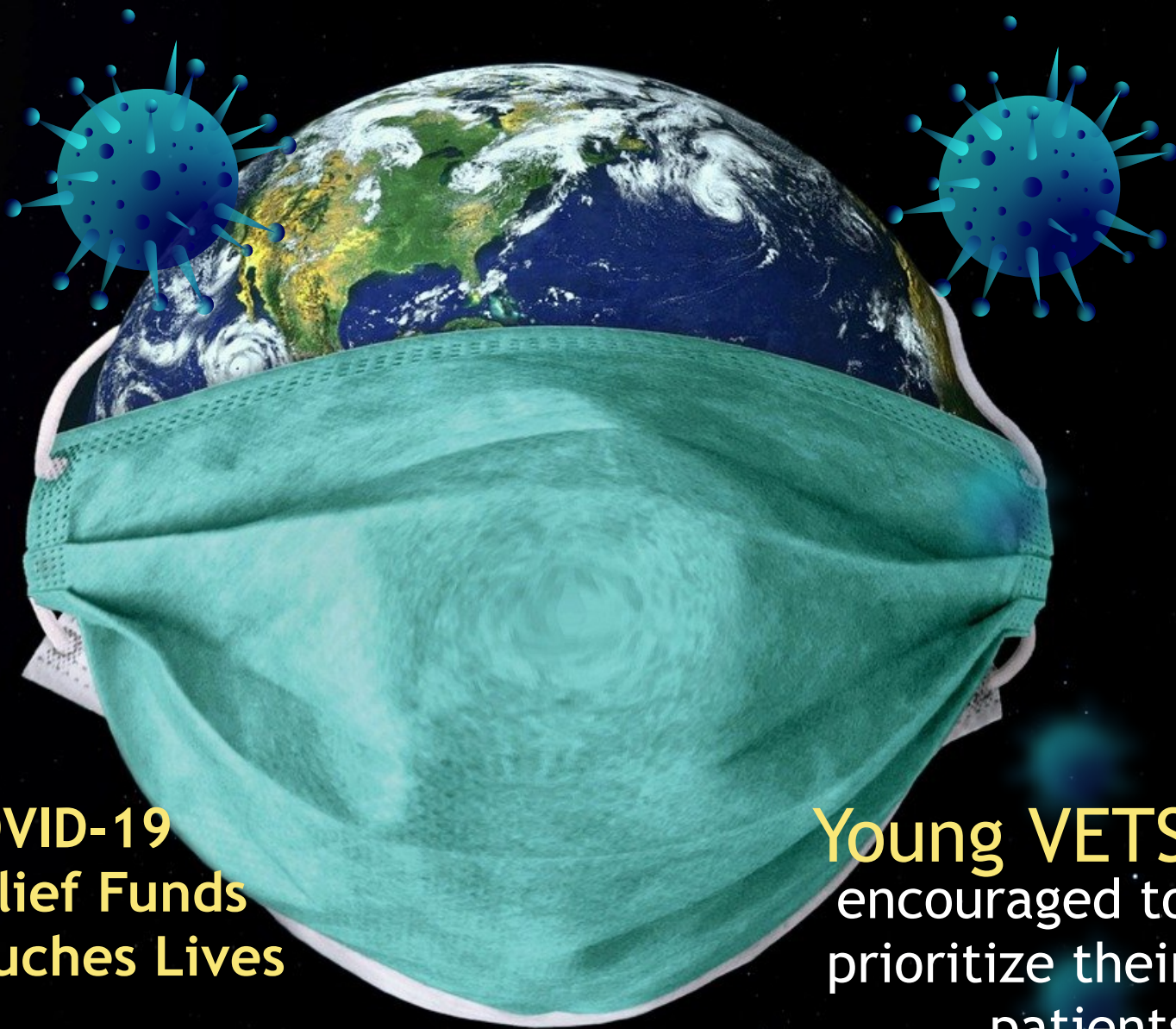


TEKULIMA

Issue 13

NENTUTHUKO



**COVID-19
Relief Funds
Touches Lives**

**A partnership
with Isiswe Mill to
benefit farmers**

**Young VETS
encouraged to
prioritize their
patients**

**The First
Fortune-40
group Graduates**



agriculture, rural development,
land & environmental affairs

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

5 JUNE 2020



**IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP.
TO TAKE NOTICE.
THIS WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY,
IT'S TIME FOR NATURE.**

Theme: BIODIVERSITY

THE FOUNDATION THAT SUPPORTS ALL LIFE ON LAND AND BELOW WATER

- 8 million plant and animal species
- the ecosystems that house them
- the genetic diversity amongst all life

Biodiversity affects every aspect of human health, providing clean air and water, nutritious foods, scientific understanding and medicine sources, natural disease resistance, and climate change mitigation.

We live in a connected world and human health is linked to the planet's health. Changing or removing one link of this connection affects the entire system that supports biodiversity and human life

IT'S TIME FOR...

- INDIVIDUALS** - to rethink what we buy and use
- ENTREPRENEURS** - to build and change businesses to sustainable models.
- FARMERS AND FOOD PRODUCERS** - to restore overworked fields and stop the assault on habitats
- CIVIL SOCIETY** - to increase efforts to revitalize and protect our earth's fragile ecosystems
- PUBLIC SECTOR** - to incorporate bold sustainable practices in their supply chains and financing
- GOVERNMENTS** - to protect wild spaces with ambition and accountability
- EDUCATORS** - to inspire students to live harmoniously with the earth.
- YOUTH** - to become fierce gatekeepers of a green future.

