

Reasons for consuming rabbit meat:

1. It is one of the best white meats available on the market today.
2. The meat has a high percentage of easily digestible protein.
3. It contains the least amount of fat among all the other available meats.
4. Rabbit meat contains less calorie value than other meats.
5. Rabbit meat is almost cholesterol free and therefore heart patient friendly.
6. The sodium content of rabbit meat is comparatively less than other meats.
7. The calcium and phosphorus contents of this meat or more than any other meats.
8. The ratio of meat to bone is high meaning there is more edible meat on the carcass than even a chicken.
9. Rabbit meat with the many health benefits does not have a strong flavour and is comparable to chicken but not identical.
10. Rabbits are one of the most productive domestic livestock animal there is. Rabbits can produce 6 pounds of meat on the same feed and water as the cow will produce 1 pound of meat on the same feed and water.

So as you can see there are many health benefits to eating rabbit meat. It is healthy for you and cheap to produce.





THE PERFORMANCE OF TEN DESI CHICKPEA GERMPLASM IN MPUMALANGA LOWVELD

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INTRODUCTION

Chickpea (*Cicer arietinum* L.) is a herbaceous, annual plant of the pea family (*Fabaceae*), that grows to 45- 60 cm high. Chickpeas are not grown in South Africa commercially. It has well developed tap root, concentrated in the top 45 cm that can grow to 2 m deep. It is highly self- pollinated with natural out crossing < 1%. The number of seeds per pod varies from 1 to 2 with a maximum of three. Chickpeas are rich source of iron and can be utilized in different ways such as tender chickpea leaves and twigs as spinach, or green immature seeds as vegetables. Dried seeds are fried, roasted or boiled and consumed as whole grains. Based on seed size and colour, cultivated chickpeas are of two types, Desi and Kabuli. Desi types usually have small angular, mostly brown seeds, with rough surface. About 85% of the chickpea area is under desi type (Ramaiah, 1983). Chickpea has high drought resistance, and a re more suitable for growing in dry environments than common beans which are more susceptible to drought (Mathews et al., 2005).

Several sets of elite desi and kabuli genotypes developed at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi- Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Patancheru, India were tested in Mpumalanga province in the past. The desi type was found superior in its adaptability to the local environment when compared to kabuli. As a result, superior desi genotypes from these studies were further tested during the 2016 -2017 cropping season to identify the most outstanding ones for farmer participatory variety evaluations in the coming season.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ten ICRISAT chickpea varieties were evaluated in a field trial carried out at the University of Mpumalanga farm (25° 25' 55" S, 30° 58' 34" E) at Nelspruit, Mpumalanga province in a Randomized Complete Block Design (RCBD) with three replications. The plot size was four rows of 4 m long, with inter and intra row spacing of 40 cm and 10 cm respectively. The seed placement was at 7 cm deep and 40 seeds per row. Planting was done on the 3rd of May 2016 and harvested from 153 to 155 days after planting. The data on establishment, plant height, yield and yield parameters were recorded and analyzed statistically.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study showed greater grain yields in eight genotypes compared to the control (ICCV 97125) that yielded 552 kg ha⁻¹. Greater grain yields were recorded in the varieties ICCV 3203 (935 kg ha⁻¹), ICCV 92944 (893 kg ha⁻¹), ICCV 8101 (794 kg ha⁻¹) and ICCV 4110 (729 kg ha⁻¹) (figure 1). A similar trend was also observed with the pod yields of these genotypes (data not shown). Although statistically there was a different amongst the tested varieties.

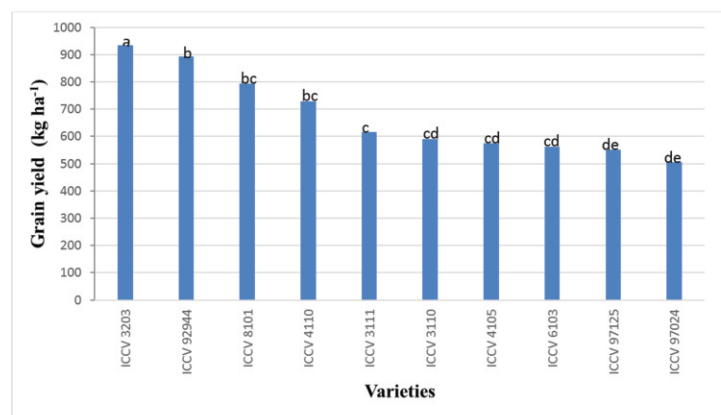


Figure 1. The grain yield of ten chickpea varieties at the University of Mpumalanga

CONCLUSION

The outstanding varieties selected based on their grain yield and other parameters such as shelling percentage, plant height, number of pods per plant, number of seeds per pod and days to maturity would be further pushed to the smallholder farmers across the lowveld of Mpumalanga Province.

Keywords: Chickpea, germplasm, grain yield and smallholder farmers.

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