BIODIVERSITY AND COVID-19



COVID-19 is zoonotic, meaning it is a virus that is transmitted between animals and people. Biodiversity loss provides opportunity for pathogens to pass between animals and people.

Research shows that these diseases are on the rise.



FACTORS THAT INCREASE ZOOZOSIS EMERGENCE

- Illegal and poorly regulated wildlife trade** (Icon: animal in cage)
- Deforestation and land use changes** (Icon: person cutting tree)
- Anti-microbial resistance** (Icon: microorganism)
- Intensified agriculture and livestock production** (Icon: farm with chickens)
- Climate Change** (Icon: dead tree)

SCIENTISTS WARN THAT IF WE CONTINUE TO IGNORE THE CAUSES OF THESE ZOOZOTIC DISEASES, WE MAY BE INFECTED WITH VIRUSES THAT CAUSE PANDEMICS EVEN MORE DISRUPTIVE THAN COVID-19.



agriculture, rural development,
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Editor's Note



MS ZJ SHABANGU

The whole world is watching in awe about life changing implications of this pandemic. The economy is helplessly on its knees. Fear of the unknown, future is palpable.

Some Environmentalists indicated that the COVID-19 lockdown implemented nationwide from the 26th of March 2020 to curb the spread of the Coronavirus, has yielded positive results when it comes to air pollution. It is said that during the lockdown the air was less polluted, as most daily activities were kept on hold, and only essential and frontline workers were allowed to move to their work place.

Agriculture is also an essential service, therefore, activities have been taking place to ensure that our farmers are kept safe whilst working the land to produce the much needed food supply. As we publish this edition, we would like to assure our readers that we still have a lot to communicate about and some means will be made to get information at their disposal.

We will share information produced by the Department's Researchers, to empower farmers whose mammoth task of food production is challenging during these desperate times.

Enjoy reading our infographics covering valuable information on Environmental and Veterinary Services that we have produced for easy and enjoyable read.

We are still available on our social media platforms with updated information.

Our lives will never be the same after the end of the coronavirus pandemic.

Some people have lost their loved ones due to the COVID-19 epidemic countrywide and in the entire world. May the souls of the departed rest in peace.

As our country enters into level 3 to open up the economy and general social activities, there are concerns that many people will still be infected, during this winter season. We need to stay positive, and hope that this invisible coronavirus will subside and eventually get wiped out of our valuable lives.

The fourth quarter of the previous financial year which ended in March 31st, did not close in the usual manner, because of the lockdown which had some very strict protocols and tight regulations that had to be adhered to by all citizens.

#Staysafethereisstillhope



HOD'S FOREWORD

The COVID-19 crisis is affecting the entire world's economy and that of Africa. Some key sectors of economies are already experiencing a slowdown. Tourism,

Air Transport, and the Oil Sector are amongst those visibly impacted. However, more invisible impacts of COVID-19 are expected regardless of the duration of the pandemic.

Declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020, COVID-19 has become a global emergency, given its impact on the entire world population.

However, during this difficult period, food security has remained even more vital for the nation and it is for this reason that as agriculture we remain an essential service.

The Department has been in operation since the Lockdown was declared to ensure that the much needed food is produced across the Province.

None of us know when the pandemic will end, or what more of the "new normal" awaits us when it does. But the current feeling of helplessness is immeasurably frustrating, because the "new normal", amongst others, forces us to find new ways to comfort and cheer one another in this difficult times - even though the closest we can get to another person is 1,5 metres apart as per the regulations.

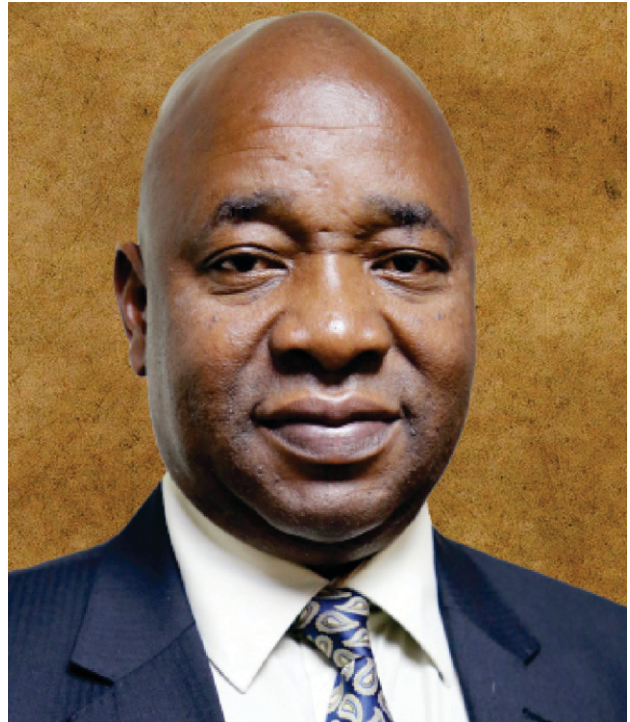
It has always been part of our culture to have difficult conversations in person, but when physical gestures of support are prohibited, like shaking hands and hugging as they are now, we must adapt.

This is our new normal. According to the World Health Organisation, this is one of the best ways to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The cruelty of the global pandemic seems limitless. So many broken promises, broken connections, broken hearts. Today for example, the bereaved - children, parents, spouses, siblings - are very much alone in the aftermath of a death.

They mourn without the friends, co-workers, etc. That is sadly how COVID-19 has shaped our livelihoods and imposed the "new normal" on us

MR LS MONARENG



The pandemic's death toll creeps steadily upward daily, enough evidence that COVID-19 is heartbreakingly real. Let us all follow and stick to the regulations as set out by the Department of Health that are aimed at flattening the curve. Let us keep the physical distance; let us wash our hands regularly; and let us wear our masks when in public places.

The best we can do, is to stay at home and keep away from crowded places where applicable.

I thank you...





MEC VR SHONGWE

To ensure that the nation has access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, farm workers' health is supreme.

One of the most important issues is the transportation of farm workers to ensure maximum safety and stop further spread of the corona virus.

Below are regulations stipulated in line with transportation of farm workers:

Vehicles used to transport workers to and from work should be utilised at no more than 50% of the vehicle's licensed capacity, and directions in terms of hygiene must be adhered to.

No more than 60% of the capacity of private vehicles are exceeded.

All directions in respect of hygienic conditions and the limitation of exposure to persons with Covid-19 must be adhered to.

All employees and drivers should at all times be in possession of the documentation (a permit) designating them to perform an essential service.

- a) Employees are required to follow hygiene procedures such as using hand sanitisers and/or washing hands before entering a vehicle.
- b) Public transport vehicles must be sanitised before picking up and after dropping off passengers.
- c) All drivers and assistants must wear masks.
- d) When employees are transported they must sit less than one meter apart,
- e) Make them aware of the necessary health precautions, such as coughing into one's elbow and using a tissue when sneezing.
- f) Also try to get teams to work and be transported in shifts.

Farm owners and employers are encouraged to follow all the precautions and regulations strictly to protect the workers and the production. In this way the spread of the virus will be stopped and the country will manage to flatten the curve

The Covid-19 virus could be invisible to a naked human eye but its rampant effects are noticeable.

In order to survive as people, we must change our way of life. Our attitude, belief systems and values must be drastically altered if we hope to continue to live longer on earth.

The responsibility is in our hands. Put differently, everyone has a duty to safeguard a life.

Government can regulate, through pieces of legislations, what we should do and not do, but police can enforce the law on a group of friends who indulge on binge drinking at some obscure location.

Government cannot police every Jabu, Sbusiso and Nomathemba who do not adhere to social distance, wash their hands frequently and wear masks especially when in public spaces.

When Lockdown was first announced, the entire country was on standstill and all operations were brought to a halt, but farming was identified as essential service along sectors such as health, safety and security.

Now, there are non-negotiable basics that as farmers and farm workers we should be mastering at this stage.



Sugarcane theft concerns MEC Shongwe

The DARDLEA MEC Mr Vusi Shongwe has voiced his concerns after thugs started raiding and stealing sugarcane from farms in Nkomazi. The thieving trend in sugarcane farms reportedly increased since the lockdown began after the Covid-19 upsurge. It is believed that the hoodlums illegally harvest sugarcane to manufacture homemade beer.

A disappointed Shongwe is unimpressed with this criminality. “It is unacceptable that some elements who defy a noble call to desist from alcohol consumption during the lockdown resort to stealing from farmers to produce their own alcohol”, said Shongwe.

“It takes long hours of hard labour for farmers and their workers to produce the sugarcane, and it cannot be that their sweat is disregarded through acts of criminality,” added Shongwe, who also advised farmers to be vigilant and put up measures, which are legally acceptable, to protect their farms.

COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS TOUCHES LIVES

Mr Bongani Mkhwanazi is from Esperanza near Secunda in Goven Mbeki Local Municipality. He is one of the many smallholder farmers who benefitted from the government's Covid-19 Relief Fund that is aimed at rescuing struggling farmers during this difficult period of the pandemic.

After starting with 4 sheep and 10 cattle in 2010, his 200 ha farm now boasts over 60 ewes and cattle. He also owns a baling machine, a ryk and a used tractor. Mkhwanazi says the financial support came at a better time when the livestock was struggling with feed due to the cold weather conditions. He applauded DARDLEA officials who assisted him when applying for the Relief Fund.



Mr Bongani Mkhwanazi



Left: Farmer representatives and on the Right: MEC VR Shongwe and HOD LS Monareng engaging farmers on the PPEs.

THOUSANDS OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT DONATED TO FARMER ORGANIZATIONS

Farm owners and management have been given a strict warning to protect workers wellbeing by getting them protective apparatus like masks, gloves and hand sanitizers, to prevent any further spread of Covid-19 virus.

MEC Vusi Shongwe cautioned the farming community about serious dangers posed by the airborne virus when he donated thousands of masks to farmer organisations, associations and other sector stakeholders.

“Farm owners must prioritise the safety of their workers, by providing them with protective masks and gloves. Social distance must also be adhered to,” pleaded Shongwe. He also pleaded with farm owners to donate food to poor farm dwellers and workers. “It really makes no sense at all that people who live and work in the farms go hungry, yet they are part of the food production process”, concluded Shongwe.

EFFORTS FOR A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY CONTINUE

The Lowveld hosted an occasion of the USAID/South Africa Low Emission Development Programme close-up event at Ingwenyama Lodge outside White River.

The 5-year USAID-funded programme is aimed at supporting the South African Government in its effort to transition to a low-carbon economy through the promotion of green growth, as part of ensuring a cleaner and safer planet for generations to come. MEC Vusi Shongwe in his capacity as a Leader of Government Business officially opened the gathering on behalf of the Premier Ms Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane.

Addressing the gathering MEC expressed appreciation for the decision to bring the Close Out Event to the province of the Rising Sun. He further applauded the work of Dr Henry Roman and his leadership collective for the sterling work that is being done in reducing our Carbon Emissions.



MEC VR Shongwe and HOD Lucky Monareng posing for a picture with other delegates.

“We need to reduce agricultural emissions while maintaining consistent economic output and ensuring that our agricultural sector is productive and is capable of meeting the food demand of an exponentially growing world population,” MEC said

A PARTNERSHIP WITH ISISWE MILL TO **BENEFIT** FARMERS

MEC VR Shongwe says forging a partnership between the Isiswe Mill and Government will go a long way in benefitting not only farmers with a market, but also in creating employment and ensuring food security.

Shongwe led a Departmental delegation to the Grain Processing Mill in Middleburg, in a visit which included a tour of the Mill for a first-hand account of the operations at the establishment, and a brief on how the Mill plans on benefitting farmers and reduce unemployed in the province.



MEC VR Shongwe and HOD LS Monareng inspecting operations at the Isiswe Mill.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

MEC Vusi Shongwe urged women to make themselves available for leadership positions in politics, government and in all facets of society. He was addressing women during the International Women's Day Celebration held in White River.

He emphasized that women are a pillar of strength at their respective homes and in their workplace. "If a man can be an MEC, Head of department, Director General, women can also occupy those positions and in most instance do better than men", he said. Shongwe urged women to continue building their homes and children. International Women's Day is celebrated annually on March 8th, throughout the world.



MEC VR Shongwe and HOD LS Monareng joined in the celebrations.

YOUNG VETS ENCOURAGED TO PRIORITIZE THEIR PATIENTS

Acting head at the DARDLEA Mr Lucky Monareng has called on Veterinarians who join the Department through the Compulsory Community Service (CCS) programme to work hard in ensuring animal health. He says the animal doctors joined the Department at a time when their scarce skills and services were desperately needed due to unpredictable outbreaks of animal diseases.

26 young Vets who were part of the 2019 class at University of Pretoria's Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute, chose to serve their 2020 year-long CCS programme, coordinated by the national Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in all State Vet offices throughout the Province. The programme aims to promote accessibility of veterinary services particularly in under-served and resource-poor areas.



HOD LS Monareng (middle centre) in a group picture with the new Vets, their mentors and Vet Services Management.

DARDLEA MANAGEMENT VISITS AN ABATTOIR ON A FACT-FINDING MISSION

Acting Head of the DARDLEA Mr Lucky Monareng led a Senior Management delegation during a visit to Morgan Beef Abattoir in Delmas to benchmark, look at areas of collaboration and explore the running of a sustainable abattoir.

The abattoir boasts with a 26 000 capacity feedlot, slaughtering 500 cattle a day, through following a sustainable model which has created jobs in the whole value chain. The visit came as the Department is on a mission to upscale Agro-processing, following the opening of the Mkhondo Agri Hub. The visit saw the Management team touring the abattoir, starting from the feedlot right to the slaughtering.



Dardlea Senior Management stops for a brief before walking into the Morgan Beef abattoir.

TRUCKING COMPANIES WARNED AFTER TOXIC MATERIAL SPILLAGE

MEC Vusi Shongwe has emphasised the importance of trucking companies which transport hazardous materials to first seek authorisation and to keep to tight safety precautions. This after a collision involving a truck on the N12 near Emalahleni, which saw the spillage of a highly toxic Ammonia, which placed the lives of some residents of Emalahleni at risk. After the collision, the Ammonia started leaking on the road and some of it found its way into the drainage system which is connected to households.

According to available scientific text, when excessive amounts of Ammonia enters the human central nervous system, the brain defences become severely compromised. Shongwe commended Emalahleni Local Municipality for promptly arranging transport to remove residents who were exposed to the spillage.

ANIMAL PRODUCTION LEARNERS GET ON-THE-FIELD EXPERIENCE

About 65 young up and coming farmers who are part of an 18 month long accredited training on Animal Production at Marapyane Farmer Training centre in the DR JS Moroka Municipality, are on the ground in different farms in the Nkangala District for their on-the-job experience.

The group is part of the first intake after the Marapyane campus of the former Lowveld College of Agriculture was revived into a Farmer Training Centre. The state-of-the-art structure was left unused following the merger of the Agriculture College with the University of Mpumalanga. The on-the-job practical takes place at the farms where they have been placed, with their grooming focusing on piggery, sheep and poultry management.



Some of the Marapyane Farmer Training College students who are out in farms for their practicals.

"Its time for Nature"

WED 2020

World Environment Day is the biggest, most celebrated day for positive environmental action and it is held annually on June 5 to focus the world's attention on a pressing environmental issue.

It is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations (UN) stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and encourages action. Held annually since 1974, World Environment Day is a vital platform for promoting progress on the environmental dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

National Environment month is celebrated in June, with the South African government and captains of industry leading the way by stimulating awareness on environmental issues and challenging all to become agents for change.

The 2020 World Environment Day global campaign aims at highlighting how we as humans are inextricably linked to and depends on nature for our existence and quality of life. Recent events, from bushfires in Brazil, United States and Australia - to locust swarms - to the COVID-19 outbreak, highlights how meddling with ecosystems and biodiversity from its natural state is creating unprecedented challenges for humankind on a global scale.

The World Environment Day 2020 theme is: **"BIODIVERSITY"** and the slogan: **"IT'S TIME FOR NATURE"**.

Biodiversity describes the variety of life on Earth, including the 8 million plant and animal species on the planet, the ecosystems that house them, and the genetic diversity among them.

Biodiversity is a complex, interdependent web, in which each member plays an important role, drawing and contributing in ways that may not even be visible to the eye. Changing or removing one element of this web affects the entire life system and can produce negative consequences. Without nature, life on earth would not be possible.

Biodiversity is the foundation that supports all life on land and below water. It affects every aspect of human health, providing clean air and water, nutritious foods, scientific understanding and medicine sources, natural disease resistance, and climate change mitigation.

The five **main drivers of biodiversity loss**, as identified by the latest *Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Africa* and the *Global Environment Outlook 6 (GEO-6)*, stem from our activity. Biodiversity loss can be prevented through changing what we consume, how we produce and where we protect nature. Stronger environmental policies and accountability measures will help drive these changes in behaviour. The drivers are; Land-Use Change, Overexploitation of Plants and Animals, Climate Emergency, Pollution and Invasive Alien Species

BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND COVID19 - This World Environment Day, as many are isolated at home, let us reflect on what got us here. The coronavirus pandemic is reminding us that we live in a connected world and that human health is linked to the planet's health. It's an opportunity to revisit our relationship with nature and rebuild a more environmentally responsible world.

The emergence of COVID-19 has underscored the fact that when we destroy biodiversity, we destroy the system that supports human life. The more biodiverse an ecosystem is, the more difficult it is for one pathogen to spread rapidly or dominate; whereas, biodiversity loss provides opportunity for pathogens to pass between animals and people.

Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people and research shows that these diseases are on the rise. Zoonoses that emerged or re-emerged recently are Ebola, bird flu, Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), the Nipah virus, Rift Valley fever, sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), West Nile virus, Zika virus disease, and, now, the coronavirus. They are all linked to human activity. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa was the result of forest losses leading to closer contacts between wildlife and human settlements; the emergence of avian influenza was linked to intensive poultry farming; and the Nipah virus was linked to the intensification of pig farming and fruit production in Malaysia.

The World Health Organization reports that an animal is the likely source of the 2019 coronavirus (COVID-19), which has infected tens of thousands of people worldwide and placed a strain on the global economy. According to the World Health Organization, bats are the most probable carrier of the COVID-19 but added that it is possible that the virus was transmitted to humans from another intermediate host, either a domestic or a wild animal like the pangolin.

UNEP's Frontiers 2016 Report on Emerging Issues of Environment Concern shows zoonoses threaten economic development, animal and human well-being, and ecosystem integrity. Scientists predict that if we do not change our behaviour towards wild habitats, we are in danger of more virus outbreaks. To prevent future zoonoses, we must address the multiple threats to ecosystems and wildlife, including habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution, invasive species and, increasingly, climate change.

Drivers of zoonotic diseases are, amongst other, the trafficking of wild animals and their body parts around the world, the shocking pet trade in wild animals, the slow destruction of wild spaces, the reducing of genetic diversity and humans' role in causing climate change and extreme weather events. We have created ideal conditions for the spread of viruses between animal and human populations. It is impossible to predict where the next outbreak will come from or when it will be. Growing evidence suggests that outbreaks or epidemic diseases may become more frequent as climate continues to change and if we continue to ignore the causes of these zoonotic diseases, we may be infected with viruses that cause pandemics even more disruptive than Covid-19.



These are exceptional times in which nature is sending us a message. Bushfires are ablaze driving pollution. Dislodging us from our homes. Threatening global food security. Accelerating the extinction of species. Glacial ice is melting at alarming rates while ocean acidification threatens the ocean's productivity. Locust invasions are bringing our harvests to the ground. Contagions are causing loss of lives and livelihoods including the Covid-19 crisis; forcing our lives to come to a stand-still. Nature is showing us that life as we know it is on the verge of a breakdown.

It's Time to wake up. To take notice.

This World Environment Day, **It's Time for Nature.**

It's Time for individuals - to rethink what we buy and use.

It's Time for entrepreneurs - to build and change businesses to sustainable models.

It's Time for farmers and food producers - to restore overworked fields and stop the assault on pristine habitats, from wetlands to forests.

It's Time for civil society - to increase efforts to revitalize and protect our earth's fragile ecosystems.

It's Time for public sector - to incorporate bold sustainable practices in their supply chains and financing.

It's Time for governments - to protect wild spaces with ambition and accountability.

It's Time for educators - at every level to inspire students to live harmoniously with the earth.

It's Time for youth - to become fierce gatekeepers of a green future.

It's Time to re-imagine our relationship with nature; and put it at the heart of our decision making. It will take not just one, not just a village, but an entire global community. To rise together.





All living things on Earth are connected in the web of life. These connections make up the fabric of nature—weakening or removing one form of life impacts the entire biodiversity ecosystem, making species vulnerable to extinction and natural systems less resilient. If we continue on this path unabated, the loss in biodiversity will have severe implications for humanity, from the collapse of food and health systems to the disruption of entire supply chains. Our unsustainable use of nature is largely to blame for this dramatic situation.

Youth Month

Youth from Sabie, Simile Location during the Youth Month took upon themselves to clean up the settlement as their continuous programme. The DARDLEA is assisting them with Personal Protective Equipment to ensure that the programme becomes sustainable as it seeks to address environmental degradation within the community.

- We need to halt deforestation and the destruction of natural habitats.
- We need to make use of existing nature-friendly, organic alternatives, and develop new ones, to feed ourselves and to maintain our health.
- We need to eliminate poverty so that people can find alternative ways to make a living other than by hunting and selling wild animals and destroying the environment.
- We need to “**build back better**” following COVID-19 with environment at the heart of decision making
- We need to connect our brains with our hearts and appropriately use our indigenous knowledge, science and innovative technologies to make wiser decisions about people, animals and our shared environment.



NEEDY FAMILIES BENEFIT FROM GOOD SAMARITANS DURING LOCKDOWN

More than a hundred needy families in the Gert Sibande District have benefitted from the generosity of farmers who decided to play their part in rescuing the most vulnerable during the Covid19 lockdown. Vegetable food hampers containing dry beans, onions, carrots, potatoes and spinach were donated to needy families who have been hit hard since the lockdown started on March 26th.

KwaSchebo Piggery Farming, Zimisele Junior Coop, Msukaligwa ADC and other farmers pledged to expand their reach and help more families who are food insecure, priority being given to child-headed households, the elderly and people living with disabilities.

The DARDLEA has applauded the gesture, and also encouraged more farmers to follow suit in ensuring that no one goes to bed hungry amid the lockdown, which is aimed at fighting against the spread of Corona Virus, which brought many economies around the world to a halt.



Above: A family pose for a picture after receiving their food parcels
Below: A local farmer sorting out vegetables before handing them over to deserving families.



Sterksdorp Farmers fighting hunger

Mpumalanga MEC for Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs Mr Vusi Shongwe has encouraged Sterksdorp Small Holder Farmers Enterprise Programme (SHEP) farmers to maintain their good working relationship as an association in ensuring that they produce the much needed food for the nation.

The farming project is operated by four community based associations, Lusito Lwesive, Masikhulisane, Juluka and Ingogo and has resulted in 75 permanent and 189 temporal jobs. Future plans for the project as announced by the MEC is the construction of a packhouse for the farmers to store their produce, some of which will be taken to the International Fresh Produce Market once it is operational.

Shongwe said he was pleased with the visit to the project which was long established, and the collaboration of farmers in one project with one vision that is shared by the Department as it reduces what he termed “food parcels dependency”.

The project has since been adopted as a special project for the Department. Currently the challenge facing the farmers is meeting the requirements of the SAGap. The farmers requested that the Department assist them to meet those requirements to be able to brand and package their produce.

Meet smallholder farmer Mr Nathan Lourie from farm Rietfontein 420 IS, in the Goven Mbeki Local Municipality. He boasts 99 herd of cattle and he is one of the many beneficiaries of the Covid-19 Disaster Relief Support Grant, with which he prioritised stocking up on cattle feed and suppliments that will see his animals through the cold winter season.

He says he is greatful for government's intervention, adding that there's no better timing on receiving such financial assistance that also enables him to pay his 4 permanent workers.



Mr Nathan Lourie's farm with his cattle feeding

THE FIRST F-40 GROUP GRADUATES

A new approach will be followed when recruiting and considering new beneficiaries of the Fortune 40 Young Farmer Incubation Programme. This is according to MEC VR Shongwe while speaking at an event that saw about 150 young incubates were given AGRI-SETA accredited certificates, after they were part of the programme since it was launched late in 2015.

The beneficiaries completed their theoretical and practical training. The Fortune 40 programme is aimed at encouraging previously disadvantaged youth into the field of agriculture, to make them sustainable farmers in poultry, aqua-culture, vegetable production, livestock farming and tractor mechanic.

The graduating group has been applauded for their patience and perseverance while the programme was being implemented from scratch, which had its own challenges that had to be overcome. MEC Shongwe called on the group to go out and play a part in creating employment for others. A process to recruit new F-40 beneficiaries immediately got underway for those who will form part of the programme for the next 3 years.



MEC VR Shongwe and HOD LS Monareng with F-40 graduates in a group picture with graduates.

FIRST F-40 AQUAPONICS PROJECT STARTS

The DARDLEA's Acting HOD Mr Lucky Monareng released the first stock of 1350 Tilapia Fingerlings, officially kickstarting production at the Silwanendlala/Mkhonto Coops in Mbombela. This is an Aquaponics project under the Fortune 40 Young Farmer Incubation Programme. The fish will mature in about 8-months, thereby becoming ready for the production cycle which will see the delivery of about 19.5 tons in production per annum.

This, as the Department encourages emerging farmers into aquaculture. Besides aquaculture, the project also covers crop production, with butternut, sweet potato, chillies, cabbage, lettuce, various seedlings, eggs and Macadamia among others, on its list.



Pictures taken during the release of the Talipia Fingerlings



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Coping with stress during the 2019-nCov outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.



If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required



Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions.

Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.



Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



2020 MEC's SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The annual MEC's Service Excellence awards ceremony keeps growing in leaps and bounds, and this year's event was spectacular. The setting was at Ingwenyama Lodge in White River.

In his keynote address, MEC Vusi Shongwe cautioned indolent employees whom he urged to pull up their socks. "There are always signs which you can pick up among lazy employees. They are normally late at work and leave early. They position themselves in a way which creates a false impression that they are busy. And yet, they are busy doing a lot of nothing," he warned.

MEC Shongwe also had special praises to hardworking employees. "There are many hard workers in this Department, who go way beyond the call of duty and their excellent work speak for itself". He further pointed out that the awards were also meant to encourage the spirit of optimal utilisation of resources.

He emphasised that the ceremony was aimed at appreciating excellence. The objectives of awarding employees are to promote good governance and accountability in the Department, and to inculcate the spirit of sharing best practices and deliver excellent service within the Department.

Winners were announced according to the following categories and they were presented with trophies and certificates.

Best-Implemented Programme/Project of the Year

- 1 Ms Rebecca Mangole
- 2 Ms Lethukuthula Shabangu
- 3 Ms Nellie Makhanya

Best Operational Employee of the Year

- 1 Mr Jones Maswidi Mahlangu
- 2 Mr Bheki Philemmon Madonsela
- 3 Ms Rebotile Mabel Mashile

Best (EPWP/Intern/Graduate) of the Year

- 1 Ms Eugenia Seepe
- 2 Ms Goodness Sibiya
- 3 Mr Chulumanco Mahlombe

Best Frontline Service Delivery Employee of the Year

- 1 Ms Tebogo Anastacia Sejeng
- 2 Ms Yvonne Hillary Morele

Best General Worker of the year

- 1 Ms Ntongolozzi Martha Ngwenya
- 2 Ms Namgidi Elizaberth Ndala
- 3 Mr Calton Samuel Sekatane



Best Batho Pele Team of the Year

- 1 Head Office - Research Team
- 2 Gert Sibande - Structured Agricultural Training Team
- 3 Nkangala - Animal Health Team

Best Innovative Project of the Year

- 1 Mr Thobela James Mhlanga
- 2 Ms Promise Xitshembiso Hlabane
- 3 Mr Selwana Michael Magongwa

Best Innovative Internal Systems of the Year

- 1 Ms Mbalenhle Penelope Mhlongo - Zulu
- 2 Mr Seyah Banda

MEC's Special Award

Best Innovative Internal Systems of the Year

- 1 Ms Mbalenhle Penelope Mhlongo - Zulu
- 2 Mr Seyah Banda

MEC's Special Award

- 1 Ms RS Srivinasan

HOD's Special Award

- 1 Mr GO Xaba

The vegetables and piggery production projects have 10 youths each, who will be incubated for a 3-year accredited NQF Level 3 training, upon which new groups will be absorbed into the Young Farmer Incubation Programme. Addressing the beneficiaries, MEC VR Shongwe said the projects are aimed at fighting hunger and youth unemployment in Daggakraal, but also to ensure that the young beneficiaries play a part in food security and the economy.

MEC VR Shongwe was at the Daggakraal Fortune-40 project at Driefontein farm in the Dr Pixley ka-Isaka Seme Local Municipality today, to assess progress at the newly established youth project. The 10ha portion accommodates the establishment of two Fortune-40 Coops, the second being the Sibonelo Piggery, with the construction of the piggery houses already underway.

Accompanied by Acting HOD Mr Lucky Monareng and a few senior managers and officials, MEC Shongwe led the entourage on a walk-about for a first-hand account on the progress made in water development, drilling and equipping a borehole, progress on water rights or a dam that is under development, and the completed vegetable tunnels and 10ha fencing.



Mandela Day

MEC VR Shongwe has called on young people to serve their communities with love, pointing out that every individual has a purpose which must be fulfilled. He was motivating a group of both young and old people in Sabie in the Thaba Chweu Local Municipality while participating in a clean-up of the town's taxi rank, including handing over PPEs and other working tools to Contshe Waste Pickers who are part of the Department's Zonda Insila Programme.

He later led his entourage, that included Acting HOD Mr LS Monareng, some Chief Directors and officials to the Theresa Willis Home of Hope, where they handed over food parcels, a Jojo Tank, including establishing a food garden.

The Mandela Day celebration turned out to be a great success thanks to a partnership with Impumelelo Education Trust and NEG Trading. The day was part of spending 67 minutes in the name of emulating Madiba's legacy. "We must all know that we should work for our people with love and that is what God expect from us", said Shongwe. All Covid-19 Protocols were strictly followed today, including frequent sanitizing and ensuring that everyone wore a mask.



Peri-urban Communal Grazing Land and Socio-economic Challenges: Advancing Small-scale Livestock Farming against All Odds

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Introduction

The loss of grazing lands in Peri-Urban areas of South Africa is of great concern to urban livestock farmers. Peri-urban livestock farming undoubtedly contributes to national food security and economic stability. The expansion of urban settlement as a result of the rural migrants who are often attracted to urban areas by greater economic opportunities and better services.

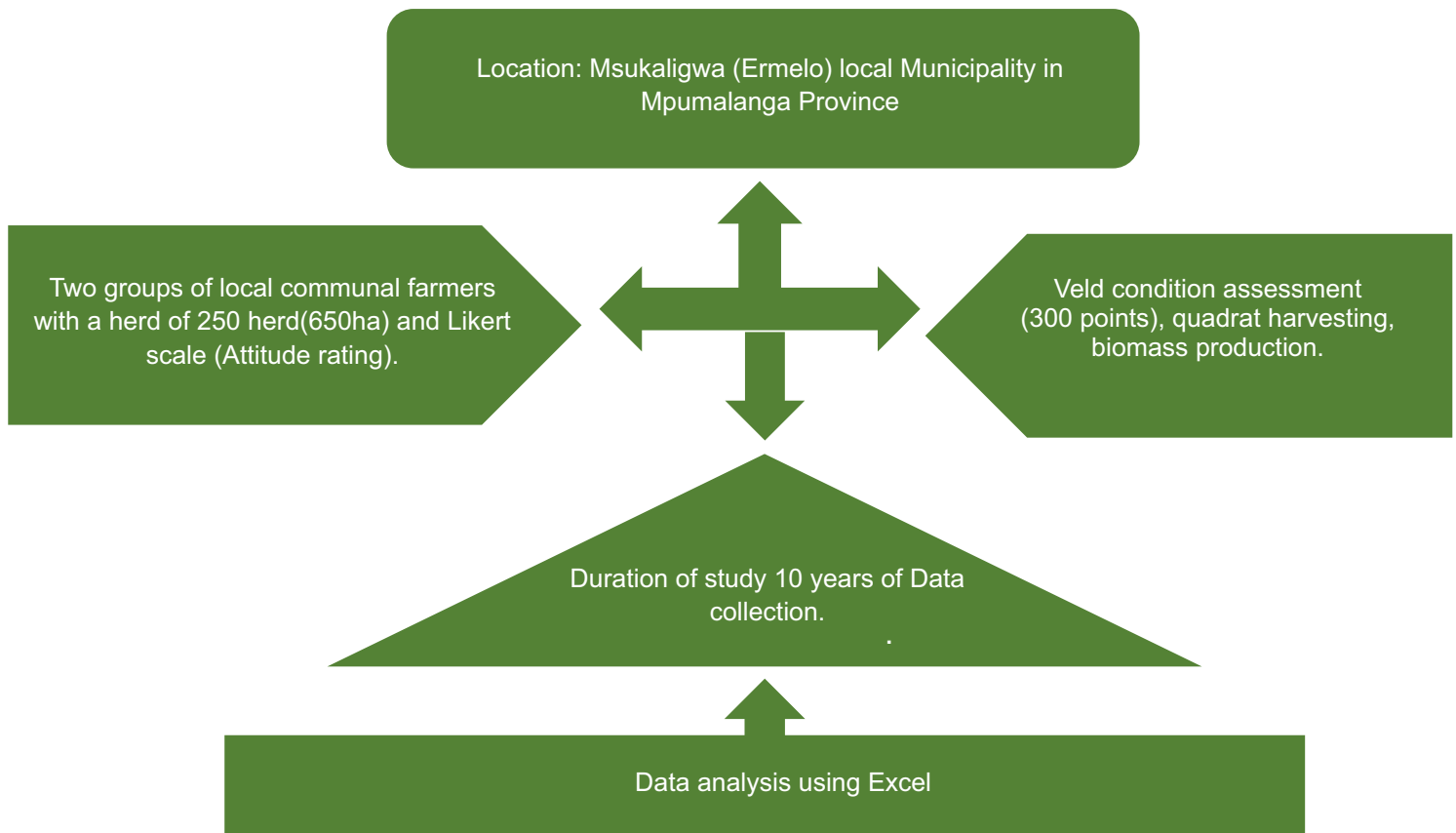
The mining boom in the Mpumalanga province also resulted in the migrant labour system and the associated urban expansion, particularly in the towns of Ermelo, Emalahleni and Middleburg. Land tenure policies and land invasion have made livestock farming in peri-urban areas less economically viable due to limited grazing lands. In addition, there is no intent by peri-urban land owners, often the local municipalities, to regulate the **stocking rate**. This puts additional pressure on the viability of already limited peri-urban grazing lands. All these lead to a bush encroachment of *Seriphium plamosum* it's called Bankrupt bush because of over grazing.

Objectives

This purpose of the research project is to study small-scale livestock farming in peri-urban areas by assessing the effect of urbanization trends on the condition of veld conditions in and around Ermelo townships, Msukaligwa Local Municipality.

Study methods

Two communal livestock farmers groups with a combined allotted peri-urban grazing areas of approximately 650 hectares was chosen for the study. The study was conducted assessing the **stocking rate and affordable fodder** in and around Ermelo townships, Msukaligwa Local Municipality. Veld condition assessment was conducted annually during April to May months from 2008 to 2018 in order to quantify the **stocking rate**.



The results show an average long term stocking rate of the area to be approximately **3.6 ha/LSU** during the grazing season. The effect of human settlement on communal grazing was evident through visible illegal land invasion of neighbouring private properties. Due to human settlement and mining activities the grazing area was reduced from 650 to 450 hectares and the biomass (quantity) production also showed a significant decrease from an average of **1 688 kg/ha in 2008 to 953 kg/ha in 2018** during the 10 years study period. The results showed no significant changes on species composition throughout the study period.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 show the state and condition of the grazing veld in 3018. Figure 4 shows overgrazing in 2018. This has subsequently reduced the stocking rate to **7.1 ha/LSU**. If this trend continues, the overgrazing will lead to a bush encroachment of *Seriphium plamosum* it's called Bankrupt bush (see Figure 5).



Figure 2: Veld Condition Assessment done in 2018 in this area.



Figure 4: Over grazing around 2018 veld assessment



Figure 5: Seriphium plamosum/ Stoebe valguris

Conclusion and recommendation

The farmers were generally dissatisfied with continuous reduction of grazing lands. Continuous peri-urban population density and high levels of unemployment potentially threatens the sustainability of communal grazing resource use. The outcome of the study was used as a guideline to transfer knowledge to local farmers on the significance of stocking rate. These include adhering to recommended stocking rate and affordable fodder. livestock will not be possible in the posing a serious threat livestock farming in peri-urban areas.

The study calls for peri-urban production technologies sustain continuous communal livestock production. As indicated by the findings of this study, veld management as main driver for livestock conducting peri-urban communal grazing land and socio-economic assessment is crucial to inform the veld management strategies and practices.

This calls for strong collaboration between Research, Farmer Support Services and farmers to develop initiatives that will improve accessibility and affordability of fodder for livestock farmers to keep livestock farming in peri-urban areas viable.

HEALTH & WELLNESS



PREPARING YOUR CHILD TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL MANAGING COVID-19



1. Practice good hygiene routines at home before so they start to feel familiar.



2. Help your child become comfortable with wearing the mask. They should be able to put it on and take it off independently and confidently.



3. Prepare your child for changes to the usual school routine. Help them understand the new do's and don'ts.



4. Acknowledge and validate their feelings of fear or worry - you may be feeling these too.



8. Let home be a place of warmth, security and safety in this time of uncertainty. Children will benefit from feeling protected and cared for at the end of the school day.



agriculture, rural development,
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